Reviews

Edited by Sue McKemmish

Publications

Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, editors, *The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years,* Monash Occasional Papers in Librarianship, Recordkeeping and Bibliography, No. 5. Clayton, Vic, Ancora Press in association with Australian Archives, 1994, 236 pp. ISBN 0 86862 019 X. $30.00. (Available from Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton, Vic. 3168.)

An Australian Perspective

If there was any lingering doubt that Australia has a unique heritage in archival science or a significant contribution to make to archival theory and practice, the appropriately titled *The Records Continuum* edited by Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott sweeps it away. Conceived primarily as a festschrift to Ian Maclean to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his appointment as the first Archives Officer for the Commonwealth of Australia, this publication is subtitled 'Ian Maclean and Australian Archives first fifty years' in celebration of the two anniversaries, one corporate the other personal, which provided the trigger for its compilation as a partnership between the Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records at Monash University and Australian Archives.[1]

So it is not surprising that amongst the twelve articles and two appendices that comprise this publication are found several pieces that reflect institutional commemoration and, as with any work that relies upon the writing of many authors, a couple which have but a tenuous connection with the title or even subtitle of the publication. Indeed, it could quite easily have been a thinner volume. It may well have benefited from some internal thematic division to separate the diverse contents, in particular the institutional and commemorative pieces from the more scholarly or theoretical contributions. Apart from Michael Piggott's opening chapter's excellent addition to Australian archival history, the book's claim to fame lies firmly in its latter half where considerable space is given to exploring what it is that makes

Australian archival work distinctive and the essential nature of this 'Australian System' which 'enables the documentation of records and their contexts in and through time and space irrespective of custody or even existence'. Within this component is to be found the pivotal contribution by Frank Upward, 'In Search of the Continuum: Ian Maclean's "Australian Experience" Essays on Recordkeeping', which analyses two of Maclean's articles to tease out, capture and explain the concept that is the distinctively Australian 'continuum', and a landmark contribution by Chris Hurley, 'The Australian System: An Exposition'. Sue McKemmish's concluding chapter, 'Are Records Ever Actual?', leaves us with some thought-provoking reflections on the very nature of records themselves providing more Australian insight for further exploration.

But before the option to fast forward to page 110 is taken a brief survey through some of the early chapters is appropriate. The editors' 'Introduction' outlines the deliberate title choice of 'continuum' and its multiple applications beyond its core use as a 'metaphor for the record and recordkeeping systems', cautioning that the concept 'has a value going well beyond its use as an alternative to the simplistic life cycle still favoured' in some circles. It is noted that from the beginning, some fifty years ago, Australian archivists have been open-minded about ideas and models from many sources, a theme picked up in several chapters, which combined with an absence of 'old' records and the frequency of administrative change in the Australian government led to the development of a distinctly Australian archival experience.

Michael Piggott in 'Beginnings' sets the scene, weaving his account of the establishment of an archival function for the Commonwealth government culminating with Maclean's appointment, with some interesting historical archival detail such as Canberra designer Walter Burley Griffin's plan to include the national archives in his 'capitol' and the subsequent laying of a foundation stone on the so-named Capitol Hill, now the home of the spectacular Australian Parliament complex (sans archives).[2] Piggott notes that while the national archives can trace its antecedents back fifty years, 'critical mass' was reached in 1961 with the establishment of the Commonwealth Archives Office. Anne-Marie Schwirtlich follows, presenting an administrative account of the archival initiatives arising from the establishment of the Australian War Memorial and its role in the preservation of Commonwealth records, explaining the background of an organisation which remains today as somewhat of an anomaly on the Australian archival or broader cultural scene based as it is on a concept of a commemorative, thematic 'total' collection.

In an examination of the development of the custodial philosophy and practices of Australian Archives, 'Keepers of the Fame?', Steve Stuckey illustrates that institution's particular approach to archives management which has always been comfortable with both custodial and non-custodial regimes for records and well supported by intellectual controls which are applicable regardless of where records are located at a particular point in time. The existence of this philosophy has both arisen from and contributed significantly to the Australian notion of 'continuum' and provided an environment ripe for the acceptance of non-custodial strategies for electronic records management although the pragmatic necessity of non-custodialism has also been a feature of the institution's landscape. Stuckey concludes with some thoughts on the challenge of electronic records after noting that, 'There are political and social pressures for the organisation to become a more "culturally oriented" agency, but there is still a clear legislative responsibility to ensure efficiencies in government administration, as well as a role as an independent auditor in an era of accountability'. A multi-skilled archival organisation or one which will have something of an identity crisis?

Another Australian Archives staff member, Helen Nosworthy, takes up the cudgels for a more 'culturally oriented' agency in no uncertain terms in her chapter, 'Reaching Out', which borders in places on the evangelical, seeming to revel in some new found institutional priority to bring archives to the Australian people whether they want them or not, linking the institution's poor public profile to an historic lack of an extensive outreach program. That the Australian public remains ignorant of the holdings (and I use this term deliberately rather than the pluralist 'collections' unfortunately used by this author[3]) or even the existence of a national archives, has far more to do with the lack of a national headquarters building in Canberra than with an outreach program. I have no doubt that the most effective way of Australian Archives fulfilling its current socially trendy and politically expedient vision statement, 'To excel as an archives in the eyes of all Australians', is to have a purpose built, dedicated, showy monolith in a prestige Canberra location where 'every Australian' can visit to see the Constitution and a couple of other bright archival specimens in appropriately atmospheric and awe-inspiring surroundings and then go home again with a souvenir coffee mug or poster. This is one we can learn from the Americans even if Canberra does not have a metro![4] This is not to say that I do not believe it is appropriate for Australian Archives to be active in the area of outreach—no national or public archives can completely fulfil its charter without such a program—but it is not its primary purpose. To equate the archival imperatives of government accountability (which implicitly includes a social or public responsibility) and efficiencies in both recordkeeping and records management with

'housekeeping' or to state that Australian Archives is fundamentally a 'collecting institution' as this author does, are simply wrong as it is to conclude that the organisation has hitherto failed to recognise 'the general public as its principal client'. Let there be no mistake that the Archives' principal client, as with any Archives, is the *record*[5], for without this neither its responsibilities to its government or its public can even be begun to be met.

It is interesting and not a little ironic that Australian Archives, with a solid foundation and clear mandate in the areas of accountability and efficiency in the management of government records, is now being called upon by its political masters to behave more like a 'cultural heritage' agency at a time when others, such as the Queensland State Archives, which has long operated in a cultural mould, have recently been under political pressure to develop strategies to assist in government accountability and with efficiencies in the management of government records. Finally, no matter which archival program is being considered, it is distressing to see archives portrayed as mere information, in that pluralist way normally associated with the library world, rather than as records, as the evidence of organisational and social activity, while the thought of any archives employees seriously thinking they can make any notable inroad into the 'highly competitive information and leisure industries' defies imagination even for those concerned with 'reinventing' archival institutions.

No flights of imagination are needed, however, in the second half of this title beginning with Frank Upward's skilful, 'In Search of the Continuum: Ian Maclean's "Australian Experience" essays on Recordkeeping', in which he analyses and dissects two articles Maclean published internationally in 1959 and 1962 respectively, to explore and find 'the continuum within but never explicitly pulled together'. This is a masterly article, intellectually rich and currently relevant and perhaps long overdue. Upward reveals Maclean's continuum, as

> A practical approach . . . which is grounded in the characteristics of recorded information, focuses upon recordkeeping systems and gives conceptual dimensions to the processes involved in the ordering of records . . . Its encapsulation within the series system in the 1960s and its re-emergence within studies of electronic recordkeeping suggest its elements are recursive . . .

and indeed is highly pertinent to current archival thought. This article is a tribute to Maclean's significant and original contribution to archival theory and to the next generation of Australian archivists as it informs and enriches our understanding of Australian archival origins and for those of us fortunate to have been reared in Maclean/Scott times of our professional precepts.

The personal and institutional triumphs portrayed in the powerful opening of the Australian Archives signature chapter 'The Series System—A Revolution in Archival Control' by Mark Wagland and Russell Kelly gradually dissipate as its exposition of Australia's heralded challenge to 'archival orthodoxy' unfolds into a very process-oriented and pedestrian account. There follows a description of the current incarnation of a system which was conceived as a building block in a total approach to the management of archives rather than solely as a method of descriptive practice for which it has been mistaken. While I believe this chapter should be compulsory reading for every Australian archivist, and while it is an important addition to the scarce published literature on the CRS system, I was saddened at how easily the conceptual genius of the Maclean/Scott/Penny archival view has been lost to the next generation of Australian Archives staff.[6] The authors present, in somewhat prosaic style, a portrait of the CRS System in 1994, thirty years after its implementation, describing its elements and taking time to recount a perspective on its faith with or deviation from the initial application and early system documentation. However, as the chapter unfolds it loses momentum together with the opportunity to continue the triumph, leaving readers with a view of an institution struggling to find the right script to continue to the next century. There is more than a hint also of an internal struggle to understand the plot, of a confusion between precept and concept and of economic rationalism replacing essential elements of the continuum.

In contrast Sigrid McCausland's chapter, 'Adapting the Series System: A Study of Small Archives Applications', ends more positively having recounted the successful adaptation of the concepts behind the CRS system beyond the walls of its parent institution. She intertwines her account of the application of the series system in three diverse institutional settings with some pertinent analysis of the incarnation of the system demonstrating, in an often deceptively simple and chatty manner, the robustness of its underlying concepts and the professional pride of those members of the 'gene pool' who have adapted the best of Australian Archives practice to their new institutional settings. This chapter makes a useful addition to the literature, despite its post hoc nature, for it records not only the essential details of the widespread use of the system originally developed in the Australian Archives but also its dynamic development by a number of former staff members, thus providing an important record of Australian archival tradition and history. Apart from these characteristics it captures well the spirit and flavour of the late 1970s/early 1980s Australian Archives exodus and the realities for those who went over the wall, as well as the not insignificant benefits to wider professional practice which resulted. The way is still open, however, in a future publication for a

more in-depth analysis of the series system beyond the initial adaptations and its overall portability to a variety of organisational environments.

A conceptual model 'independent of but . . . comprehending the varying applications of the system currently in use' is presented in 'The Australian ("Series") System: An Exposition' by Chris Hurley in an excellent chapter which should not only be compulsory reading for all Australian archivists but also internationally. Any continuing suggestion from ICA circles that the Australian approach is not cognisant of *respect des fonds* should be dispelled by a comprehension of this article. Hurley postulates that rather than the 'series system' there exists an 'Australian system' declaring that it 'cannot simply be understood . . . as just another way of describing records . . . it is part and parcel of, and in important ways an emanation from, an approach to (philosophy of) archives', and a building block in continuum management. He explains that classificatory techniques which cannot be employed until 'the dust has settled' are not suitable as they effectively place a barrier between archivists and 'the ongoing management of recorded information', noting that Australians have eagerly embraced current trends in post-custodial documentation theory 'because they fit so well our own long-standing commitment to integrated records management'. Apart from its value in presenting a conceptual model this chapter reaches out far beyond expected parameters to explore archival philosophy—the Australian rejection of a purely custodial approach to archival description; issues surrounding the physicality of records, the transmutation of recordkeeping and context; and the centrality of an unbroken chain of custody of records. Hurley spins us out beyond provenance in its traditional meaning and challenges us to venture not towards physical discovery in 'The Search for the Holy Fonds' but towards insight—to develop the power in ourselves to see using the 'Australian System' as a philosophical pointer.

Issues surrounding the physicality of records are drawn out by Sue McKemmish in the concluding chapter 'Are Records Ever Actual?' which is informed by Scott's conception of a system

> capable of capturing and re-presenting archival data about the nature of the "logical or virtual or multiple relationships" which exist at any moment of time (and hence through time) amongst records and between records and their contexts of creation and use.

She encapsulates the significance of this breakthrough:

> a system that could reconstruct recordkeeping systems in their legal, functional and organisational contexts at any point of time, a system capable of generating for users multiple views . . . of a complex reality that has always been conceptual rather than physical.

She notes that contrary to a view still held in some quarters overseas Scott did not reject the archival prime directives of *respect des fonds*, provenance and original order; rather he rethought the objectives behind them in a modern context, inter alia breaking the nexus between moral defence, physical arrangement and physical custody. She observes that while many archival traditions have become bogged down in the physicality of records, attempting to represent records and their contexts by freezing them in time, Australian Archives-trained archivists were liberated by a view that managed records beyond the repository shelves, although today perhaps some further liberation is required as the series is often erroneously viewed as a physical record unit. That 'The record is always in the process of becoming', that essentially it has a conceptual rather than a physical being, even in traditional paper form, is an important and startling insight worthy of further attention and development.

What makes Australian archival work distinctive? *The Records Continuum* tells readers this in no uncertain terms both in its title and through the chapters in its latter half. While hitherto the 'invention' of the series system has been regarded as the signal Australian contribution to archival science, this publication forthrightly proclaims that this is but a part of an underpinning philosophy and approach based on engagement with records throughout their continuum. This is the distinctly Australian archival experience and it is a healthy start to understanding and managing post-custodial realities. It derives from a tradition where theory and practice go hand-in-hand; it was a 'reinvention' before reinventing became trendy. As a celebration of nationalism *The Records Continuum* has particular appeal at a time of our increasing exposure to and scrutiny by the international archival community but we should not think that it will be any better understood by those wedded to traditional processes and with different mindsets than the well-known Scott articles have been. As the basis for effective ongoing management of records to ensure the existence and continuing survival of archives, Australian continuum strategies have much to offer new age archivists if they but care to consider.

Glenda I. Acland
University Archivist & Coordinator Records Management
The University of Queensland

Endnotes

1. *The Records Continuum* was launched in conjunction with the Playing for Keeps Conference in Canberra in November 1994 by elder statesman of the Australian archival profession, Bob Sharman, in the presence of Ian Maclean.
2. Australian Archives in 1995 still lacks a national headquarters building, and consequently a profile in the Australian community. It was a practice amongst a group of Commonwealth Archives Office/Australian Archives archivists in the 1970s, several of whom were cited as springing from its 'gene pool' at the launch of this publication, to hold an annual commemorative picnic for the laying of the foundation stone on Capitol Hill, and indeed for other significant archival occasions such as Jenkinson's birthday, but sadly this did not influence any of the many Australian governments in that period to provide a national building.
3. See Glenda Acland, 'Glossary' in Judith Ellis (ed.), *Keeping Archives*, D. W. Thorpe in association with the Australian Society of Archivists, Melbourne, 1993.
4. The nearest metro station to the National Archives Headquarters in Washington DC, is called Archives in one of the most effective and cost efficient public outreach initiatives to be witnessed.
5. Glenda Acland, 'Managing the Record rather than the Relic', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 20, no. 1, 1992, especially p. 60.
6. I had the benefit of an archival education directly from Peter Scott at a formative stage in the development of the institution, its continuum management strategies and the CRS system and have carried that benefit beyond the walls of Australian Archives through my archival career.

A Canadian Perspective

In historical terms, fifty years is not a long time, less than a normal lifetime these days, but enough for memory and reflection to act on, enough for a thin layer of history. If history is the telling of stories, then perhaps tradition consists in the stories people with something in common repeat to themselves. The essays in this volume collectively aim to tell stories of fifty years of Australian labour in the archival field and to answer the question, 'what if anything makes [it] distinctive', a tradition, if you will.

Concern for tradition seems to be animating archivists here and there these days. Why is not so clear. Editors Michael Piggott and Sue McKemmish say that they

> will be satisfied if the history, speculation, commentary, criticism, and testimony [in their volume] reveal something of the variety of thinking about issues which have arisen in the management of government records through the records continuum.

In my opinion, they ought to be very satisfied. The reflections in this volume cut to the bone of Australian distinctiveness far more effectively than the attempt to build a similar Canadian skeleton from a series of republished essays issued not so long ago under the title *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance.* The main reason is not hard to find.

