

# Reviews

Edited by Sue McKemmish

## Publications

**Dick Sargent**, *The National Register of Archives: An International Perspective. Essays in Celebration of the Fiftieth Anniversary of the NRA*. University of London, Institute of Historical Research, 1995. Published as Historical Research Special Supplement No. 13, June 1995. 103pp. ISSN 0950 3471. (Available free of charge from the Historical Manuscripts Commission, Quality House, Quality Court, Chancery Lane, London, WC2A 1HP, UK. Facsimile: 171 8313550.)

This book is deceptive. It is slim. Its long title, although accurate, lacks a catchy phrase to engage the casual browser, and the layout is conservative if not old-fashioned. However, despite its rather unprepossessing appearance, this book has much to offer archivists, not just here in Australia but all over the world. That is not to say that 'The National Register of Archives: An International Perspective' is an easy read. Indeed, it is not the sort of book that invites reading from cover-to-cover. However, for those keen to gain a view of the differences in archival infrastructure and practice across a number of western countries, it is worth making the attempt.

As the title suggests, the purpose of the book is to celebrate fifty years of the British National Register of Archives. The NRA sees itself as a world leader in 'putting historians and others in touch with archival source materials'. It has used this opportunity to present a history of the development of the NRA and the challenges it faces through computerisation, and to draw accounts from Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Sweden and the United States of America. The mix of English and non-English, European and non-European, and the addition of two perspectives from the Southern Hemisphere, adds much to the depth of the book. However, if it had been possible to include Asian and Middle Eastern perspectives, its contribution to archives internationally would have been significantly enhanced.

Dick Sargent, Assistant Keeper in charge of the National Register of Archives at the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, compiled the essays and wrote the history of the NRA, covering the background to its establishment in 1945, the appointment of the inaugural Registrar, Lieutenant-Colonel G. E. G. Malet, the achievements and frustrations of the early years and the challenges facing the NRA in the 1990s. Sargent has drawn heavily from various other accounts of the history of the Historical Manuscripts Commission, especially the work of Roger Ellis, to capture the flavour of the times and the context in which the NRA was founded.

Either by chance or direction, two key themes emerge during Sargent's account: the role of national archival infrastructure and the tools available for the processing and management of information. These themes subsequently influence the reading of the essays from other countries and contribute to the real strength of the book. In all cases contributors have indicated why a national register of archives was desired in their country and how it meshed with the archival structures that had evolved over time. In just about all cases this involved a discussion of archival legislation and the relationship between official government records and the records of private individuals and organisations. Although they came from widely different cultures and archival environments, what emerged was a common vision for all these archivists and archives. This vision is to provide considerably enhanced access to distributed collections of records at a national level. The paths to this end have been determined by local structures and local forces but interestingly have led to somewhat similar solutions. This, indeed, must augur well for the acceptance of an international vision for archivists and the convergence of nationally disparate systems of description and control to a set of fundamental data elements.

Sargent, in his account of the British NRA, talks frankly about the problems of computerising the manual indexes, control systems and finding aids that form the basis of the register. In particular he describes the problems in handling large databases, the primitive search tools that were available in the 1980s and the poor acceptance of the database by users. There is confidence in his essay, as well as in many others, that the evolution of database interrogation tools is proceeding so rapidly that this shortcoming will be addressed in the near future. However, a fundamental issue to be addressed by all is the development of tools that give users confidence that they have covered all possible avenues to finding collections and records of interest. As Sargent notes, the NRA staff are keen users of the computerised system because they 'know' what is in it and can use the computer as a tool to greatly

enhance searches. However, the general public user is at a significant disadvantage. To get the right answer you have to ask the right question. So the fundamental questions are: how do you find out which are the right questions and how do you know when you have the right answer?

In summary, this book is an excellent introduction to the international archival scene and a necessary handbook for overseas travellers. Graeme Powell, in his account of developments in Australia, is clear about our failure to unite as a profession behind the *Guide to Collections of Manuscripts relating to Australia*, particularly the failure of Australian Archives (in a previous era) to become a major player in the project. Our efforts, despite a keen beginning, are floundering at this time while other countries are positioning themselves to make the most of the communication revolution. I do not know how many archivists would be encouraged to visit Australia on the strength of our work in this field but, personally, I am very keen to visit South Africa to see their national register which integrates both private and official records.

Gavan McCarthy  
Australian Science Archives Project

**Hilary Golder**, *Documenting a Nation: Australian Archives—The First Fifty Years*, The Australian Archives and Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1994. 76 pp., ISBN 0644 33386 3. \$22.95 (available from Australian Archives, Canberra and AGPS bookshops).

In *Documenting a Nation* Hilary Golder has written a sharp, engaging summary of the retarded, stuttering growth of the Australian Archives. She shifts easily between the major debates to particular failures and triumphs. In many ways *Documenting a Nation* is a model for those many historians who labour through archives boxes (that I now know to be 'Type 1' and survivors of the test of Cyclone Tracy in 1974) unable to detach themselves from the accumulating detail. The manuscript that they finally submit to examiners and/or editors has every fact in, say, AA(Vic) MP 742, 336/1/1955, three boxes, items 1–15 (these files are concerned with Japanese war crimes in the Rabaul area). Sometimes, too, those conscientious labourers at austere archive tables become so immersed in the pages held by rusting pins that their prose begins to echo that of writers of another time. So they begin to use the phrases of careful clerks: 'it is therefore to be noted that the abovementioned. . .' and 'further to the previous paragraph. . .'. But Golder has the prose to match her attractive format and well-chosen, diverse illustrations. And it is pleasing to see that

this history of archives is not just a product of archives: Golder has used interviews and surveyed newspapers.

Pages 40 and 41 are the saddest in the book. The photograph top left is of the Nissen huts that housed the Canberra archives from 1953. Bottom left is a sketch of a splendid white building to complement what might have been its neighbours: the National Gallery, the High Court, the National Science and Technology Centre, and the National Library. The caption under the sketch is 'Proposed Australian Archives National Headquarters Building'. It was, of course, never built. The stolid dark grey repository was constructed in Mitchell, and the reading room and research facilities were included. The Mitchell repository, aggressively utilitarian in style and distant from all the other buildings central to the preservation and construction of national culture, helped define the role of the archives for Australians: the archives were for the storing of paper generated by the government and they were to be visited only by those with a determination to travel beyond the showgrounds and the racecourse.

By contrast, in Canada one wanders down Rue Wellington (a neat compromise between competing perceptions of nationhood) past the federal government buildings on Parliament Hill, the Supreme Court, and then there is a single building housing the National Archives of Canada and National Library. On some maps it is simply the 'National Archives'.

The National Archives of Canada proclaims itself the 'collective memory of a nation'. In the universal cliché of contemporary management its 'mission' is to acquire and preserve both 'private and public' records. As well as government records, it holds the papers of religious groups, poets, politicians, indigenous peoples and others. It preserves paintings, photographs and costumes. One of its proclaimed strengths (and housed separately in Ottawa) is its collection of cartoons and caricatures. In the Archives reading room I wanted to look at the records of those Canadian troops captured in Hong Kong so that I could make some comparisons with the Australians captured in Singapore. With only the distraction of the view across trembling leaves to the Ottawa River, I could work through the battalion diaries of the Royal Rifles of Canada, official government papers such as royal commission reports, and personal diaries. In Australia, similar records are likely to be dispersed through the Australian War Memorial, the Australian Archives in Canberra and Melbourne, and perhaps the National Library.

The National Archives of Canada by its location, its public activities and the range of its holdings is obviously concerned with broad issues of national



culture and identity. This is not to claim that what the Canadians have done is ideal. The Canadian system has its own deficiencies, and there are particular functions carried out much better in Australia. And they may be better because they are done separately. But the Canadians have been able to ensure that their National Archives is seen as more than a government storage vault where only the dedicated search for arcane information.

One of the strengths of Golder's book is that she consistently illuminates the tension in the history of the Australian Archives between 'warehouse' and 'treasure house'. Readers will be left with regret that Australians have missed opportunities to have an institution that, while it is primarily concerned with government records, also takes its place alongside those other institutions that are accepted as central (physically and mentally) in preserving the past, enriching the present, and helping determine the future.

Hank Nelson  
Australian National University

**Elizabeth Riddell**, editor, *With Fond Regards: Private Lives Through Letters*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1995. 134pp. ISBN 0 642 10656 8. \$24.95 (available from the National Library of Australia, Canberra).

In recent years the National Library and other Australian repositories have sought to more widely publicise their collections through exhibitions and the publication of guides and other works which illustrate the variety of records held by these institutions. *With Fond Regards*, compiled by Yvonne Cramer and edited and introduced by Elizabeth Riddell, consists of a selection of letters drawn from the personal papers collections of the National Library.

Altogether eighteen letter-writers (and receivers) are represented in *With Fond Regards*. The date range and the subject matter of their letters cover a wide variety of periods and topics. The collection begins with an eighteen page epistle by Sir Joseph Banks in 1773 and includes writers as diverse as Margaret Catchpole (life in NSW in the early 1800s), Ruby Madden (Imperial India in 1903), two 'Dunera boys' (internment at Hay in the early 1940s) and Emma Robson (a supporter writing to Dame Enid Lyons in 1934). There is only one letter (Queen Pomare of Tahiti, 1843) between 1811 and 1900 and writers are well represented (E. L. Grant Watson, Rosa Campbell Praed, Vance and Nettie Palmer, Patrick White, Andrew Taylor, Thomas Shapcott and Alan Marshall).

In her Introduction, Elizabeth Riddell expresses her concern that 'there may soon be no more letters, and as letters cease to punctuate our lives, so will a large piece of history slip away'. *With Fond Regards* certainly includes some fine letters such as those by Nettie Palmer about her relationship with Vance and Captain Ferdinand Wright's letter to his son in case he did not survive the attack on Gallipoli. It is hard, however, to discern the reason why these particular examples were brought together. The dust jacket states that 'the letters which comprise this intimate book allow us passage into a private world' and the Introduction mentions 'mysteries' and 'the trivial charm of the clandestine'. *With Fond Regards*, however, is too varied in date range and subject to allow such a theme to emerge. Even those letters which do take us into the private world of their writer usually have too little contextual information about them and their circumstances to enable an appreciation of its subtleties and complexities. A short bibliography would have usefully guided readers to related biographies and collections of letters.

All the correspondence appears to be printed in full, the publication is nicely produced and the typeface is suited to the content (except for an unfortunate slash through the first letters of fractions). The book is well-illustrated although there is some overdesigning, with two or more images combined, sometimes to the detriment of all. It is a book for dipping into but not one that stimulates further delving into the wonderful treasures the National Library holds in its collections of personal papers.

Baiba Berzins  
Freelance Historian, Sydney

**Andrew Hassam**, *Sailing to Australia: Shipboard Diaries by Nineteenth Century British Emigrants*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1994. ISBN 0 7190 39290.

**Michael Cannon**, *Perilous Voyages to the New Land*. Mornington, Vic., Today's Australia Publishing Company, 1995. ISBN 0 6462 40188.

When my husband began his research on an aspect of RAAF operations he gradually came to realise that the reason no-one had attempted a thesis on this topic before was that, for the particular period and the particular place he had chosen, not a great deal happened. His survey of resources revealed large slabs of uneventfulness.

