Reviews

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

Publications

Stephen Yorke, editor, *Playing for Keeps: The Proceedings of an Electronic Records Management Conference hosted by the Australian Archives Canberra, Australia, 8-10 November 1994.* Canberra, Australian Archives, 1995. ISBN 0 642 22695 4. $24.94 (available from Public Programs, Australian Archives, PO Box 34, Dickson, ACT 2602).

There are any number of ways a volume such as *Playing for Keeps* can be evaluated—contribution to the professional literature, benchmark in recent thinking about electronic records management, report of a recent professional conference, source for professional guidance in the administration of electronic records, or all of these. Whether one likes, dislikes, or has ambivalent feelings about *Playing for Keeps* will depend on how this publication is approached. For myself, I see the value of the publication as providing another benchmark for tracking the evolution (and it is a rapid evolution, indeed) of electronic records management theory and practice. I must also compliment the excellent work of the Australian Archives in editing, designing, and releasing the conference proceedings in just six months after the conference, which surely enhances the value of *Playing for Keeps*.

The publication follows the tripartite conference structure, with sections on the 'world scene,' the 'Australian scene' and the 'technology.' Whether the conference was designed to build consensus, help the Australian records community advance in its work with electronic recordkeeping, or resolve issues is not completely clear, partly because there seems to be varying attitudes by the speakers about their sense of the conference. Editor Yorke states that 'due to their size and the diversity of the background and interests of the attendees, conferences like *Playing for Keeps* cannot resolve issues; at best they can highlight them and assist the process of achieving general resolution'. Well, maybe, but this is the temperate, moderating tone of an editor. The introductory comments by George Nichols suggest that the conference was intended to bring together the professionals working on electronic records issues because 'it is critical we have access to "state of the

art" information about possible solutions and practices being adopted'. Here we have the gap between reality and aim, but it is one that is probably evident at most professional conferences. The irony, of course, is that the electronic records community in the larger archives profession has reached a certain level of consensus with a new emphasis on the 'record'.

The 'world scene' section focused on American, European and Canadian work, with an additional report on the activities of the International Council on Archives. From the very start of the conference, therefore, some blatant differences of opinion were obvious because of the inclusion of representatives of New York State and United States and Canadian National Archives programs. Margaret Hedstrom provides a nice summary of the decade of work that has made the New York State Archives and Records Administration a leader in North American electronic records management, while Ken Thibodeau's description of the US National Archives' efforts provides a startling contrast in approach, with its emphasis on the social science data archives method of acquiring electronic records systems; while Thibodeau uses the same notion of record as Hedstrom and others at this conference, he describes a program that has stressed the preservation of databases rather than recordkeeping systems. Finally, John McDonald, Edward Higgs, and Hans Hofman describe work in England, the Netherlands and Canada, again with an array of approaches and reflecting different levels of success and commitment to electronic records management. Still, the first day of proceedings reflects a beginning of coalescing about the definition of record and the essential responsibility of archives to manage records, although conference attendees must have wondered just what had been concluded after the initial day.

The second part of the proceedings is a series of presentations relating to the 'Australian scene', with two papers on recent efforts by the Australian Archives and other descriptions of information management strategic planning, work by the State Archives of Western Australia and the Australian Council of Library and Information Services Taskforce on the Preservation of Australian Electronic Information, and a number of presentations on the implications of the technology for researchers. It is in this section of the proceedings that we see the indications of a major problem faced by the Australian archives and records management communities in the light of the nature of modern electronic information technology. The two views of the work of the Australian Archives show a promising commitment by that national archives to a focus on recordkeeping with strategies for building understanding and support for electronic recordkeeping by federal agencies

that reflect some of the more innovative recent thinking of the archives and records management disciplines. The Australian Archives' papers fit comfortably with the earlier papers by representatives of the National Archives of Canada and the New York State Archives and Records Administration, North American leaders in innovative electronic records management approaches.

The challenge for the Australian Archives is seen, however, with the following cluster of papers that wander far afield from records into the murkier waters of 'information' as if records and information are synonymous terms with the same characteristics, values and concerns. There is not sufficient space to describe all the problems and challenges evident in these presentations, but a couple of examples will suffice to illustrate the issue. Judy Huxley, in her commentary on information management strategic planning includes the comment that 'information obtained from a non-Commonwealth agency becomes a Commonwealth "record" by right of intention to transfer ownership'; is the meaning really that a mass of data, like a mailing list, becomes a record just because of a transfer of ownership? If this is the case, then we all need to go back to the drawing board in order to reconsider what it is we are about. The presentation by Maggie Jones on the preservation of Australia's 'electronic documentary heritage' is out of place in the proceedings because it focuses on non-record materials more than records and returns us to a reliance on paper printouts as a solution to the increasing use of electronic information technology. David Berman's discussion of geoscience data is built about a definition of document which is not necessarily a record, moving from transaction with structure, content, and context to a 'collection of electronic data'.

The problems with the second day of the conference drifting far from the essential responsibilities of archivists and records managers to manage records, become obvious with the proceedings of the third day's theme of technology. This section commences with a spirited paper by David Bearman on the need to return to a focus on records and concludes with Margaret Hedstrom's conference concluding summary reflecting on the papers' lack of consensus by the archives and records management profession on their essential business. There are other presentations on specific technology trends and approaches, but these are less important (in fact they really offer little that is new to anyone who reads even occasionally in the commercial computer newsletters and magazines) than Bearman's and Hedstrom's commentaries and the transcription of that day's panel discussion. Bearman seems to attempt to return the conference to a definition of record and strives to comment on

how many of the presentations of the previous two days were not about records management; as he states in response to a question, 'We are not information managers; we are records managers'. During the panel discussion, Bearman also engages in debating with others on the panel with the notion that 'databases are not records', that analysing content for information retrieval is not the business of archivists and records managers, and that records are not blobs of information to which we can add value as needed, but they are simply about documenting 'what we have done'.

Margaret Hedstrom's concluding comments must have been a heroic effort on her part to weave together the themes of the conference, and she does an admirable job by providing first a summary and then a bit of a commentary. There are several things she states that are crucial for archivists to reconsider. She argues that 'it is incumbent upon the archival profession to define its own parameters for a solution to electronic records problems'. The fact that so much of what was discussed during the 'Playing for Keeps' conference was far from the archival solution and that the conference structure seemed to minimise debate and discussion between archivists, records managers, librarians, information technology professionals, information policy experts and vendors did not help the profession in Australia to sketch out those parameters. Hedstrom also argues for the profession to return to the concept of the record: 'We have to be certain as archivists that we know what a record is, that we agree what it is, and, importantly, that we can communicate our concept to others who use it and act on it'. Again, this conference reflected the fact that there is still not a consensus about this important matter.

Playing for Keeps is a useful publication for two reasons. First, it provides another document in the archives of the history of electronic records management. *Playing for Keeps* can be seen as a conference occurring in the early stages of the rediscovery of the record as the focus for archivists and records managers. Second, the proceedings perhaps can serve as a lesson for others planning conferences in the future. Conference planners need to determine what the purpose of the conference is and the intended outcomes they want. These proceedings reflect, in fact, that a better title for this conference might have been *Playing for What?* since there was a wide array of discussion about information, library materials, data and technology, confusing the essential matter of records as the business of archivists and records managers. This could have been an interesting dialogue with a different conference structure, but the structure of formal papers and carefully controlled audience participation led to a sense of everything being equal.

There is a disturbing aspect in all this. A profession is distinguished by the fact that it offers expertise to society in order to support the public good. The very word 'profession' derives from the older religious notion of a calling, 'to profess' or to vow to follow a particular calling with service to society. *Playing for Keeps* seems to suggest that archivists and records managers have little to profess or to offer to society. Or, at the least, as Hedstrom tried to suggest, that only a small group of archivists and records managers believe that they have something to say. Hopefully, these proceedings will stir up my colleagues to return to their primary business and mission.

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Robert M.Warner, *Diary of a Dream: a History of the National Archives Independence Movement, 1980–1985.* Metuchen, N.J., Scarecrow Press, 1995. ISBN 00100 29568. $45.60 (available from James Bennett, 4 Collaroy Street, Collaroy Beach, NSW 2097).

This is a curious book written, as the author notes in his introduction 'with some degree of passion and pride'. Robert M. Warner, Archivist of the United States between 1980 and 1985 has used the contents of his diary from this period to describe how the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) regained its independence 'through the enactment of Public Law 98–497 signed into law on 19 October 1984'.

On 19 June 1934 President Franklin Roosevelt had established the National Archives as an independent agency. But on 5 September 1950 President Harry Truman had 'signed legislation changing the independent status of the Archives and relegating it to a "Service" under the authority of the Administrator of the newly created General Services Administration'. Such are the fortunes and misfortunes of national archives.

Warner's book then is his own version of the campaign he waged to achieve independence for the Archives, generally in the face of outright hostility from the Administrator, Gerald Carmen. Given the status of the Archivist within the General Services Administration, the role Warner played in the events he outlines was ambiguous to say the least. It must have required both the skills of a diplomat abroad and nerves of steel to simultaneously be supporting the Administrator's non-independence line in Congressional hearings and

running, or at least participating in, a public campaign of lobbying to achieve independence.

A lesser man may have found the task all too difficult or have been outmanoeuvred by the Adminstrator. As it happened Warner 'saw off' the Administrator, Gerald Carmen who resigned towards the end of 1983 to take up an ambassadorial post. From then on it was relatively smooth sailing with a more complaisant acting Administrator not actively opposing the move to independence.

Robert Warner is careful to stress in his introduction that this is 'not a definitive history . . . far from it in fact'. He states that the book 'feeds my ego rather too generously'. I suppose it is too much to expect a diarist to be critical of himself in his own diary nor completely objective! The book is sourced almost entirely to the diary but it appears to be text created from the diary entries rather than actual diary entries. It is, therefore, very much one person's perspective.

Warner says 'that the book demonstrates that the official record does not tell us about many important facets of historical events'. While few would quarrel with this assertion, I also found it difficult to assess whether (in this case) the Warner version of events was a useful addition to the official record. He has provided us with a fascinating insight into what it takes to change a law in the USA. Some of the processes may be a little different from Australia, but the general picture is accurate enough. In the United States the need to persuade members of Congress directly is greater because of the lack of any party discipline but how this is done, especially while outwardly maintaining the official line, is one of the most interesting parts of the story.

There is a real sense of the drama unfolding in the story too. Just when the Administrator has left and it seems like full steam ahead, Warner learns that Carmen was still directing a campaign against independence from his ambassadorial post in Geneva. More lobbying, more politicians contacted, more meetings and the deal is done. As Warner put it 'the "good guys" won and the system worked'.

You would want to think twice before revealing your diary in a book like this but Warner has shown you can do it and make it work. Having said that I do not think it is a format to be persevered with. Not too many of us would relish having our daily diary published. In effect Warner has done so voluntarily but he has avoided some problems by creating a text drawn from his diary. But even if you do this you still may reveal your innermost thoughts

at times (or you do so unintentionally). Warner is most frank when he is contemplating his reaction to the news that there is a concerted campaign to have him replaced. 'I am not a martyr and I don't like fights . . . Too many people stand on principle when it really isn't that important . . . But there are issues which have to be faced on the basis of principle. This is one of them . . . The non-politicizing . . . of the National Archives is one of those fundamental points'.

This book is difficult to recommend unless you were involved in the events that are described. It is detailed, excessively so because it is the daily record of what a senior government official was doing, who he was meeting and who he was calling. I found the names too confusing and could not remember who were the good guys and who were not. A greater familiarity with the US political canvass is needed to fully appreciate the finer points of what Warner was doing. That is where the book would find its most understanding market. For the rest of us it is an interesting inside account of an important event which ended with the right result—but you might find it hard going unless you really enjoy the labyrinthine processes involved in legislative battles in the US Administration and Congress.