Each country produces its own archival discourse—all the professional writings of the community of archivists and institutions. It usually hoves closely to institutional experiences, but from time to time breaks off into the abstract, generalised realm of theory. Australian archivists, like their counterparts in the United Kingdom, the United States and Canada, with whom for reasons of language and political culture they share much, have tended to formulate their ideas by reflecting upon experimentation with methods to meet the peculiar circumstances they face. You need some length of practice on which to reflect before this kind of ex poste facto explanation and justification can bear fruit. In this kind of thinking about the thinking behind acting, ideas hidden in the way it is done burble to the surface, become articulate, bear repeating, and, in the repetition, grow into a tradition of shared assumptions and behaviour. The writers in this volume bring this particular art to a high level. Why that is so may suggest an answer to the question of why Australian archivists, at least, set out on their quest to articulate a tradition at this particular time.

The subtext of many of these essays compares Australian ways with those from overseas. Everywhere else is overseas from an island. An island people dwells on its isolation and overcomes it by reflective comparison with the ways of people 'from away', to use a colourful phrase for outsiders employed by Newfoundlanders. ('You're from away, eh?') Australian archivists seem more than usually interested to know how they stack up against the rest of the world, and that leads them to consider foreign ideas more closely than their counterparts in most countries and from that, by comparison, their own ideas. To judge by this volume, the result can be especially fruitful. From time to time, comparisons strain to find distinctiveness where there is simply different means to the same end, but often there is a fundamental matter at issue.

When several years ago I compared Canadian and Australian developments, I used the Public/National Archives of Canada to illustrate the decidedly custodial and cultural tradition of so-called 'total archives'. Even though the Canadian national institution, like many government and in-house archives, struggles with the notion of the records continuum (I do not think archivists the world over face different circumstances to any

substantial degree and so feel the same urges), there is nothing like a common, systematised Canadian approach to its realisation. Jay Atherton's reflection on the records continuum, as Frank Upward notes, reformulates the life cycle concept and gives it a much needed service twist. Yet, to this day in Canada, the reach of archival authority extends weakly across the great divide between the historically oriented repository and all those records out there in government offices the land over, command of which remains flimsy at best, despite the exhortations of post-custodial thinkers. Steve Stuckey, who joins their chorus, is no doubt right to remind us that it is possible to accomplish our mission 'if the records themselves are never in the hands of the archivist', but certainly we still have a way to go before archivists are acknowledged as the 'nation's experts who must be consulted in all questions of public records making and recordkeeping and likewise become the trustees who will safeguard the written monuments of the past, of the present day, and of the future', to use Ernst Posner's uplifting words quoted by Upward (p. 123).

Not that Australians, I suspect, have this particular snark firmly by the tail. At least, I would be surprised if they did. Though I would never suggest that the quest for the records continuum, like that for Lewis Carroll's snark, is only for dreamers and visionaries, in the context of this volume the search is more for the idea than for evidence of its embodiment. Upward is cautious enough about the matter to call his essay 'In Search of the Continuum'. As I read the last fifty years, the search to mediate between the record as administrative fact and cultural artefact has been easier to conceive in the mind's eye than in institutional design. For instance, the stories by Michael Piggott on the beginnings of the Commonwealth Archives and Anne-Marie Schwirtlich on the Australian War Memorial's early years illustrate how awkwardly the two visions coexist. Despite our comfortable stereotypes to the contrary, we can see that historians like G. F. James understood the primary value of records and administrators like Paul Hasluck understood their secondary value, but these generous sentiments could not alone carry the day. Few people inside and outside our governmental leviathan appreciate records in either administrative or cultural guise. They constitute Helen Nosworthy's *indifferent* group, among whom, it would appear, fall many of the Australian prime ministers whose recordkeeping Graeme Powell tells us about, and no doubt a good many others who use records on a daily basis. This climate of what English historian H. G. Nicholas once called 'lethargy and neglect' flavoured the beginnings of an archival authority for the Commonwealth and the end of hope for a fully rounded archival role for the War Memorial. Establishing a tradition of careful recordkeeping runs against the grain of certain stubborn attitudes of modern government and society. It requires the imposition of a records ethic which this book labels the records

continuum. Ultimately, if records are to play a part in the wider life of the community, they must be exposed effectively to an audience concerned to account for its actions. If, as Piggott suggests, 'societies show a heightened concern for material links with the past during times of upheaval and rapid change', the concept of the records continuum implies more than spasmodic interest in the objects of our concern, more than disjunction between the rhythms of care for fact and artefact.

The heart of this volume seeks to flesh out just what is implied by the Australian conception of the records continuum. Much of the responsibility for the Australian twist on what the French call *l'archivistique* rests on the shoulders of Ian Maclean, who, along, no doubt at all, with colleagues in the Commonwealth Archives of yore, pondered long and hard about what it meant to act as an archives agency of government, and who began to build a system of administrative and intellectual control of records to match conception. We in the rest of the world have heard of Peter Scott, but Maclean's role is less well-known. This volume took me back to his masterful article of 1959 on the 'Australian Experience in Records and Archives Management' (*American Archivist*, vol. 22, no. 4). It is much more than an exposition of Australian experience, for in several deft strokes he illuminates the climate of thinking which we can now see animated the agency he headed. How fortuitous to have as the first head of the national institution someone with such deep and even prescient understanding. Few persons at the top possess his understanding; fewer still cultivate its embodiment in method so fruitfully; they are too busy just running things.

Much as I admire the clarity of Upward's honorific exposition of Maclean's ideas, the original voice needs no gloss. For instance, here he is on the heart of the matter from two separate passages in the 1959 article.

> But it seems to me to be crucial that if the archivist's profession is to be a separate profession there must be some basic professional knowledge that is, particularly, the province of the archivist. This professional study is surely the study of the characteristics of record materials, the comparative study of past and present recordkeeping systems, and the classification problems associated with them.
>
> To the question — 'What should be the relation between archivists and record managers?'— it seems that they are or should be the same people . . .

In short, he envisioned a profession of experts on which society could rely for the proper care of its records at all stages in their existence. He identified classification both in the office of origin and globally as a central concern. Other essays in this volume show how his vision took shape.

Chris Hurley tells us it is 'the story of the search for a satisfactory way of documenting records . . .'. He also calls it a technique, so, at its heart, it is a method of describing records, but one, it is clear, based on systematic classification of records suited to all facets of their administration. Understanding records means being able to explain them; explaining them means describing how they came into being, who produced them, how they were accumulated, and how they are related both physically and non-physically to other records of the same provenance; describing them in context and in relationship means having some coherent means of classification that can apply universally to all records so that they can be exposed in rigorous and regularised terms. This Scott and company worked out in fundamental terms by identifying the classes of entities, relationships, and attributes principally at issue. Hurley claims that the method of determining the entities and their relationships can be applied anywhere, whether or not the nomenclature or particular decisions of the Australian system are adopted. I am sure he is right, in principle at least.

The articles on the series system provide a clear and precise exposition of Scott's formulation, which should be easier for outsiders to understand and apply. On the wider applicability of the system Hurley has this to say:

> The system does not provide answers to questions like: what is a series and what is an agency? Archivists applying the system may develop different rules on these and like questions and still be operating within the conceptual framework which the system provides (p. 161).

I think that this says no more than that the ideas on which the system is built can be applied in any context where records are managed. It cannot mean that we cannot reach some fundamental understanding of what an organisation is, or an agency, series, recordkeeping system, function, action, and transaction. It may be that applying the method reveals anomaly and difficulty, but the ideas about what is what (the analytical framework) help us overcome them. The trouble, and the reason why the Australian system has not readily been adopted elsewhere, is that the system, much as it is built on a very good conception, is in fact a method, not a theory, and a method which is only generally explained to us. Others who would employ it have to understand the ideas behind the method *and* take the trouble to build a system fitted to their needs. It can be done, as Sigrid McCausland shows, even for so-called collecting archives, I agree. Anyone trying to adapt the method will be thankful to McCausland and Hurley and to Mark Wagland and Russell Kelly for explaining the method and the ideas behind it so well. However, Australians should not hold their breath waiting for converts. Traditions are not easily made, or overturned. Maclean and his colleagues laid the foundation

of the series system in the 1950s and 1960s. It has been built into today's conception and method by dint of the careful thinking and experimentation that this volume reveals, so we can hardly expect it to export easily, especially when studying it properly probably means seeing it in practice in some detail, and that, one presumes, can only be done in Australia.

The notion of ambient entities deserves some comment. What do we have here? Is something of the grand design of the concept of the fonds creeping back into the Australian way? At bottom, the concept of the fonds simply supposes that the whole of the records of organisations (or suitably distinct entities within them) or natural persons are interrelated. In theory, the problem is to determine the various kinds of relationships that exist among the records produced by organisations and persons. It is clear by now that some of the relationships are established by the way the creator functions and some by the documentary procedures it uses. The emphasis on series and the immediate facts about them provide the foundation on which these higher order relationships of ambient entities can be built. After saying that 'records creation is only one aspect of provenance', Hurley goes on to tell us that

> We are still thinking through (and in many ways only just beginning to realise) how much further ideas about context and provenance must go beyond mere records creation (p. 155).

Precisely, but it is a journey we are all taking the world over.

I have heard Australian colleagues say that they have been poor expositors of the system. There is some truth in that, but they cannot be held responsible for the widespread ignorance of Scott's articles. Most writers quote only his 1966 article, and very few indeed subject the series of articles published beginning in the late 1970s to rigorous examination, and those that do seem to me often to get Scott wrong. Perhaps Australian archivists will have to rest content to see the worm turning, as visitors in search of the snark of records and context control replace the itinerant Macleans of times past and guests beckoned for advice. Among other things, tradition bequeaths confidence. To judge by this volume, that effect is firmly taking hold in the land of the series system, but perhaps not without a mildly regrettable effect.

I detect a certain competitiveness, even aggressiveness towards other conceptions, often of the same ideas. To pretend to discover that the fonds is an abstract concept, to suppose that previous generations of archivists have somehow been intellectually captive of the physical aspects of archives, or to find that arrangements other than the Australian ones are necessarily misguided is a little disingenuous. For instance, I think it is quite wrong to

suppose that the international rules (and the Canadian ones which have heavily influenced them) for archival description which are emerging are somehow incompatible with the Australian way of thinking. I believe this misconception comes about because the Australian system and the Canadian and international rules are not really comparable. There are no Australian rules; there is no system in the Australian sense in the rules. Curiously enough, writing rules for description is, strictly speaking, an exercise neither in theory nor in method in the sense of system building.

Because the rules as they currently exist never expose the theory of classification behind them in enough detail, there is ample room to see fundamental difference where different means to the same end exist. I have no doubt that existing rules need further elaboration on the context and relationship side. It may take some time and considerable 'thinking through' of ways to strengthen context and relationship description before the rules are completely adequate to the task. Australian thinking helps us see that codifying ways to reveal a dynamic environment and complex, changing record accumulations will be a devilishly difficult challenge, but, as Hurley says, it is work still dimly visible in the mind's eye. Rules do not decide a working method or system for capturing and recording information about archives. Rather they act as a bridging mechanism between theory and practical implementation of systems. Hardly anything like the testing of them has yet occurred which could be compared to the experimentation with the series system in Australia. Dismissing them as cataloguing rules is like supposing, as some people do, that the Australian system is merely one for administrative control. We need to see where our conceptions meet and how to articulate them in common ways. Even so, a systematic means of classification and documentation is not all there is to the continuum.

It seems to me that the records continuum has two intimately related goals. On the one hand, it aims for unified administrative command of all the processes of records production, maintenance, disposition, and use. On the other, it aims for unified intellectual command of information about the properties, circumstances, and substance of records. Together the two seek to assist people to realise the many primary and secondary values of records, the archival mission, if you like. These essays also make it clear that there is a way to go. For instance, Jim Stokes speaks of users being 'at times justifiably irritated by access delays and inadequate finding aids', and Sue McKemmish muses on the intellectual complexity of capturing 'representative traces of the functions and activities of records creators'. Much as one might question the notion of representativeness and even of records as traces of actions, I take it from the Australian experience and system that one builds the picture

of the whole from its parts. This can only be a laborious and never perfected exercise for the gigantic fonds of organisations like the Australian government.

Still, perhaps Ian Maclean sends us a message in this regard, for I see tucked away at the end of the list of his selected writings an entry for his guide to the records of Gavin Long. No complete and utter separation of knowledge of context and records, I presume, in his effort to describe the surviving artefacts of Long's activities. Enduring understanding of records means facing up to the awkward task of fitting the artefacts into historical reality and communicating that knowledge to the world. There also has to be a place for that in the corporate vision of which Lee McGregor speaks.

So, what makes the Australian way distinctive? I would say, first, the voice. It is both sharply analytical and pragmatic. Ideas matter, but they must be made to work, to animate activity. I see these qualities in the exposition (and defence) of the Australian system. The system itself is distinctive because it reflects these qualities. It has conceived of a way to receive the flood of accessions and consignments and fit them into the patterns of their creation. Both in principle and practice, it has worked out a way to communicate essential knowledge of Maclean's 'past and present recordkeeping systems'. It meets real, pressing needs of contemporary archival institutions, and it has evolved in conception and method to do that better as time goes on. That is no mean feat. Chances are another half century of work on it and with it will give the notion of the records continuum even greater substance. Who knows, the world may yet beat a path to your door.

I hope that this book is read by colleagues everywhere. It is tribute worthy of a half century's diligent labour, and it should go a long way to overcoming the frustration Australians feel that we 'from away' just do not understand.

Terry Eastwood
Chair, Archival Studies
School of Library, Archival and Information Studies
University of British Columbia

David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence: Strategies for managing records in contemporary organisations.* Victoria Irons Walch, editor, Pittsburgh, USA, Archives and Museums Informatics, 1994. 314 pp. ISBN 1 885626 08 8. $50.00 plus $5.00 postage. (Available in Australia from Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton, Vic 3168.)

The question seems deceptively simple—what do we do about electronic records? How do we ensure that the right records are created and captured to ensure corporate accountability and the preservation of the corporate memory? The electronic records conundrum has—or should have—brought home to all archivists by now that we can no longer afford to simply play with old records. In recent years the name of David Bearman has become synonymous with leading edge developments in the management of electronic records strategies, carrying his message and brainstorming his ideas through several countries across three continents, including Terra Australis. A prolific and enduring contributor to the professional literature, Bearman is a clear winner in the 'most cited' stakes in the English speaking archival world. The release of this volume brings together in a handy reader his most significant articles and reports in the area of electronic recordkeeping written between 1989 and 1993 and published in a variety of journals to which few archivists would have easy access.[1] Introduction, 'Constructing a Methodology for Evidence', is the only new material, providing the link between the articles to display them as a coherent guide to managing electronic records in the contemporary corporate/governmental environment. Bearman defines the problem presented by the advent of electronic records then postulates that there is only one set of functional requirements necessary for electronic records management and that these could be satisfied by four means: policy, design, implementation and standards. The remainder of the book is offered as support for this approach. The author goes on to explain the choice of a thematic rather than chronological presentation of the ten articles, two each in five themed sections[2], provides a list of his other articles and reports on the same topic written during the period, and recounts a snapshot of the how and why of the articles represented. This thematic arrangement gives a more fluid view of the electronic recordkeeping strategies and approaches than could have been presented in a sequential or evolutionary schema. Most revealing, however, is the explanation of the publication's title and the accompanying evolution of thought from 'Electronic Records Management' through 'Archiving Electronic Records' to arrive at 'Electronic Evidence', enunciating a concept to which a number of Australian archivists can clearly relate and indeed have made some contribution. Bearman notes that his choice of title is to 'emphasise the point that most collections of electronic data, electronic documents, or information are not records because they cannot qualify as evidence'.[3]

The collection begins with diagnosis. Under the theme **The Problem** are two 1993 articles 'Archival Data Management to Achieve Organizational Accountability for Electronic Records' and 'Recordkeeping Systems'. The former reviews the problems faced by current organisations in light of

developments in electronic communications and the archival challenges to be faced if the evidential basis of organisational accountability is to be ensured. Strategies to ensure that electronic records can act as evidence are provided including utilising archival functional requirements. (See the Appendix of this book for an articulation of the Functional Requirements for Recordkeeping Systems.) Chapter Two continues in this curative vein by offering the recordkeeping system as the locus of the primal archival principle of provenance, rather than the fonds, record group or record series. As the mainstay of a record's evidentiality is its provenance, preservation of provenancial/contextual information is essential to accountability. Recordkeeping systems, as specialised information systems which maintain evidence, have the advantage of solid parameters—agencies may 'die' but the functions, in the main, live on and are transferred with the recordkeeping system to a new environment, thus facilitating a shift from description to documentation (covered in greater detail in Chapter 8). Using the recordkeeping system as the focus of provenance puts the archivist, according to Bearman, in the position of auditor, able to influence the direction of policy, systems design, implementation and standards (his four tactics from Chapter One), a front-end planner, rather than the traditional undertaker[4], leaving an opening for the advent of non-custodial archives as the recordkeeping system is best maintained and preserved by those who brought it into being and/or used it in the course of conducting business.