I suspect Andrew Hassam must have encountered the same situation when limiting his study of emigrant voyages to one manuscript genre, to events which occurred from the day of departure to the day of arrival and to the perspective of the diarists. The award in 1992 of a Harold White Fellowship by the National Library of Australia enabled Dr Hassam to continue research already begun in Britain. For his analysis of the shipboard diaries of British emigrants to Australia between 1820 and 1900, Hassam surveyed as wide a cross-section of diaries as he could discover, held in various British and Australian repositories or in private hands, original, copied or published. The resulting work, *Sailing to Australia*, focuses on the function of a diary, the motives of its author (for emigrating and for keeping a diary) and the parallels which can be drawn between society in general and the way people's lives were ordered on board ship. The chapters follow the progress of the diary and the voyage: the beginning of a new book (and a new life), disciplining oneself to keeping the diary going, impressions of other passengers, impressions of the coastline of the promised land, and disembarkation. Along the way, one learns much about history and maritime traditions, but this is almost incidental to the purpose of the book. Tantalising glimpses of real people make one long to find out what kind of lives they made for themselves in Australia, but the parameters of the book do not allow for this. We know that some of them returned to England and kept accounts of these voyages, but these are also out of scope for the study.

The overwhelming impression I gained was that generally voyages were long and tedious, with protracted periods where not a great deal happened, and this is useful knowledge in itself. When one day was the same as the next, many passengers found writing a diary a challenge, a chore and a pastime. Likewise, Hassam would have faced the challenge of progressing his narrative and argument. Lively and substantial extracts help to move along the pace of an otherwise weighty treatise. A few illustrations would have helped.

By way of contrast, Michael Cannon's book *Perilous Voyages to the New Land* has a different purpose and a different audience. While well-researched, it is crafted as a popular history rather than a scholarly thesis. As one reviewer puts it, 'serving up chunks of tasty Australian history has been a speciality of author Michael Cannon for many years'. Cannon has confined himself to portraying emigrant voyages to Port Phillip in the period 1840–1850, based on Australian resources (chiefly in Melbourne libraries). Nevertheless, in a sense he is liberated by being able to concentrate entirely on the eventful and sensational aspects of selected voyages and by drawing from a range of primary sources other than diaries.

The structure follows particular voyages as well as groups of emigrants. History is brought to life by the use of numerous short quotations and copious illustrations. Here the focus is on the behaviour and perspectives of the authorities as much as the passengers. How the migrants fared after arrival is an important part of the discussion. The risk is that a reader unfamiliar with Hassam's study and carried along by the snappy pace of Cannon's book might be forgiven for thinking that all emigrant voyages were fraught with disease, abuse, death, the threat of shipwreck and that misconduct was rife. A reading of both books should help provide a balanced picture.

Valerie Helson  
National Library of Australia

**Kerstin Abukhanfusa and Jan Sydbeck**, editors, *The Principle of Provenance: Report from the First Stockholm Conference on Archival Theory and the Principle of Provenance, 2–3 September 1993*. Skrifter utgivna av Svenska Riksarkivet 10. Stockholm, Swedish National Archives, 1994. ISBN 9 188 366111.

I first heard of this publication as I was completing my article (in its unexpurgated version) on problems with provenance for the last number of this journal (November, 1995). As my argument there turned on the proposition that archivists use imprecise and unsatisfactory ideas about provenance and do not think about it as much as they should, the news that there had been a whole conference on it was not entirely welcome.

Having obtained a copy, I turned the pages with apprehension but this soon turned to disappointment. Nothing here was particularly new or relevant as far as I was concerned and the book was laid to one side. The invitation to review it affords an opportunity to reconsider. It remains an unsatisfactory volume and one wonders a little at the ambition (implicit in the subtitle) to have more like it.

There is no definition of provenance and no attempt to express clearly what it means to the participants (mostly northern European and some from southern Europe and North America). Some of the papers merely recount institutional activity or describe archival programs in different countries and would have been equally appropriate (or inappropriate) under any other theme. Others appear to use provenance as a peg on which to hang papers on other issues.

Apart from the odd expected reference to Scott and the problems of dealing with electronic records, there is little direct focus on archival methods dealing with provenance and what we must do to document it. If you believe as I do that documenting provenance (I would say context) is the central, arguably the only unique, contribution which archival theory can make to modern recordkeeping practice, this is disappointing.

One thing all speakers share (amongst themselves and with me) is a conviction that provenance somehow supplies an underlying unifying basis for all archival work. Peter Horsman of the Dutch National Archives concludes that 'what archivists are on this earth for . . . their added value' is to interpret information in its original, administrative, functional context. He sums this up as arranging the work of others or taming the elephant—a reference to Jenkinson's famous example of the dispatch from the Viceroy of India to the Secretary of State in England to which the gift of an elephant was 'attached'.

Raimo Pohjola of the Finnish National Archives agrees that this means abandoning physical for intellectual implementation of the principle. The authors of both these papers understand that provenance (the fonds) is to be found in connections ('relationships') established through archival descriptions which are part of the recordkeeping process itself. For Horsman, the task of the archivist is 'to make a representation of the original context' (describing a continuum: the records-creating agency, its competencies, functions, structure, and the changes therein) and to preserve original order by describing the structure of recordkeeping systems and establishing relationships 'between the agency's characteristics and the documents'.

The centrality of what we used to call 'arrangement and description' in modern electronic recordkeeping practice is the subject of a paper from Alf Erlandsson of the International Monetary Fund (formerly of the Archives Section at the United Nations) who asks what role can the old principle of provenance play in this new technological world? He reviews archival thinking on the advent of the 'virtual organisation' (notably by David Bearman and Terry Cook) and reminds his listeners that provenance is no longer just the concern of archivists and historians. Features 'that preserve the context, the origin and the role in decision making for electronic records must be built into systems for management of electronic records right from the very beginning'.

A frustrating paper on appraisal by Angelika Menne-Haritz of the Marburg Archive School lays out all the pieces of the puzzle but does not take us far beyond a literature review. The question here is how to link evaluation and

provenance. The model developed by Helen Samuels is discussed—identifying the key elements of documentation strategy as an analysis of the universe to be documented and the formulation of a plan. Analysis must precede action and general functional descriptions need to be ‘translated’ so that they are applicable in particular situations (functions are contingent, not generic). ‘The translation process begins by studying each function and evaluating its importance to the institution through historical investigations . . . Functional analyses provide the understanding of why specific documentation is sought. Archival principles determine how those records are located, arranged and described’ (Samuels). The author contrasts documentation strategy and acquisition strategy (this sounds familiar) from which follows a false dichotomy between ‘social’ functions (detached from organisations, persons or institutions that support them so their definition must be derived and analysed ‘from history’) and ‘administrative’ functions (which are formulated and described before they are executed). One longs for, but does not find, a unifying analysis.

Turn to this volume for sustenance (if you need it) of the view that archivists are concerned, in Glenda Acland’s words, with outcomes not with outputs. In some (but by no means all) of these papers you can hear repeated what we must do and why—this time from voices which lack the usual North American twang. But it is very light on how.

We are being told more often than is probably good for us that Australian archival thinking is ‘distinctive’ (would that it were so). Little here suggests to me that an Australian archivist would have felt uncomfortable or out of place at this conference—except for those who already feel uncomfortable and out of place at our own conferences. But perhaps I mistake indigestion for distinction.

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Public Record Office of Victoria

*Archives in the Tropics: Proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference, Townsville 9–11 May 1994.* Canberra, Australian Society of Archivists, 1995. ISBN 0 947219 07 2. \$14.00 plus \$6.00 postage and handling (available from the ASA, PO Box 83, O’Connor ACT 2602).

The 1994 annual conference of the ASA was held in Townsville on 9–11 May. The conference itself was reviewed by Baiba Berzins (*Archives and Manuscripts*, November 1994, pp. 424–28) in November that year.

The conference proceedings were made available in 1995 and with two exceptions are a complete record of the conference. The exceptions are the absence of two papers, one due to the type of presentation (a visual presentation by Guy Petherbridge from Australian Archives) and a paper by Helen Lucas which was not available at the time of publication.

The proceedings are arranged in the order of the conference itself, starting with the keynote address and followed by the categories of education and training, conservation, oral history, electronic recordkeeping, archives in Malaysia, documenting Aboriginal/Islander experience, archival considerations and collecting archives special interest group.

Mrs Zakiah Hanum Nor, Director General, National Archives of Malaysia, gave the keynote address which dealt with archives in Southeast Asia and provides background information about the founding and function of SARBICA (Southeast Asian Regional Branch of International Council on Archives). Issues covered included records management, access and use of archives, archival training, conservation and reprography, automation, oral history, outreach, guides to history sources, and the role and contribution of Southeast Asian Archives.

The Education and Training section included papers from Peter Orlovich (University of NSW) on archival training in the Pacific region, and Fabian Hutchinson (Central Land Council) on archival training needs for Aboriginal organisations in Central Australia. Livia Iacovino (Monash University) and Karen Anderson (Edith Cowan University) provided papers on future directions of archives education and distance education for archivists.

Vicki Warden from the Queensland State Archives presented the only paper in the Conservation section of the proceedings. Her paper explains the stages in design and construction of the new State Archives building at Runcorn.

The Oral History section of the proceedings contains papers by Mark Cranfield (National Library), Francis Good (Northern Territory Archives Service), Monty Soutar (Massey University, New Zealand), and Tim Bowden. These papers covered topics such as the evolution of the oral history collection at the National Library, new technology for oral history collections, the oral traditions of the Maori culture, and the history of the Australian Antarctic Division.

The panel discussion convened by Glenda Acland (University of Queensland) on Electronic Recordkeeping began the second day of the

conference. Despite more recent publications and seminars on this topic, I found these papers very topical and well worth reading. There are papers from Clive Smith (World Bank), Anne Picot (Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW) and Adrian Cunningham (Pacific Manuscripts Bureau). The commentary was provided by David Bearman (Archives and Museum Informatics) and along with questions from the floor, this session provided an excellent insight into some of the issues associated with electronic records. Mrs Zakiah Hanum Nor presented the next session on the National Archives of Malaysia which detailed the growth of the archives from establishment in 1957 with three staff members to its present size with 426 staff. The Archives has always been proactive and has been involved in the training of government records managers in subjects including conservation, archives administration and bookbinding. Vital records programs for government departments, conservation training and research, the use of exhibitions to encourage donations, and oral history programs were a few subjects covered in this paper.

The next section is a group of papers on Documenting Aboriginal/Islander Experience. Ewan Maidment (Noel Butlin Archives Centre) and Karin Brennan (University of NSW) dealt with Pacific Islander archives collections, while Henrietta Fourmile (James Cook University of North Queensland), Kathy Frankland and Ysola Best (John Oxley Library) covered the area of Aboriginal records held in Australian Archives and related institutions. The issues of access to and ownership of Aboriginal records are addressed in these papers.

Barrie Reynolds (James Cook University) presented a paper on archives' relationships with museums and areas of mutual interest. Consultant Archivist Baiba Berzins' paper explained the use of the Taxation Incentives for the Arts Scheme as a means of boosting archives deposits.