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Richard J. Cox, *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists in the United States: a study in professionalization.* New York/London/Norwood (Australia), The Haworth Press, Inc., 1994. ISBN 1560 246448. US$39.95 (available from Bush Books, PO Box 1370, Gosford, NSW 2250).

In centuries to come electronic 'archivists' will 'interview' their clients and provide access to records 'experiences' via virtual reality archival access modules. These modules will be located exclusively in Timezone and Intensity Corporation Supermarkets. Open and free access will, of course, have gone the way of the ozone layer. Introducing new clients to the virtual records series 'experience' the electronic 'archivist' will begin by apologising for the paucity of records 'experiences' from the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. Upon hearing this depressing news the client will receive an adrenalin injection to counter balance their mood swing. For those that the client-mood-receptor judge can cope with further mood swings access will then be provided to background virtual sources on how this situation may have arisen. The first source will be a virtual representation of Richard Cox

sitting in his office at the University of Pittsburgh circa 1994 reading from this book. . .

It is sobering to occasionally ponder what the future will be like or how it might judge us as a profession. We sometimes conclude that the future is not our problem because we won't be around then. It is therefore somewhat challenging when one picks up a book such as this one which not only does the analysis while we are still alive but delivers a message which is less than positive. Of course the publication specifically addresses the situation in the United States and as we know there are differences between the archival history of that country and our own, particularly when it comes to professional education. There are, none the less, some interesting similarities.

On first glance none of this appears obvious. The title does not give too much away. In fact it is slightly misleading. The title suggests the book is about electronic records but it is far more than that. In reading the foreword one begins to sense how much more than electronic records the message in the book is about and who it is aimed at. The sub-title gives gives us a clue; 'a study in professionalization' (or as it turns out from the study, lack thereof). Lawrence J. McCrank's foreword begins, 'This monograph is a revision of Richard Cox's doctoral dissertation which investigates a critical issue in the broader topic of primary sources and research: as more records are electronically produced . . . how will they be conserved for future research without electronic archives or without professional archivists adequately educated and trained to preserve them, and create access to them for such research?'. He concludes that 'It was difficult for me to read Richard Cox's assessment of this pioneer era and its aftermath . . . because his conclusions are less than flattering of the archives profession and indicate just how slow progress has been pervasively and nationally overall'.

McCrank is being somewhat circumspect. At its heart this study provides evidence of the failure of the archival profession to change and adapt to the challenges posed by the introduction of new technologies. If the eyes are the window to the soul then this book is a viewing platform into the soul, heart and entrails of North American archivism (and by implication, when one considers our own historical response to this issue, Australia and a number of other jurisdictions besides).

One should not, of course, always draw direct comparisons from American research to make conclusions about our own country. Our professional educational structure is different and our archival influences and history are different, although heavily influenced by North America and the UK. Even

so it is striking to read in Chapter three (Archival Position Advertisements 1976–1990) that there were only nineteen job advertisements in this period for positions specialising in the administration of electronic records as opposed to the 352 needing some requirement to work with automated systems. I thought: if Cox is saying this reflects poorly on North America, how would this country compare over a similar timeframe. In the same period, similar positions were very scarce indeed. The NSW State Office of the Australian Archives had a Machine-Readable Records Archivist during the 1980s, and there may have been others in State archival institutions. The point of this example is that one should not read this book and feel too smug. Surgeon heal thyself. . .

Reading this book is necessarily a good point for the surgeon to start the healing process. That electronic records are the major challenge to the archival profession now and for the foreseeable future is not in doubt. Cox goes further, however, by suggesting that computerised technology has been a challenge for a significant length of time (well over thirty years) which by and large has not been adequately addressed by the profession and archival institutions. He suggests that technology per se (pens, telegraphs, telephones, typewriters etc.) have been a challenge to archivists for a long time. Cox argues that the archival profession as we know it is actually a creature of the twentieth century in North American (and Australian) terms and that the modern profession was born and has existed ever since in a period of rapid technological change and yet has, generally speaking, stuck fairly rigidly to orthodoxy and shows a distinct lack of flexibility.

Again we need to see some of these criticisms in perspective. For example on a list of milestones on page thirty we read, '1969—The National Archives establishes Data Archives staff in Office of Records Management'! We know that both the major US and Canadian institutions began to do something about 'Machine Readable Records' a long time ago. This book is clearly a critique of the process but they had to start somewhere. What would a similar list of milestones reveal about the management of electronic records in this country?

The book also analyses graduate archival education and electronic records programs; the NAGARA (National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators) Institute and its effectiveness; and archivists, archival institutions and approaches to electronic records generally.

The conclusion reached after this minute examination of the North American archival entrails is that the archival profession there has not done

well in structuring itself to manage electronic records. Cox tells us that there are five aspects of the American professional community which suggest this conclusion:

- the professional literature seems to lack consensus on the nature of the impact of electronic records on archival theory and practice and how such records should be administered;
- State government archives' positions do not, generally, reflect knowledge and skill requirements needed for the management of electronic records;
- there were virtually no job advertisements from 1976–1990 for electronic records specialists;
- graduate archival education programs have offered only a few courses on electronic records management and the size and nature of these programs provide little opportunity for educating future archivists in electronic records work; and
- the advanced institute on electronic records and information policy offered to State government archivists at the University of Pittsburgh from 1989 suggest some of the weaknesses in the archival profession's reliance on continuing education for electronic records administration training.

Given that much of the research was conducted up to and including 1990, Cox injects some optimism, after the less than positive conclusions of his research, by suggesting that recent indications (late 1993) are that the American archival profession is improving its ability to deal with electronic records. New publications, courses, programs and research grants have appeared in the early 1990s. Work undertaken at the New York State Archives, Kentucky State Archives and the University of Pittsburgh via the Functional Requirements for Recordkeeping Project are but three examples. In many ways this parallels similar developments in Australia beginning with the 'Keeping Data' conference in 1990 and the arrival of David Bearman on these shores the following year.

As this book is also about professionalisation (or the lack thereof) Cox suggests the need for greater research to enable the archival profession to determine just how it might structure itself to effectively manage electronic records. He identifies some examples of areas suitable for further research:

- requirements for education and training;
- employers' needs and expectations;
- archivists attitudes to technology; and
- case studies to identify key electronic and information management problems and priorities.

Cox concludes by highlighting the choice available to us all. Without innovation and new attitudes towards the problems, challenges and opportunities posed by the continuing application of new technology in business environments, archivists will remain onlookers rather than participants in the information age; spectators rather than players. Let the games begin!

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Mark Brogan and Harry Phillips, editors, *Past as Prologue: The Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters,* Proceedings from a conference on the Part II Report of the Royal Commission and the reform of government in Western Australia. Perth, Edith Cowan University, 1995. ISBN 0-7298-0198-5. $29.95 (available from SASTEC, Edith Cowan University, 2 Bradford Street, Mount Lawley, WA 6050).

The 'Past as Prologue' conference was held in November 1994 to mark the second anniversary of the release of the Royal Commission's Part II Report and coincided with the long delayed appointment of the Commission on Government (COG), the mechanism recommended by the Royal Commissioners to oversee the implementation of their reform agenda. Indeed the conference provided the occasion for the first public presentation by Jack Gregor, the new Chairman of COG, who mainly addressed procedural issues.

Many of the papers revisit a pivotal issue in the debate over what went wrong in Western Australia during the 1980s—whether what occurred was aberrant behaviour or symptomatic of a deeper malaise within our systems of government and business, structural failings that enabled the executive to get away with proverbial 'blue murder': it suborned the institutions of government, and media and private business interests (the latter no doubt knowingly and willingly), to its own interests (Michael Barker, Counsel assisting the Commission, p. 14).

Academic Alan Peachment draws attention to the dangers inherent in pursuing the explanation 'that corruption is fundamentally a deviant position' (p. 86), and its eradication a matter of getting rid of the 'rotten apples', especially if this is done to the exclusion of wider causes. Just such an approach is epitomised in the paper by current WA Minister for Health, Peter Foss, representing the Liberal Premier, Richard Court. Foss dismisses out-of-hand the need to reinvent accountable government:

> If the past is any sort of prologue to the future, it is this—we have seen the results of personal failures in standards. The key to future probity and accountability remains, as it has always, in the power of one. . . I think our system of government in Western Australia is basically sound. After all, it dealt effectively with WA Inc. in the end (p. 102).

The paper by Professor Peter Boyce, who also assisted the Commission, puts the counterview to Foss succinctly:

> Certainly in the last resort, personal moral choice is the cause of political corruption, but it is political institutions which create the discipline and culture which help inform that moral choice (p. 29).

The views put by Foss in his paper suggest that there will be little support from the Court Government for the new Commission on Government if it takes the same line on systemic reform as the WA Inc. Royal Commissioners.

Predictably, the current State Labor leader in Western Australia, Jim McGinty takes the opposite viewpoint from Foss, arguing strongly systemic failures must be addressed, especially through electoral and parliamentary reforms. McGinty's paper is the only one to address the general failure of accountability mechanisms in the financial sector, an issue which has been explored recently by Trevor Sykes in *The Bold Riders* (reviewed in *Archives and Manuscripts*, May 1995). McGinty claims that WA Inc. can only be understood in the context of 'the broader failure of the corporate culture' of the 1980s, when 'all of the traditional safeguards were swept away by a tidal wave of greed'. There is an element of special pleading here and, by contrast with Michael Barker (noted below), McGinty sees the politicians as pawns of the corporate cowboys, rather than vice versa. However, there is something to be said for widening the focus to consider the interrelationship between democratic and corporate accountability mechanisms in the post-modern state.

Following on from Fitzgerald in Queensland, the WA Inc. Royal Commissioners themselves took the view that not only had elected and appointed public officials failed in their duty, but that the Westminster system

itself was no longer able to ensure democratic accountability because of the increasing dominance of Parliament by the executive and the power exercised by party machines over our elected representatives. They concluded that fundamental reforms were needed and set about the task of developing a blueprint for 'reinventing' accountable government in Western Australia. Ian Temby, Commissioner of the NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption 1988–1994, makes it clear in his keynote address that the approach of ICAC too is based on the view that there is a need for systemic change to ensure accountability and more integrity in public life. It is because the WA Inc. Royal Commissioners and Temby have taken this approach that they have had much to say that is of significance in relation to accountable public recordkeeping and its role in supporting public accountability.

As discussed in the paper by Michael Barker, the Commission attempted to answer 'the Big Question' of how our system of government can be reformed so that it is more accountable by reference to the 'organising principles' which inform the system, translated into 'three practical goals', namely:

- government must be conducted openly;
- public officials and agencies must be made accountable for their actions; and
- there must be integrity both in the processes of government and in the conduct expected of public officials (Report, Part II, 1.2.8).

In this context they looked at public recordkeeping, not in isolation, but in relation to where it fitted in the broader reform agenda and how it supported other accountability processes and mechanisms.

Three papers deal specifically with recordkeeping issues. Vicki Wilson reports on an Edith Cowan research project-in-progress which is investigating the extent to which WA public sector agencies address accountability issues relating to electronic recordkeeping systems. Karen Anderson's paper reviews the use of FOI by *The Western Australian*, and makes the usual points about the vital links between effective FOI legislation, proper recordkeeping infrastructures and the employment of professional records managers. Mark Brogan provides an overview of the evolution of the modern idea of public recordkeeping and its links to democratic accountability from the days of the French Revolution to the administrative law reforms of the late twentieth century, before discussing the failures in recordkeeping revealed by the Royal

Commission. He then canvasses the view that accountability issues are compounded by problems associated with electronic recordkeeping. After mentioning the differences between electronic information and recordkeeping systems, the functional requirements for recordkeeping, and Bearman's mix of tactics (policy, system design, implementation and compliance with standards), he uses the so-called PROFS case to highlight the issues involved. In his view the Commission was only incidentally concerned with issues in accountability arising from public sector records management, and analysis of the likely impact of digital communication and information technologies suggests that problems surrounding the record of government action and decision making are likely to grow (p. 64). However, in what sounds like a contradiction, he also states that the new public records legislation envisaged by the Commissioners and 'an appropriately constituted Public Records Office' might be able to meet the challenges. Interestingly Peachment argues against introducing more watchdogs and layers of regulation, stating that accountability itself has to be redesigned. In this regard, none of the papers really take us beyond the measures already canvassed by the Royal Commission.