Moving on to **Policy Guidelines**, 'Electronic Records Guidelines: A Manual for Policy Development and Implementation' is a more compact version of Chapter II of the United Nations Advisory Committee for the Coordination of Information Systems 1990 report with vastly superior footnoting to the published report. This is a seminal work which stands up well to the elapse of time and is compulsory reading for all recordkeeping professionals. 'The Implications of Armstrong v. the Executive Office of President for the Archival Management of Electronic Records' is an excellent exposition of how accountability can be the victim when the archivist neglects the fundamental duty as the custodian/ensurer of evidence—indeed in a landmark finding the former Archivist of the United States has now been found by the US Federal Court to have been negligent in the performance of his duties in this matter.[5] Despite its particular relevance to US jurisdiction, the underlying exhortation to the profession contained in this very accessible article has universal relevance. Bearman puts his frustration with professional inaction and loss of opportunity in critical issues squarely on the line, stressing the importance of the archivist as a front-end planner of policy and systems design and urging an activist role for archivists in lobbying governments and organisations for the re-education of organisational cultures to foster accountable electronic

records management practices or else risk losing the archival record of the next decade and 'squander[ing] our role as protector of the public interest in documented accountable government'.[6]

To facilitate policy initiatives, **Design and Implementation** begins with 'Archival Principles and the Electronic Office' which was first published in *Information Handling in Offices and Archives* (a collection of papers from the 1991 Symposium on the Impact of Information Technologies on Information Handling in Offices and Archives). This article acknowledges the dichotomy of electronic recordkeeping systems; that while they have the potential to capture and preserve more fully the provenancial information required for archives to serve as evidence, they are also more liable than paper systems to lose this essential information. The author examines several of the most common electronic office applications in light of the requirements of what he terms evidential historicity and the degree to which these requirements must be fulfilled in order for records to be accepted as evidence. 'Managing Electronic Mail' from the 1994 electronic recordkeeping theme edition of *Archives and Manuscripts* is a detailed look at one of the latest electronic communication mediums, what its functional requirements are, how it should be managed and how it can be used as evidence to support accountability. This chapter explores the nature of the problem: how to ensure that a record is created when necessary and how it is to be managed and preserved, and the use of the four tactics expounded in chapter one to ensure the evidentiality of electronic mail. It is to be hoped that this exposition of perhaps one of the greatest challenges facing archivists in the electronic office will be an eye-opener for those in the profession who have expressed the view that electronic mail in particular and the Internet in general will have no impact on their work.[7] To underpin successful design and implementation there have to be standards. 'Information Technology Standards and Archives' is a study of how information technology standards can be used to ensure records' evidentiality and identifies which standards we need to influence in order to do so, principally preserving data and its evidential context and being able to rely on standards to enable interchange of not only the data content but also of its context and structures which, as provenancial information, form the basis of its evidentiality.

'Documenting Documentation' was born of Bearman's disenchantment with and objections to the ICA's Statement of Principles Regarding Archival Descriptions and its ISAD (G) which did little more than reflect the current state of a particular practice of archival description rather than offering any new insights into the discipline.[8] In this article, Bearman suggests a shift from description—the creation of surrogates for documents (finding aids)—to

documentation—which captures information about the record and the activity, as well as the institution which created it. This technique means using metadata to move away from post-mortem description of records to capturing the information which is already there about the records and their recordkeeping systems. It means that the archivist is freed up from the time-consuming exhumations and examinations that make up description and promotes the archivist as an auditor of records from the front-end of the process. Documentation strategies, which by their very nature are about capturing and preserving context, are an effective tool in providing for evidentiality.

Chapter nine, 'Diplomatics, Weberian Bureaucracy, and the Management of Electronic Records in Europe and America' examines traditional strains of European archival theory and organisational practice and how they have been applied to the electronic records management dilemma in Europe, concluding with their influence and applicability to the United States. The final chapter, 'New Models for Management of Electronic Records' provides an effective 'summing up' of the contents of the reader although its original incarnation preceded several of the articles in earlier chapters. It has a useful and more vigorous successor in 'Program Strategies for Electronic Records', *Archives and Museum Informatics* Technical Report #18.9. The melange of articles is well chosen and flows nicely with no jarring contradictions despite their disparate origins. They are not mirror images of the original published versions with some differences in editing apparent and the opportunity being taken for some minor clarification of meaning or update of footnotes, although no indulgence in revisionism is evident. This compendium provides a schema for the profession to advance and a roadmap for those beset with the syndrome Terry Cook refers to as 'Electronic Records, Paper Minds'.[10] Bearman's work is never light reading but it is invariably worth the effort. For those who have read most of the articles over the years they are well worth reading again and as a set present a powerful and inspiring continuum of ideas and strategies. This is archival theory at its best, suggesting strategies and opportunities for the evolution of real solutions for the implementation of efficient and effective electronic records management practices to ensure accountability in organisations, whether they be corporate or governmental.

The primary archival responsibility is to ensure evidence—Jenkinson's moral and physical defence of the record. Evidence, as we all know, is not something that can be validated after the fact. Saving databases does not preserve evidence only information, although regrettably this is still not a point universally understood as the recent 'Playing For Keeps' Conference demonstrated.[11] Bearman's fundamental insights that information systems

do not automatically create or retain records but that in an electronic system evidence resides in the conjunction of the structure (as defined by software control rather than physical layout), context and data (content) in a transaction, form the building blocks for the archival management of electronic records—for electronic evidence. If we as archivists are to continue to ensure the moral and physical defence of the records this can only be achieved by technology. Our concerns must be with outcomes not with paper outputs; negotiation with agencies or our corporations over outcomes, rather than undertaking scheduling and transfer, to ensure organisational accountability brings to us the role of auditor rather than traditional undertaker or even keeper.

This is not a book for the archivally challenged—or perhaps it is—at any rate all recordkeeping professionals would benefit from reading this book and absorbing its message as would archives and records students who perhaps have found themselves stuck with reading articles that are roughly the archival equivalent of the Flat Earth Theory. Bearman's most recent work 'A Reference Model for Business Acceptable Communications'[12] is a natural conclusion to this collected work on electronic evidence, marketing the conclusions to specialists in the information technology industry. Can there be any real doubt that paper rather than electronic records will be the 'special media' of the next century? It is incumbent upon us as a recordkeeping profession to ensure society's 'rights-in-records'. For those of you who are still asleep, the coffee has been brewing for a while: can't you smell it? It's time to wake up and drink: read this book!

Glenda I. Acland
University Archivist & Coordinator Records Management
The University of Queensland, *and*
Angela Slatter
Archives and Records Management Services
The University of Queensland Graduate Diploma
in Applied Science (Archives Studies)
Student, Edith Cowan University

Endnotes

1. For example, few Australians would have seen the article reprinted as Chapter ten, 'New Models for Management of Electronic Records', originally published in the Portuguese journal, *Cadernos de Biblioteconomia, Arquivistica, e Documentacao* 2 (1992).
2. The provenance of the articles is in itself an interesting reflection of the reach of, and influences on, Bearman's work. In addition to the Portuguese journal cited above, two articles derive from each of three major, English language, archival journals - *American Archivist, Archivaria, Archives and Manuscripts*, one from the ICA journal *Janus*, one from the publication of proceedings of a symposium held near Marburg,

Germany with the remaining being Bearman's seminal contribution to the 1990 United Nations ACCIS Report.

3. David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence*, p. 2.
4. Glenda Acland, 'Archivist—Keeper, Undertaker, Auditor: The Challenge for Traditional Archival Theory and Practice' in *Keeping Data: Papers from a workshop on appraising computer-based records*, eds Barbara Reed and David Roberts, Australian Council of Archives and Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated, 1991. pp. 115–119.
5. American Historical Association, et al., v. Trudy Peterson, in her official capacity as Acting Archivist of the United States, and George Bush. Civil No. 94–2671 (CRR). US District Court for the District of Columbia. Judge Charles Richey on 27 February 1995 found the Bush-Wilson Agreement inconsistent with the Presidential Records Act and Article II of the U.S. Constitution. (Source: "ERECS-L" — Management & Preservation of Electronic Records Listserv, Tue, 28 Feb 1995, Subject: PROFS Case: Presidential Records Act enforced.)
6. David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence*, p. 141.
7. As recently as November 1994 at a professional seminar in Sydney attended by one of the authors a strong element of professional denial of the impact of Internet was in evidence. While it is accepted that the Australian University community has until recently enjoyed a position of privilege in this country through the establishment of AARNet which gave many of us from that sector access to the Internet in the early 1990s, nevertheless its use is now widespread and it is pleasing to note that a special workshop on the Internet for archivists is being held in July this year in Canberra, immediately preceding the annual meeting and conference of the Australian Society of Archivists.
8. David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence*, p. 223. ISAD(G) and successor ICA Descriptive Standards documents have also met with some significant Australian opposition. Chris Hurley as a representative of the Australian Society of Archivists became a member of the ICA Commission on Descriptive Standards following the 1992 ICA Congress in Montreal. For Hurley's eloquent exposition of the 'Australian system', see 'The Australian ("Series") System: An Exposition' in *The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years*, eds Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, Ancora Press, Clayton, 1994, pp. 150–172.
9. Margaret Hedstrom (ed.), *Electronic Records Management Program Strategies—Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report #18*, Archives and Museum Informatics, Pittsburgh, 1993.
10. Terry Cook, 'Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The revolution in information management and archives in the post-custodial and post-modernist era', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 22, no. 2, 1994, pp. 301–328.
11. 'Playing For Keeps', Electronic Records Management Conference, Canberra, 8–10 November, 1994.
12. David Bearman, 'A Reference Model for Business Acceptable Communications', December 1994. Unpublished proposal, 1995.

J. Kennedy & C. Schauder, *Records Management: A Guide for Students and Practitioners of Records Management,* Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, 1994. ISBN O 582 91178 8. $28.95.

There have been many attempts to provide the definitive text on records management. Unfortunately, existing texts have focused on specific elements such as disposal, technology, or filing equipment, or are promoters of a particular style or product, and not on how to deliver all the elements of a records management program. Many colleagues have expressed the need for a well–rounded text with an Australian emphasis. Even at the last RMAA conference, this deficiency was again noted by Vicki Wilson in her address on training tomorrow's records and information managers.

This text meets a well-recognised need. The text was written for records practitioners and Australian students at TAFE courses. It provides a comprehensive guide to all the major components of records management, using examples drawn from the daily reality of a records manager. The book aims not to give hard and fast rules to follow, but to develop the records manager's skills and knowledge.

The layout of the text is very accessible, with headings clearly marked, and rarely a page of text which is not broken up with graphics, illustrations and figures, or the very apt and amusing cartoons. I particularly enjoyed the fairy godmother searching (under spells, pumpkins, mice or matchmaking??) her 'wand' manual for the spell to transform Cinderella. Each chapter concludes with a practical task for students, notes and references, and further reading. Many of the tasks set are challenging, and all are relevant to the preceding text.

The text begins with an overview of records management, recognising that the increasing complexity of our society and the levels of regulation contribute to the importance of records. There is also recognition of the mismatch between the increasing importance of records and the historically low priority given to records management, as well as the low status of those responsible for their care.

From the opening statements about why records are kept, and the changes being experienced by the records function, the approach is clearly a proactive one. The objective of a records program is to manage all records, not just paper-based correspondence files held in central registries. This chapter includes a definition of records which recognises their value as evidence. Comments about the changing proportion of paper to electronic records hint

at the concerns expressed throughout the text about the challenges to be faced in managing electronic records.

The following sections discuss the elements of a records management program and describe some of the changes within the records function such as the decentralisation of registries; electronic records; management of all formats of records; moves to standard setting and policy development rather than direct service delivery; the promotion of efficiency through sound records management for the whole organisation; accountability; and information technology and its impact on work.

The book moves onto measures for the control of records including the records inventory and disposal programs. There is plenty of evidence of a close reading of the professional literature, and conflicting views are presented. Here the division amongst the experts about the need for inventories is noted (and it's Saul, L. not Sal) but the text does not recognise that one of the main uses for the comprehensive records inventory is facility planning, in particular when organisations are restructuring, or moving to new premises.

In the chapter on disposal there are two very useful sections. The first, on the legislative basis for the retention of records, provides a clear overview of this sometimes complex field, and the second is an excellent summary of the special problems of assessing the value of electronic records. Again the examples and exercises are noteworthy for being realistic and current. One case study is a backlog of non-current records and the second is to provide retention controls over an electronic mail system.

Chapters five and six examine classification, indexing and the development of classification schemes for filing systems. These are complex and difficult issues, and there are currently a number of competing methods in the field. Again the presentation is thorough and methodical, e.g. there is recognition of the different functions of filing systems, and the different retrieval levels for document or file based systems. There is also a good explanation of the interdependency of thesaurus and indexing, but I was disappointed by a couple of issues in this section. In the section on file titling approaches, one common method was omitted, i.e. the use of a combination of controlled vocabulary in order, then natural language. Secondly, the development of a classification scheme does not have to be linked to physical control of the files as the example of the structured numbering system suggests. Thirdly, more attention is required on the issue of specialist thesauri. After all, a comprehensive thesaurus is fine to the central core of a large organisation, but it can be less than useful if you happen to belong to a small section of the

organisation which has only received one functional term in the larger thesaurus. Lastly readers should be aware that the NSW Records Management Office's *Thesaurus of General Administrative Terms*, which is used as an example here, is currently undergoing a review to refocus from a subject to a functional approach and to simplify the rules of its use.

I was pleased by the focus on the use of technology, not simply to control records and indexes, but to create or capture them. This includes recognition of the need to create records of transactions which take place by telephone, fax and email, which are not normally created as a by-product of the transaction. This chapter fulfils the early promises to deal with difficult issues. It also covers electronic data interchange and computer assisted logistics support, text retrieval, optical character recognition, imaging and microfilming. In the conclusion of this chapter, the authors note that technology issues now tend to dominate the records management literature, and that the rate of change necessitates students keeping up to date with developments.

The final chapter is a recognition of the importance of coordinating the creation of records, as well as their maintenance and use. This chapter expands the role of the records manager to deliver productivity improvements in areas which have not traditionally been seen as the concern of the records manager. These include: style and presentation of documents; control over the volumes of information being produced; direction, distribution of mail and workflow analysis; and cost effective information processing. This chapter describes the elements of a record creation control program and the steps to implement it, including managing reports, forms, and policies and procedures.