The final session included in these proceedings was the panel discussion of the Collecting Archives Special Interest Group which was chaired by Anne-Marie Schwirtlich. The session aimed to address the issues relating to the collection of records relating to Aboriginal Australians, and how collecting archives can provide equitable access. This session again includes a summary of the discussion at the end of the session and for those presentations from Kathy Frankland and Ysola Best for which there were no prepared papers. This session also deals with many issues which were addressed in the session on Documenting Aboriginal/Islander Experience, and as such the two sets of papers should be read together.

These proceedings were dedicated to Fabian Hutchinson whose death in 1994 was a loss to the profession. The proceedings would make a very valuable



addition to your professional library, especially for those like myself who did not attend this conference. The minor distraction of typographical errors are easily overlooked by the quality of the papers and their relevance to current issues. The proceedings are a credit to June Edwards and the ASA, and they clearly reflect a conference that was well-planned and covered many current issues by speakers of high calibre.

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Northern Territory Archives Service, Darwin

*Redefining Records Management: Conference Papers: RMAA 12th National Convention, World Congress Centre, Melbourne, 18–21 September, 1995.* Melbourne: Records Management Association of Australia, 1995. \$25 (available from Waldron Smith Management, 93 Victoria Avenue, Albert Park, 3206).

Redefining Records Management was the theme of the 12th National Convention of the Records Management Association of Australia, held at the World Congress Centre in Melbourne in September 1995.

The keynote address was given by Professor Ashley who discussed the attention being given to the function of information technology in modern business organisations. He pointed out that there have been some fundamental shifts in the role of the Information Technology specialist in both public and private organisations and that, on the whole, information technologists have failed to see that the most important ingredient of their role was the information, not the technology. He went on to assert something very close to my own heart—the fact that you do not need to be computer literate to manage information technology, you merely need to be information technology fluent, which is very different. I shall be giving this article to all my third year management students to read.

The session papers covered a wide range of issues from a number of speakers, many of whom came from disciplines outside records management. Michael Barrett discussed the need to refocus our efforts from custody to business process support. While much of what he has to say is valid, I feel that he addresses only one side of the equation—missing, perhaps understandably, is the importance we attach to the management of records as evidence. This is another paper my students will read, but balanced, perhaps, by one that presents some arguments on the evidential aspect.

I thought I had such a paper with the next offering on challenges relating to organisational accountability, but I found it a little disappointing, as it was a detailed look at experiences of the Victorian Ombudsman while investigating matters involving issues of accountability. Most of the examples pointed to deficiencies with paper based-records systems that made rather depressing reading.

David Moldrich provided a succinct summation of what is now an Australian Standard on Records Management AS4390 (1–6) 1996 (released after the publication of this paper). Kerry Gordon's and Gary Noble's articles talk about refocusing records management practice on business processes and workflows, an idea that has been around for some time and has considerable merit. These articles also touched on some information resource and total quality management principles that deserve further investigation.

Anne Picot's article provides a clear exposition of the new Commonwealth evidence legislation and the questions this poses for the retention and disposal of electronic records.

I enjoyed Karuna Raj's paper on the applicability of audit methodologies to recordkeeping. Karuna is using her valuable expertise to suggest new solutions to old problems and I hope that her innovative ideas will stimulate some lively debate in the records management community.

Peter Acres presented a report on progress with the ambitious South Australian Government initiative to deliver records management policies, guidelines and tools across the whole-of-government. I was impressed by the professionalism of the business case that was successfully put up to support the project. In particular, the strong linkage of the project goals to the overall strategic direction for the State public service and the careful cost/benefit analysis that was subjected to third party scrutiny were particularly striking features. Another noteworthy feature was the strong strategic partnership between the project team and the Office of Information Technology. I would suggest that records managers look closely at this methodology if they want to have any chance of obtaining significant project funding in the present competitive environment.

Sue McKemish provided a substantial paper on the issues and challenges for recordkeeping professionals for the twenty-first century in which she again argues for the abandonment of the life cycle model in favour of the continuum approach and for the greater integration of the 'recordkeeping professions'.

In her paper I found a counterbalance to the approach advocated by Dr Barrett, but I was a little uncomfortable with her total rejection of the life cycle model and with the information science/services aspects of records management. However, I have no quarrel with establishing a unique theoretical basis for the recordkeeping disciplines. I liked her identification of three specialisations within the discipline—those of current, regulatory and historical recordkeeping and I shared her concerns about the competency standards 'game'. I also believe we must take cognisance of what is happening in the worlds of information management and information science and make sure that recordkeeping principles and practice are integrated into educational offerings in these disciplines.

Margaret Sneddon's paper presented some standard management theories and shows how they can be applied in the records management setting. I felt this paper would be useful for those without formal records management education, but would have hoped that such topics would have been extensively covered in any recognised course.

Stephen Yorke's paper on the role of the records manager raised more perceived threats than opportunities and I fear may fuel existing paranoia within the discipline. Personally, I would have liked to have seen him focus more on the opportunities that the challenges present.

It was nice to see a paper from the local government sector. Darrell Treloar traced the horrors of amalgamating disparate records management systems from the CEO's perspective and made some recommendations derived from bitter experience.

Conclusions? Well, the papers provided a wide range of opinion and are well balanced between the theoretical and the practical, between issues internal to the profession and those drawn from the wider community. I would have liked to have seen some more contributions from up-and-coming enthusiasts who are new to the discipline and who can bring in fresh ideas and new perspectives.

It was disappointing to find that several authors had not met the deadline for submission. If I was paying good money for the proceedings, I think I would be understandably grumpy about not getting them all. I sympathise, however, with the publishers about the need to get the papers out promptly and the dilemma with which they are presented if papers are not submitted.

On the whole, this publication would be a useful addition to a library collection and some of the papers will provide worthwhile fodder for inquiring minds. If, like me, you were unable to make it to the conference, I suggest that you buy a copy.

Vicky Wilson  
Department of Library and Information Science  
Edith Cowan University

*Preservation Microfilming: does it have a future? Proceedings of the first National Conference of the National Preservation Office, at the State Library of South Australia, 4-6 May 1994, Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1995.*

This conference was convened by Jan Lyall, the Director of the National Preservation Office. Papers were given by conservators, librarians and archivists from the National and State Libraries, the Australian War Memorial and the major Australian document reproduction firms.

The conference marked the emergence of the NPO as a national and international coordinating body in the Australian cultural heritage industry. The NPO is a sister organisation of the UK National Preservation Office and the Commission on Preservation and Access of the US Research Libraries Group. Established by the NLA in accordance with its national coordinating responsibilities, the NPO now has an extensive cross sectoral influence, not only on Australian libraries, but also on archives and museums, through such conferences and through its other initiatives such as the formation of the Australian Preservation and Conservation Abroad Group. Ralph Manning, a guest speaker at the conference from the National Library of Canada, remarked that the formation of the NPO is something that we can be very proud of and probably look to as a unifying force in our efforts to cooperate to preserve our cultural heritage (p. 180). He pointed to the well-established network of Australian State Libraries, each with their conservation units, and stressed the need for these and other organisations in Australia to cooperate with each other, and with the NPO, to select priorities of what is to be preserved on a national and international scale.

This was not only the first national conference of the NPO, but was also, as Jan Lyall pointed out, Australia's first national conference devoted to documentary preservation. Anne Kenny from the Cornell University Library,

the other overseas guest speaker, summed up the proceedings as an 'affirmation of the role of microfilming' as partner with digital technology which 'holds great promise for the world's libraries and archives, revolutionising how we capture, store, preserve and access information'. ('From Analog to Digital: preservation reformatting in a changing world', p. 91.) The conference led to a second NPO National Conference in Brisbane in November last year which focused specifically on digitisation at a time when millions of dollars of government funds had just been allocated to documentary digitisation projects such as the Australian Cooperative Digitisation Project, 1840–45.

Microfilming has become an integral step in digitising documents: a 'hybrid systems' approach to preservation. As Anne Kenny pointed out, 'Production of both microfilm masters for preservation, and digital masters for access, seems likely to become the preferred preservation strategy of the next decade' (p. 95). Microfilm ensures the longevity of the images. Tony Wheeler of W. & F. Pascoe Pty Ltd gives an estimate of the life expectancy of modern microfilm at 400 to 500 years. It can be used as the medium for the transfer of images of documents into digital form and it is also possible to generate archival quality computer output microfilm from high resolution digital images.

The conference papers considered the history and current state of preservation microfilming, particularly in Australia, as well as its future. According to Paul Wilson's paper, 'An Historical Perspective on the Use of Microfilm in Libraries and Archives', microfilming technology for large scale document copying developed in the US in the 1930s and immediately attracted the attention of librarians and archivists, including John Metcalfe of the Public Library of NSW. Photographic and microfilming units were established in Australian libraries during the late 1930s. Microfilming technology was popularised during World War II when it was used extensively by the Americans for military communication and cultural preservation.

Wilson observes that since 1945 Australian libraries and archives have used microfilm for a variety of purposes: (a) to copy deteriorated or heavily used fragile material; (b) to secure copies of rare items held overseas; and (c) to ease pressure on reference services. A user backlash against the difficulties of reading microfilms has been felt and addressed in the first instance by the introduction of quality standards for microfilming and the production of adequate finding aids. The latter allows the structuring and use of microfilm as a data bank rather than as if it were narrative literature.

The conference proceedings includes a useful range of case studies of in-house contract and mixed microfilm production. However, there are no case studies of joint microfilming projects despite the repeated emphasis in the conference on the advantages of cooperation between institutions. Papers by representatives of commercial firms uniformly advocate a 'hybrid' approach to digitisation. Further papers investigate the application of copyright law to preservation microfilming, the general management of microfilms, production standards, cataloguing standards, storage and marketing.

Colin Webb's 'Insights into Australian Library and Archives Microfilming Experiences' illustrates a number of interesting aspects of pre-digital microfilming practices. He highlights one of the crucial difficulties of preservation microfilming: the bind of needing to film material of marginal legibility. He notes that 'while our standards at Australian Archives were very high . . . we did not manage to turn barely legible manuscript into something clear and easy to read, like spinning straw into gold' (p. 35). According to Anne Kenny, though, digital technology has the potential to create a higher quality reproduction of a deteriorating original by various forms of image manipulation.

The agenda for preservation reformatting is now quite grand in scale: in 'Towards the Library Without Walls: digitisation projects at the State Library of NSW', Margy Burn and Alan Ventress state that the Library's 'present commitment is to achieve the mass digitisation of the Australiana collections' (p. 112). They outline projects such as electronic publishing, the digitisation of videodisc images and of the Sir Joseph Banks papers in order to 'assist to preserve original formats and to provide a means through which some of the costs of preservation and collection management may be recovered' (p. 112).

The development and apparent feasibility of mass reformatting projects on vast scales, such as UNESCO's *Memory of the World*, introduces new parameters to the archival practice. The dangers are: firstly, that readers will mistake the part for the whole—it should be recognised that archival microfilming and digitisation programs, like all other large scale archival exercises, are necessarily selective and even more so in this instance, being one or two steps removed from the originals; and, secondly, that the reformatted medium may produce 'information' divorced from its context and transformed into a value-added commodity.

The conference proceedings are a comprehensive publication documenting many aspects of reformatting technology in Australia and internationally at a pivotal point in development of documentary preservation techniques.

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## Reports

**Commission on Government, Western Australia, *Discussion Paper No. 5. Specified Matter: 9. Independent Archives Authority.*** August 1995 (available free of charge from the Commission, 6th floor, May Holman Centre, 32 St George's Terrace, Perth 6000).