This is a timely publication for archivists and records managers as in August COG released for public consideration its *Discussion Paper (No. 5) on Specified Matter: 9 Independent Archives Authority.*

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Debates and Discourses. Selected Australian Writings on Archival Theory, 1951–1990. Edited by Peter Biskup, Kathryn Dan, Colleen McEwan, Greg O'Shea, Graeme Powell. With an Introduction by Robert C. Sharman. Canberra, Australian Society of Archivists, Inc., 1995. ISBN 0947219080. $25 (available from the ASA).

An Australian Perspective

The motivation underlying the re-publication of a collection of papers on some of the theoretical issues which have engaged the attention of the archival profession in Australia during the past forty years arises partly from a desire to present to the wider profession a case for recognition of the distinctive contribution which has been made by archivists in Australia, as suggested by

Robert Sharman in his Preface, to 'the thinking of archivists in other parts of the English-speaking world'.

It may seem, therefore, something of a paradox that the authors of the papers which have been assembled in the present volume should have been preoccupied over the last forty years with the task of attempting to apply and adapt orthodox nineteenth century European theoretical precepts and principles in a twentieth century Australian archival setting, while the editors, in their selection of papers for inclusion in the book, aspire to demonstrate the originality of Australian archivists in their contribution to the debate on the physical and intellectual control of archives.

That Australian archivists have enriched the literature of the profession through the collected papers included in *Debates and Discourses* is amply demonstrated by the observation that nowhere else, in the broad spectrum of archival publication within the last fifty years, can one find such a refinement, clarification and elucidation of the fundamental principles underlying the keeping and management of archives and manuscripts, than in the papers which have been brought together in the present volume. A careful scrutiny of the sequence of publication of the papers, and the responses to them of scholarly archivists in other professional contexts, including Europe and North America, suggests that the initiative in the critical analysis of accepted archival orthodoxies has generally been from within the Australian archive profession. This reluctance to accept the unquestioning importation of theories and principles evolved in other archival contexts directly into the Australian context is perhaps nowhere better illustrated than in the observation of Ian Maclean, in his 1959 paper entitled 'Australian Experience in Record and Archives Management', that 'even if the main principles [underlying the theory of recordkeeping] continue to stand up to professional criticism, it needs much clarification and adjustment, not only in terms of logical argument but also in the light of the practical experience or record managers and archivists'.

It is interesting to speculate on the reasons for this phenomenon, which characterises much of the writing in the other papers in the book. It may perhaps have been a response to the emphasis placed on the study of evolved, rather than evolving archives, by those archival pioneers who derived much of their understanding of the peculiar qualities and organic nature of archives from the study and analysis of the archives of medieval administrations. In Jenkinson's *Manual of Archive Administration*, first published in 1922, and reissued in 1937, upon which Maclean depended for his theoretical basis,

Jenkinson drew for his examples of the application of the fundamental principles of archival science, on the archives of English administrations from the thirteenth to the eighteenth centuries. The theme which runs through the majority of the papers subsequent to Maclean's 'Australian Experience', touching upon the adoption and adaptation of the principles of provenance and original order—and these include most of the papers in the collection—has been the imperative need to refine, but not dispense with or depart from the fundamental concepts and principles of archives administration, as broadly enunciated in the early years of the nineteenth century by French archivists, and made more precise in its later years by German, Dutch and other archivists. Seen in the context of the long history of the evolution of archival theory over the past century and a half, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Australian archivists, as reflected in the writings contained in the present collection of papers, and in the implementation of the archival principles, have made a significant contribution to the understanding of those principles and to their application in modern administrative contexts.

Not all of the papers, however, are concerned with the theoretical principles of archive science. Some are concerned with the nature of archives and manuscripts, and their distinctive qualities, while others attempt to arrive at a clearer perception of the role and relationships of the archivist, the manuscript curator and the records manager. For the most part, they endeavour to reconcile what have often been considered to be divergent views within the professions, and in so doing, to correct misapprehensions and clarify misconceptions about the true nature of the profession of archivist, and the nature of archives themselves. Much of the reflection of Australian archivists, as exemplified in this collection of papers, has been retrospective, rather than prospective, and concerned with the problems of reconciling received theory and principles with the experience of practice. In doing so, the profession in Australia, through its writings and its practice, has brought into sharper focus the problems confronting the archivist in the adaptation of traditional theories and principles to changing administrative contexts and new methods of recordkeeping, and thereby facilitated the more effective resolution of the problems confronting them. Faced with new methods of creating and maintaining records, at the dawn of the era of electronic recordkeeping, Australian archivists have begun to return to basic principles and fundamental concepts in search of answers to the old question of how best to secure the permanent preservation of their archives during times of rapid technological and social change. They have been faced with the same challenge before, as we discover in the papers now presented to us in *Debates and Discourses*. It is not too speculative to anticipate that they will discover

the way ahead by re-evaluating their own perceptions of the nature of records and archives, and their own role in the 'record continuum', while faithfully adhering to the universal principles which have guided them in their deliberations on such questions in the past.

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*An Italian/Canadian Perspective**

When I was told that this book was a collection of the most influential writings by Australians on archival science, I did not worry about the fact that three hours before leaving Canada for Australia I had not received it. I assumed that I would have been familiar already with most articles and that scanning the table of contents and the introductions would have been sufficient to provide me with a clear idea of what the book was all about.

I was wrong. When I finally received the book—on the threshold of my home, where Terry Eastwood delivered the precious package hurrying from the School to catch me before I jumped into a taxi heading for the airport—I discovered that I did not know a good half of the articles included in it. This of course made for a most busy, though fascinating, reading time on the airplane! This also made me reflect on the fact that the articles that the Australians themselves consider influential are not really so abroad, while those most known worldwide are perhaps the least appreciated at home, as it often happens. I was surprised by the fact that the five-part article by Peter Scott on administrative change was not included in the selection, but concluded that probably the reason was entirely practical, as it would have taken up most of the volume.

However, the choice of the pieces and the order in which they were printed were most interesting for me.

In the 'foreword', the editors confirm what is already stated in the subtitle to the book, that is, that they selected pieces on 'archival theory'. I did have some difficulties in identifying more than one or two pieces somehow dealing with archival theory, at least in relation to a conception of archival theory

* Speech at the book launch held in Canberra by the ASA ACT Branch, 1 November 1995.

that defines it as the whole of the ideas held about *what* records are, and the analysis of those ideas. Most articles address archival methodologies, that is, grapple with ideas about *how* to treat records in respect of their nature. A few of the articles present reflections about archives in general, such as that by Fischer.

This does not detract from the value of the book as a representative sample of Australian archival writings anymore than it detracts from the value of the articles themselves as the product of quite sophisticated archival thinking. Through the selected articles, the Australian archival community is presented as one very prompt and effective in its intellectual reaction to the challenges of both administrative and technological nature with which it has been confronted since the 50s, thanks mostly to its own special situation as a bridge between the old and the new.

It clearly appears that Australian archival knowledge has been permeated by the British, and specifically Jenkinsonian, perspective on archival science. It absorbed its rigour, cohesiveness, consistency and unity. At the same time, possibly because of the insular feeling that seems to be an integral part of the Australian character, Australian archival thinking appears to have remained open to external influences, which however were not passively received, but carefully examined, selected, adapted, and then incorporated in the Australian archival system, making sure that it would not be disturbed by the introduction of new ideas but would maintain its coherence, focus and internal purpose. Moreover, the selection of the new ideas has been based on specific needs, and often its purpose has simply been that of stimulating the natural development of archival methods within the Australian system and according to its own context.

Thus, the administrative change upsetting the Australian government since the 1950s made Australian archivists look very carefully to each single component of the archival body of knowledge and analyse with unprecedented depth, often in open debate, the ideas about the nature of records and the way of treating them, the theoretical and methodological ideas, that is, without ever rejecting anything, but taking in the substance of them, looking for their common ground, finding it, using it as the basis of a new construction, and testing the outcome against each element of the Australian archival system as it was before and as it was to be. The series system, on which most articles concentrate, is still one of the best modern examples of how archival science can grow and renew itself without losing its organic unity, and without renouncing its fundamental autonomy.

The series system is clearly only one achievement of a continuing endeavour, of a constant attempt to redefine concepts such as those of record continuum and accountable recordkeeping system, an attempt which it is hoped will continue to look at the past for both understanding and inspiration. In fact, as I proceeded towards the end of the book, something made me feel that Australians cannot sit on their laurels as yet, and read this volume with complacency or passivity.

One thing that immediately caught my attention when looking at the book's table of contents was the order in which the articles were printed. While the analogous American collection, *A Modern Archives Reader*, is organised by archival function, and the Canadian collection, *Canadian Archival Writings and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, is organised by themes, this selection is in strict chronological order. While the choice might have been necessary, given the concentration of Australian writings on the functions of arrangement and description and their tendency to avoid broad themes in favour of the analysis of concrete situations, the presentation of Australian archival thinking in its historical becoming achieves two very important results: (1) it offers to the archival profession a clear view of its historical dimension and, in so doing, has the opportunity of strengthening it, and (2) it shows the roots of archival concepts in the Australian context and the reasons for and conditions of their development, even if only implicitly. This is extremely important, particularly at this point in time in the development of archival policies and the definition of professional choices.

At times, I am overcome by the very real sense that contemporary archivists everywhere in the world, nobody excluded, are losing the knowledge of who they are, why they exist, what their function in civic life specifically, and society in general, is just because the modern world appears to be so dramatically different from anything we knew only ten years ago. Many modern archivists have acquired the belief that a break with the past is needed and we need to reinvent ourselves and our place in society.

It seems ridiculous to say to archivists among all professionals that the responses to the challenges of their future should be searched in their past, but. . . here you go!

I am sure that most of you, at one time or another, have read all the articles in this book, probably as they came out. Thus, it would be spontaneous for many of you to buy it as a nice memento of your professional past and put it on the shelf, or just scan it with a nostalgia pervaded by a benevolent cynical feeling of how simple the world used to be and how pleasant it was to be an

archivist when one could look at issues from an 'ideas' stance, as opposed to one of practical and political pressures.

After all, these collections of writings are mostly directed to students of archives—one might think.

Well, I would strongly encourage everyone to take this book in his/her hands and begin reading it very carefully from page one, but . . . not as a selection of historical artefacts! I would ask everyone to forget context for once, and read these writings with the mind of today, filled with the questions of today, and looking in them not for 'how we were', but for 'who we are'. Read Hasluck, especially from pp. 22 to 25: he knew! Read Maclean about Jenkinson: he knew! Read the 1971 Sharman article, particularly from p.109 to p. 112: did he know! And enjoy yourself! Because this book is not only important reading, but is something that will make you proud of both your profession and the Australian way of living it, besides allowing you, together with the rest of the world, to re-examine the foundations of archival science. Have a good reading!

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Report

Broadband Services Expert Group, *Networking Australia's Future: The Final Report of the Broadband Services Expert Group.* Canberra, Australian Government Publishing Service, December 1994. ISBN 0644 430532. Gratis (available from the Department of Communications and the Arts, GPO Box 2154, Canberra, ACT 2601).