The appendices include: indexing rules; an outline of the role and history of the Records Management Association of Australia (which omits any mention of any other professional association including the ASA, even though *Archives and Manuscripts* is referred to throughout the text); and a list of records management and archives courses currently available in Australia. It is missing a comprehensive bibliography, which is a shame, but references are provided at the conclusion of each chapter. There is a useful glossary of terms including cross references (e.g. disposal and disposition are referred to records disposal), and a comprehensive, useful index—we would expect nothing less!

The flow of the contents provides a logical sequence of steps to follow, starting with the macro elements of the records program, and moving to the more detailed aspects. The text is comprehensive, accessible and practical. There is a clear direction, the necessary information to decide which course

of action to follow, without the assumption that one solution will meet all needs. In particular, the attempt to balance examples and exercises from private and public organisations, the emphasis on current issues, and the close reading of the professional literature are commendable. There is an unfortunate absence of references to recent work on electronic records by Bearman, Hedstrom and others which would have enhanced the discussions about disposal and electronic records.

Despite my reservations about the chapters on classification, and the lack of a bibliography, this book fills a long felt need in the field, and I have already recommended it to clients. This text should serve Australian students and teachers well, and has plenty to offer our international colleagues as well. If we were to develop students with this broad perspective of the future role of the records manager, the profession might have a clearer sense of what it has to offer.

Kerry Gordon
Director
Provenance Consulting Services Pty Ltd
Sydney

Nick Vine Hall, *Tracing Your Family History in Australia: A Guide to Sources,* Scriptorium Family History Centre, Albert Park, 1994. ISBN 1 86404 071 8. $45 plus $10 postage (available from 386 Ferrars Street, Albert Park, 3206).

This large book (over 450 pages of text, five appendices, a subject index and ten pages promoting the author's business and other publications) has been researched, compiled, written and published by Nick Vine Hall, a well-known genealogist. The author has not used an editor, which is a pity, as the worst of his idiosyncrasies and hopefully all of the grammatical and typographical errors would have been eliminated. He has, for example, capitalised all surnames, all abbreviations *and* all words or phrases he wished to emphasise, making the publication read rather like a marketing manual. The Introduction, for example, commences:

> THIS BOOK is about sources for tracing the family histories and genealogies of people LIVING IN AUSTRALIA. It is NOT ABOUT tracing people in OVERSEAS COUNTRIES.

Chapter 2 gives basic advice on tracing family history and is perhaps the most useful section of the book. The following chapters list each State or Territory, give a brief history of European settlement in each, list the main

record repositories and then detail the records available in forty-one separate categories, e.g. adoptions, births, deaths and marriages, inquests and probates. Some of these categories could have been combined; for example, adoptions and orphans logically could have been placed together, particularly as they are not always cross-referenced in the text. Included in these chapters are details of local genealogical and local history societies. This approach works when the author is extremely familiar with the sources to be used, but leads to inaccuracies where this is not the case.

While Vine Hall had experts from Queensland and New South Wales look over those chapters, he did not do so for the chapters referring to other areas, which again is a pity, as some of his comments need further explanation and some are just plain wrong. Looking only at the Victorian section (the area with which I am most familiar), he claims, for example, that in the 1850s a Poll Tax on the Chinese had been introduced in South Australia, hence their emigration to Victoria. However, it was in Victoria that the tax was introduced, forcing them to land in South Australia and come overland. The Royal Historical Society does not have a branch at Bendigo, and one of the largest local history societies in the State, the Woady Yallock Society, is omitted from his listing. The Police Historical Society is a voluntary organisation and holds no records; it is the Police Historical Unit that is the repository.

The section dealing with the Public Record Office of Victoria is poor, as he has not grasped the fact that the original records are *all* housed at either the Laverton or Ballarat repository. The city office holds only microfilm/fiche copies of records. Only some original records can be accessed at the city office and these must be ordered in advance so that they can be retrieved from Laverton. A seventy-five year closure rule applies to many of the records held by the PRO, but nowhere is this stated. The newsletter published for users is called *PROACTIVE*, not *PRO File*, which is for records managers.

Looking at the information supplied within the categories themselves, again mistakes and omissions occur. The Charles Brothers Museum, which is quoted as holding records of asylums, was closed down at least five years ago, with the records being transferred to the Public Record Office. The *Victoria Police Gazette* did not change its name in 1884 and did not cease in 1992. The divorce index at the Supreme Court is not available to the public. The Defunct Business Files at the PRO are not mentioned in the Business Records category. The existence of the Alfred and Children's Hospital archives are not listed under the relative category, and Liz Allan's comprehensive indexing of country hospital records is ignored. While the Australian Archives correspondence files relating to Aboriginals are mentioned, without identifying their context,

similar material from an earlier period held at the PRO is not. Convict records are covered, but the only mention of criminal records in the entire book (that is, those people convicted of crimes in Australia) appears in the Victorian section, under the Occupational Listings category!

Appendix 1 lists published Australian Family Histories, but only those from the collection of the Society of Australian Genealogists, which is based in Sydney. The Alexander Henderson Award, given each year by the Australian Institute of Genealogical Studies for the best published family history in any given year, is ignored, yet it is a national award that has been in existence for many years.

Appendix 2 is an index to The Dawn of Australia's Radio Broadcasting, a 1993 publication covering the period 1910–35. While Vine Hall has published the index as a tribute to the late author, Philip Geeves, the value of its place in this publication is doubtful.

Appendix 3 is a listing of many repositories which hold genealogical records. Each has been given an acronym only in the text, and it is only in the Appendix that the full title appears. A notable omission here is the Victoria Police Historical Unit.

Appendix 4 is a useful bibliography, but some of the references listed are of doubtful use. Loney's shipwrecks publications, for example, are notorious for not listing the sources consulted, which renders them of little use to genealogists.

The subject index is useful, as long as the reader remembers to check out criminals under the occupational listings! And I don't know whether I'd place the names of various family history journals in this category.

Retailing at $45 (plus $10 postage within Australia), this publication is not cheap, but neither is it a quality production. The style and format of the book clearly shows it was desktop published, a practice aimed at reducing costs. That the finished product in this case is so highly priced suggests either a small print run or an excessive markup. Moreover, with one page of Corrigenda already included, and at least another two pages worth which ought to be included, I have serious doubts about its value for money. While I have no problems with the concept of the book, as the present attempt shows, it is more than one person can satisfactorily achieve. What Vine Hall should

have done was to collate information provided by local experts who can contribute their particular knowledge.

Helen D. Harris OAM
Historian and Genealogist

Gérard Ermisse, *Les Services de Communication des Archives au Public [Archival reference services for the public],* International Council on Archives, ICA Handbooks Series, volume 9, K. G. Saur, Munich, 1994. ISBN 3 598 20281 4.

As the foreword explains, this handbook was commissioned by the ICA in order to provide the international professional community of archivists with a manual about the organisation and management of public reference services for archives. Gérard Ermisse, Inspecteur général des Archives de France, in charge of the Centre d'accueil et de recherche des Archives nationales (CARAN), has drawn on his own experience at the CARAN but has also included advice based on the literature and on information provided by a number of other archival institutions.

The handbook is in French and there is no indication that it will appear in English. This is a pity not only because it is packed with good advice and useful information, but also because a work like this is bound to provoke debate within the archival community. Other reference archivists who do things differently from the way Ermisse proposes are forced to rethink why they do things the way they do. For archivists engaged in disposal, transfer and registration, arrangement and description or preservation work, this manual is provocative because it states categorically that 'we must redefine the priorities of our services in terms of the primary aim: the use of the archives by the public' (p. ix — my translation).

Ermisse puts his reference centred approach to archives strongly and challenges those archivists who are shut away from the public to approach all aspects of their work with the public user in mind:

> I have to say that we notice too often that archivists operating within a purely archival context, lose sight of the primary objective of the instruments of research: to provide tools adapted for the use of researchers. Nothing should be undertaken unless it has been studied from the point of view of the researcher; every project should be put within the perspective and framework of the needs of the public (p. 61 — my translation).

Ermisse believes that all archivists should begin by working in reference, arguing that this is the best way for a new recruit to get to know the collection, and that initiation through reference work produces archivists for whom accessibility will always be a high priority.

Ermisse quotes a number of times and very enthusiastically from *Keeping Archives* (1st edition) and the plans from 'Getting Organised' (pp. 67–69) are included. Otherwise Australian practices are not mentioned. Nevertheless, one of the major strengths of the book is the frequent reference to policies and procedures from archives in Europe and Canada (rarely from USA) and the PRO in Britain. The author is often critical of practices established at his own institution so readers expecting French chauvinism will be disappointed!

Ermisse refers to the management of reference services in a broad range of institutions and his handbook presents a range of options rather than a rigid set of rules and regulations. This is an appropriate approach given that Ermisse is addressing archivists across the whole spectrum from major national institutions to small in-house establishments.

I have chosen at random several examples to illustrate this approach.

(1) The discussion about services available to the public begins by pointing out that the Canadian National Archives is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. The unlimited after hours services offered by the Canadians under this arrangement demonstrate possible approaches for institutions wanting to extend their opening hours without overloading their staff.

(2) In recommending against a public lending system for archives, Ermisse observes that loans to the public are almost totally forbidden except in Switzerland where, extraordinarily, certain privileged researchers are allowed to take the records home!

(3) The section on reprographic services begins with a short case study showing that in one year at the CARAN a staff of about ten handled the following reprographic work: 1 327 requests, 913 negatives, 3 076 photographic prints, 244 613 photocopies and 9 058 metres of microfilm. This example is followed by general advice about managing the public's growing demand for copies of records. Issues discussed include whether the public should do their own photocopying or not, whether limits should be imposed on the number of photocopies a researcher can request, copyright issues, and ordering and accounting procedures.

The handbook lacks an index and a bibliography but is well-footnoted. With 155 pages of text, sixty-one illustrations and thirty-two appendices it is an important addition to the literature already available about public reference services. Let us hope an English version appears soon.

Gabrielle Hyslop
Australian Archives

Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton, editors, *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, Melbourne OUP 1994, pp. viii, 254. ISBN 0 19 553569 3. $26.95.

This collection of twelve chapter-studies each by an author from widely separate professions, explores the complex, often invisible, unacknowledged and sometimes concealed relationship between memory, history and myth, and the ways in which the boundaries of all three shift and blur, or are deliberately obscured, deconstructed or reformed by ideology, dogma and belief.

Memory, the uniting thread in this often disparate, sometimes uneasily assembled collection, is essentially an individual experience, and therefore 'fallible' or at best subject to misunderstanding and partiality. The opening short story ['It must have been two other fellows'] in Len Deighton's collection *Declarations of War* brilliantly illustrates this, as two survivors of a skirmish in the Second World War attempt to reconcile their shared but totally differing memory of it.

Memory, in this individual sense, is argued to be stronger in oral than in other societies; but even there myth and politics shape and reshape a narrative which itself is a complex quilt of recollection comprising fragments of varying age and vividness.

In a society such as that of contemporary Australia, in which events and their inevitable, unreliable and selective representation minutely impinge on the individual memory like leaves falling on a lawn, and as soon to be swept away into the undiscriminating compost of history, the process is much less verifiable because there is in no essential relationship between what is recounted, those who recount it, and those to whom it is told. Almost all of our history is told to those who have only a remote or a partial connection with it.

This apparent paradox needs further exploration, because in a very real sense, memory in our society, perhaps the most highly documented society in human history, may be even more fallible than that which exists in 'primitive' non-literate communities. We have a deep and instinctive unease about this, which is why we struggle so hard to preserve and support individual 'memory' with our photographs and videos.

But memory was never concrete, never infallible, never preservable; many years ago, the author was exploring the bush in the coal-bearing hills of the hinterland of Newcastle NSW. In the centre of a gravelly and overgrown crossroads deep in the encroaching bush, on a marble plinth there stood a marble cross; the lead lettering which carried its message had long ago fallen out, but words and names were still distinguishable. There were nearly a hundred of the latter, and the cross commemorated those of the long-abandoned village who had gone to 'The Great War'; of the village itself and of those who erected the cross, of the 'memory' there was barely a trace. No wall entire, no street immediately discernible; and of all those families there remained only the cross and its litany of the long-dead.

Even the 'official' histories, those carrying the imprimatur of governments and compiled from 'sources' which themselves may be corrupt, incomplete or simply non-existent, are only approximate and partial (in every sense of the word) accounts of any sequence of events, and invariably recount only the 'famous victories', as at least two of the studies here assert.

That is why this volume is so welcome, and why it should be widely read; it is in part an account and an explanation of histories recounted 'from below', but more importantly it exposes and in part explains the complexity and subjectiveness of history, even our recent history, where we pride ourselves on the integrity and assumed infallibility of the preserved record.

Every essay is individually readable, and although the editors and compilers have been careful not to superimpose a unifying narrative or theme, the cumulative effect is powerful. Perhaps the most illustrative of the phenomena with which we are grappling is Ann Curthoys' account of the anti-Vietnam war movement, but to single out any one of these essays for praise is unfair. Each bears reading, close study, meditation and digestion; although no overt central theme is prescribed or applied, some powerful, common and salutary trends emerge: two of them may be illustrated by quotation from another study in the collection, this by Heather Goodall: *Colonialism and catastrophe; contested memories on nuclear testing and measles epidemics at Ernabella.*

This account of the duplicities and incompetence attendant on British atomic experiments at Maralinga in the early fifties uses illuminating phrases such as '. . . Many of the powerful resources of these two states (Great Britain and Australia), had in fact, been turned to ensuring ignorance . . . *a form of state-organised forgetting*' [my emphasis]. She contrasts the memory-making processes of Aboriginal society with those emanating from a European and 'official' culture.

There are twelve such studies in this collection; each makes absorbing reading, and any one would serve as an object lesson in the fallibility of both memory and history and to confirm that neither has a guaranteed and objective integrity, other than that which might be invested in it by the consensus of the moment; history and memory evolve and are shaped by and eventually discarded by society. But while each lives they have power and meaning, both inherent and ascribed; in the end, however, both are merely artefacts.

As such, they have their uses in bringing some understanding of what it means to be human, but they are anything other than absolutes, as this collection shows.

The anthologists are to be congratulated on their original and provocative approach, as are the individual authors. Oxford's editors might have served them better; there are a number of infelicities of style, including the by now inevitable but still crude 'verbing' of nouns, including the use of 'privilege' as a transitive verb, and some outright carelessness of process. But the essays themselves glow with originality, intelligence and cerebration.

A useful reading for all employed in the craft of history, for the bureaucracy and for those with vested and detached interest in the processes by which we locate ourselves in time, space and evolution.

John Levett
formerly Chair
Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records
Monash University

Paul Conway, *Partners in Research: Improving Access to the Nation's Archive: User Studies at the National Archives and Records Administration*, Pittsburgh, Archives and Museum Informatics, 1994. ISBN 1 885626 09 6, 156 pp. $50.00 (available from the Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Monash University, Clayton, Victoria, 3168).

This is a fascinating, easy to read report which should be studied closely by any archivist interested in attuning their reference services to the way researchers go about their business.

It reports on a series of user studies Paul Conway designed and carried out at the National Archives and Records Administration between January 1990 and July 1991. He set out to test an assumption which he saw as underpinning some strategies recommended for adoption by NARA to better meet users needs. The assumption he resolved to test was that users want and need archivists with subject expertise to intermediate between them and the records.

His findings indicate that researchers do not benefit from dependence upon archivists. His recommendations were for NARA to:

(1) Promote accessibility—essentially to get over the first hurdle of denial of access through lack of awareness about the existence and role of the Archives;

(2) Unify all reference services—to provide a 'consistent and transparent' service rather than the idiosyncratic collection of loosely-knit units currently in operation;

(3) Balance preservation and access needs;

(4) Protect existing records expertise—and channel that expertise to manual and automated access systems (i.e. finding aids), thereby optimising access to that knowledge and retaining the knowledge independent of the staff member; and

(5) Encourage researcher self-sufficiency—by matching the assistance provided to researchers with the way they approach their searching rather than matching the subject of their search with an archivist who has specialised knowledge in that subject area.