**Commission on Government, Western Australia, *Report No. 2, parts 1 and 2.*** 1995. 2 vols. ISBN for the full set is 0 7309 6915 0; for Part 2 of Report 2 is 0 7309 6917 7. \$48.00 including \$8 postage and packing (available from Dymock's, 705–707 Hay Street Mall, Perth WA 6000. Fax (09) 481 1964).

The *Discussion Paper* is one of several issued by the Commission on Government, which was set up in 1994 in Western Australia in order to investigate matters specified by Western Australia's Royal Commission into the Commercial Activities of Government and Other Matters—usually called the Royal Commission into W. A. Inc. Specified Matter No. 9 was a recommendation that a 'Separate and independent archives authority be established under its own legislation'. The W. A. Inc. Royal Commission did not have the time, nor the necessary skills, to frame the legislation itself: this was one of the tasks which it wanted the Government to ask a Commission on Government to do.

The *Discussion Paper* follows the pattern set by other such papers—it examines the essence of the function about which it is now calling for submissions, then it analyses the Western Australian situation—including legislation, current structure of government agencies, official reviews which have already been carried out and criticisms of the current system. It then proceeds to take the essential issues—what offices of government are indeed 'public offices', what constitutes a public record, what provision should be made for technological change, powers of inspection, mandatory *archiving* of records (it is terrible to see what we had always thought of as a noun becoming a verb, and worse still when it becomes a present participle), and so on. This section is important, because the names of topics chosen here, and the order

in which they appear, is followed in the *Report*, of which more anon. Throughout the *Discussion Paper* the authors ask thematic questions (e.g. Who should pay for the preservation of public records?), then provide a paragraph or two, or more, of general comment, and then set out discussion points for comment. This made it very easy indeed for groups and individuals in the community to make submissions—which was, of course, the point of the *Discussion Paper*. The *Discussion Paper* did not, and was not meant to, solve any problems. It left that to the people who were to make submissions (there were public hearings, and archives matters were raised in meetings in various parts of the State, for the Commission, like the Curia Regis, went on circuit), to the public hearings, to the later deliberations of the COG, and to the *Report* it was to issue. The executive officers of the Commission, too, were peripatetic—a table at the end shows comparative situations as between Western Australia and the five other States, and the Commonwealth. Officers of the Commission travelled throughout Australia to get a wider and comparative view.

Within a surprisingly short space of time, the Commission's *Report No. 2* arrived—in two volumes. Those interested exclusively in archives matters can buy Part 2 of *Report No. 2*, and this will cost them \$25.00, plus \$6.00 postage and packing. People showing that sort of desire to economise will, however, need to remember that archives and public records matters are mentioned elsewhere in the *Report*, and even in *Report No. 1*, which has sections on what records should be kept in Cabinet, public access to Cabinet records, freedom of information with respect to Cabinet, and so on.

Mark Stevens has written (in the *Bulletin* of the Australian Society of Archivists, February 1996): 'The COG has completely endorsed the views put forward by the . . . Society'. I am not sure if this is literally correct; but the *Report* certainly adopts a stance towards archives and public records matters which is significantly supportive of what the ASA was recommending. There should be a Public Records Act to provide for the management of public records. It should provide for a Public Records Authority headed by a Commissioner, who should be eligible for professional membership of ASA. The Commissioner should be empowered to report direct to Parliament, and he or she should be assisted by an Advisory Body. The Commissioner should be responsible for establishing standards, and ensuring that they are maintained. Public Records should be defined in such a way as not to be 'format bound'. Ministerial offices (but not local electorate offices), Cabinet itself, courts and tribunals, royal commissions, the office of the Governor,



Parliament, government trading bodies and corporatised bodies should be included in the definition of 'public office'.

The recommendations are more fully documented in Gerard Foley's contribution to *Western Archives*, the newsletter of the Western Australian Branch of the ASA (December 1995). A review such as this cannot hope to summarise them all.

### How the West May be Re-Won

Our task ought to be to consider to what extent it is likely that the recommendations will be implemented. No statement on this has been made by the Premier at the time of writing (January 1996). In fact, my own experience of matters such as this suggests that it is extremely unlikely the Government will accept the recommendations (I need to be careful—my record on prognostication is not good. In a paper given at the 1989 Conference of the ASA in Hobart I said that Western Australia would not get Freedom of Information legislation in my lifetime. The WA FOI Act stares at me now, in dumb remonstrance). However, past records of governments show that they take action by means of new legislation only when it can be shown that a significant portion of the population urges it, or there can be seen to be some gain in attracting admiration as a progressive government. I do not see archives or public records pressure as amounting to the sort of influence that will determine a government's action, particularly in the face of the opposition of an entrenched bureaucracy. In a recent Cabinet reshuffle, Peter Foss, the Minister for the Arts who advanced a Gilbertian solution to the whole problem—the one where you had an independent archives authority which was powerless, and a certainly far-less-than-independent archives bureaucracy—held on to the Ministry for the Arts as his private fiefdom. He became in addition, to the unease of all the proponents of an independent archives, Attorney-General. His Clayton's independent archives plan was rubbished in the Commission on Government's Report now being reviewed. My guess is that he will have the last laugh, and the independent archives authority will be left to gather dust, to use that most awful of clichés, in the would-be stacks of the could-be public archives authority whose inauguration it ought to have heralded.

Bob Sharman  
Managing Editor, ASA

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## Guides

**Adrian Cunningham**, compiler, *Guide to the Papers of Edward Koiki Mabo in the National Library of Australia*, National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1995. 30 pp. ISBN 0 642 10650 9 (available free of charge from the National Library).

The name of Eddie Mabo is familiar to most Australians because of the 1992 High Court decision in *Mabo v State of Queensland* which established that indigenous land ownership existed in Australia before European settlement. The Murray Islands land claim case, launched in 1981, was a major preoccupation of the last ten years of Eddie Mabo's life. Regrettably he himself did not live to hear the decision which vindicated his long struggle. There has been much argument subsequently about the implications of the Mabo decision in legal and academic arenas and among the general public. There are still many legal issues to resolve about native title but whether people understand these or not, most Australians have a definite opinion about 'Mabo'. The desecration of Eddie Mabo's headstone in Townsville in mid-1995 is sad evidence of what some people think.

In March 1995 the National Library purchased the Mabo papers from his family. It was an important decision because there is little documentation in the nation's repositories about the recent politics and history of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. Eddie Mabo has gone down in Australian history because of the Mabo judgement, but the fact that that long battle was just one of many which he was involved in and his life illustrates many of the problems and dilemmas faced by the indigenous people of this country. The significance of the collection is its documentation of the nature and breadth of his activities. He was born on the island of Mer in 1936 but in 1957 moved to the mainland and spent much of his life in Townsville. From the early 1960s onwards he devoted himself to advancing the cause of Torres Strait Islanders and Aboriginal people through a variety of educational, housing, cultural, political and business organisations and initiatives. He himself had little education but in trying to achieve his goals he had to negotiate with white politicians, lawyers, bureaucrats and financiers. Passionate about the rights of Torres Strait Islanders, he had to deal with political conflicts with Aboriginal people in Townsville and with Islanders who, unlike him, had spent most of their lives in the Torres Strait. He was never well-off and the struggle to earn a living was as constant a theme of his life as his politicking.

Adrian Cunningham's guide to the Mabo papers consists of a Scope and Content Note and a biographical chronology, followed by series listings which describe the contents of individual items or folders. Where appropriate, series listings are preceded by relevant historical information. The folder and item descriptions identify people, organisations and activities mentioned. In the nature of personal papers, the folders are not administrative files but consist of documents (including publications) relating to a particular subject or time period. The Guide is brief but sufficiently detailed for the location of particular documents or information.

The access conditions indicate that the entire collection is restricted and that one series is closed. An explanation of the nature of these restrictions and how to go about requesting access would have been useful. Presumably a guide would not have been printed (and the current prominent display in the Library's exhibition area mounted) if there is no access for anyone within the foreseeable future. An index to people and organisations mentioned in the series descriptions would also have speeded the identification of specific information.

It is to be hoped that the National Library's acquisition of the Mabo papers and this Guide will not only stir the interest of researchers in delving into Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander politics of the last few decades but will also encourage other repositories to collect this type of material. Oral culture is of paramount importance in indigenous communities but it would be wrong to overlook the written documentation that has been produced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and organisations. It is also to be hoped that copies of the documents in this collection will be made available to the communities on whose behalf Eddie Mabo struggled.

Baiba Berzins  
Freelance Historian, Sydney

**National Library of Australia**, compiler, *Guide to Collections of Manuscripts Relating to Australia: a Selective Union List*, 1995 Supplement. Canberra, National Library of Australia, 1995, microfiche, 42x reduction, ISSN 0725 9107, \$10.00.

It is fitting that a supplement to the guide should be published in 1995, the guide's thirtieth anniversary year. Since its inception in 1965, the guide has grown to comprise 6 000 entries in twenty instalments, supplied by seventy-three contributing institutions.

The guide began life as a loose-leaf hard copy publication, but changed to a microfiche format in 1986. Most entries have also been loaded onto the Australian Bibliographic Network in electronic format, making the information more widely available both nationally and internationally. Now it seems that the guide is about to undergo another metamorphosis. According to the foreword to the latest instalment, this is possibly the final instalment of the guide in its current format. One proposal under consideration is that the guide will continue as 'a discrete guide database which would be available for on-line searching through the National Library's network of bibliographic databases'.

The 1995 Supplement completes a series of four instalments which began in 1990 as Series E. The Supplement consists of four microfiches:

- an updated Introduction which outlines the history, scope and arrangement of the guide and includes information for guide contributors and a complete list of contributors;
- a consolidated Name Index to all instalments (two microfiches); and
- the fourth instalment of Series E, comprising 300 entries (E901-E1200) arranged in numerical order.

It is encouraging to see the list of contributors continuing to expand, making the guide more comprehensive and therefore more useful. There are twenty contributing institutions to this instalment, eight of which are new to the guide: Australian Archives, ACT Regional Office; Australian Gallery of Sport and Olympic Museum; Australian Lesbian and Gay Archives; Central Queensland University Archives; Charles Sturt University Regional Archives; James Cook University of North Queensland Archives; Melbourne Cricket Club Archives; and the Performing Arts Museum, Victorian Arts Centre. Institutions from Tasmania and the Northern Territory are not represented in this instalment.

The complaint of previous reviewers of the guide that over fifty per cent of the material listed was held by two repositories has been somewhat rectified in this instalment, with six institutions contributing approximately thirty entries each.<sup>1</sup> The other institutions have each contributed an average of eight entries. With such a diverse group of contributing institutions, it is not surprising that an enormous variety of material is presented. There is also a good balance between collections of papers of individuals and records of organisations, with the latter comprising about one third of the entries.

While access to the guide is usually via the Name Index, a browse through an entire instalment affords interesting insights into the various institutions, revealing their collection strengths and their recent accessions and processing work. This is made possible because entries from a particular institution are normally grouped together. A feature of this instalment is the inclusion of thirty entries from the Australian Archives' ACT regional office, being personal papers of politicians and public servants, including several former Prime Ministers of Australia. These entries fall under one of the permitted exceptions to the general exclusion of government archives from the guide.