Broadband services can be described as 'a range of communications services that use still or moving video, images, sound, text and data singly or in combination' (p. 116). The equipment used to deliver broadband services must be able to transmit data at a high rate and therefore has a far higher capacity than that used for narrowband services. Sending electronic mail on the Internet would be considered a narrowband service requiring a relatively low rate of data transmission. In contrast, interactive, broadcast-quality moving image with sound is a broadband service needing more sophisticated equipment. The physical technology used to deliver the data can vary; optical fibre, coaxial cable, microwave links (satellite or MDS), and asymmetrical digital subscriber line (that is, video delivery using enhanced telephone lines) can all be used.

In December 1993 the Commonwealth government established a Broadband Services Expert Group consisting of academics, leaders in communications research and the television industry, representatives of telecommunications suppliers, unions and government. It was established to examine what conditions were essential to ensure 'the widespread delivery of broadband services to homes, businesses and schools in Australia'. Inherently, the terms of reference and the Group's approach suggest a broad investigation of the range of new communications services becoming available. In effect, the Group investigated what virtual freeways, tollways, suburban streets and dirt roads will be necessary to allow transport from the 'information superhighway' to reach Kalgoorlie, Collingwood and Coonabarabran.

The Expert Group was asked to examine technical, economic and commercial conditions. Its main tasks under the terms of reference were to investigate and compare technological options, to assess industry development opportunities, to judge the likely customer demand for services and analyse the potential impact on the Australian community. In addition, the inquiry examined research and development issues, education and training requirements, funding mechanisms and the role of standards in the emerging communications environment. Effectively the Group was asked to predict the range of social and economic factors likely to affect Australia and its use of communications technology in the next ten years. They tried to gaze into the crystal ball and imagine how the Australian people would want to use communications infrastructure.

The Group did not restrict itself to particular bandwidth definitions but reported both on the types of networks which are possible and the potential for content. They conclude that both narrowband and broadband services may be required in the future and that the more important questions are about ensuring flexibility of the technology and sound application to people's information and communication needs. The Group recommended gradual implementation of broadband services by introducing hybrids of existing cable systems and the newer technologies as they become viable.

Because the Expert Group was trying to predict the future environment, some of its conclusions and recommendations tended to be very general, idealistic and even somewhat bland. However, it clearly did not see its role as one of prescribing particular technologies or particular patterns for action. It describes its role as 'setting in motion a complex evolutionary process, providing a starting point and framework through which some common understanding of the issues is gained and agreement reached on a strategy

for implementation' (p. 5). Consultation is a key theme in the recommendations.

The report has six chapters each addressing aspects of the Group's inquiry. Of greatest interest is Chapter three, 'A Culture of Innovation', which outlines some of the potential impacts on society and describes and discusses at some length the 'virtual corporation' concept where companies are connected by data links and operate as a consortium. Documents, files and graphics are transmitted, used and managed in this virtual environment. The potential uses in business, health, education and community projects are all explored. It is in this chapter that the Group also discusses access to material held in cultural institutions (mentioning galleries, libraries and museums but not archives). As with most potential applications mentioned, it supports the benefits to be gained in establishing trials of such services.

The final chapter outlines concrete strategies for implementation of user driven broadband technology. The group recommends a national strategy which 'would embrace the process of evolution from narrowband to broadband, the strong emphasis on education, the need for pilot projects to develop content, services and applications and to test them, and especially the talents and drive of young Australians to lead the way. It would include government becoming a leading edge user of networks, and the private sector and the community also taking up the opportunities offered. Most importantly, the strategy must be built on a commitment to continuing consultation, to draw the community into the process of deciding our communications future' (p. 92). To achieve this idealistic vision the Group recommends a number of Federal government coordinating mechanisms, for example, that the government establish a National Information Services Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, to provide leadership for the national strategy and a Ministerial Committee on National Information Services, chaired by the Minister for Communications and the Arts, to coordinate policy across different sectors (pp. xii–xiii). It also recommends action in the areas of education and community access, industry development and government coordination and that government provide seed funding to establish links for community centres, schools and other educational institutions. For industry, they suggest government monitoring of future plans and regulation of Australian content and support open and equitable systems achieved through the government's regulatory environment and leadership from the business sector. Privacy is to be ensured through industry self-regulation while existing classification schemes are offered as part of the solution for censorship

concerns. In many areas the Group encourages 'test bed' development of services together with further research and consultation.

Since the report was issued the Federal Government has taken steps to establish structures to implement some of the recommendations arising from this report, the Australian Science and Technology Council's report on use of the Internet, and an independent review of the government's use of technology. In April, the Prime Minister announced a 'coordinated and whole-of-government approach, particularly in the areas of formation of national policy, the Government's own use of technologies, and industry development'. Thus the government has established an ad hoc committee of Cabinet and the National Information Services Council, both chaired by the Prime Minister, the latter to be 'a high-level discussion forum for broad policy issues associated with the development of the so-called "information superhighway" ... to inform the policy debate in government, by encouraging input from members of the community, industry and relevant experts in the field'. Within the bureaucracy a Government Information Services Policy Board has been established chaired by the Chief Government Information Officer (Andy McDonald was appointed to this position in July) reporting throughout the ad hoc Committee of Cabinet. Other developments include the Department of Employment, Education and Training sponsoring the development of Education Network Australia (EdNA) including the Open Net initiative and the Department of Social Security's Community Information Network (CIN) which aims to provide those who do not have a computer with access to e-mail and bulletin boards through local community facilities.

The structures are gradually forming and looking at any newspaper or current affairs magazine will show how the 'information superhighway', interactive multimedia and associated issues such as censorship have gained public attention. The Broadband Services Expert Group's Interim and Final Reports play a key role in describing the options available in adopting new communications technology. They analyse likely changes and suggest the principles which should govern the way forward. The solutions will be complex and will require foresight and coordination by government, business and the community. Indeed, if there is a single message from this Report it is that to move the agenda forward government must ensure wide debate and consultation within the community about how and what services should be delivered using the developing communications infrastructure. The challenge for both governments and the communications industry is whether they can implement the idealistic vision of the Group or whether the commercial and political environment will restrict what is made available to the Australian

people in the next decade. The Broadband Services Expert Group also poses a challenge to us to state clearly what services we want to obtain from the 'information superhighway'.

Kathryn Dan
National Library of Australia

Guides

Anne Thurston, *Sources for Colonial Studies in the Public Record Office: Records of the Colonial Office, Dominions Office, Commonwealth Relations Office and Commonwealth Office.* London, HMSO, 1995. 479pp. ISBN 0 11 440246 9 (available from Hunter Publications, PO Box 404, Abbotsford, Vic 3067).

Various government agencies were responsible for British colonies and plantations from the early seventeenth century onwards, but it was not until 1801 that the Colonial Office was established. Located in Downing Street, it remained in existence for over 160 years, a fine example of the stability and continuity of public administration in Britain. It was not until 1925 that a major reorganisation took place, with the Dominions Office (later the Commonwealth Relations Office) being set up to deal with Australia, New Zealand, Canada, South Africa and the Irish Free State. For many years the two departments were in the same building and shared certain facilities, and they were finally reunited in 1966. Two years later the Commonwealth Office quietly merged with the Foreign Office, signifying the end of the British Empire.

In 1964 the Public Record Office published a slim handbook entitled *The Records of the Colonial and Dominions Offices.* Compiled by R. B. Pugh, it contained a brief administrative history, followed by an erudite discussion of the recordkeeping practices of the two Offices. The second half of the book was devoted to a listing of classes (series), arranged by colony or subject. Dominions Office records received scant attention, for at that time they were not available to researchers. Pugh was recognised by researchers as being one of the most useful handbooks of its kind, but there has long been a need for a new edition.

Anne Thurston is an academic with a strong interest in both Commonwealth history and archives management. She has had for many years a close association with the Public Record Office and was the ideal person to complete the work that Pugh had begun thirty years before. Her book is described as

an enlarged version of Pugh, which is somewhat of an understatement. It is in fact over four times longer and is a handsome tome rather than a modest handbook. The page margins are unusually narrow, so a lot of text fits on one page, but there is a liberal use of headings and subheadings. The book concludes with a series of plates illustrating registry procedures and a fifty-four page index.

Dr Thurston's is a more complex and diffuse work than Pugh, which had a relatively simple structure. She seems a little uncertain of her focus, as she moves from administrative histories to lists of officials to summaries of records and back to administrative histories. The records are sometimes submerged under vast quantities of data about the internal organisation of the Offices in the twentieth century. Chapters nine and ten, for instance, describe the functions and activities of dozens of advisory bodies and organisations and institutions with an interest in the colonies, but do not refer to their records or where they are currently located. Similarly, chapter fourteen provides a huge amount of detail about the structures and organisation of the Dominions Office and Commonwealth Relations Office, but there is hardly a mention of their records. Instead, after a good deal of searching, a list of Dominions Office classes can be found in chapter eleven, even though the title of the chapter only refers to the Colonial Office.

Researchers who have had little experience with British official records may find the detail in the book overwhelming and the arrangement of chapters confusing. On the other hand, those who have spent weeks or months immersed in governors' despatches or departmental registers will gain a great deal of useful background information. Chapter three, which follows Pugh closely, is especially illuminating on such subjects as the inception of registration in the early nineteenth century, the emergence and disappearance of out-letter books, the minuting of papers, the confidential prints, and the replacement of the single-paper unit by the subject file system in the 1920s. Chapter eleven is the pivotal chapter, not only in listing all the colony-based classes of records, but in documenting the frequent restructuring of the geographical departments within the Colonial Office.

The recordkeeping system of the Colonial Office was extremely sophisticated and Dr Thurston rightly states that its records are far richer than most departmental records of the nineteenth century. They are arguably the single most important source on the history of Australia for the period 1788–1860. Colonial Office and Dominions Office classes formed by far the largest group of records filmed by the Australian Joint Copying Project and they are listed in considerable detail in parts two and ten of the AJCP

Handbook. Australian archivists and researchers who have used the microfilm will be able to gain a great deal of contextual information from Dr Thurston's wide-ranging guide. She is especially strong on the administrative context, but possibly has less interest than Pugh in the recordkeeping practices of registries. To take one small example, she records that the British High Commission in Canberra was established in 1936, but does not explain why only eighteen files of the High Commission seem to have survived from a period of thirty years. This is not a criticism but, until more research is undertaken and published on departmental archives and registries, researchers will not fully understand the context and significance of those records that have survived.

Graeme Powell
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Beverley Symons with Andrew Wells and Stuart Macintyre, compilers, *Communism in Australia: A Resource Bibliography.* Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1994. $25.00.

As its introduction says, 'this bibliography is an attempt to identify and document all extant materials that will assist with a historical reconstruction and interpretation of Australian communism'. The *Bibliography* presents an extraordinary range and depth of material which includes library and archival manuscript collections, through communist publications, books, journal articles, theses, and audiovisual materials. Concise histories that demystify communism and the Comintern are included for the non communist reader.

As Library and Archival Manuscript Collections occupy forty-one out of 253 pages in the *Bibliography* the casual reader could conclude that archives and manuscripts make up about sixteen per cent of all materials on communism in Australia. But careful examination of the major Communist manuscript and archives holdings suggests that, in terms of their physical quantity, they would amount to not less than fifty per cent of the materials on communism in Australia. Archives of the Communist Party of Australia (CPA) are held in the Mitchell Library, in the Universities of Melbourne, Queensland, Newcastle and Wollongong, and in the La Trobe and John Oxley Libraries. In addition the Mitchell Library holds a microfilm copy of the Communist International archives concerning the Australian party. The records of the Communist Party can be supplemented from many other archival sources—records of government surveillance agencies, anti-communists, and the highly

significant personal collections of members such as James Normington Rawling (who is perhaps better known now as the biographer of the colonial poet Charles Harpur).