This book makes two significant contributions to our thinking about reference services. The most important is the very simple recognition that we have to find out not what researchers want to know, but how they go about finding out things. Paul Conway's premise is that our reference service should be tailored to supporting that discovery process, rather than being structured to try to answer every researcher's question by knowing the answer.

Its other major contribution is providing sufficient detail about the methodology used in the study to enable other archivists to adapt it to their

situation without having to start from scratch. This is a wonderful, potentially time-saving bonus.

One slight deficiency is that the study was limited to people who contacted the National Archives, and so does not explore why people might choose not to use the Archives. Paul Conway acknowledges the need for research into this group.

He also explains at the beginning of the book that this is a failed study, in so far as its recommendations have not been implemented. The first chapter explains some of the internal politics behind the failure to implement, and he acknowledges that he underestimated the impact of this factor on the ultimate value of his research. It would be a valuable addition to the literature for archives managers to be able to read a more detailed analysis than is included here, of what went wrong in managing the study's outcomes through the process of internal debate to what should have become a process of implementing change.

Helen Nosworthy
National Director, Public Programs
Australian Archives

Seamus Ross & Edward Higgs, (eds) *Electronic Information Resources and Historians: European Perspectives,* Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, St Katharinen, 1993, pp. 1-326. ISBN 39 281 34957. US$20 (available, Society of American Archivists, 600S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605, USA).

This publication reprints papers delivered at a two-day workshop organised by the International Association for History and Computing and held at the British Academy in June 1993. Discussion generated at the workshop is not included, although several of the papers appear to have been re-edited to take account of it. The book is divided into five parts, the main four being entitled 'The Vantage of the Creators', 'Technology Standards and Legal Issues', 'Archives and Libraries' and 'The Outlook of the User Community'. The fifth part consists of a summary essay by Professor R. J. Morris of Edinburgh University and a postscript declaring the intentions of the workshop organisers to address the issues of 'Access and Usage', 'Data Structures' and 'Legal Impediments and Aids to Preservation' in similar workshops in 1994, 1995 and 1996.

This declaration of intent triggered for me many of the reservations which informed *Archives and Manuscripts* readers will have about this publication, because it sets out a plan of future work which will appear to many to have been overtaken by the more recent development of thinking in the area of electronic records in Australia and North America. Indeed, the symposium as a whole has a certain antiquated air about it, in that most of the well-worn arguments and issues about electronic records and their preservation and use are rehearsed in the workshop papers without much evidence of any progress towards practicable solutions and with considerable evidence of woolly thinking and naive expectations. There is, however, a lot of valuable information about practices being followed in various European data archives and about the perceptions which those interested in the problem of electronic records in Europe are bringing to it.

Part I, 'The Vantage of the Creators', seemed to me to be a rather inappropriate title for a collection of papers which really does little more than summarise the nature of the problems presented by electronic records in the various jurisdictions covered by the speakers. Most of these papers are not really from or about 'creators' of electronic records, although they do include a considerable amount of information about current trends in the use of electronic records in both public and private sectors. I suppose some scene-settings presentations are to be expected in a conference or workshop report, so it is not really a criticism that these papers rehearse in a European context most of the issues and problems presented by electronic records, and do not appear to raise any new ones.

It is in this first section, however, that a fuzziness in thinking becomes apparent which is a dominating feature of this whole symposium: this is the confusion in thinking about data sets and electronic records. The irrepressibly irreverent Eddie Higgs slips the boot into the UK government's handling of electronic records, but other papers from the private and local government sectors drag in King Charles' Head in the form of 'information', its 'dissemination' and 'availability' and how these functions interact with 'records' in electronic systems. The problems presented are related to the preservation of electronic records, but are not necessarily the same. George Satrap's articles about the data sets which provide publicly available information about deputies elected to the Congress of Peoples Deputies from 1989 to 1991 is interesting but its relevance to the creators of records is not clear. It appears to be just another report (of which there are many here) about an interesting data set, from which historians may gain interesting 'information', if only it were 'accessible' and 'disseminated' widely enough.

This confusion between what is perceived as data and what is seen as records is a fundamental flaw in the thinking reflected in the symposium as a whole. Jeffrey Morelli's paper 'Defining Electronic Records: a Terminology Problem . . . or Something More' (Part II, p. 83–91) begins with the respectable enough objective of clarifying the different uses of such terms in the Information Technology and the 'archives/records' professions, but his paper ends up like the curate's egg.

His definition of a record has some appealing characteristics:

> First of all a record is an entity which must be designated as such. That is to say, it must be *allocated the status of a record*, either implicitly or explicitly, by a human being (p. 84, emphasis in original).

He goes on to assert that the record must be an 'identifiable entity' with boundaries which separate it from other records, and that the record exists in order 'to convey the information contained within it'. Although all this appears at first glance to be rather tautological, my main reservation about it is the confusion which introducing the concept of 'information' brings to his discussion. Morelli subscribes to the view that 'records are "containers" or "vehicles" for information', that 'where records are concerned, the medium is very definitely not the message; only the *vehicle* for the message' (ibid., emphasis in original).

I am not convinced that this sort of formulation is really helpful in distinguishing records from other forms in which information is presented, nor in clarifying the differences between the use of terms such as 'records', 'data' and 'information' in the professional areas concerned with electronic records. It seems to me that it does not adequately address the central concepts which make up the distinguishing characteristics of a record with which archivists have traditionally been concerned.

In my view, these concepts include time: in David Bearman's phrase, a record is 'time-bound'. A record also has, or is meant to have, or is taken to have, an authentic relationship to a real event or transaction. It is a representation in writing (or pictorially etc.) of the essence of the transaction and can stand as evidence of it—in John of Salisbury's words, 'letters are shapes indicating voices. Hence they represent things which they bring to mind through the windows of the eyes'.[1] Central to the archivist's concern also is the concept of custody—a record is that which is *kept*, and the manner of the keeping of it is what lends it authenticity and ensures its availability over time. It seems to me that without these central concepts, the definitions offered do not really distinguish records as a class from other ways in which

information presents itself in our societies, and moreover, they do not acknowledge the way we both use and make records in practice. After all, a book (a film, video, audio-cassette) is a 'container of information' whose purpose can be 'to convey information'—but in practice we are normally able to distinguish these from records.

It is curious that a workshop opened by Sir Keith Thomas, whose own historical work (e.g. *Religion and the Decline of Magic*) has been based so effectively on the interpretation of the historical meaning of terms and of their context, should fail in such a central aspect of the problem of electronic records.

Morelli's paper contains a number of useful considerations, but his overall failure can perhaps be summed up in the futility of his own conclusion:

> Without a computer system to read them, there are no such things as true electronic records, only proto-records. ....Therefore for long-term recordkeeping, paper and microfilm will probably continue to be the only viable record retention devices. (ibid., p. 91)

What a counsel of despair! But if you consider this to be the wacky fringe, let me assure you the collection contains papers about restoring valve computers and collecting antique software , so there is something for all tastes.

The confusion between data and records permeates the papers in this symposium. Many of them address the particular problems and issues presented by providing access to large or rare data sets for social science research in an historical context. Much of this information is quite interesting, and is probably to be expected from a workshop concerned with the use of collections of 'electronic information resources' by historians. But the discussion does not really help those of us who are seeking to address the problems posed by the challenge to preserve access to large bodies of true records in electronic form. In his summary paper, R. J. Morris asserts:

> Those that still persist in the belief that the use of computers in the study of history equates solely to quantification are about as out of date as the dinosaur-like machines of the computer-using pioneers of the 1970s.

Frankly, I am not convinced by his argument, not least because his own examples go on to list basically quantitative cases, and also because so many of the other papers in this book concentrate on data sets and their use. The case of Oliver North gets a fair trot in a number of papers here, but there is not much other evidence of non-quantitative uses being made of electronic material.

It is difficult to do justice in a review to so broad-ranging a collection of papers as this, and perhaps it is too easy to pick out objectionable or challengeable quotations. But informative as the concrete examples are of European practices and approaches, I do not detect here any new or challenging thinking which could compare with recent work on electronic records by archivists in Australia.

Stephen Ellis
Director, Systems Integration & Redevelopment
Australian Archives National Office.

Endnote

1. M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record*, Oxford, Blackwell, 2nd. ed. 1993, p. 253–257.

Trevor Sykes, *The Bold Riders: Behind Australia's Corporate Collapses*, St. Leonards NSW, Allen & Unwin, 1994. ISBN 1 86373 702 2. $45.

Taking his title from Edgar Allan Poe's 'Eldorado' (Over the Mountains of the Moon, Down the Valley of the Shadow, Ride, boldly ride, The Shade replied, If you seek for Eldorado), financial journalist Trevor Sykes tells the story of the Eldorado-seeking corporate cowboys of the 1980s in Australia, an epic tale involving the rise and fall of huge corporate empires ('built on mountains of debt' and creative accounting), the takeovers of the brewing, media and textile industries, and the bankrupting of key areas of the Australian economy. The casualties included Australia's largest industrial group (the Adelaide Steamship Company), the Bond Corporation and Bond Brewing, Australia's three major commercial television networks (Bond Media, Qintex, Channel Ten), the car rental company Budget, the Fairfax media group, Victoria's largest building society (Pyramid), Australia's largest textile group (Linter), Australia's three largest merchant banks (Tricontinental, Partnership Pacific and Elders Finance), two of its four state banks (in Victoria and South Australia), and of course the thousands of individual shareholders and the general public who ended up underwriting the debts.

In seeking to explain how and why it all happened, Sykes explores not only the forces that created and nurtured the corporate cowboys, the Bonds, Skases and Connells, but also systemic failures in the banking and finance industries, the prostitution of professional management, accounting and auditing standards, and the impotence of the regulatory authorities (the

muzzled 'watchdogs who did not bark'). He also reflects on the inability of the legal system to bring the bold riders to account.

> Take any bold rider whose empire collapsed and look at its accounts two years before. The picture will be of rising assets and rising profits. A bank which presumably should have had access to the bold rider's books will have lent him a heap of money. A top accounting firm will have verified his accounts. He will boast the services of one of Australia's leading law firms and merchant banks. An analyst for one of Australia's top broking houses will have written a glowing recommendation for the stock (p. 577).

Of particular interest to readers of *Archives and Manuscripts* is Sykes' exploration of how the corporate cultures that emerged during the 1980s flouted traditional accounting, credit control and audit practices, scorned the reporting requirements and documentation processes that had underpinned them as just so much red tape, and relied on the word of the corporate cowboys and their supporters rather than the documentary record. For instance, the complex multiple-page guarantees that used to accompany bank loans gave way to 'a legal bastard called a letter of comfort', designed to reassure a lender, while not actually guaranteeing the debt. One of the best examples of a letter of comfort cited by Sykes is the testimonial to L. R. Connell & Partners signed by Brian Burke, then Premier of Western Australia (p. 75). Meanwhile audit reports were ignored or never tabled at board meetings, committee meetings were not minuted, subcommittee minutes not tabled at full committee meetings, debtors files were 'scant and unsatisfactory', reporting controls waived, documentation standards compromised, and published annual accounts falsified. Rothwells accounts for 1984 to 1987 inclusive, for example, were fraudulent—Rothwells being at the time, according to Burke's aforementioned letter of comfort, a highly successful firm 'in good standing with the Government and the business community in Western Australia'.

But behind the published accounts, and the failure of reporting and audit processes (Rothwells' auditor later stating that 'we relied more on in-depth discussions with directors . . . rather than looking at files'—p. 94), the ledger and journal entries, registers, other prime transactional documents and the auditor's own records told and tell a different story. For in many cases the records have survived, or, in testimony to the resilience of the web of documentary relationships in which we live, the document trail has been followed into the recordkeeping systems of other corporate players, some on the other side of the world. And these records provide key evidence for the investigators who in the 1990s have unravelled the 'tangled skein' of transactions that enabled Connell to use Rothwells as his personal bank and the other bold riders to pursue their own Eldorados. In other cases,

recordkeeping practices had reverted to remembrancing. The auditors for the Spedley group run by Brian Yuill had noted in 1986 that the company did business without formal documentation, and it was later concluded that 'many of the records of the company were in Yuill's head and the collectibility of the receivables might be in the same place' (p. 171). A similar role was played by Peter Beckwith for the Bond group and by Ian Johns for Tricontinental. The latter is reported to have said that management meetings should be about 'planning for the future *rather than* recording the past' (my emphasis). At the same time in the Spedley group documents relating to futures trading had been 'photocopied, tampered with, then photocopied again'. Indeed:

> Most deals between the Spedley, Bond and Rothwells groups were done on a wink and a nod. When documentation existed, it was usually misleading (p. 178).

In another celebrated case, that of the National Security Council of Australia Victorian Division, audit reports had been doctored to delete adverse findings. Interestingly, Sykes' comments draw attention to the failure of board members in this case to recognise that the doctored report deviated in key respects from the stereotypical documentary form of such reports:

> A lazy layman flicking through the pages of an annual report could be forgiven for being fooled by such an audit statement. It is much harder to forgive the board and the banks (p. 257).

Finally for readers of this journal, there is much food for thought in Sykes' discussion of the failure of regulatory mechanisms such as the Victorian Registrar of Building Societies, the National Companies and Securities Commission and the Reserve Bank, especially when considering the parallel role in relation to the regulation of recordkeeping posited for our archival authorities.

Sue McKemmish
Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records
Monash University

Reports

University of Pittsburgh, *Recordkeeping Functional Requirements Project; Reports and Working Papers,* Research Report Series LIS055/LS94001, Pittsburgh September 1994 (initially distributed gratis and available through Richard Cox, University of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh PA 15260, rjc@lis.pitt.edu).

The Pittsburgh project, as Richard Cox notes in the first paper in this compendium of papers, is both transformative and a rediscovery. It can be placed within the broader rediscovery of the importance of evidence to the archival mission, but may prove to be the beginning of a new approach to the management of the record within recordkeeping systems. As such the Pittsburgh project should be of interest to us all whether we are involved in current, regulatory, or historical recordkeeping tasks. That the project exists is a cause for wonder. It is ground-breaking work, seemingly free of the constraints of an American archival culture heavily shaped by a collecting tradition and weakened by the sharp division between archives and records management. For those with a collecting or records management past it may even seem a threat because it operates so solidly within the regulatory domain but has yet to be articulated through into the much more heavily populated worlds of current and historical recordkeeping.

This volume contains eight previously unpublished papers and two brief documents, plus abstracts of seven published papers which owe at least something to the project. The early papers explain the project, set out the requirements that have been developed, provide the literary warrant for an approach based on evidence, and discuss the development of production rules. These are followed by several papers on organisational culture and one on a functional classification methodology. There are a couple of short documents dealing with government information locator systems and the bibliographical database project, and a conference paper on metadata. Authors are Richard Cox, David Bearman, David Wallace, Wendy Duff, David Thomas, and Ken Sochats.

This is work in progress and has to be read that way with the exception of the background presented in Richard Cox's introduction. The value of the volume was its freshness (in September 1994 when it was distributed at the Society of American Archivist's conference) and continues to be its existence as a published record of the project's formulative processes.

The literary warrant approach displays significant difference. A small selection of documents have been probed for the manner in which they can show that society has a consensus about the need for good recordkeeping,

drawing upon rules of evidence, security practices, procurement considerations, electronic document interchange, and electronic transaction authorisation processes. The elements extracted relate to business processes with great ease and demonstrate that regulatory recordkeepers do not need to rely solely on black letter law for their juridical warrant. More practices need examination, but there is enough presented here to demonstrate the usefulness of the methodology, and to affirm the project.