One of the priorities for submission of entries to the guide is the inclusion of records which are not in the repositories in which they would be expected to be found. Examples of this from the latest instalment are the records of the Rewa Sugar Company held by the Melbourne Cricket Club Archives (E1086) and the Mary Kathleen Uranium Company held by the University of Melbourne Archives (E1103).

Although a union catalogue must contend with many cooks, the level of standardisation amongst the entries is surprisingly high and the broth has not been spoilt. This could be attributed to the clear guidelines supplied to contributors by the National Library. Entries from some institutions, however, are less detailed than one would wish. For example, it would be desirable to have more biographical information submitted by the University College Library of the Australian Defence Force Academy. On the other hand, additional information supplied by some institutions such as bulk dates after the date range, and the number of boxes after the shelf metres, is particularly welcome and should be encouraged from all institutions. While not wishing to imply that the guide is riddled with typographical errors, I cannot resist mentioning that the biographical note for entry E1115 states that Keith Hudson was a 'totor and electionist' at Monash University Faculty of Education.

The guide continues to be a valuable tool for alerting researchers to the existence and location of original source material relating to Australia. It also facilitates cooperation between repositories in the development of their collecting policies. The proposed electronic format for the guide will further enhance its value as a research tool because it will offer greater search capabilities and more access points than the present Name Index. Before embarking on this next stage in the life of the guide, perhaps it would be an appropriate time to produce a hard copy volume of the first 6 000 entries. This would provide a more visible presence of the guide in the reading rooms of archives and libraries.

The staff of the Manuscript Section of the National Library of Australia, in particular the editor, Adrian Cunningham, and all the contributors to this instalment should be congratulated on the high standard and variety of the 1995 Supplement.

Meredith Lawn  
Mitchell Library, Sydney

#### Endnote

1. J. L. Cleland, 'The Guide to Collections of Manuscripts Relating to Australia: an outline and assessment', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 3, no. 3, November 1966, p. 22; J. Murphy, reviewer, 'Guide to Collections of Manuscripts Relating to Australia: a selective union list, National Library of Australia, 1986, 21 microfiche set', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 14, no. 2, November 1986, p. 176.

**Pramod Mehra, Sanjay Garg and S. Sengupta**, compilers, *Guide to the Sources of Asian History: India—Directory of Custodial Institutions*, volume 3.6. New Delhi. National Archives of India under the Auspices of UNESCO. 1994. 292 pp. ISBN 81-85935-13-0.

The task of compiling a directory of custodial institutions in India is one to make even the most stout of heart quail—the compilers described the task as 'stupendous'. It is indeed a significant achievement.

The volume is part of a program run under the aegis of UNESCO (with the collaboration of the International Council on Archives). The program is titled Guide to Sources of the History of Nations. This directory is part of a project called Guide to the Sources of Asian History.

The Asian segment was initiated in 1979 at a meeting held in Kuala Lumpur. Under the scheme India was allocated the number three for the guides and directories it produced. Volumes 3.1 and 3.2 consist of guides to records and other materials held by the National Archives of India (already published). Volumes 3.3 to 3.5 (which are in progress) will be guides to the records held by the State and Territory archives of India. This volume covers the custodial institutions other than the archives of the Federal and State governments. The object of the volume is to present an overview of custodial institutions which collect records, manuscripts, newspapers, private papers, books, photographs and memorabilia.

The 200 institutions for which full entries are provided are categorised by State (Andhra Pradesh to West Bengal). Within each State, the institutions are presented alphabetically by title of the governing or host body.

An appendix lists a further 115 which could not be included (presumably for reasons of space although this is not specified) — an address is provided for each institution.

The Preface to the volume states that the holdings of the 200 institutions are described 'graphically'. This is something of an overstatement as the entry for each institution is by and large no more than a page.

This allows brief statements about:

- Date founded or established;
- Status (for example, religious trust; semi-public; private; public trust; registered society—the meaning of these terms and their bearing on the use of their holdings is not made explicit);
- Brief history and activities;
- Collection—this entry is subdivided to provide information about the following categories: records/documents, newspapers, manuscripts, private papers, microfilms, others (for example, texts transcribed on rice, seeds, lentils);
- Finding aids;
- Access;
- Services and facilities;
- Significant holdings;
- Address.

The historical information provided about each institution is a useful summary to place the holdings in context.

Undoubtedly the compilers were at the mercy of the individuals responding to the questionnaires circulated. This is no more apparent than in the information provided about the materials held. There is often no indication of quantity or of date ranges. Entries are scrupulous about providing information about the language in which their holdings are couched, a crucial inclusion given the linguistic richness of India.

The statements about access are bland to the point of being unhelpful. Most say 'the collection can be consulted by scholars' or 'the collection can be consulted by scholars with prior permission'. It might be difficult for a

prospective researcher to know the liberality or rigour of the definition of 'scholar' applied, from whom permission is required, and how long it takes to be granted.

The information supplied about facilities is vital. It covers the gamut from xeroxing, typing, translation, inter-library loans and microfilm readers—it might have been helpful (although I accept that such information dates very quickly) to have an indication of whether charges are imposed and at what rates. One of the more useful facilities often listed is that lodging is available or can be arranged for researchers. The information provided about addresses is limited—either a physical or a postal address is provided. No telephone (or facsimile or telex) numbers are listed, neither is there any indication of whom you should first contact.

The volume has one index. It is an index to the titles of the institutions listed. This is the most striking weakness of the volume. An index to the people and organisations cited in each institutional entry would have enhanced its utility immeasurably (and, I know, increased enormously the labour involved in producing the volume). For example, you might assume that the Gandhi Memorial Museum would hold material authored by, or about, Mahatma Gandhi. However, it is highly improbable a researcher would divine that dispatches of the Duke of Wellington are held by the Cannanore Public Library in Kerala or would be able to identify without assistance institutions holding material relevant to Vedic literature.

Similarly, if your interest is in specific formats (palm leaf, bamboo leaf, photographs, audio material, cartographic material) it would have been helpful to have had an index by format so that reading every entry could be avoided. The volume contains a helpful glossary to many of the Hindi, Sanskrit and other Indian language terms used.

Although I have some criticisms of this volume, I remain in awe of the achievement it represents by the compilers. It is also testimony to the National Archives of India and its leadership role in the national archival scene. This volume, and its companions, will be of great value to intending scholars—particularly those outside India.

Anne-Marie Schwirtlich  
Australian Archives, Canberra



**Donald L. DeWitt**, compiler, *Guides to Archives and Manuscript Collections in the United States: An Annotated Bibliography*. Bibliographies and Indexes in Library and Information Science, 8. Westport, CT, Greenwood Press, 1994. 496 pp. US\$85.00 cloth ISBN 0 313 28499 7 (available from DA Information Services).\*

This bibliography lists 2 062 published guides, inventories, calendars, registers and other finding aids describing manuscripts and archives either held in the United States or of American interest. The items range from guides to the entire holdings of libraries and other institutions, to detailed calendars and lists of individual collections and record groups. 'Archival records' are broadly defined, and scattered through the publication are guides to microfilms, maps, drawings, photographs and oral history collections. While most of the guides have appeared in the last thirty years or so, there are occasional entries for publications dating from the early years of this century.

The finding aids produced by the Library of Congress, the National Archives and other federal archives form one section of the bibliography. All the other entries are grouped under broad subject headings, such as business collections, ethnic minorities and women, military collections, regional collections and religious groups. Each guide is only listed once, but there are many cross-references. The annotations are of a high standard, identifying the person or organisation that created the records, the types of records, date range and the format of the guide. There is a consolidated index to record-creators, collections, compilers and institutions.

The title is not entirely accurate, as one section of the bibliography is devoted to guides to American-related records held in Britain, Europe and Latin America. It is surprising that there are apparently no guides to American records held in Canadian archives. Many of the guides describe records that originated in other countries, and the bibliography highlights the wealth of sources in the United States on the history of Europe and Latin America. The section on art, for instance, refers to collections of William Blake and Aubrey Beardsley, while the literary collections include papers of Samuel Beckett, Charlotte Brontë, Robert Browning, Charles Dickens, E. M. Forster, James Joyce, T. S. Eliot and Evelyn Waugh. A number of publications describe medieval manuscript in American libraries. Despite this wide geographical coverage, Australia has been overlooked: Nan Albinski's *Directory of Resources for Australian Studies in North America* (1992) is omitted.

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\* Reprinted by permission of the editor of *Australian Library Review*.

The bibliography is primarily a record of the immense industry and high standards of American archivists in making their collections widely accessible. It may also serve a secondary function as a selective union catalogue. Instead of lengthy searching on databases, within this single volume one can immediately locate the major holdings of papers of Abraham Lincoln, Robert Lowell or Robert Oppenheimer, or the records of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People or the Bureau of Census. It will be a particularly useful source for researchers unfamiliar with the diversity of American archival repositories.

Graeme Powell  
National Library of Australia

**Public Record Office of Victoria, *Coming South: Victorian Archives of Immigration 1839–1923*.** Melbourne, Public Record Office, 1995. 40pp. ISBN 0 7306 7901 2. \$8.95 (available from Information Victoria, 318 Little Bourke Street, Melbourne).

This booklet, directed principally at the genealogical market, but also towards those interested in more general aspects of immigration, sets out succinctly the why, where and what of Victorian records of immigration.

Beginning with a two-page summary of the role of governments in immigration, mainly through assisted immigration schemes and the monitoring of immigrant arrivals, the guide then outlines the services offered by the various PRO Search Rooms, and gives a few tips on the use of the records for genealogical research. A step-by-step guide on how to trace an ancestor is designed to take researchers from what they know to the records that may be relevant to them.

The descriptions of record series relating to immigration form the heart of the guide. These are arranged under a number of categories: assisted immigration; correspondence, accounts and statistics; passenger arrivals; ships crews and shipping movements; and naturalisation records. The mini essays introducing each category provide the historical and social context, and the descriptions of the records give the reader an exact idea of what will be found.

There is an excellent balance between putting the records in their historical and administrative context, telling the reader what to expect from each series, and providing illustrations of the records and the human events revealed

there. Thus in the section on assisted immigration we not only have the detail needed to guide the researcher, but also a reproduction of a page from a register, an illustration of immigrants on deck in 1849, and a view of the ship *Great Britain*, with the added information that she foundered in the Falklands in 1886 and is now being restored in Bristol.

My only difficulty with the guide was in trying to work out from the text whether there was any overlap between records of assisted immigration and records of inwards passengers in the period before 1871. It is made clear that both assisted and paying passengers are listed together from 1871 onwards, but there is no clear statement that for the period 1852–71, when the two series were kept concurrently, assisted immigrants are not also included in the passenger lists. As doubt will creep in where there is the slightest opportunity, perhaps a revised edition could make this point clearer.

Nevertheless, apart from this minor quibble, the balance and scope of this booklet make it a most worthwhile guide to the records held at the PRO, giving not only the means to research but also a glimpse of the experience of immigration. In fact the records reproduced received as much attention from me as the text about them, for it is there that the people behind the descriptions become visible. From whence came the three immigrants in 1850 who were Church of England, but not from the British Isles? How agreeable a wage was 10/- per day, without rations, working on the government roads? And why did the cholera on board the *James T. Foord* in 1849 suddenly disappear, after laying low twenty-five passengers and crew? The revelation of what the immigrant experience was like in the nineteenth century is but tantalisingly glimpsed in the sedate Tom Roberts scene on the cover and the much rowdier view of the crossing of the line by T. Flintoff, as well as pictures of the immigrant ships. If there is anything that I have wanted to know about my immigrant ancestors, after discovering the concrete facts, it is how their immigrant experience differed from or resembled my own. If the PRO could come up with four or five books that would tell me that, they would be doing well indeed—but first, where in Canberra can I get hold of those microfiche indexes from the PRO?!