Totalling 3 414 entries the *Bibliography* makes accessible the vast records and literature of Australian communism. The literature includes a ninety-three page listing (pp. 42–134) of pamphlets and periodicals. During the Party's period of illegality in the 'forties, pamphlets were published by various groups closely associated with the CPA which acted as alternative publishers.

Some of the most volatile, radical material consists of industry, locality and student bulletins published by the CPA. These date typically from the 1930s Depression and include *The Abbatoir's Blade: To Cut Deep into Capitalism and Expose its Rotten Inside* (Sydney, 1931+), *The Hammer and Scraper* (Sydney, 1934+), *The Red Guard* (Melbourne, 1931+), *The Red Railwayman* (Melbourne, 1931+), and *The Red Signal* (Brisbane, 1931+).

No less evocative of those hard times and valuable for regional and local research are periodicals of the unemployed workers' movement and other unemployment groups. They include the *Canterbury/Bankstown Liberator* (1932+), *The Dole Worker* (Port Kembla 1934+) the *Red Light* (Balmain, 1934+) and the *Spearhead* (Sydney, two, 1934+ and 1935+). Of these unemployed workers' publications one Newcastle Communist (Vic Bird) later wrote:

> Many camps produced their own weekly or fortnightly 'Camp News'. These were usually printed on 'Platen' flat beds (a flat wooden 'bed' with hinged lid guide holding stretched silk. One sheet was done at a time by forcing ink through the silk screen with a rubber roller) . . . Platens were expensive and so many were hand made. Even the ink was improvised, from lamp black powder, petroleum jelly and turps . . .'(Quoted in Ross Edmonds, *In Storm and Struggle*, Newcastle, 1991, p. 126).

Leafing through the vast monograph, journal, theatre, and thesis literature there is material published over the years in *Labour History* and this is some of the most interesting material in the *Bibliography*. These articles include Mowbray's *The Red Shire of Kearsley, 1944–1947: Communists in Local Government* (1986); Walker's *The Fall of the Labour Daily* (1980); and Salt's *Women of the Northern Coalfields of NSW* (1985). Elsewhere in the *Bibliography* humour relieves the serious, with titles like *A Brush with History: History of the Operative Painters' and Decorators' Union*, and *That Dark lady's husband: the forgotten life of Dr. Eric Peyten Dark.*

If the archival, manuscript and published holdings are impressive, the audiovisual materials on communism are significant, and include Cinesound

and Australian Movietone Newsreels from the 1940s and 1950s, television footage of the funeral of L. L. Sharkey in 1967, and a marathon oral history record made in 1992 by Laurie Aarons—thirty-three reels and seventeen cassettes.

My main criticism of the *Bibliography* is the absence of a glossary of communist and related terms to help the non communist researcher although the erudite introductions throughout go a long way towards remedying this omission. The personal name index (including communists, former communists, anti-communists and other non communists) is exhaustive (it includes Charles Harpur) and its obvious limitations will be overcome by browsing the *Bibliography*.

For this reviewer living in Newcastle (as far back as 1880 'the very hotbed of radicalism and ultra-democratic notions') browsing this *Bibliography* has been time well spent. For many archivists, librarians, historians and other scholars *Communism in Australia: A Resource Bibliography* will be indispensable.

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Manuals

Ellen Ellis, *Preserving Ourstory: Keeping the Archives of Women's Organisations/ Tohungia Nga Korero Mo Nga Puni Wahine.* Wellington, Women's Studies, Victoria University of Wellington, 1994. ISBN 0 475 11031 5. NZ$12.50 (available from the publisher, PO Box 600 Wellington, New Zealand).

In 1893 New Zealand led the world by granting women the suffrage and one hundred years later this important milestone was appropriately celebrated. Not surprisingly the centenary focused attention on women's organisations, especially those involved in the suffrage campaign and other political activities. Even less surprisingly it was discovered that the archives of such organisations often had either not survived or inadequately documented their history. *Preserving Ourstory* is an innovative attempt to prevent this situation happening in the future.

To encourage women's organisations to preserve the archives of women's activities for future use, Ellen Ellis has compiled a 'practical manual with simple guidelines for managing archives'. The text is short (47 pages) and the language straightforward. The coverage is comprehensive with sections

on all the key archival functions: setting up a program, creating a policy, conducting a survey, appraisal, accessioning, processing, storage and preservation. No prior knowledge of archival practice is assumed and every function is therefore clearly explained, all technical terms are defined and summaries are provided of complex processes. There are plenty of examples and organisations are encouraged to use these to create forms and documents suitable to their own situation.

Although primarily intended for women's organisations *Preserving Ourstory* will provide a very useful source of advice and information for any community organisation interested in preserving its archives. Anniversaries typically make organisations think about documenting their histories but most lack the resources to employ professional staff and to maintain their own repositories. Collecting archives on the other hand usually cannot be actively involved in organising archives programs for their depositors. Ellen Ellis understands this very well and her manual encourages organisations to deposit their archives with an appropriate institution while at the same time giving them the confidence to undertake programs and take responsibility for them to the extent of their ability. In other words she is equipping record creators to cooperate with institutions for the mutual benefit of both parties and in the interests of the documentary heritage.

I strongly recommend *Preserving Ourstory* for anyone seeking or having to deliver basic archival advice. The text is set out in a way which makes it easy to read but it could also be used most profitably as a basis for short introductory workshops. The 'Getting Help' section contains mostly New Zealand information but the ASA's own leaflets and publications could be substituted to provide the corresponding data for Australian readers and users. The list of recommended reading is brief and it is a shame that the second edition of *Keeping Archives* is attributed to Judith Evans, not Ellis, and that *Practical Archivist* does not get a mention. These are minor quibbles which do not detract from the contribution that Ellen Ellis has made to the archival community by producing a very basic manual which encourages a positive attitude to archive keeping and which empowers non archivists to understand the commonsense that underlies its practice.

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Nancy E. Elkington, editor, *RLG Archives Microfilming Manual.* California, USA, The Research Libraries Group, Inc., 1994. 208 pp. US$45.00 plus postage (available from Distribution Services Center, The Research Libraries Group, Inc., 1200 Villa Street, Mountain View, CA 94041–1100 USA).

This manual is an invaluable resource for those organisations intending to launch a microfilm project or program. It provides a comprehensive and very pragmatic guide to all the major components of preservation microfilming of archival materials. The publication is the result of the RLG Archives Preservation Microfilming Project (APMP) and follows the 1992 publication of the *RLG Preservation Microfilming Handbook.* The APMP was a cooperative microfilming project involving fifteen institutions in the United States. In order to improve the level of understanding about the various stages involved in preservation microfilming in archives, the authors of the manual set out to 'articulate some of the principles and activities central to a successful preservation project to microfilm archival materials' (p. 3). The specific stages in the process are discussed in depth in separate chapters, each written by a different author/authors. They include vendor selection and use, archival material preparation, bibliographic and archival control, microfilming procedures and guidelines, inspection and quality control, post filming procedures, and issues for future digitisation.

The text begins with a brief overview of management issues. The concepts are organised under broad categories including preservation priorities, cost factors, infrastructure, administration, assessment and funding opportunities—illustrating the point that a preservation microfilming project can have a major impact on an institution, affecting organisation and staffing, daily operations and organisational priorities. The authors introduce the important point that 'there are few parallels between the range of activities leading up to and including the filming of books and serials and all the associated activities leading up to the microfilming of archival and manuscript materials'. The recurrent emphasis on this issue is particularly important as underestimating the time for microfilming of archival materials is all too common.

Having decided that microfilming is the best option, the first step is to choose a vendor. Chapter two suggests a number of ways to ensure that the film produced by a service bureau meets the needs and requirements of the owning institution. Questions about previous experience in preservation microfilming, asking for references and sample filming are all essential tools in evaluating filming services. The section on evaluating vendor performance

raises an important point which could have done with greater emphasis: that the repository needs to maintain its own quality control log. This often neglected issue necessitates employing staff who know what to look for, or training existing staff. A comprehensive guide to preparing the contract is included, and a sample contract covering all the points is included in Appendix four.

Preparing archival collections to be filmed is the subject of chapter three. This complex operation is described in great detail and with many recommendations for how best to handle particular materials. Attention is drawn to the point that one of the more common mistakes made in archival microfilming projects is to 'under budget for activities associated with making a collection camera-ready'. In the APMP cost study, which is included in appendix eight, preparation tasks (excluding targeting) 'averaged more than thirty-eight hours for two linear feet of material—more than the time spent in all other activities combined' (p. 27).

A brief guide to archival and bibliographic control issues forms the nucleus for chapter four. A helpful hint here is to alert potential users, librarians and archivists, via a note on the bibliographic record, to the fact that material is being prepared for microfilming as soon as the decision to film is made. If the microfilm is going to be made available through interlibrary loan, researchers may be saved the expense of travel. As with the earlier chapters, it is useful to note the many associated tasks created by the decision to microfilm.

Chapter five focuses on microfilming procedures and lays out the technical difficulties in reformatting materials that are not uniform or serial in nature. While the manual presumes that microfilming will be contracted out, it is essential that the project manager has a clear understanding of the technical process and how to overcome difficulties associated with archival materials. The 'Basic Microfilming Work Flow' (p. 60–62) is useful information for the novice project manager.

Film inspection is the next step in the microfilming process, and the key to quality assurance. Chapter six provides detailed instructions on setting up an inspection area and routine, what to look for, and how to conduct inspection measurements. The readers attention is drawn again to the need for recordkeeping: disputes about the quality of the microfilm product can only be resolved by referring to the repository inspection record. Another point made is the need for ongoing inspection of the stored camera negatives. Post inspection operations including box labelling, reversal of camera-readiness,

storage or disposal of original material, and storage of the master negative, are the subject of chapter seven, completing the microfilming cycle.

The final chapter is a recognition of the growing interest in digitising material for enhanced access and use. It looks at how to produce microfilm that can be easily and economically scanned and digitised in future. The best guarantee of both digital image quality and cost containment is to produce microfilm that meets very high technical standards.

The series of appendices include a number of items that flesh out ideas raised in individual chapters, such as how to handle scrapbooks, options for splicing, a sample contract, the cost study report, and a discussion on polysulphide treatments. Also included are a set of targets and technical guidelines to be followed in the production of preservation microfilm of archival materials. The technical guidelines are based on those published in the RLG Preservation Microfilming Handbook, with modifications to address the special needs of archival records.

One of the appendices, the 'APMP Cost Study' (appendix eight), warrants special mention. Conducted over a multi-year period, this report collects information specific to microfilming archival collections as distinct from microfilming bound materials and by doing so reinforces the differences in preservation microfilming of these disparate formats. This detailed study is particularly useful in drawing attention to the many minor tasks involved in preparation and showing how much time they can actually take.

The manual is well laid out and the concepts clearly articulated. The flow of the contents provides a logical sequence to follow. While most of the information has been known for some time, the strength of this manual is that it brings theoretical, management and technical issues together in the one text. By combining the experiences of the many authors, it makes a remarkable contribution to the archival and library professions, and could help the reader steer clear of the costly 'learning experiences' commonly associated with such endeavours. While targeting organisations at the stage of considering microfilming projects, the wealth of experience represented in this publication makes it recommended reading for anyone involved in microfilm programs.