The paper on the development of production rules is informative and the last section gives us a neat summary of the metadata approach that is at the heart of the Pittsburgh project. It also points to the way metadata will be important to recordkeeping audits as a means of exercising the warrant being established.

The papers on organisational culture are interconnected setting out the methodology developed for this part of the project which is directed at how to get managers throughout an organisation to accept the need to consider recordkeeping requirements. Hopefully the use of the data collected will outlive the predicted death of the cultures from which it is being collected. Electronic networking is not simply a new tool but a new social system which will bring new organisational cultures. These new cultures will probably add to the significance of a project based on identifying and promoting the use of recordkeeping requirements. Such requirements have the potential to provide a base for reasonable tactics for control within the cultures that futurologists are predicting and in which past strategies will be ineffective.

An article by David Thomas reports on the business re-engineering literature of the recent past and sets out derived definitions of functions, processes, actions and transactions. It is an invaluable paper for someone like myself who can immediately incorporate it into teaching programs, but in terms of the project itself it does not consider the weaknesses of the re-engineering approach in relation to business variables, ties functionality in to a narrow view of appraisal in Schellenbergian fashion, and does not take us down any new paths methodologically.

Finally, David Wallace presents a paper on metadata which, reflecting its conference background, is more cogent but less detailed than his article in *Archivaria* (number 36). Wallace establishes a persuasive and wide ranging justification for metadata strategies and starts to explore what he describes as top-level process and lower level granularity, issues which Thomas' article stops short of tackling methodologically. (Could functions and processes be used for top down approaches, and is activity/transaction within systems

the key to coping with granularity?) Unfortunately, Wallace remains keen to link metadata approaches with the development of a single multilevel descriptive instrument which suggests that some pennies have yet to drop. A context/recordkeeping duality within a continuum model would be more workable, and makes much better contact with the aims of the project.[1]

These papers represent a stage in what Terry Cook has referred to as archival postmodernity, as we move from physical to logical paradigms, from artefact to the act of creation and towards metadata based approaches that carry responsibility for context and recordkeeping structure. However, as Richard Cox notes, the project is not a 'magic bullet' and much needs to be done across the breadth of recordkeeping activity.

Will the Pittsburgh project join the list of false starts to electronic records control? Probably not. It has already had a profound influence on some archivists whose mental models, already receptive to the evidential approach, will never be the same again. What we may be looking at in this informative set of papers is the early development of the documenting approaches that will dominate archives and records management in the twenty-first century.

Frank Upward
Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records
Monash University

Endnote

1. The duality and the model referred to are discussed in *The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years*, edited by Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott, Ancora Press in association with Australian Archives, Melbourne 1994, pp. 110 to 203.

Archival Guides

Raj Jadeja, *Parties to the Award: A Guide to the Pedigrees and Archival Resources of Federally Registered Trade Unions, Employer Associations & Their Peak Councils in Australia 1904–1994,* Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Research School of Social Sciences, ANU, 1994. ISBN 0 7315 2070 X. $35. (Available from Reply Paid 440, Bibliotech, ANUTECH, Canberra, ACT, 0200.)

Since the March 1983 election which brought the Federal ALP to government, a combination of changes in industrial relations legislation and ACTU policy have resulted in the creation of the so-called super unions formed by the amalgamation of smaller unions into broad industry groups and some into

political alliances. The ambitious plan to amalgamate over three hundred unions extant in the early 1980s into no more than twenty by 1994 was spelled out in the ACTU documents *Australia Reconstructed* and *Future Strategies for the Trade Union Movement* in 1987. The Federal Government's contribution was to replace the path-breaking Commonwealth *Conciliation and Arbitration Act 1904* with the *Industrial Relations Act 1988.* In subsequent amendments, the minimum membership required within unions registered under the Act was raised from 100 to 1 000 and eventually 10 000, before being dropped to 100 again after a successful complaint by the Confederation of Australian Industry to the International Labour Organisation in 1993.

Structural change has occurred in unions throughout this century as they have amalgamated, registered and been deregistered under industrial relations laws since 1904. But in this rush of amalgamations between 1991 and 1993 it has been taxing for archivists and researchers to keep pace with changes to the names, let alone the structures and records, of these super unions. The implications for archives holding union records have been many and troubling. By virtue of these amalgamations, previously separate collections of trade union records are now related as either previous or subsequent entities, but often held in different repositories. Which unions are the ancestors of the current super unions? How do we answer research inquiries about these unions when we are not sure where all of the newly related records are?

Into this confusion Raj Jadeja from the Noel Butlin Archives Centre has mercifully dropped *Parties to the Award.* It has been written specifically to clarify the administrative and structural changes within federal industrial organisations on both sides of the negotiating table, and is the first guide to the location of archival records of these organisations throughout Australia.

The first section contains a foreword and introduction which outline aspects of the federal industrial relations system between 1904 and 1994, and the trend towards amalgamation into industry based unions during that time. This provides background to a second section containing forty-two pedigree charts of federally registered trade unions, employer associations, and their peak national and state councils. Charts are organised by industry or occupational grouping and correct up to 1 September 1994. A third section contains an alphabetical directory which acts as both index to the charts and a guide to the Archives which hold the records. Finally, a select bibliography and a key to the archival institutions mentioned in the index are provided to help researchers follow up their inquiries and obtain more specific details of holdings.

The pedigree charts and alphabetical directory form the core of *Parties to the Award.* They have been designed to work together to convey the desired information about structural change and location of records.

The pedigree charts are the most innovative and easy to use section of the guide because they represent complex structural changes in a simple visual format. They make clear the relationships between previous and subsequent organisations; dates of registration, deregistration and amalgamation; whether there were official amalgamations or unofficial absorptions; and which organisations are currently registered. With the simple use of an asterisk, they indicate whether the records of each organisation are held in a repository and available for research. A specific trade union or employer body can then be looked up in the alphabetical directory to discover which of twenty-two repositories around Australia holds the records.

The alphabetical directory adds more detail on each organisation but is really designed to augment and index the charts and would not function well without them. The entry for the Royal Australian Nursing Federation (RANF), for example, contains the information that: its name changed to the Australian Nursing Federation in 1988, which is still its registered name as at September 1994; its registration number is 099V; three repositories hold records from the state and federal branches; it is represented in pedigree chart thirteen and grouped as part of the health industry. But it would only be possible to discover the forerunners of the RANF, or other trade unions in the health industry grouping, by consulting the chart.

The use of pedigree charts to represent complex structural changes was perhaps an obvious choice given that the author wished to convey breadth of information about industrial organisations and the location of their records and not depth of information, usually represented in text, about the amalgamations, provenance, record types and date range of each collection. While *Parties* might not therefore be an appropriate model for all archival guides, it nevertheless challenges archivists to creatively consider image as an alternate way of conveying information in finding aids, a challenge which might be extended in future if finding aids are created specifically for computer networks in hypermedia for example.

Raj Jadeja strictly acknowledges the limitations of *Parties to the Award* as a guide. He admits that it was not practical to cover everything that researchers might want to know and advises them to check further details of provenance and record types with individual repositories or organisations. He covers only unions registered federally since 1904 and not state registered ones. He

includes only registered employer organisations, although he points out that there are many more operating successfully without registration. Unions with important nineteenth century pedigrees and substantial records are only mentioned here from the time of their federal registration in the twentieth century. The Operative Stonemasons Society of Australia, pioneers of the eight hour day struggle, are, for example, included from 1919 whereas the Noel Butlin Archives Centre holds their records from 1850. This reduces the usefulness of *Parties to the Award* as a guide to the location of nineteenth century trade union records, but then, the author did not set out to produce such a guide. Similarly, no attempt has been made to convey the current internal structure of unions, because there are adequate details of these structures to be found in current guides published by trade unions themselves.

More importantly, amalgamation of unions continue to occur, and those occurring after 1 September 1994 are not noted in this publication. Since then, for example, the Automotive Food Metals and Engineering Union has amalgamated with the Printing and Kindred Industries Union to form the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (1995), thus moving the Printers from the Media and Entertainment industry where they are classified here, into the Manufacturing grouping. Moreover as Raj Jadeja notes, since 1994, the minimum number of members allowable in a registered union has been reduced once again to 100, raising the possibility that some of these super unions could de-amalgamate if the political alliances between their constituent parts prove unstable.

These limitations do not detract from the success of *Parties to the Award* in satisfying its initial aims. Raj Jadeja and the Noel Butlin Archives Centre are to be congratulated for the ingenuity of their pedigree charts as a simple way of representing the long and complex genealogy of the super unions in a time of rapid change, and for coordinating the first guide to the holdings of trade union and employer organisations which is national in coverage.

Suzanne Fairbanks
Labour Archivist
University of Melbourne Archives

Conferences and Seminars

Stephen Yorke, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich and Laurine Teakle, *Ethics, Lies, and Archives: Proceedings of a one-day Seminar conducted by the Canberra Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated at Becker House Canberra, Thursday 20 May 1993*, Canberra, ASA Inc., 1994. ISBN 0 646 18599 3. 131 pp. $10. (Available from ASA Inc., PO Box 83, O'Connor, ACT, 2601.)

Hosted by the Canberra Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists this seminar was organised as a series of case studies presented by experienced members of the Society. Although there was no original intention to publish the proceedings the interest generated by the seminar was sufficient to encourage the Canberra Branch to produce this edited summary.

The ethical parameters were set by Dr John Uhr in his keynote address 'Professional Ethics: Promises and Pitfalls' which is reproduced in full in the proceedings. Dr Uhr identified three spheres which impinge upon our ethical decisions; our values on a personal level; our obligations as archivist or records manager; and our role as an agent for public trust. He also gave us a useful but perhaps simplistic catch cry from Peter Drucker's *Management* on the ethics of public responsibility '. . . never knowingly do harm'. The seminar then moved on to the case studies which had been circulated to participants prior to the event. Panel presentations, discussions and commentary from the floor were taped and these tapes form the basis of the published proceedings though obviously edited to eliminate irrelevancies and repetitions. One difficulty of this format is that the discussions are open ended and, reading the proceedings, the lack of any summary or conclusion to the arguments is rather unsatisfying. Perhaps for the purposes of the proceedings a post-seminar conclusion from each presentation panel may have been useful. Presentation panels had varied approaches from adversarial to conciliatory but with comments from the floor in most cases the results were lively, even heated discussions. While the case study technique is artificial, especially where the creators of the case studies had enjoyed themselves developing 'complications', which in real situations would only become apparent after our initial 'ethical' decision had been made, the format did allow for wider audience participation than a more formalised structure. As one of the later commentators noted, perhaps a more realistic approach would be a hypothetical with participants making decisions without necessarily knowing the possible ramifications of every choice.

It is interesting how many participants took refuge in institutional regulations and how narrowly most interpreted 'ethical' considerations. Though this may only reflect on the working environment of the participants

who came mainly from large public institutions, which presumably had clear guidelines and procedures. Few participants seemed to feel that their institutions would give weight to their professional advice, solicited or unsolicited, or that they had any potential to dispute decisions being made by management which the archivist saw as unethical.

It seems a sad indictment of our self-image and professional standing, that archivists had so little confidence in their own status and abilities. While the Australian Society of Archivists' Code of Ethics offers quite explicit guidance applicable to many of the case studies few commentators either on the panels or in the audience used them as a guide in recognising their ethical dilemma or as a guide to their decision making. The addition of a few decorative details in the case studies seemed to make it hard for people to recognise the underlying principles, or perhaps they have never carefully read the ASA Code of Ethics. If the problems are detached from the 'dressing' of personalities and actual scenes the ethical dilemma becomes clearer and it simplifies the decision making. This does not mean the archivist will necessarily make the correct ethical decision, it may be beyond their authority to do so, but at least he or she will know what is wrong with the decision made and perhaps how to minimise the potential harm. A point made by S. Bok in *Secrets: on the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* is that we need 'judgement and accuracy in dissent, to explore alternative ways to cope with improprieties . . . '.

The general impression from the proceedings is that many experienced practising archivists fail to recognise an ethical dilemma or place low priority on archival principles and ethical standards. Surely we owe a duty to our institutions, clients and ourselves as professionals to develop a clearer vision of our role as arbitrators between many often conflicting interests. The Canberra seminar was an excellent beginning but an interest in ethics and our professional concerns and priorities should be part of a program of continuing education throughout the profession. All those unable to attend the seminar as well as those who did get to Canberra, will find material of interest in the Proceedings. If the seminar case studies whetted your appetite for further exercising of your ethical sensitivities, the Proceedings finish with further unused case studies, some letters of response and discussion by members of the seminar, and finally but not least the ASA Code of Ethics which we all should study more carefully.

Anne Cooke
Archival Consultant
Sydney

Playing For Keeps: Electronic Records Management Conference, Canberra, 8–10 November 1994.

Storm, then sunshine: nature's welcome to the ICA's Electronic Records Committee as it came to Canberra to join the Australian professional societies in their conference. What happened outside to the weather was reflected to some extent by the passions within, but everyone who followed the debate must have gone away better equipped for the great problem of the 2000s—what to do about electronic records.

When we come to look back on it with some historical perspective, I believe we shall see that this conference marks a significant moment. At it, the archival profession took another step towards recognising and accepting the principles that will work for the management of electronic records, at least for the next few years. The conference was hosted by the Australian Archives, and received support from six other organisations, including the Australian Council of Archives, and the two professional associations involved. The invited speakers included most of those who had established reputations internationally in this field, and representatives of those Australian organisations that had begun to work in it. There was a very full attendance, up to 400, drawn from Australian archives and records management practitioners, in and out of the public service, as well as the foreigners.

The main highlights came on the first and third days. On Tuesday 8 November, the essential ground to be covered was laid out by three of the best-known practitioners available. Ken Thibodeau led with his experience at the National Archives of the USA. Margaret Hedstrom followed, with her account of the systems established at the State Government of New York, and then John McDonald gave an updating report on the electronic records program of the National Archives of Canada. After this session, which also included information from Britain and The Netherlands, the delegates were fully acclimatised to the concepts and vocabulary that had developed in these successful enterprises. After this we were all set up to mount locater programs, to accept information managers as colleagues, and to operate non-custodial policies. This, we could see, would initiate the era of the post-custodial archival service.

On Thursday 10 November, David Bearman added his powerful and authoritative summary of what the most expert now think about electronic records administration. He recalled the strict definition of 'records'—material that is part of a transaction in historical time ('communicated business

transactions'), and not material that simply conveys information. His certainty that the technological problems of managing these records have been solved, was not perhaps entirely received by the audience; but it was recognised that he had provided an essential key to the process that confirmed and extended the message of the previous speakers. It was no longer possible for archivists and records managers to create and add descriptive material, or to construct programs that would add artificial extra elements. The necessary data would be held in *metadata encapsulated objects*, descriptive information included with the records when they were first created. The records managers of the originating agencies would use this metadata to migrate the records to new systems as required.

The main Australian contribution came on the second day, Wednesday 9 November, and was delivered by Stephen Ellis and Steve Stuckey, in a generally admired and appreciated double act. Their message was entirely in accord with the ideas set out with such force and clarity by the international speakers. Electronic records, from the archival viewpoint, are those best and most economically kept in that form. They are needed as part of the nation's commitment to accountability, part of its vision of the rule of law and the needs of a civilised community.

With so many people participating, there was considerable social interaction. For this, the venue at the Hyatt Hotel Canberra was generally excellent, with plenty of space for moving about in groups. The working day was long, however, and the delegates were obliged to sit in a darkened hall and follow a very full preset pattern of speeches. That these were of excellent value did not altogether hide a general feeling that there could have been more opportunities for debate and questioning. Each day concluded with a panel discussion, but the questions for these had to be previously written and submitted. There must have been many who felt this procedure made the experts too remote. Since the main purpose of the conference was to impart information, these arrangements were probably unavoidable. Perhaps there is now a place for a program of smaller, more practical, workshops.