Patrick N. O'Neill  
National Library of Australia

**James Andrighetti**, compiler, *Italians in NSW: A Guide to Archives in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales*. Sydney, State Library of New South Wales, 1995 (available on request from the Manuscripts Section, State Library of New South Wales, Macquarie St, Sydney, NSW, 2000).

*Italians in NSW: A Guide to Archives in the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales* brings together the private archives relating to 'the documentary record of the Italian presence in NSW', acquired by the Mitchell Library since the inception of 'The Italians in New South Wales Project'. It is a fitting tribute to the successful partnership established in November 1989 between the Mitchell Library and the Italian Historical Society of New South Wales.<sup>1</sup> It has also provided a model for the Library's relationship with other ethnic and community groups. The New South Wales collaborative model is based on the model developed by the Victorian partnership formed in 1983 between the State Library of Victoria and the Italian Historical Society of Victoria. Unlike New South Wales where the Library has taken a leadership role, the Italian Historical Society of Victoria now maintains its own collection. Due to its strong exhibition focus it has now entered into a partnership with Museum of Victoria. The NSW and Victorian approaches to documenting the migrant experience reflect the two major models in Australia for preserving a documentary record of community organisations and individuals, that is the collecting archives model that centres on an archival institution acquiring the records of community organisations and private individuals; and the in-house model where organisations establish their own archives/records program. The Victorian experience has demonstrated that it is viable to combine the two models. The brokerage and emerging networked approach is another model which is likely to become relevant as more personal and community records are created and maintained in electronic form.

The origin of the Mitchell Library's acceptance of a partnership with the Italian Historical Society of New South Wales coincided with the Federal Government's 1989 National Agenda for a Multicultural Australia, which included in its agenda the responsibility of archives, libraries, museums and galleries in Australia to redress the inadequate representation in their collections of the ethnic presence in Australia. This responsibility was reinforced in the action plan for documenting Australian cultural diversity adopted by the 'Towards Federation 2001' Conference in 1992. The success of the project's original aim of 'collecting material which documents Italian community life, the experiences of individual Italians who have settled in NSW, and the activities of Italian businesses, clubs and societies' can be measured against the contents of the guide which lists original and copied

material collected by the Mitchell Library up to 1994. As stated in the Introduction to the guide, a cross-section of personal papers of individuals and of various associations have been included, but business records remain under-represented. The major personal papers listed in the guide include the papers of former radio broadcasting couple 'Mama' Lena and Dino Gustin, journalist and broadcaster Pino Bosi, the former state parliamentarian George Paciullo, and artist Antonio Dattilo Rubbo. Records of associations included in the Guide are the Dante Alighieri Society (Wollongong Branch), FILEF (NSW Branch), the San Francesco Catholic Italian Association, the Italia Libera: Australian-Italian Anti-Fascist Movement (NSW Committee) and the National Italian-Australian Women's Association (NSW Branch).

The guide forms part of a series of ongoing guides produced by the Mitchell Library. Unlike other Mitchell Library guides dedicated to one discrete collection, this is a subject guide dedicated to the Library's collection relating to one ethnic group. It has been compiled by James Andrighetti, the Coordinator of the Project. An inexpensively produced spiral-bound volume of some 127 pages, it includes an extensive index not normally found in Mitchell Library guides. An attractive composite picture of photographs and documents from the collection features on the front cover. In other respects however the format of the guide is similar to other Mitchell guides. It includes a useful Introduction which provides the background to the origin of the Italian collection, the range of coverage of the guide, and the arrangement of entries. The arrangement is alphabetical by the name of the creator of each collection (person, family, business or association). Each entry includes information on the date range of the contents of the collection, call number, language, format, quantity, access conditions, source/donor, and date of receipt. Detailed listing at item and/or series level appears for large collections and a biographical note is included if considered appropriate. There are cross-references to pictorial and published material in some entries. It would have been helpful to include an explanation of abbreviations used in entries even if they only refer to call codes, e.g. ML MSS; MLOH; ZML; and 'Add-on'.

In relation to the arrangement of entries by creator, there appears to be some inconsistency in the use of the family name as creator. In some instances the family name is followed by records that appear to have been created by one family member only (e.g. Anivitti family), in other entries members of the same family are listed only individually (e.g. Battistessa members), while elsewhere individual family members are listed after the family name. But does a family create records? The family is really a means of associating related provenance/creating entities. It is therefore a separate context entity from

the person creating the records. However it was probably a pragmatic decision to class the records under one provenance in the guide where several family members contributed to the creation of a small collection.

It is not always clear if the arrangement of the records in the guide has been imposed or is the original arrangement. A note in entries where substantial rearrangement has occurred would have been helpful in terms of understanding how the records were originally created, used and kept. It would also have been useful if long entries had the title repeated at the top of each page to prevent the reader losing track of the entry to which the page refers. In other respects the layout is very clear with the use of bold face for item dates providing ease of reference to the date range of individual items.

The centre of the guide includes a selection of photographs and documents which provides examples of the format and content of the collection. The inclusion of an index by Italian region to the birthplace of creators of the collections is important as a large part of the Italian migrant experience has been tied to chain migration from specific towns and /or regions. The extensive index includes all the entries in the guide in bold as well as names of individuals, associations and subjects such as occupations, activities, and place names which appear in the collections. This is very useful as many records of associations are found in the collections of individuals who as members of these associations held what may be the only extant copies of the records.

Archival guides have been the traditional finding aid produced to improve access to archival collections and are usually aimed at the general public. This guide provides in-depth detail of the contents and the provenance of individual collections on Italians in New South Wales, together with an excellent index. The sense of family memory as part of the collective memory of society witnessed in diaries, recollections, passports, testimonials, photographs, and the activities of a broad range of political and cultural organisations reinforces the importance of archival institutions preserving, or assisting organisations in preserving, personal and community records. The work of the Mitchell Library with the Italian community in NSW in the production of exhibitions, joint activities and this guide, is helping to ensure that the collective archive of one ethnic group becomes part of the archive of society as a whole, accessible to a wide and diverse audience.

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## Endnote

1. For further details on 'The Italians in New South Wales Project', see Jim Andrighetti, 'The Italian Connection', *New Librarian*, Sept. 1994, pp. 26–29; 'Patrimony on Parade: The Collection, Preservation and Exhibition of the Italo-Australian Documentary Heritage at the State Library of New South Wales'. (Draft of forthcoming article for the *Italian Historical Society Journal*, 1996.); and 'News notes', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 17, no. 2, November 1989, p. 269.

## Manuals

**Commonwealth of Australia.** Department of Finance. Information Exchange Steering Committee. Electronic Data Management Subcommittee. *Improving Electronic Document Management: Guidelines for Australian Government Agencies*. 1995. Canberra. ISBN 0 644 35724 X (available from AGPS bookshops).

In a foreword which pithily argues the case for electronic document management in Commonwealth agencies, the authors declare the purpose of these Guidelines to be one of outlining:

the issues to be addressed in introducing an electronic document management system into an agency, combining records management principles with practical advice on the implementation of the necessary records management procedures and information technology support.

Content and organisation of *Improving Electronic Document Management* is built around the development of principles and strategies followed by a discussion of program responsibilities and concluding with two case studies drawn from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Department of Industry, Science and Technology. A collection of Appendices consecutively deal with the mandate for electronic document management in terms of Australian laws and regulations, improving information retrieval for electronic documents, standards for document formats and finally a checklist of requirements aimed at agencies contemplating fully electronic recordkeeping. Readers familiar with the work of the IESC will find *Improving Electronic Document Management* involves few conceptual departures from previous work.

Part I recapitulates and elaborates ideas and approaches first seen in the 1993 publication *Management of Electronic Documents in the Australian Public Service*. The document life cycle model, the keepers/finders model of interaction, the concept of a document classification system (corporate, working and personal) and an in-depth discussion of document principles and attributes form the familiar knowledge base. The idea that documents should be conceived differently from records is accepted. But the discussion

which purports to describe differences between the two entities will seem alien and confusing to many archivists and records managers, who have not encountered elsewhere the IT concept of a document. In particular, the authors assert that while some documents may be records, there exists a subset of records outside the universe of documents. What is required to make sense of this discussion is the missing notion of a virtual document, and this subset of records outside the universe of documents might be thought of as consisting of virtual documents. In other respects, the theoretical framework is less contentious. It is also reasonably expansive, moving well beyond the restrictive interpretation of EDM adopted by document managers and generally found in any IT sourced discussion of document management. A valuable addition to the literature can be found in the Part II discussion of program design and implementation issues, which deals with the practical side of introducing an EDM program into organisations. The project management model for analysing requirements and managing the introduction of an EDM program is well conceived.

Possible criticisms applicable to Parts I and II respectively concern the absence of content on the theory of electronic recordkeeping developed as a consequence of the Pittsburgh Project and under emphasis of the importance and role of document management principles as an element of tactics. The omission of specific content based on the functional requirements for recordkeeping is likely to offend some. However, in its defence, it should be recognised that *Improving Electronic Document Management* is intended as a practical rather than theoretical publication.

The trend in literature to employ case studies to enhance learning is illustrated by the inclusion of two case studies. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) case study is the most extensive, describing tactics and systems operating within this agency. ABS uses the groupware software Lotus Notes for document creation and electronic document management. The selection of a case study based on Lotus Notes is not ideal, and describes the dilemma in software availability facing agencies seeking EDM solutions. While Notes may be good at things like version control and document retrieval across multiple corporate databases, it has not been designed to meet the functional requirements for recordkeeping and the creation of electronic evidence. As the repercussions of the PROFS case are felt in government and business, the arrival of a new generation of EDM software tools is anxiously awaited.

On a technology level, I have some quibbles. Appendix D which discusses standards for document formats makes no mention of Adobe's Portable Document Format (PDF), an evolution of PostScript technology offering many



advantages over low level standards such as ASCII and RTF. PDF supports metadata and is a better solution than SGML or HTML for some kinds of compound documents. Some discussion of the proprietary nature of documents and its implications for EDM might also have been useful as a valuable introduction to the discussion of document standards. In general, the Appendices are, however, a valuable resource in their own right.

In conclusion, it should be noted that *Improving Electronic Document Management* is intended for the broadest possible audience of decision makers, including managers, records managers and people who work with electronic documents, as well as information systems personnel. The less restrictive interpretation adopted by the authors enables the coverage of important issues in policy, procedures and standards, which are just as important in many contexts as systems procurement issues. It is recommended, both for its comprehensiveness and useful discussion of managing the introduction of an EDM program in an agency context.