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Conferences and Seminars

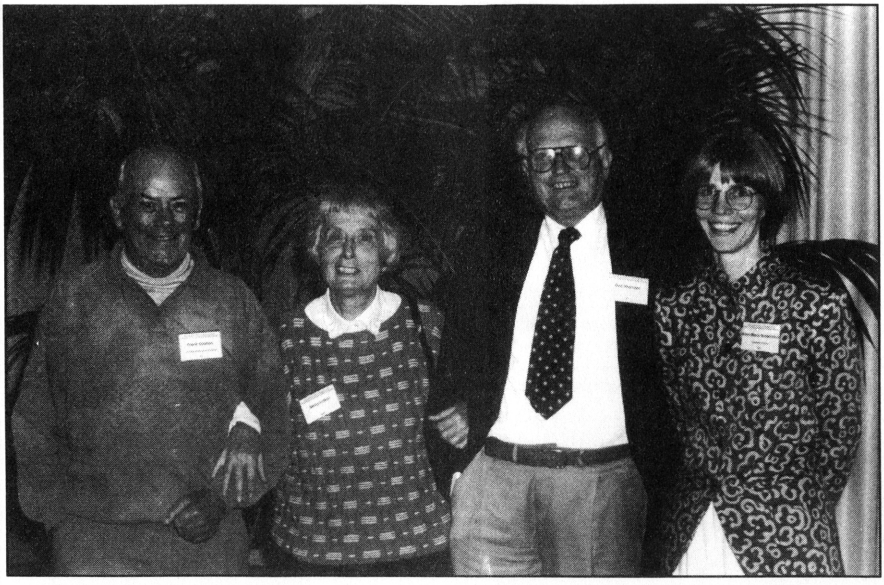
The Annual Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists Inc., Canberra, 26–28 July 1995.

The latest ASA conference provided a chance to reflect on the achievements of twenty years and to identify the issues to take on into the future through its theme of the 'Image and Future of the Profession'. Some delegates seemed disappointed that they did not leave the conference with a neat package of issues, answers and future directions. However, it would be an enormous mistake to blame 'the Conference' or some other vague 'them' for this. The conference reflected the state of mind of the profession and the Society. Richard Cox referred to this in his conference summation. We are confused about our identity, we have not achieved everything we would like to, and our considerable achievements are buried under self-doubt. A conference can raise the issues, but the results come afterwards, through enthusiastic leadership and the future participation of every member.

A positive development was that in 1995, speakers from outside the profession showed some understanding of archival activities, even if one or two were rather obviously adding *archivists* where their notes had previously said *records managers*. This showed an improvement in the recognisability of the profession since the Melbourne conference in 1993, where even careful briefing had not removed the conviction that archivists were some esoteric breed of librarians who merely cared for old pieces of paper that no-one else wanted.

The conference opened with reflections on the Society's origins and achievements. Baiba Berzins' observation that the Society's objectives have not been re-examined in twenty years gave food for thought. Andrew Lemon remembered that context is beloved of archivists as he defied a warning that the origins of the ASA were not of intrinsic interest to members and gave his account of the Society's early years. With a large proportion of members joining in the last five years, delegates did want to hear about the Society's background. Questions asked showed that many of the early interests and concerns, such as a permanent secretariat, profile of the profession, educational issues and professional membership, are still present.

A snappy presentation of the outcomes of the 'Directions for the ASA' workshop which had been held prior to the conference would have followed well on this promising start. Unfortunately, either one day had been insufficient or the facilitator was insufficiently skilled to formulate clear



Left to right: The Society's newest Fellow, Frank Strahan with existing fellows Nancy Lutton and Bob Sharman, and its only Laureate, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich. ASA Conference, Canberra. July 1995.

outcomes. I participated in the workshop and was aware that there had been much more positive and productive discussion than this report reflected. Incidentally, there was a tendency throughout the workshop and the conference to assume that 'the ASA' and 'the profession' were interchangeable terms. I hope that there will be some further development of the workshop material, with a fuller account given to the membership.

The keynote address would have been better placed near the beginning of the conference, rather than the end of the last day, to give more opportunity for reflection and discussion on Richard Cox's theme of establishing the importance of maintaining an adequate documentary record by educating children through literature, television and other popular media. It seemed to be a somewhat peripheral choice of keynote address, although it contained the underlying idea drawn out by the commentators of the need to clarify exactly what it is that archivists do, so that its importance can be conveyed to a world in danger of losing its memory.

The presentation by Bill Nicol, an image and marketing expert, was a highlight of the conference. Here was someone who professed to know very

little about the nuts and bolts of the profession, but who was able to suggest a wide variety of strategies and approaches for marketing a small organisation with limited resources. If nothing else emerged during the conference, it was that we are incredibly preoccupied with our image, with our eternal references to the logo and our complaints that nobody knows what we do. This has been a concern for years, but action from within the ranks has only been moderately effective, so perhaps it is time to look for some outside expertise and a fresh approach.

Humphrey McQueen and Michael McKernan presented entertaining accounts of their experiences as users of archives. We smiled and shuddered at wistful recollections of a past where it was possible for a researcher to be locked in alone with wine, cheese and all the archives to browse at will. However, their archival wish lists highlighted the formidable difficulties we face in making archives accessible to users who believe that in this electronic age, information should be instantaneously available with minimal effort on their part.

The Educators' Forum held before the conference was very successful, judging by the enthusiastic summary presented, dealing with continuing education, competency based training, educating for technology and a comparison with archival education in the United States. Plans were laid for future similar meetings.

I was delighted by the inclusion of excellent presentations by current archives students on international issues. This move to involve students more closely with the profession is to be applauded and will encourage their future participation. Students have the luxury of being able to explore a wide variety of interesting areas. This was reflected in Tham thi Bich Hai's discussion of the massive problems in gaining control of public recordkeeping and archives in Vietnam with its chequered recent history, Peter Sharpham's account of the impact of Luciana Duranti on the profession and Sophie Papadopoulos' research into archives and public recordkeeping in developing African nations.

The case study session provoked enthusiastic debate, especially considering the difficulty of conducting a discussion in a filled lecture hall. There was some criticism that the case study itself missed the essential issues for a conference about the future of the profession, but it certainly raised some real issues for an electronic age, including custody, access, copyright, the role of the archivist and the nature and integrity of the archival record.

The ASA Special Interest Group sessions were held on the day before the conference. It is always difficult to program these without drawing out proceedings. However, perhaps future thought could be given to holding the Electronic Records SIG meeting at a separate time, since it is of interest to such a wide range of members. This year's session included particularly interesting presentations on the progress made by a number of major institutions.

Richard Cox's conference summary commented on the negative tone he had perceived in many of the conference sessions, and urged the profession to dwell on its positive achievements, and to have confidence in defining and publicising its role.

The conference was very smoothly run, with catering, venues and timing all well-organised, although it amazes me that experienced venues like the Hyatt still have difficulty with sound and climate control. The committee had paid great attention to the details which promote a successful event. The 1995 conference provided a potentially useful basis for the ASA to plan towards its next twenty years.

Jenny Edgecombe
Records Manager, University of Western Australia

Society of American Archivists 59th Annual Meeting, Washington, 28 August – 3 September 1995.

At a conference with more than 1 500 people and often six sessions running concurrently, it is possible that no two people will have had the same experiences. Indeed, on occasions I felt there were two or three conferences on at the same time in the same venue. What follows are my impressions of the conference that I went to.

Prior to the SAA meeting I attended the meeting of the International Council on Archives Provisional Section on University Archives (which now incorporates the Research Institution Archives) which met on 28 and 29 August, first at Howard University and then at the beautiful American Institute of Physics. About thirty-five people were present, from the US, Canada, South America, Europe and Scandinavia, not to mention the three Australians, Gavan McCarthy, Glenda Acland and myself.

The topics for the two days were: 'Towards Institutional Power for Archives', 'Support Services for Managing the Academic Record' and 'How Researchers Communicate in the Electronic Age'. Each session consisted of a number of papers offering particular views on the challenges facing university archives. All the papers were of interest, and demonstrated a wide divergence of opinion on the nature, role and functions of an archives in a university. The discussion following the papers, and in particular the debate surrounding the draft 'Guidelines for College and University Archives' by Dr Frank Scheelings of Vrije Universiteit Brussels, showed the difficulty of gaining agreement on quite basic matters in an international context.

It is fair to say that the Australians made their presence felt, not least by the excellent papers presented by Glenda Acland and Gavan McCarthy. The creation and maintenance of international professional links is not easy and nothing really can replace personal contact, but some steps have been taken in ensuring that best advantage is made of contemporary electronic media. An experimental World Wide Web home page has been established for the ICA/SUV (URL http://www.usyd.edu.au/su/archives/ica_suv). In addition a listserv for Science Technology and Medicine archives has been started (send administration instructions to: majordomo@asap.unimelb.edu.au, postings to: stama@asap.unimelb.edu.au).

For me the SAA meeting commenced on Wednesday 30 August with a Practicum on Preserving Electronic Records conducted by members of the staff of the Center for Electronic Records at Archives II in Maryland. While the Archives II building can only be described as state of the art, the intellectual approach of the Center for electronic records was a disappointment. There was a marked unwillingness to pursue discussion on post (or non) custodial roles for archives in relation to electronic records. The concentration was apparently entirely on the acquiring of objects (tapes) and making them last. Much of the discussion centred on information rather than records, and the matter of appraisal was inadequately considered. It was particularly significant to see the NARA attitude (or at least that of some staff members) to electronic records at the very time the long running 'PROFS' case was resolved. One staff member said they hated what the 'PROFS case has done to the Center'. (The PROFS case/s revolve around the status of the electronic mail generated in the Executive Office of the President of the United States.) It seemed to me that the outcome of the case would simply require NARA to be concerned with records which are some of the most significant records, in terms of public accountability, created in the US.

Rather than attempt to give a detailed account of each of the sessions I attended, I will make some comments on what were the most significant to me. My particular interests were electronic records and privacy issues, as will be clear from what follows.

Margaret Hedstrom's 'The Electronic Records Strategy Task Force Report: What It Says and What It Means' should have been the keynote address for the meeting. It amounted to an expert account of the challenges facing the SAA and therefore the archival profession. I hope it will be published in the *American Archivist*. Without wishing to appear overly nationalistic, Glenda Acland's paper on the Australian perspective on the same report at the same session deserves mention and is also worthy of publication. Apart from the intellectual content, Glenda's excellent use of visual aids revealed herself to be a closet 'Trekkie'.

On the matter of electronic records in general, and the 'PROFS' case in particular, the Government Records Institutional Section managed something of a coup in having both the lawyer who represented the Public Citizen Litigation Group and the staff attorney from the Department of Justice speak on Armstrong v. Executive Office of the President. The case had only been resolved within days of their speaking. Given the nature and importance of the case I had assumed the session would be amongst the best attended of the entire SAA meeting. In anticipation of this it was moved to a larger room, but the attendance, while not small, was not what I would have expected. The case cuts to the centre of the nature of records, and of archives and public accountability. I hope the relatively poor attendance was a reflection of poor advertising of the session.

My interests in privacy issues were served by the Roundtable meeting on Privacy and Confidentiality and the session titled 'Private Lives in Open Records'. While both were interesting occasions, with lively debate and relevant examples I came away with a feeling that the emerging view of privacy as a right to be informed of and to control the use of information about oneself was not widely understood in the US. Opinions expressed strongly reflected the view of manuscript curator rather than archivists dealing with administrative records. It seemed to me, perhaps naively, that many of the conundrums presented in the sessions simply vanished by consulting the individuals concerned (where, of course that was possible). I also gained the impression, and I stress that it was only an impression, the International Privacy Principles were not widely known or understood by those present.

There were other sessions dealing with electronic records and, of course, the Internet. The titles were indicative of the subjects covered, for example: 'Crimes against the system: Legal and Ethical Issues of Electronic Communications' and 'From the System Perspective: Managing and Preserving Electronic Records in the Real World'. The former also touched on matters relating to privacy, while the latter had an excellent real life account of electronic records in a Canadian insurance company. The session on the Internet (which I could not attend) should have won a prize for the best session title: 'Toto, We Aren't in Kansas Anymore: Issues of Access for Archives on the Internet'.