The organisers, and in particular Dagmar Parer of the Australian Archives, are to be congratulated on this bold initiative and useful professional occasion. The proceedings should attract international attention to the Australian record in professional development.

Michael Cook
University of Liverpool

Toward International Descriptive Standards: papers presented at the ICA Invitational Meeting of experts on Descriptive Standards, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, 4–7 October 1988, Munchen, Saur, 1993. 177pp. ISBN 3 59811163 0. Price not known (available K. G. Saur Verlag, Postfach 70 16 20, D-81316 Munchen 70, Germany).

Victoria Irons Walch, compiler (for the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description—WGSAD), *Standards for Archival Description; A Handbook*, Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 1994. 320pp. ISBN 0 931828 96 1. US$30 (available from SAA, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago Illinois 60605, USA).

> **Archival Information Systems Architecture Working Group Throws in the Towel:** With sadness, the working group established in 1992 to pursue . . . standards for information system architecture . . . gave up in June. It submitted a final report . . . that suggested the cause of failure was that the task required greater time commitment than volunteers could give . . . I am sure that this is not the cause of the failure. The cause, very simply, is that 'archivists' don't agree about what they do and so a standard description of how they do it fails to achieve agreement . . . *Archives and Museum Informatics*, vol. 8, no. 2, Summer 1994, pp. 179–180.

The opportunity to review these two compilations together provides, at least for this reviewer, an irresistible temptation to consider Australian progress (or lack of it) in grappling with the standardisation issue. Both books are products of early stages in the debate overseas and, though both are recently published, neither is up-to-date.

As I write this review, I have before me on my desk Austel's *National Numbering Plan: Guidelines on Presentation of Numbers* (October 1994). It tells me, in three pages, how to write out telephone numbers. It is a standard. The world is pullulating with standards—about almost everything. The Society of American Archivists' Standards Board, according to the foreword to Walch, has identified more than 550 which affect archival work in all its various aspects. Recordkeepers must learn more about standards and how to use them—for surely we will never be able to write all the standards we need and, even if we could, get them accepted by the rest of the world which has its own needs for standardising many of the tools we use in common with everybody else.

The Walch *Handbook* represents this large view of the role of standardisation in recordkeeping. It lists some 300 standards deemed to be relevant to archival description (with commentary in many cases). Its message is that what we customarily think of as descriptive standards—manuals of archival

description—are just the tip of the iceberg. Such manuals cannot stand alone—we must operate within a framework of standardisation impinging on descriptive activity all the way from system design and networking standards down to agreed conventions on dating and character sets. Nor does it end with description—on all sides of the recordkeeper's work, standardisation will be needed.

In 1988, the Society of American Archivists established its Working Group on Standards for Archival Description (WGSAD) to evaluate and promote descriptive standards. The WGSAD report was published in the Fall 1989 issue of *American Archivist* and publication of the Walch *Handbook* fulfils one of its seventeen recommendations. Its currency is difficult to judge. Though it contains citations up to and including 1993, the bulk of its contents appear to have been compiled at a somewhat earlier date.

It will come as a surprise to some Australian archivists that a handbook on this subject which devotes one or two pages to each main listing runs to 320 pages ('the marvellous thing about standards is that there are so many to choose from'). We are introduced not only to manuals of archival and bibliographical description (such as RAD) but also to the wide world of system and data structure standards within which any standardisation of data content and the development of authority controls must operate. A useful overview of the standardisation debate in the US is given in the Introduction and a first chapter on the 'Evolution of Standards . . .' there.

Something like half of the standards cited come from the library world and this alerts one to a problem of the kind alluded to in the obituary for the Systems Architecture Working Group cited above. Wide-ranging the view of archival description may be, but focused it arguably is not. Although there is evidence that a non-custodial perspective on documentation of recordkeeping and context (not just description of holdings) kept breaking in on the project, the *Handbook* retains some flavour of what was (one suspects) its origins in a narrow focus on a cataloguing/publication model. The 'foundation' for the work of WGSAD we are told was agreement on a definition of archival description:

> Archival description is the process of capturing, collating, analysing, and organising any information that serves to identify, manage, locate, and interpret the holdings of archival institutions and explain the contexts and records systems from which those holdings were selected.

We are then advised that the definition developed subsequently by Frederic Miller in his *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* (1990) 'refines' the one adopted by WGSAD:

> Archival description is the process of capturing, analysing, controlling, exchanging, and providing access to information about (1) the origin, context, and provenance of different sets of records, (2) their filing structure, (3) their form and content, (4) their relationships with other records, and (5) the ways in which they can be found and used.

Whatever one thinks of these definitions otherwise, the notion that Miller's omission of the idea of 'holdings' (unless it was inadvertent) merely **refines** the earlier definition suggests that archivists indeed cannot agree on what they do and, what is more, often do not even perceive the extent to which they disagree. It is good that the focus broadened, but it says something about how far we have still to travel that it was done in midstream.

That said, the Walch *Handbook* is warmly recommended. When I studied First Year Philosophy at Sydney University, our text book was a single volume *outline* of the subject. Our lecturer told us that we would find the most useful part of the book was its contents page. The remark was not entirely facetious. Condensation made the text superfluous for those of us who knew something about the subject already and impenetrable for those who did not. Its value to us, as beginners, lay in the organised overview it gave us of the territory we had to traverse.

Something of the kind could be said here. The *Handbook's* greatest value comes from the skill and intelligence which has gone into its compilation, organisation and presentation. It is as good a map of the contours of the descriptive standards landscape as you will currently find.

A word of warning—there are eccentricities here for a non-American audience. Steve Hensen's *APPM* is listed in Chapter 4 for Cataloguing Rules (Data Content Standards). Canada's *RAD* and Michael Cook's *MAD*, which belong in the same genre, are found in Chapter 13 for International Efforts Toward Descriptive Standards—which I suppose they are from a US point of view, though 'foreign' might have been a better description.

Toward . . . Descriptive Standards took five years to appear and, except for one or two contributions, takes a more limited (traditional) view of standardisation for description. It contains papers from a 1988 conference which led to the formation of the ICA Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, on which (courtesy of the ASA) I have represented Australia since

1992. Several speakers at the 1988 conference subsequently became members of that Commission. Avowedly international, the Commission nevertheless owes much to the administrative and intellectual support it receives from Canadian members and is much influenced by their experience in developing Canada's *Rules for Archival Description (RAD).*

Toward . . . Descriptive Standards is a more historical work than the *Handbook,* if only because the international community has moved on since the conference in Ottawa at which the papers which make it up were presented. In addition to numerous European and North American contributions, participants came from China, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Senegal, and Zimbabwe. Also included are expert evaluations of international and technical developments, one of which is a spirited contribution from David Bearman emphasising the need (the urgent need) to look beyond both the cataloguing model and the limits of manuals of archival description.

In this regard, it is refreshing to be able to cite with approval from the contribution at Ottawa of a Spanish colleague (Pedro Gonzalez, Centro de Informacion, Documental de Archivos):

> The Canadian group uses the library model as a starting point . . . There is no doubt that libraries are ahead of archives in developing standards . . . Unfortunately, this does not happen in the archives. Following their path will undoubtedly allow us to advance faster. But how useful is it to follow the lead of librarians? Should we make only minor modifications to their work, or should we make more basic changes? Are archives not different enough for their own standards? . . . The future no doubt lies with standardisation. But the entire profession must progress towards it. This path will undoubtedly be more expensive, but it will be more profitable in the long term.

Scattered references in the literature to wise comments on this and other issues from Iberian and South American colleagues makes one wish that more of the Spanish and Portuguese professional writing was accessible to us in English.

Perhaps it needs to be said that the objection to the library model (which I have just quoted approvingly) is not meant to imply that existing library-developed standards are irrelevant for archivists. Quite the contrary. Existing library standards (which are numerous) should be applied wherever possible together with standards from any other discipline of which we can make use. It is in how we recordkeepers use standards (not what standards we use) which marks us off from the library model or any other (e.g. the information management model). We must use the tools of librarianship and information

management to document recordkeeping systems in context and not to describe 'holdings' or as a bibliographical device.

It is not because we recordkeepers use different tools from librarians 'and information managers' that we are different from them—it is because we use the same tools (more or less) but differently. That's important. I'll say it again. It's not that we use different tools; we use the same tools differently.

Before archivists can agree about standards, they must first 'agree about what they do'. The ASA's twentieth anniversary looks like being a time for congratulation (if not reflection) on the extent to which we have realised the founders' aspirations. The plurality of the profession here—which certainly was one of our aspirations—is both a triumph and a danger. By a combination of restraint and good sense, we have successfully navigated the blending of library/manuscript and government records streams.

Today's plurality is even more varied than the one we had to deal with in 1974: institutional archivists and lone arrangers, custodials and non-custodials, information managers and recordkeepers, heritage junkies and records managers, paper preservers and data archivists, electronic recordkeepers and document managers, evidence freaks and data managers—to name but a few. The formulation of, leave alone adherence to, standards in this climate is more difficult than it ever was. What a pity then that our survival depends upon it.

What does all this mean for Australian recordkeepers? The point can be over-emphasised, but it means the rest of the world is beginning to take descriptive standards more seriously and on a broader level than we seem capable of just at the moment. There is a certain smugness to be found here about growing Australian standardisation on the CRS system—which has effectively ossified since Scott. Because early Australian developments are now being acknowledged internationally, there is a temptation to believe we have all the answers. Nothing could be further from the truth. Peter Scott anticipated and did much to solve some of the key documentation issues now being faced up to elsewhere. What we are being afforded is a nod of recognition for that achievement by an international community which is catching us up and, in certain respects, is ahead of us on the road towards a proper theory and practice of archival documentation.

Trail-blazers sometimes get left behind. Mature and lively reflection on the issues involved and the steps to be taken—individually and collectively—is needed in Australia. We have an original and valuable contribution to make to the international debate. It would be a pity if that contribution was muted by an inability to live up to and develop our own fine descriptive tradition.

To do that we must be true to our own past but open to ideas from abroad. Both these works could help us with the latter.

If you can only afford one, you should certainly choose Walch.

Chris Hurley
Public Record Office of Victoria

Electronic Recordkeeping Systems. Best Practices Seminar and In-Depth Workshop. Melbourne, 14–15 November 1994.

For two days in the week following the 'Playing for Keeps' conference in Canberra, a seminar and workshop on electronic recordkeeping systems was held in Melbourne. The four presenters, John McDonald (National Archives of Canada), Margaret Hedstrom (New York's State Archives and Records Administration or SARA), Barbara Reed (Records Archives & Information Management Pty Ltd, Sydney), and David Roberts (New South Wales Records Management Office)—urged their colleagues to rethink their archival practices, to become more strategically orientated, and to break down the barriers between records managers and archivists. Although the individual messages from the speakers were not altogether new—they have all presented similar arguments in the professional literature before—the overall theme that emerged from the sessions was the urgent need for archivists and records managers to make a paradigm shift in order to protect the integrity of recordkeeping. The critical issue facing records professionals is not so much how electronic records differ from 'traditional' paper records but that in an environment of downsizing, devolution and service orientation how do we protect the integrity of recordkeeping at all. The event was sponsored by the Australian Archives, Monash University and the University of New South Wales (similar sessions were held in Sydney later in the same week).

Day one, a seminar on best practices, consisted of case studies and a general discussion on the state of play in electronic recordkeeping systems. McDonald spoke on the way the information technology landscape is moving from the 'wild frontier' towards automated work processes. Whereas personal computers have so far simply enhanced personal productivity, changing management strategies, including the reengineering of business processes as championed by Michael Hammer and James Champy (*Reengineering the corporation: a manifesto for business revolution*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1994), are resulting in radically different work environments. Small decentralised groups of workers who share space both on a local server and on each others'

computers will become the norm. As the centralised registry disappears, archivists and records managers will have to move from controlling records to acting as service providers for these decentralised workgroups. The Canadian National Archives is trying to anticipate these changes by forming partnerships with other government agencies and commercial software companies to develop 'virtual registry' systems and a bank of 'best practice' guidelines.

Reed discussed the opportunities and risks that such virtual registry systems pose for archivists and records managers. Records management systems that combine records creation control, classification languages and disposal scheduling capabilities offer a dramatic improvement for archivists and records managers over traditional practices. However, current software, such as many of the document management systems that are proving to be increasingly popular in private enterprise, simply controls records at the folio or document level, and does not relate groups of records together (by, for instance, creating electronic folders or using a controlled description language). Such systems have been developed by software providers with little knowledge of the importance of contextual information, and are the equivalent of 'nineteenth century registry systems'. Unless archivists and records managers try to develop alliances with information system professionals to improve such systems, the opportunity for true records management software will close and contemporary recordkeeping practices will become marginalised within organisations.

Building partnerships was also the focus of Hedstrom's presentation. SARA had initially adopted prescriptive regime of standards and requirements for electronic records that New York government agencies had to meet. This approach failed, and SARA has embarked on a 'second generation' program: the Center for Electronic Records, which acts a service provider to New York state government. The Center actively solicits partnerships with agencies, seeks to solve their problems on a case-by-case basis, and focuses on outcomes rather than set rules, regulations or policies. It has found the second generation approach much more successful in influencing recordkeeping practices, and SARA's profile within government is changing from being a regulatory body to a repository of best practice techniques.

Roberts spoke on the re-orientation of the Records Management Office towards the promotion of accountability through recordkeeping and the development of specific products such as thesauri, classification schemes and educational programs to influence recordkeeping within recordkeeping.

The workshop on day two focused on the approaches archivists and records managers can adopt to initiate partnerships and develop second generation programs. Informed by the work of David Osborne and Ted Gaebler (*Reinventing government: how the entrepreneurial spirit is transforming the public sector*, Plume, New York, 1992), much emphasis was placed on archivists 'steering' rather than 'rowing' records programs. The 'steering' approach involves building a records creation and maintenance infrastructure within actual work processes and office information systems that facilitate good recordkeeping practices by action officers, rather than archivists and records managers themselves physically managing and storing records. To steer, archivists and records managers must become customer-driven (offering a *service* to agencies and action officers, not simply enforcing compliance with a set of regulations), outcome-orientated (focusing on *achievements* and solving problems), and requirement-driven (*understanding* the needs of agencies and action officers and the dynamics of networked information systems). Following on from the strategies and case studies mentioned by the speakers on day one, archivists and records managers were urged to get out of the registry and take a much greater role in both the implementation of information technology and the satisfaction of the information management needs of action officers and workgroups.

In order to undertake this pro-active role, archivists and records managers need to become opportunistic by capitalising on scandals such as the 'Sports Rorts' affair and becoming early adopters of new information technology and management techniques. Records professionals also need greater skills in information systems and organisational analysis. Archivists and records managers do not need to become computer programmers or management gurus. However, to properly understand the context of changing organisations, to act as service providers, to form alliances with other professional groups, and to articulate recordkeeping needs, the modern records professional needs an education beyond provenance and original order. Such a professional will provide not only traditional technical skills but managerial solutions to records problems throughout the entire records continuum. As one participant suggested, the old demarcations between records managers and archivists need to be broken and a new professional emerge: the 'records system analyst'.

The seminar and workshop highlighted dynamic new directions towards which some archivists and record managers are moving. Regardless of the eventual techniques that records professionals adopt to deal with electronic recordkeeping, it became clear that the greatest impact new information

technologies may have on archivists and records managers is a fundamental paradigm shift in the way that we perceive ourselves.

Simon Davis
Australian Archives National Office

Exhibitions

Christian Dior; the magic of fashion. Powerhouse Museum, Sydney, 27 July – 23 October 1994. Curated by Marika Genty, Lydia Kamitsis and Louise Mitchell.