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**Archives Authority of New South Wales, *Documenting the Future: Policies and Strategies for Electronic Recordkeeping in the New South Wales Public Sector*. 1995. ISBN 0 7310 5038 X (available from the Authority, Level 3, 66 Harrington Street, The Rocks, Sydney NSW, 2000).**

**Australian Archives, *Keeping Electronic Records: Policy for Electronic Recordkeeping in the Commonwealth Government—Exposure Draft Version 2*. 1995. ISBN 0 642 23429 9 (available from Australian Archives, PO Box 34, Dickson ACT, 2602).**

These two publications represent another major milestone in the advancement of electronic records strategies not only within Australia but around the world. Both are similar in purpose, structure and content and both build on a common perspective of how archives should position themselves to deal with electronic records. Although both draw on the writings of international experts such as David Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom they also incorporate the most recent thinking of Australian experts. Above all, both are concerned about placing ideas and concepts that have been well documented in journal articles at a

theoretical level into an environment where they can be applied in the real working world of records creating and recordkeeping.

The objectives of both publications are very similar. The objective of *Keeping Electronic Records* is 'to provide guidance to users and managers of computer systems in the Commonwealth public sector about: the problems associated with managing electronic records; recordkeeping and accountability in the electronic environment; and archival strategies for the management and preservation of electronic records in an accountable way (i.e. as evidence of agency business transactions)'. The objective of *Documenting the Future* is to 'identify, and propose for endorsement, a framework of policy and strategies for electronic recordkeeping in the New South Wales Public Sector'.

Both guidelines are very careful to set out the importance of records, not just from an archival perspective but from the perspective of the business and accountability requirements of government organisations. In fact, unlike some North American guidelines, the archival requirements are carefully interwoven into the overall recordkeeping framework that institutions should be expected to establish if they are to carry out good government. As *Documenting the Future* explains, 'records and recordkeeping activities play indispensable roles in supporting the ongoing business of government and its agencies, in supporting organisational and public accountability in a democratic system of government and in enriching the cultural resources of the state'. An explanation of the role, relevance and importance of recordkeeping is critical if government officials are to share in the responsibility for the preservation of valuable electronic records as proposed in both guidelines.

They also share a similar perspective on the definition of 'record' and other relevant terms. In this respect, David Roberts' contributions to the terminology issue have been invaluable and have helped to break down the communications barriers with respect to the information technology community in particular. The focus on records as evidence and the role of records as instruments of accountability (based on concepts developed by Sue McKemish and Frank Upward in particular) are important concepts that are at once understandable and relevant to the variety of communities with which the archives must relate.

At a broader level, however, it will be interesting to see how the definition of 'record' used in these documents is addressed in other jurisdictions either nationally or internationally. In Canada, for instance, both the National Archives of Canada (NAC) Act and the Access to Information (ATI) Act share

the same definition of record. While we might argue that a record should contain content, context and structure and be part of a recordkeeping system, Canada's Information Commissioner, who is responsible for investigating complaints made under the ATI Act, would advocate a much broader interpretation—one that would mean that a piece of paper with someone's name on it could be considered a record for the purposes of the ATI Act. This variation in interpretation reflects a far deeper public policy issue that touches on the choices that a society makes on the domain of recorded information. What should or, for various reasons, should not be considered as records for the purposes of archives, access or privacy laws? The implications of adopting a narrow or broad interpretation of the concept of record can have a profound impact on how an archives' role in society is perceived.

Regardless of the debate that terminology can generate or the deeper issues that it can reflect, the approaches that both guidelines use to clarify their terms will be extremely useful to any archives that is concerned about communicating the electronic records message to others. In fact, *Documenting the Future* contains an excellent summary of key terms and concepts that should be a reference piece by itself. In the future, and as we gain more experience, it might be useful to build on this by clarifying other terms that are quickly becoming as important as 'record'. The definition of terms such as 'function', 'activity', 'process', 'transaction', 'action', 'task', and other related terms will be important if the concept of records as evidence is to have a proper and commonly understood context of its own. Another outstanding area of exploration is the concept of 'metadata'. Although both publications address its nature and importance, and although the work referenced at the University of Pittsburgh has already demonstrated its significance, I sense that our understanding of what it means to use metadata to ensure intellectual control over and access to electronic records through time is still in its infancy. Again, this is an area that could be explored further in future editions.

Both publications provide guidance on how, where and at what stages the keeping of electronic records should be addressed. The stages include: preliminary investigation; analysis of business activity; identification of recordkeeping requirements; assessment of existing systems; identification of strategies for recordkeeping; design of recordkeeping systems; implementation of recordkeeping systems, and post implementation review. This discussion is combined with brief overviews of the strategies that can be employed based on the 'policy', 'design', 'implementation' and 'standards' perspectives articulated by David Bearman. As well as providing a useful and, again, highly relevant implementation framework, they underscore the

need for archives to reconsider how they are currently positioned to meet the challenges presented by electronic records.

Both guidelines also deal with what seems to have become a rather thorny issue—custody of archival records in an archival institution versus distributed or noncustodial control where the records are left indefinitely with the creating agency. Some have argued that the Australian Archives is abdicating its responsibility by releasing a policy that places the care of archival records in the hands of government agencies. They argue that the policy flies in the face of archival principles because it leaves records in an environment where they might be corrupted. They also question why organisations would want to pay for the continued retention of records for which they have no further use. Others would argue that to avoid becoming a museum of technology, archives will be required to depend on creating agencies for ensuring the ongoing preservation and accessibility of electronic records. They argue that the agencies are in the best position to migrate such records through changes in technology and that the only way that an archives will ensure the ongoing preservation of electronic records will be to work in partnership with others. In fact, they argue that the necessary compromises that would have to be introduced by an archives to ensure a consistent and cost-effective approach to the processing and storage of electronic records (e.g. conversion to standard formats) would far more compromise the integrity, authenticity and reliability of electronic records than any actions the agency might take to migrate and maintain them through time.

In my own view, the decision to adopt a custodial or distributed custodial role should be conducted on a case-by-case basis and should emerge as the outcome of a careful analysis conducted by the parties involved (i.e. the archives and the records creators). In some cases (e.g. atmospheric readings, patents records) organisations will keep records for the long term simply because they are necessary to support the business of the organisation. In other cases (e.g. policy offices, royal commissions) the records may no longer be of value after the policy has been developed or the commission has submitted its report and been disbanded. In either case, however, as soon as the business and accountability requirements of an organisation ceases, it is likely that it will be difficult to convince such organisations to hold onto records simply because they are considered by the archives to have archival value. Many such organisations may question why they are being asked to assume ongoing accountability for records that should no longer be under their control. On the other hand, an archives might argue that the ongoing care of archival records should be a matter of public policy in much the same way as

institutions respond to public policies related to bilingualism and employment equity. They might also argue that it would not make economic sense for the archives to absorb all of the costs of acquiring and preserving all of the archival records generated by the government.

Although the guidelines indicate that this has to be a shared responsibility, I think that it is an issue that needs to be lifted even higher than the archives and the creating institutions. It needs to be raised to the level of parliament which should be asked how much society is willing to pay to ensure that records of archival value are preserved. The question of who will look after the records will be irrelevant if the funds are not there to ensure that the records can be preserved at all. Unless such funds are accounted for in the overall costing of new or modified systems and programs or built into the budget of the archives, the issue of preserving archival records will probably be seen as an additional unforeseen 'cost', a cost that few organisations will be willing to absorb. In order to overcome these challenges, archives will need to insert themselves not just at the records creation stage but at what the Dutch archivists call the 'conception' stage when program and systems planning are just getting underway. Such a positioning would enhance the opportunity for archival requirements to be blended more naturally into the overall recordkeeping requirements for new systems or programs. By working in partnership with creating organisations it may be possible to establish a single envelope of resources at the outset to cover the costs of caring for all records including those of archival value.

While the custody/distributed custody debate will carry on, the one thing that is clear, regardless of the viewpoint, is that archivists cannot deal with the electronic records issue alone. Both guidelines recognise this by underlining the importance of cooperation and the need to establish close working relationships with a variety of communities. In the future, and as archives begin to reposition themselves, this will become more than just a nice thing to do. It will become critical to the continuation of the archives as a viable program. And as archivists gain a deeper understanding of the roles of these other communities, they will need to better understand the skills, knowledge and abilities that they themselves will require if they are to relate to these communities effectively. Education and training programs directed to archivists and others involved in the management of electronic records will be crucial if the implementation of these guidelines is to succeed.

As George Nichols stated in the preamble to *Keeping Electronic Records*, 'it (the publication) also marks the beginning of a change in the way we go

about the business of preserving our archival heritage'. As others (e.g. Bearman, Cook, Hedstrom) have also mentioned, electronic records can transform the way that an archives does its work. They are not a special media issue. They cannot be simply tacked onto an existing archival program. Electronic records help inform us about how we should be carrying out the business of archives generally. To this end, both guidelines have provided a very useful starting point from which archives can begin to reposition themselves to deal with the modern record.

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### Conferences and Seminars

**Multimedia Preservation—Capturing the Rainbow.** Second National Preservation Office Conference, Brisbane, 28–30 November 1995.

The conference had an ambitious aim; to discuss issues relating to both the preservation uses of electronic media and the preservation of electronic media. Particular emphasis was on interactive multimedia. Approximately 200 delegates attended the conference held at the Brisbane Hilton to participate in what was intended to be a working conference. A preconference workshop, *Towards the Digital Collection*, and post conference tours to Queensland State Archives and the State Library of Queensland were available to a limited number of delegates. The rainbow theme was very apt, conveying images of a converging spectrum of issues in areas presently defying understanding, let alone capture.

The three day conference timetable was hectic with between eight to twelve presentations each day, including interactive discussions and an opportunity to visit digitisation case study presentations. I have provided a summary of the main themes considered.

Michael Alexander gave an insight into the power of digital technology as a research tool and also as an enhancement to microfilm. Bronte Turner's technical demonstrations of photographic image capture, storage, and management showed the benefits of digital technology in improving the image quality of damaged photographic items. David Keightley reviewed the success of digitising with the use of mosaicing video, melding text and images, restoring raw film in real time, and 'denoising' sound and video.

Some speakers provided an important balance by providing an overview of some of the problems and limitations of the technology. Gulten Wagner stated that the existence of technology is not an argument for its use and that development projects have been happening before research and the development of international standards. Michael Lesk warned that it is important to both the credibility of an institution and the success of its projects for digitisation projects to reflect the needs of users.

In her introductory presentation Jan Lyall questioned the extent to which legislation adequately covers the issues raised or emphasised by multimedia. The issues of legal deposit and copyright were thoroughly addressed as was the threat to security and privacy posed by the technology.

Eric Wainwright in his overview cautioned that electronic format change and the ability to 'enhance' originals afforded by the technology of the electronic era along with the challenges of preserving dynamic and updatable documents may threaten the evidence and integrity of records. Keith Parrott, Margaret Henty, and Bob Jansen stressed the importance of ensuring that the chosen technology is able to maintain such evidential links in records. These were the presentations that addressed the 'preservation of electronic media' issue most directly. Ross Harvey suggested that effort be concentrated less on media concerns as on the data represented upon it.

Maggie Exon reminded us that we face the possibility that nothing may survive in the electronic age and prompted us to consider whether digital preservation may be capable of preserving permanent records or if its use best lies in short-term high access projects. David Keightley addressed the incredible access potential of digital technology saying that it 'removes walls digitally'. Steven Schwalger explained that the electronic age offers the opportunity to reinvent our roles using the new technology. Colin Webb proposed that at present, digitisation is best viewed as an access medium and used perhaps in targeted project-specific ways. Ross Harvey stated that optical disc is not a valid preservation tool and that its benefit lies in its access potential.