Part of the SAA meeting was that Saturday 2 September was to be 'International Archives Day'. While the entire meeting did not have a theme, this one day brought together a number of sessions on archives in an international context. Many countries were represented at the meeting, and were identified at the formal dinner. While I have not attended previous meetings, and so cannot judge to what extent the Washington meeting was different, it seemed to me that having a variety of national perspectives represented gave depth to the proceedings in many sessions. A natural bias towards things Australian notwithstanding, I felt that there was very strong interest in Russell Kelly's paper titled 'Archives Description: The Australian Scene—More Similarity than Diversity?'. Needless to say, some emphasis was given to the series system, and it was this which sparked most discussion. Indeed, Wendy Duff of the University of Pittsburgh who chaired the session, suggested the need for a pre-meeting workshop in 1996 on the series system. Australia would seem to have a marketing opportunity for San Diego.

By the end of six and a half days of ICA/SUV and SAA meetings the prospect of having to attend another meeting on anything remotely connected with archives was not appealing. However, I was left with a number of strong images of archives and archivists in the US. Perhaps chief amongst them is that of the newly appointed Archivist of the United States, John W. Carlin, addressing a tour group from the SAA meeting at Archives II. He made it abundantly plain that he intended to make major changes to the culture and functioning of NARA. My thought at the time was, if this is what he is saying in public, what is he saying in private? It will be fascinating to watch.

Tim Robinson
Assistant University Archivist, University of Sydney

Tim Robinson has presented us with an overview of that slice of the SAA conference he attended. This review is focused on two of the sessions I attended (one of which Tim has already singled out). The sessions were 'Electronic Records Strategy Task Force Report: Strategic Action for the Profession' and 'Educating Experts: Establishing an Effective Continuing Education Network for Archivists in North America'. Although the subject of each session was quite different they both raised questions of fundamental importance to the profession and professional societies—not just in the USA.

The third goal of the SAA's 1993 Strategic Plan is 'To position the SAA to lead the archival profession in advancing electronic records issues'. The Society commissioned the Electronic Records Strategies Task Force to report on ways to implement this goal. The Task Force reported (in a concise four pages) in May this year. The Task Force articulated the following assumptions having agreed that it wanted the SAA to be visible and forceful in the electronic records arena:

- most organisational records will be created and/or communicated electronically within five years;
- records creators will define how records are created and influence whether and where records are kept;
- SAA must serve electronic records keepers whose primary affiliation is not as archivists;
- it is imperative to intervene prior to creation of records or early in life cycles; and
- SAA's message must appeal to creators, system designers, vendors and implementors.

The Task Force has accepted that the National Information Infrastructure will be ubiquitous and used within two years, arguing that it represents an unprecedented opportunity because all services will be delivered on it; if archives miss the opportunities it presents they will be marginalised; and archives will become virtual and distributed.

The Task Force identified the following political and economic changes: growing concerns about the vulnerability of privacy in an electronic world, growing demands for accountability and citizens' rights in information, and inequitable access to information and technology. Also as a new generation

enters the workforce, archivists will have different needs—some will be competent with technology (usually those entering the profession) while some will not. There will be an on-going need for training, and archivists will face increasing competition from others with better skills.

Building unity and developing a consistent message is a real challenge for the profession and the SAA. Archivists have a brief opportunity to assert authority over electronic records (because we are knowledgeable and are independent authorities on long term value) but we have to act now.

The Task Force recommended that the SAA:

- turn its attention to people shaping policy and practice outside the SAA (policy makers, standards bodies, software vendors and engineers, research and development organisations, discipline or profession based practices);
- change its modus operandi (structure, values and behaviour); and
- adopt proactive strategies and tactics.

It will know that it is successful when it attracts new members who are in the electronic records environment; when it is of value to individuals involved in archives work whether or not they are archivists; and when it develops, promulgates and validates best practice.

The speakers in the session 'Educating Experts: Establishing an Effective Continuing Education Network for Archivists in North America' outlined something of the history of the SAA and its involvement in continuing education and asked to what the SAA was aspiring and what had been achieved.

The SAA has been discussing education and continuing education since 1910. It started running pre-conference workshops in the early 1970s. Tim Ericson, the first speaker, said that the question about continuing education is from what, to where and on what route? He argued that continuing education is ill-defined and that the SAA delivers both continuing education and basic education but that the advanced group misses out. He also argued that for every problem there is a workshop and that the SAA focuses on means and not on goals. Education efforts are uncoordinated at every possible level and there is little cooperation, for example between the SAA and regional associations; between regional associations and between the SAA and graduate programs.

For Ericson the focus is on delivery of programs and not on planning and evaluation. The SAA has not identified gaps and duplication. There is a lack of any meaningful identification of needs. For example, the SAA needs to know what employers value and what they need, and what impact more formal programs will have on continuing education. As continuing education efforts are aimed at practising archivists—those people who are already converted—he asked why groups pivotal to the success of the profession are not targeted, for example, resource allocators. The SAA's continuing education efforts need to be based on better information (survey members and others), be broadly defined, and offer a menu of solutions.

David B. Gracy II followed Ericson and had some equally critical and analytical comments to offer. He said that education is about what we want to be and the skills we want to exercise. From this vantage point the SAA's continuing education offerings indicated that the Society's members are all about basics. He wondered whether the point of the existing continuing education offerings was solely to assist upgrading of members and to support the SAA's need for income. He argued that the SAA must change its mindset about what archivists are and the purpose of continuing education and added that this would not be achieved by the workshop syndrome.

To Gracy, education is not democratic—it is about passing on knowledge. The SAA and the profession needs to find the best ways of passing this knowledge along. He then posed a series of questions:

- How do we conceive ourselves and the education we want and need?
- What business are we in? (Until we have the answer to this we cannot decide on appropriate education.)
- Are we in the business of managing a resource and asset?
- Do we have customers whom we can charge?
- Is service our business?
- Is our business a technical one or history, or communication, and is our business fundamental to humanity because it constitutes the most concentrated source of experience?
- Who do we serve? All time? Contemporary society? Our employers?

Gracy argued that the SAA and the profession must emphasise one or two and weave these through the curriculum; currently it strives for too much and serves too many people. Gracy concluded by saying that the SAA can not provide education for all constituencies and that the SAA and educators have a responsibility to the profession as well as to individuals. He called for a new and precise definition of continuing education and argued that relying on practitioners will perpetuate technique based education.

Eric Pomeroy, the last speaker, talked mainly about the experience of the Mid-West Archives Conference in offering workshops. One observation he made about continuing education was that he saw it as the responsibility of the individual—the corollary being that providers should not bend over backwards because if people do not demonstrate a commitment they should be left at the margins.

The discussion session was lively as it was triggered by Richard Cox who asked what the effect would be on the profession if continuing education as currently practised stopped. He contended that it would have no effect on professional practice and knowledge because what is on offer is not continuing education it is training and stroking.

In summary the sessions were of value and interest because they were analytical, reflective and focused on the future. The speakers and participants demonstrated a willingness to be constructively critical and the desire to mobilise the profession to take action—hopefully the results will be noteworthy.

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich
Australian Archives, Canberra

Beyond the Archives Wars. Accommodating Differing Professional Views. School of Information, Library and Archives Studies, University of New South Wales, Sydney, 29 June 1995.

'Beyond the Archives Wars' was one of a number of events organised to take advantage of the visit to Australia earlier this year of Professor Richard Cox. Three issues were debated during the course of the day: The Electronic Revolution: Archival Bonanza or Catastrophe?; What is our Business? Keeping Archives or Ensuring Evidence?; and University Education: 'Lone Arrangers' or Consulting Specialists? The principal speaker, Dr Richard J. Cox provided

the 'US Perspective and Comment' at the end of each session. The final session was a general panel discussion on prepared questions from participants.

It was explained that the various speakers would be deliberately espousing particular (sometimes extreme) viewpoints (not necessarily their own) for the purpose of debate.

Alan Howell (State Library of New South Wales) presented the case for the 'Archival Bonanza of the Electronic Revolution'. He outlined some of the 'unexpected riches' of the electronic revolution including 'miniaturisation, utilisation, democratisation and fidelity'. He saw an increasing role for the archivist in the electronic environment to meet the 'demand to extract the useful information from the mass of information available'.

Adrian Cunningham (National Library of Australia), in what was the best and most thought provoking paper of the day, presented the argument for the 'Archival Catastrophe of the Electronic Revolution'. He raised concerns that the archival strategies being developed for electronic records while useful, ignored long-term issues and problems and that the narrow focus of the current debate distorted archival discourse. He argued that Jenkinson's archival mission 'To ensure the moral defence of the record' should be seen in broad societal rather than in narrow organisational terms. The latter approach emphasised the administrative and operational values of records at the expense of the social, cultural and symbolic values. Adrian raised further concerns about the long-term viability of post-custodial policies, the loss of functionality with every migration of data and the ability of new technology to read digital media in the future. Richard Cox concluded the session by outlining the reactions of archivists to the introduction of electronic technology and the consequent changes in the administration of various archival functions. He speculated that if archivists adapted to the new technology there would be opportunities 'to preserve better archival records; (to have) access to increased resources and to be (placed) at the hub of the information society with something to offer'.

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich (Australian Archives) opened the debate for 'What is our Business? Keeping Archives or Ensuring Evidence?'. She suggested that the role of 'capturing evidence of transactions' limited the 'purpose, depth, scope and meaning' of the archival profession. She reinforced Adrian Cunningham's argument concerning the significance of the symbolic value of records using examples from the holdings of the Australian War Memorial. Tim Robinson (University of Sydney) presented a cogent argument that 'Ensuring Evidence' is the business of the archival profession. He emphasised

the importance of accountability and ensuring evidence, as the framework in which we should approach electronic records. He maintained that the archival profession should not be expending energy on determining which records to destroy but on identifying evidential records. Richard Cox explored the question 'What is our Business?' by concentrating on the key archival function of appraisal. He discussed the various, often conflicting purposes of appraisal; the challenges to modern appraisal (quantity of records, lack of agreement about archival mission, complexity of modern organisations and records); and the importance of appraisal as the dictator of subsequent archival activities. He reaffirmed the need to focus on appraising for evidence and then evaluating whether the evidence provides sufficient information for secondary research.

The final debate was on the purpose of university education. Anne Cooke (consultant and editor, *Practical Archivist*) discussed the educational requirements of 'Lone Arrangers'. While she considered that the 'workshop' format was an effective training mechanism for non professional staff she underlined the importance of university education programs for professional archivists. She felt that the current university courses provided graduates with sound basic archival skills but that a new approach was required to fully equip the 'Lone Arranger'. Such archivists are required to negotiate with employers for scarce resources. They need to have an understanding of such matters as management, accounting and public programs. Sigrid McCausland (University of Technology, Sydney) examined the educational requirements of 'Consulting Specialists'. She emphasised their need to have a thorough grounding in all archival principles and practices so they can exploit their 'specialist knowledge'. She identified a detailed knowledge of relevant legislation (evidence, privacy, freedom of information) as a necessary educational requirement for 'Consulting Specialists'. Richard Cox presented his final paper clearly stating that professional archivists should have graduate university qualifications. He discussed some of the challenges of archival education (the conflict of information v. historical science based archival programs and the need for research and continuing education). He outlined what he saw as the prime objectives of graduate archival education as 'educate for careers, not train for the present', 'provide state-of-the-market information' and 'prepare for changing the market'.

I found the day to be very interesting and worthwhile. The 'Beyond the Archives Wars' debates deserved a wider audience. I appreciated the opportunity to hear discussion on genuine differences of opinion on crucial professional issues. Adrian Cunningham's comments regarding the 'corporate

myopia' of some electronic record archivists and Anne-Marie Schwirtlich's refocus on the 'symbolic value' of records crystallised some of my own thoughts on these issues. My only disappointment was that while Richard Cox presented very good papers outlining the US perspective (and his personal perspective) on the topics of debate, he did not really respond to the comments (often challenging) of previous speakers.