'Christian Dior; the magic of fashion' presented a selection of original outfits and related material sent from Paris by the Union Française des Arts du Costume and the Christian Dior Archives. Some items of Australian origin

The definitive Dior outfit, the Bar suit *from Dior's Corolle Line of his first collection. Spring/Summer 1947.*

(C) ADAGP, Paris and DACS, London. Photo: Willy Maywald

were also included. As the catalogue summarised it at the time, the exhibition was 'primarily a retrospective of Dior's decade of achievement as the most authoritative figure in the world of fashion. It begins with the "Bar" suit of 1947, an outfit that encapsulates the New Look, which was to make Dior a household name. It continues with over sixty garments that represent his seasonal collections up to the time of his death in 1957. The exhibition concludes with designs by Dior's successors at the House of Dior: Yves Saint Laurent, Marc Bohan and the present designer, the Italian Gianfranco Ferré.'

Though neither versed in the decorative arts nor interested in frocks for any personal reasons, I was greatly taken by this exhibition.

Firstly, it impressed because of the variety of complementary material presented. In addition to the dresses, gowns, coats, jackets and suits, the exhibition included photos, hats, charts and a range of accessories. There was also a separate section on the Australian Dior connection comprising film footage, fashion show memorabilia, and excerpts from oral history and the contemporary press. This latter focus made some nice points about the use of fashion parades by people such as Mary Horden, magazines such as the *Australian Women's Weekly* and department stores such as David Jones and Myer to feed the 1950s Australian woman's equation of style and elegance with 'creations' Parisian.

Secondly, the exhibition designer's approach to the challenge of displaying the items was thoughtful and effective. All were arrayed with a mind to the viewer's full appreciation of them. Not surprisingly, the use of lighting was crucial. There were also slowly rotating display models, mirror backdrops, and beside the actual item, photos of the garment as modelled at the original fashion parade. And very few dresses were behind perspex: unobtrusive barriers allowed one to view them standing just out of reach. In short, everything within reason had been done to aid assessment (for those who know about such matters) of the skill of designer, cutter and seamstress.

Thirdly, because the exhibition managed to raise, through its explanatory panels and the superb exhibition catalogue, issues not unrelated to our own world. One began to wonder about questions of the control and exploitation of intellectual property and overseas cultural influence. However, it was the idea that a dress could be a record, and under what circumstances, which was perhaps understandably the greatest bonus of the exhibition, an idea raised again by the recent announcement by American Express that it would buy the dress Lizzy Gardiner wore when receiving an Oscar together with Tim Chappel for their designs for *The Adventures of Priscilla Queen of the Desert*.

The company spokeswoman stated that Gardiner's dress, comprising 240 gold credit cards, was 'a work of art' which 'should be preserved'. Presumably that dress would not be a legitimate addition to American Express's archives, though given the tendency of some information professionals to accord artworks a 'documentary record' status, anything is possible.

As for the dresses lent to the Powerhouse by the Christian Dior Archives, the case is quite different. It would make perfect sense for a fashion house to keep a master copy of each dress as part of the business transaction of designing and making them, or adopting Jenkinsonian phraseology, to keep them 'in their own custody for their own information'. Actual dresses aside, examples of two other types of records were also displayed, one documenting the transaction of a fashion parade, the other documenting individual dress commissions. Thus there were charts which Dior developed to keep track of each collection in a fashion parade containing the name and number of each dress, a fabric sample and a brief description and details of all the accessories. The other was a 'dress form', a mannequin model made to the measurements of each client and serving the same function as records of sleeve length maintained by Kim Philby's London tailor.

In summary, a visually stunning and thought provoking exhibition.

Michael Piggott
Australian Archives

Videos

Edith Cowan University, *The Records Environment,* A continuing series of videos, Edith Cowan University, 1994– (available through the media production office, Pearson Street, Churchlands WA 6018 for $90.00 each with concessions for purchasers of the full series).

Educational videos are a vital teaching aid, and not just for distance education. The Edith Cowan University staff in their undergraduate records management program and postgraduate archives program are to be congratulated on filling a need with the initiation of this continuing series of videos. The videos discussed in this review are the first four in the series which cover records management concepts, archives, records retention and disposal scheduling, and electronic recordkeeping. When viewing them, it is necessary to keep in mind that they are a teaching aid, not definitive statements to the profession, and usually have to be assessed on that basis and used accordingly. When

they deal with particular issues, however, they have the potential to reach a very wide audience and that is the case with at least one of these videos, the one covering electronic recordkeeping.

The introductory videos *Records Management Concepts* and *Archives* are very useful within a teaching environment. They provide the equivalent of physical site visits, consolidating the experiences and practices, in outline form, of six Western Australian institutions. These videos are essential to support distance education, but are also helpful in site based courses. *Records Management Concepts* takes us to a computer assisted registry system within a government department, to a private industry records system which proclaims the information management creed but has an elaborate central document processing system, and to a medical records system with particular reference to the physical aspects of records management occurring at the site rather than the specialised coding techniques within such systems. *Archives* takes us to a regional office of the Australian Archives, a State Archives and a University Archives. Both videos provide representations of how the sites at the time they were visited wished to be represented, and will have long-term educational value as these representations recede into the past, which may be relatively quickly in the case of *Records Management Concepts.*

The other two videos fit into special niches although in the case of *Electronic Recordkeeping* a canyon is probably a better term since many of the tools for a relatively paperless office have now been developed but are not being integrated in the manner this video suggests. *Electronic Recordkeeping* is a twenty minute encapsulation of an emerging approach that David Bearman is doing so much to shape. It defies summary in a review and that Bearman can present it in a short video is a breakthrough. It provides an introduction suitable for students and for professionals alike, stepping over the educational program barrier into a wider market. Students will need assisted viewing and a lot of additional material, but practitioners who buy a personal copy will find it a rewarding purchase that will repay itself with repeated viewings.

Whereas *Electronic Recordkeeping* has limited value within training programs at a basic level, one would have hoped the second specialised video, *Records Retention and Disposal Schedule,* would serve that purpose. If our reaction at Monash is any guide, this hope has not been realised. If we use it in our courses it will be within a discussion of why disposal programs are often given low priority in organisations, and to question some of the assertions that are made. As a training video we could not recommend it. It makes too little connection to methodologies for analysing organisational activities, and does not establish clearly enough the place of risk management, clients and

other organisations, and the regulatory environment. The video argues that it is difficult to get management cooperation but does not effectively show how using the particular cost benefit approaches set out in the video will change this situation. Indeed it is debatable whether they would affect management, given that the approaches outlined have been around for a long time, by the video's own line of argument frequently are ignored, and managers these days are more hard-headed than they have ever been.

In reviewing videos one should, I suppose, make reference to them as a visual experience. Vicky Wilson and Karen Anderson do admirable jobs as hosts but these are information videos, not 'infotainment' and the viewer should not expect the sort of delights of something like the Toronto Area Archivist Group's video *The Archival Trail.* Production values place clarity of exposition ahead of visual interest. This is particularly noticeable in the electronic recordkeeping video where the physicality of the other videos (for example, lots of shots of file covers and archival boxes) is more inconsequential. Shots of someone entering data do not tell us much about electronic recordkeeping, whereas the physicality of the other videos tells us a lot about the problems archivists and records managers face in adjusting our thinking to take advantage of changing technologies or to deal with electronic records.

Archivists are well served by these videos. Their programs are fairly presented, with coverage of a wide range of issues including many that are challenging us. Records managers are accurately represented, and, as the last of the true believers, may be happy to see all recordkeeping activities shown within a life cycle framework (shown as an eight part pie being sliced). For those, like myself, who are sure that this metaphor is an impediment to further development of records management there is ample internal evidence of this in the videos which can be discussed with students.[1] (Slicing electronic recordkeeping off as the last stage of the life cycle pie, which the graphic on the video box does, is a crowning irony.)

The videos undoubtedly will be expanded upon in range and reissued with changes as the years pass. A lot will be learnt and with the collaboration of the staff members there should be more integration between the records management strand and the archives strand. The *Electronic Recordkeeping* video, for example, sets out a view of records management which stands in stark opposition to the self-constructed physical enclaves presented in *Records Management Concepts* and perhaps a future video could focus on this. It would be nice to see an Australian video on archives that captures the delights and significances of working with historical records in the way the Toronto video

referred to earlier does, or to see a video which deals with organisational analysis for purposes of documentation and appraisal. These videos tell it as they found it in records management, provide some food for thought in the archival video, and give us a feast of thought in *Electronic Recordkeeping*. Hopefully, future videos will provide as interesting a record of the way things used to seem, and of the challenges we were identifying at particular points of time.

Frank Upward
Department of Librarianship Archives and Records
Monash University

Endnote

1. The problem which needs to be sorted out in these videos is nicely encapsulated by Mark Brogan in the *Archives* video when he notes that as a University archivist he takes a continuum management approach to the life cycle of records. Somehow this seems to be a contradiction in terms. A life cycle approach is defined in my dictionary as one which covers the entire series of processes covering the life history of an organism, whereas a continuum approach is defined as something that is continuous of which no separate parts are discernible. In a life cycle approach there is a clearly ordered progression, something which can happen within metaphors but is unlikely to happen in reality. The continuum approach does not deny the use of the terms normally contained in the life cycle, but it does not slice the different processes off from each other or claim that the processes occur in serial fashion. By taking our minds off the mythical stages the continuum model allows us to focus on more significant issues like differentiation between types of recorded information, the recordkeeping systems in which records are captured, methodologies for documenting and appraising activities of an organisation or person, and ways of establishing the usefulness and usability of records. Within this framework we can then consider the particular elements set out in the life cycle model, and add other elements as necessary.

Briefly Noted

Compiled by Sue McKemmish

Alec Bolton, *Interviewing for Oral History at the National Library of Australia: A short guide,* Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1994. 36 pp. ISBN 0 642 10618 5. (Available from the NLA, Canberra ACT, 2600.)

Prepared by Alec Bolton, one of the National Library's most experienced oral history interviewers, this publication briefly traces the history of the Library's oral history program from its beginnings in 1948 to its focus today on eminent Australians, social history and folklore, before providing a short practical

guide which encapsulates the Library's experience of oral history interviewing. Originally intended as an internal guide, it was realised that what was emerging could be an introductory tool of value to the many others working to document Australian experience through oral history interviews. The guide covers the basics of researching the interview, equipment requirements, issues of confidentiality, documentation and copyright, conducting the interview, and action to be taken after the interview. Written for interviewers, especially new interviewers, these parts of the guide give 'a brief introduction to a large subject'. It is a pity that, having decided to publish the guide for use beyond the walls of the National Library, in these sections, the guide assumes that the reader is working within the Library's program with all the infrastructure support that implies. Some effort should have been made to address the other contexts in which oral history interviewers operate. Only one reference for further reading is given, the 1988 oral history handbook by Louise Douglas, Alan Roberts and Ruth Thompson. A short list of further references, which could usefully have included Ann Pederson's chapter in the second edition of *Keeping Archives*, which does provide the broader program and institutional contexts of oral history interviewing, would also enhance this publication. The guide concludes with appendices which reproduce the National Library of Australia's forms for documenting their oral history projects, e.g. the deposit form, and conditions for use form, and an extract from an 'Index of Interview'.

Diana Giese, *Beyond Chinatown: Changing Perspectives on the Top End Chinese Experience,* Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1995. 58 pp. ISBN 0 642 10633 9. $12.50. (Available from NLA, Canberra ACT, 2600.)

Diana Giese has been working on a National Library oral history project which aims to collect and highlight the history of Chinese Australians in north Australia. Many of the interviews recorded have been used in this publication, supplemented by European documents from government sources and newspapers. Thus the 'major storytellers' in this work are 'the Chinese Australians themselves who, through oral history, family stories, photographs and their own accounts, place themselves in the mainstream of Australian history' (p. iii), along the way transforming the use of oral history by earlier researchers 'to compensate for deficiencies in the written record' (quoted on p. 35). Weaving through the stories told by the European documents and the Chinese Australian storytellers is an intriguing discourse by Giese on the construction of history itself. Giese begins with the early accounts of the Chinese in the Northern Territory—written by Europeans 'looking in'. To these she adds the perspective of Chinese voices, past and present, for 'a national history that denies all its people voices can be totalitarian by default' (p. 11).

And to these she adds her own voice on 'making histories'. So we move to 'Chinatown transformed' and the 'making of stories' that engage in a dialogue with the earlier histories at the same time as they reconstruct them. This process of reworking the stories of Chinese Australians finally moves us 'beyond Chinatown' to 'a redefinition of what it is to be Australian' (p. 48).

Terry Irving, editor, *Challenges to Labour History,* Sydney, UNSW Press, 1994. 217 pp. ISBN 0 86840 118 8. $24.95.

This volume comprises essays on the historiography of labour history, the challenges posed to it by post-modernism, and its 'loss of political purpose' with the challenges posed to the labour movement itself by the 'new social movements' of women, the greens, youth, and Aboriginals. The essays chart the way in which labour history has been deconstructed to reveal that in its concern with the 'masses rather than elites as the moving forces in the historical process' (as Ian Turner expressed it in 1965, quoted p. 150), it focused on the role of white Anglo-Saxon working-class men, its main theme the 'ongoing conflict between men' (p. 77), between capitalists and working men. Themes of oppression based on gender, race, ethnicity and sexuality were not part of the construct. A number of essays also provide case studies in the way 'culturist and feminist methodology can be applied to reshape the discipline of labour history by offering new theoretical paradigms and redefining conventional terms' (p. 151).

Wilsie Short, *Benjamin Short 1833–1912: A Migrant with a Mission, Grandfather's Story as told by Wilsie Short,* UNSW Press, Sydney, 1994. 138 pp. ISBN 0 86840 102 1. $24.95.

This conventional biography of Benjamin Short, who migrated to Australia in 1860, worked as an insurance salesman for AMP, and established the Sydney City Mission, draws on the archives of the AMP Society, parish and church records, as well as personal and family papers. In a foreword by the Master of Robert Menzies College, Macquarie University, we are told that 'Benjamin Short's vision of a new society, based on probity and hard work, will continue to challenge us today', while in the preface, written by the Managing Director of the AMP Society, we are assured that this biography 'accurately illustrates the necessity for insurance protection', and 'serves to illustrate the close association of evangelism with protection and insurance'.

Department of Social Security and the Data-Matching Agency, *Data-Matching Program, Report on progress, October 1994,* Canberra, AGPS, 1994. 98 pp. ISBN 0 644 35317 1. (Available gratis from AGPS.)

This is the fourth report on progress with the operation of the Data-Matching Program. As with previous reports, we are presented with evidence of the continuing success of the program in deterring incorrect payments. Indeed the statistics provided indicate a steady improvement in the detection of overpayments and the reduction or cancellation of payments. The report also refers to amendments to the *Social Security Act 1991* which ensure that people who do not have a tax file number and who have no intention of applying for one will not receive payments. The results of the efficiency audit conducted by the Australian National Audit Office during 1993 are also reported. Although the audit recommended a number of improvements to project monitoring and reporting, it concluded that the Program is a 'valuable compliance and control technique', and confirmed that the Program and the DSS operate with due regard to the privacy and security of personal information. After analysing direct savings in social security outlays, the indirect savings achieved by increased voluntary compliance and the relatively low costs of the Program, the report concludes that the ratio of costs to benefits is 1:7 (1:6 when the other participating agencies are taken into account).

Jean Houssiau and Rombout Nijssen, *Bibliographie Courante Archivistique: Articles parus dans les revues archivistiques* (Lopende Bibliografie Voor Archiefkunde: Artikels verschenen in tijdschriften vo or archiefkunde), Algemeen Rijksarchief en Rijksarchief in de Provincien Miscellanea Archivistica Manuale 15, Brussells, 1994. 97 pp. (Available from the Algemeen Rijksarchief, Ruisbroekstraat 2, 10 00 Brussel.)

This bibliography covers articles and reviews published in 1993 in the main European and British archival journals. Abstracts for most articles are provided in French or English.