Fiona Burn
Australian Archives, Sydney

Educating for the Future. University of Canberra, Library and Information Studies Program Seminar, Canberra, 13–14 July 1995.

Taking advantage of the visit to Australia of Associate Professor Karen Drabenstott of the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, USA, the Library and Information Studies Program at the University of Canberra hosted a seminar which brought together academics and other interested individuals in the discipline of information services to consider the hypothesis 'Information is the resource of the twenty-first century, and information management is the challenge'. The speakers and participants, which represented universities, archives, libraries and other concerned agencies both overseas and interstate, had all been invited to respond to the question: 'How do we prepare emerging professionals to meet the challenge?'.

The seminar was opened by the University of Canberra's Vice-Chancellor, Professor Don Aitkin, who introduced Karen Drabenstott as the keynote speaker. Her message was to represent the vibrant vision of her School of Information and Library Studies (SILS) for information and library studies, with emphasis on the Kellogg funded CRISTAL-ED Project i.e. the 'Coalition on Reinventing Information Science, Technology and Library Education'.

The mandate that flows from the SILS vision included educating knowledge resource management professionals for the twenty-first century, designing new systems to support information access and collaboration; and to be a *skunk works* for the application of information technology to the 'knowledge mission' of the University. This term 'skunk works' created some interesting debate with translations such as 'task force' and 'think-tank' not getting much support. Subsequent research has it that the origin of the term emanates from Li'l Abner's and Billy Barnsmell's illicit still making Kickapoo Joy Juice. (An acceptable contemporary interpretation from authoritative sources defines a

'skunk works' as an informal, experimental group working together to achieve innovative designs or products).

The Kellogg CRISTAL-ED Project, which is central to the SILS current activity and the principal subject of Karen Drabenstott's paper, encompasses the development, creation and application of digital (virtual) libraries; running pilot projects to support research and continuing education; applying collaborative ideas to distance learning; and, perhaps, creating a federated (virtual) school. Overall, the impression given by Karen Drabenstott was one of enthusiasm and major innovation in the education domain of information and library studies, with initiatives born of funding that made us all somewhat covetous.

Michael Piggott, from the Australian Archives in Canberra, had been asked to speak on *The Needs of Industry: One Employer's Perspective.* Having recognised his commitment to the standard public service disclaimer, Michael recast the subtitle of his presentation to 'One employer's employee's perspective .... Discarding some generally accepted assumptions of the employer's role in the development and delivery of graduate programs as being 'anything but clear and direct', he proceeded, after describing the Australian Archives' induction and in-house training and development schemes, to list the ideal attributes now sought by the Archives as a prospective employer. These attributes included being a computer literate, personable individual who can recognise recordkeeping values, and differentiate between information and records.

After lunch, Brenda McConchie, the Executive Director, AIMA Training and Consultancy Services spoke on *Managing the New Environment: Skills for Tomorrow.* Having listed issues that now dominate dialogue in librarian circles, she emphasised the turmoil that is evident in the library domain, where organisational cultures are changing, greater demands are being placed on people skills, flexibility and adaptability within libraries, and the rejection of complacency and narrow, specialist competencies.

Dr Mark Balnaves, a lecturer in the Faculty of Communication at the University of Canberra, in his presentation on *Educators and Cyberspace,* in a very interactive session, described his pilot project which involves establishing usage patterns, including distance learning, in the broadband network facilities being introduced into the homes of a new Canberra suburb.

The second day started with a presentation by Vicki Williamson, the University Librarian at Curtin University of Technology. The characteristics

Vicki saw as necessary in the product of today's education system included being mobile, flexible, and able to adapt to new circumstances. She advocated being literate and articulate communicators, preferably in more than one language, and having the ability to diagnose and evaluate client needs as being, similarly, essential attributes. Vicki also endorsed what some saw as a contradictory requirement (which engendered a subsequent lively and rather contentious discussion), the testing of competency skills, annualising of working hours, demonstrated proficiency in related technology, and commitment to participatory management.

The second representative of the employers' perspective was the Canberra Manager of Hermes Precisa Australia, Laurie Smith. Laurie, rather gently, reminded the academics that the costs of training new entries into business organisations to make them a productive and profit-positive member are high. The demand, he suggested, was for articulate, literate, flexible and adaptable individuals who have a commitment to the organisation and its product. The inference was that these attributes in graduates were, in reality, quite rare. He asked for programs which profiled courses to meet specific business needs—and an assurance that the educational institutions are both willing and able to meet those needs if those institutions are to be relevant in today's dynamic marketplace.

Dagmar Parer, also from the Australian Archives, in discussing the disparate processes of information provision, claimed that the apparent convergence of principles and methodologies were illusory. The real need was for standards which ensure transparency in information provision without the users having to be aware of service source, or form, or process.

The closing event of the seminar involved ten minute presentations given by a panel which comprised Elaine Eccleston, University of Canberra, Carmel Maguire, University of New South Wales, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Australian Archives, and Colin Steele, University Librarian, Australian National University. Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, in a succinct but profound ten minutes, summarised the attributes that should be developed in preparing emerging professionals for the information challenges of the future. She noted that communication skills were essential—the ability to listen, negotiate, analyse, and articulate. The realities of increasing intangibility of the practice of 'work' and institutions required an acceptance of a commitment to life-long learning. Denying this raised the awful spectre of 'Ignorance, Intellectual Impoverishment and Impotence'.

The seminar, as an innovative gesture to bring together disparate educators and employers, with a common commitment to recognise and develop a mutual understanding of the needs of the community, and a product that is able to accommodate those needs, was a success. Not the least evidence of its success was the intensity of controversy in debate, and a thoughtful departure.

Anthony and Elaine Eccleston
Respectively Consultant and Lecturer, University of Canberra

Exhibitions

John Curtin: A Man of Peace, a Time of War. Parliament House, Canberra, 5 July – 3 September 1995. Curated by Rowena MacDonald. An Australian Archives Exhibition developed with the John Curtin Centre, Perth.

'The Wheel of Labor crushes all opposition,' proclaims a NSW Labor advertisement of the 1930s. A vast and menacing wheel rolls relentlessly forward, driving the fat men of Conscription, Reaction and High Food Prices before it. John Curtin and William McKell are the two advertised speakers, to be heard at the Sydney Town Hall: members of parliamentary Labor parties, and just one spoke in this mighty engine of working class politics, along with the trade unions, the branches, the youth movement, and Labor's own radio station and newspaper. Curtin's position as the architect of Labor unity is plain here, but it is as the leader of one class.

A decade later a slide flashes onto the screen of Brisbane cinemas. 'You can't have Curtin as Leader unless you vote Labor' it proclaims. There is no talk here of class warfare, of the division of society into necessarily opposing forces. Curtin's stature as the greatest Australian of his day is clear.

The latest travelling exhibition launched by the Australian Archives, 'John Curtin: A Man of Peace, a Time of War', triumphantly explores the fascinating history of how the anti-conscriptionist, soapbox socialist and reformed alcoholic John Curtin became Australia's greatest wartime leader and, in the view of many, our greatest Prime Minister yet. Drawing principally on the Archives' collections and developed in association with the John Curtin Centre, Perth, it negotiates the very difficult ground of political exhibitions, based necessarily on mostly two-dimensional documentary material, with consummate skill.

The exhibition mixes manuscripts, posters, ephemera, newspapers and photographs, and also makes extensive use of sound and film. Four principal themes are explored, in four separate booths: the Australian home front in World War II, the war itself, Curtin's own life story, and his death in office just weeks before the final victory over Japan. I found it interesting to observe visitors to the exhibition during its showing at Parliament House, Canberra. Most spent a fair time browsing, and to many younger people this was clearly unfamiliar material. I heard two children about eight years old saying to their grandfather 'what do you mean, the Japanese bombed Darwin?' and I wondered (not for the first time) about the teaching of Australian history in schools.

Many visitors were interested in the video more than the documents on display. Although this is hardly surprising, given the dominance of television in popular culture, it perhaps also reflects the relative 'foregrounding' of the video monitors, with showcases housing manuscripts off to the side of the booths. This demurral aside, the exhibition has been well served by its designers, Melbourne-based Rosemary Simons and Stephen Goddard. The striking structure they have created to house the exhibition, which serves the utilitarian end of creating appropriate light conditions for the display of original manuscripts, also has a wonderfully appropriate air of make-ready minimalism. The tent-like roofs, reminiscent both of wartime camps and the canvas shanty towns of the Depression years, powerfully contextualise the material on display without overwhelming it.

Rowena MacDonald's text is full without being prolix, and quickly conveys the essence of this extraordinary life. The exhibition succeeds in giving visitors something of the flavour of the very different Australia of the 1930s and 1940s. I remember some time ago coming across a small story in a 1943 newspaper. 'What will you be doing on election night, Mrs Curtin?' the interviewer asked the wife of the Prime Minister. 'I'll get tea at 6,' she replied, 'and then we'll listen in to hear the results'. This was an Australia without the glitz and razzmatazz of election night fever, 1990s style. It was an Australia at war, but at the same time a simpler, more sedate Australia.

This said, the job of Prime Minister has never been simple. Our society and its governance may have become complex in ways that the authors of the federal constitution never dreamed of, but the Prime Ministership of Australia has always demanded an impossible set of talents and abilities. Perhaps more than any other incumbent in our near century of federal unity, John Curtin lived up to and exceeded the demands of this appalling yet so sought-after

job. This exhibition does him justice, and serves well the memory of the men and women of his Australia.

Michael Richards
National Library of Australia

An ideal city?: the 1912 competition to design Canberra. An Australian Archives/National Library/National Capital Planning Authority Exhibition, Canberra, Jun – Oct 1995 and Greenway Gallery, Hyde Park Barracks Museum, Sydney, Oct – Dec 1995. Principal Curatorial Adviser: Professor Emeritus John W. Reps.

Canberra is a planned city based on Walter Burley Griffin's plan. This leads me to ask 'What would Canberra be like if someone else's plan was used?', 'What were the other plans like?' and 'Was Burley Griffin's vision very much different to the others who entered the competition?'. This exhibition is both a great source of information and visual delights and greatly helps to answer such questions.

The Australian Federal Government's 1912 competition to design the capital of Australia resulted in 137 entries being submitted. The judges soon reduced the number to forty-six semifinalists. One of the themes of the exhibition is how these finalists in the Canberra competition reflected the town planning movements of the early twentieth century. One section of the exhibition summarises the then contemporary town planning movements and their influence on planning and conversely the influence particular cities such as Washington and Paris had on them. The features which strike the modern eye are the radial plans involving broad boulevards leading to significant public buildings or monuments and a grand European flavour pervading the public areas.

One significant feature of the exhibition is the presentation of copies of the forty-six semifinalists' principal designs. The judges in 1912 had similar photographic copies with them on their visit to the proposed site of Canberra. The copies are in two loose-leaf binders and seem to have been very popular since they allowed visitors to flick through the copies quickly to get an idea of the similarities and contrasts between the entries. Unfortunately the hinges had taken a battering and so one of the volumes was off being repaired when I visited. I managed to call in a few days later to see if it was back and disappointingly not only was it still away but also its companion volume

was off being repaired. The lesson for curators is to make sure that anything visitors are invited to touch or use is sturdy and if it has to be repaired to do it quickly. Visitors would rather look through a volume which has a rough repair than nothing at all.

The original plans on display by Agache, Griffiths, Coulter and Caswell, Saarinen and Burley Griffin are magnificent to look at and support well the exhibition's story of town planning and the design competition. There are excellent models of three entries and a tape recording of comments about particular entries. Overall the exhibition is interesting and well presented. There were some minor disappointments such as Marion Mahony Griffin's large drawings done for Burley Griffin. Information about some of the elevations was not well presented and a couple of them were mounted on a wall painted a similar colour resulting in them being 'lost'. A well designed and informative catalogue is available for purchase.

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