Colin Webb suggested that it is not necessary to postpone practical applications until all is understood. Digitisation projects currently require a preparedness to choose between many options and often to recognise that no one system will suit all collections. Ross Coleman's outlined as a solution a 'hybrid approach' which means the use of microfilm, digitisation, and networked access. Bob Jansen argued that risk assessment could apply to

choosing the best known method for the job and that we be prepared to make mistakes. Nancy Elkington and Jan Lyall outlined the need to foster cooperative projects and practical experiments, which, alongside multi-disciplinary communication, should start to refine best practices, guidelines and principles, and ultimately to establish standards. Richard Jones while illustrating 'the way ahead' said that the National Preservation Office cannot do all of this alone.

Details of planned and existing projects and methods were outlined and helped us to see to what extent and with what results and problems, digital and multimedia technology is being used. The visits to the poster presentations of digitisation case studies were popular and valuable. In addition, the trade displays and demonstrations available throughout the conference gave participants the opportunity to see actual projects and to ask questions of those involved. They were essential to an appreciation of the issues highlighted during the conference. However, as most of these related to photograph, sound, and film projects, I felt that much remained unaddressed for those responsible for largely text collections.

The conference while not enabling participants to go out and 'capture the rainbow', gave an invaluable view of the spectrum and its issues. In respect to the conference's main aim, to discuss issues relating to both preservation using electronic media and preservation of electronic media, I think that the emphasis was more about using electronic media to deliver information rather using it to preserve electronic media. The issue of preservation of electronic media, and in particular recorded information and its accessibility, was largely, and probably necessarily, overlooked. It has of course been the subject of conferences, intensive seminars and workshops of its own.

Warren Horton, the Director-General of the National Library of Australia, said in his written welcome, 'what we need most is a greater understanding of the difficult issues involved and the range of options at our disposal'. This is what many delegates needed and the conference more than satisfied this demand. This second conference of the National Preservation Office has established, as did the first—'Multimedia Preservation—Does It Have a Future?'—a basis for dialogue and exploration in an area that will continue to challenge us all. The draft Statement of Principles arising from the NPO Workshop on the Preservation of Digital Objects which was held in Canberra after the conference is a significant outcome. Perhaps the third conference



will consolidate some of the Brisbane conference's several themes for more strategic attention and report on the implications of the draft Principles.

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Australian War Memorial

**Private lives revealed: letters, diaries, history.** National Library of Australia seminar, 23 March 1996.

Our professional response to letters and diaries can be located somewhere between two extremes. At one end is a breathless reverence for the original document, often listed in disaster plans or among an archives' or library's 'treasures' and accorded iconic status, gloved handling and vault storage. This is derided as a 'jewel box' or museum mentality at the other extreme, where the personal papers of which they theoretically once formed a part are ignored because fundamentally they are no different from all other records (thus discouraging research into other kinds of difference) or sent to a professional Coventry because either they are not really records or because the 'hunters and gatherers' who vacuum them up are not really archivists.

Such polarity has its secular equivalent. The autograph collector perhaps best represents one extreme, a position shared with those who romanticise about the golden days of correspondence, fountain pens, decent stationery and three postal deliveries per day. At the other are the likes of Sir Robert Menzies who hoped his executors would 'use the incinerator freely' on his papers, and biographies (for example Alan Frost's life of Arthur Phillip) which still come alive despite the absence of the subject's papers.

Elements of the middle ground of both spectrums were brought to mind at a recent half-day seminar organised by the National Library of Australia. It featured academics Chris Tiffin and Peter Read, independent scholars Patricia Clarke and Ann Moyal, the biographer and broadcaster David Marr and the Library's John Thompson. Each dealt with an aspect of the advertised theme, and with exception of Read, succeeded in addressing to some degree at least letters and diaries.

Strictly speaking the seminar should have had little interest for an archivist. No archivist spoke—though a former manuscripts librarian John Thompson described, with some moving illustrations, the anthology of Australian letters he is co-compiling for OUP. No strong appreciation of letters and diaries as

records and of individuals as recordkeepers came through, for the focus was deliberately and understandably on the former as historical sources and the latter as writers of communications (and arguably as authors of a genre of literature).

Themes of archival importance nevertheless did surface. Almost every speaker commented on the challenges of hunting down material, and much of Marr's discussion traversed familiar 'privacy versus access' ground. His plea for a tougher stand by libraries against donors stipulating lengthy access restrictions was nicely illustrated by the release the previous week by the Mitchell Library of several hundred Henry Handel Richardson letters after a (to Marr) patently unwarranted fifty year closure. There were also moments when, given a different audience, issues of recordness, impartiality and context could have been brought out in relation to letters and diaries. Chris Tiffin's exploration of a letter writer's sense of audience was especially suggestive, and one looks forward to seeing the formal version of his presentation in the National Library's quarterly journal *Voices*.

For the rest, the speakers and the audience reflected on the meaning of and attitudes towards privacy and discussed how biographers, literary scholars and others should or should not use letters and diaries as historical evidence. My one disappointment was the lack of a conclusion to the seminar. Ian Templeman had opened proceedings in a most engaging way, weaving in a quote from Elizabeth Jolley about how letters 'reveal oneself to oneself' and closing by briefly recalling each speaker's paper. I was left wondering what whole the sum of these parts, interesting though they were, amounted to. Perhaps this is unfair, because in half a day the multilayered relationship between private lives and personal documentation can hardly even be introduced. An entire day for example could be devoted to how such private and highly personal material as patients' therapy journals, rape counsellors' notes and Congressmen's diaries can get caught up in litigation involving charges of malpractice or sexual harassment.

Perhaps the best measure of success with these seminars is what mental aftershocks they trigger. For me, a favourite perennial which asks exactly what is it that we archivists are meant to be experts in resurfaced in the face of all that scholarly analysis of the cultural, literary and psychological facets of letters and diaries. I wondered too how an equivalent seminar held by my own organisation would be billed: 'Private Lives Revealed—minutes, logbooks, history', or more realistically' . . . ASIO dossiers, e-mail intercepts, history'? And in my vision of a perfect world there are another eighty

Canberrans paying another \$50 each to devote most of their Saturday to hear archivists discuss 'Personal recordkeeping systems and the average Australian—photo albums, tax returns, history'.

Michael Piggott  
Australian Archives

**Document and Records Management in Corporate and Government Environments, Boulevard Hotel, Sydney, 29–30 November 1995.**

This conference examined the issue of electronic records and document management in the operation of an organisation. I found it one of the most rewarding conferences I have attended in this area as there was a good mix of visionary papers and 'state of the nation' papers in addition to practical case studies. Often electronic records and document management are dealt with in the conference setting by case study only. This conference was made far more valuable by the fact that there were only a few relevant case studies while a variety of issues specific to the electronic document environment were dealt with in more detail.

Many of the papers addressed issues at a strategic level, rather than a basic 'this is how you do it' level. As a result, the conference confirmed in my mind that the will, and often the technology, exist in most organisations to embrace electronic document and records management as a business strategy. Many papers addressed the definitions and differentiation of records, documents, electronic records, records management and document management. The point was made by several speakers that the role and responsibility of the user or creator of documents in relation to the records management function becomes greater in the electronic environment. As a consequence, records managers and archivists need to take or make the opportunity to contribute significantly to strategic development in this area within their organisations. If they do not, because they are perhaps overwhelmed by the technology of the electronic information world, or bound by traditional paper management strategies, then they will leave the field to the technologists. One of the conclusions I reached after the conference was that if records managers and archivists do not ensure that they are involved at a strategic level with document management, then the risk arises that the documents in the organisation may be managed but the records may not.

Speakers were drawn from government and private sectors in Australia, and for the most part gave sound discussion papers supported by some excellent Powerpoint displays. Although there were no international speakers, this in no way detracted from the conference due to the credibility of the speakers and their understanding of the Australian electronic records environment. I was also left with the feeling that the speakers could be contacted later for further discussion. Most were effective speakers, and had prepared comprehensive written papers for inclusion in the conference proceedings. A few did not prepare written papers instead supplying their overheads in the conference material. A few papers were not prepared in time for the conference but I was pleased to note that the conference organisers either made the papers available the same day or mailed them out to delegates within a week of the conference.

The overall quality of the papers was high. However, I found the following outstanding for their interest value and the quality of the speaker. A paper on the 'Law of Electronic Records and Document Management' by Philip Argy of Mallesons Stephen Jaques was particularly good, providing a clear position summary on the *Evidence Act 1995*. Barbara Reed presented an interesting and challenging perspective on the 'Changing Roles of Records Managers' whilst David Roberts discussed quality issues with regard to the development of the Australian Standard for records management.

Of about 200 delegates, a significant number were from the private sector, and fewer were from government agencies. I saw only two from other universities, and a number of people I spoke with were from the Information Technology units in their organisations. I found the attendance of technologists at a conference with a records management focus to be a good sign for the future development of electronic records management strategies.

The Boulevard Hotel was a good choice of venue, with good conference facilities. Social activities were limited to one cocktail party on the evening of the first day. This was the only time set aside for networking, apart from tea and lunch breaks. It was relaxing to sit down to a served lunch with a choice of wines, rather than stand around juggling sandwiches and drinks, or struggling with a plate from a buffet. As delegates could sit where they chose, it was possible to mix over lunch and move around after the coffee had been served. The two days over which the conference ran were very full days, due to the intensive structure of the program (eight speakers on day one and nine speakers on day two). I would have preferred to see some time set aside for talking with vendors as I found there was insufficient time during the day for software demonstrations. The question and answer sessions after each

speaker were well handled by the chairpersons, who had a good understanding of the conference topics.

I came away from the conference stimulated by new ideas and able to see pathways for implementation of sensible strategies for managing electronic documents and records within my organisation.

Debbie Osborne  
Head, Records Administration, UNSW

## Exhibitions

**The Work of Art: Australian Women Writers and Artists.** State Library of New South Wales, Sydney, 14 August 1995 – 11 February 1996. Curated by Rebecca Thomas.

Visiting this exhibition, which relies exclusively on material from the Library's own collections, is an inspiring experience. The Work of Art focuses on the creative work of fifty Australian women, some in fragmentary outline and others in greater detail, from almost the earliest days of the colonial period up until the present.

The Work of Art is not a treasures exhibition showcasing only the most exquisite or best known pieces from the Library's extensive collections, nor is it an attempt at a broad brush historical survey of women in the arts. Instead, it presents individual vignettes of how our women writers and artists have approached and executed their work. These vignettes are linked through several themes covering personal and public aspects of women's creative work—including 'Careers', 'Process' and 'Support', the last being a tribute to women benefactors of the arts, such as Portia Geach (who endowed a prize for female portrait artists) and Miles Franklin.

Such themes as the difficulties of women finding the time for their artistic work and struggling to be paid what they deserve for it may be familiar but they are treated freshly here. Lilian Turner at the beginning of this century and Kate Grenville and Elizabeth Jolley at its end propose different stratagems for trying to limit the effects of domestic intrusions on their work. There are also insights into the circumstances surrounding the creation and reception of famous literary pieces, for example: how May Gibbs arrived at the names for her best known gumnut characters; how Florence James and Dymphna Cusack worked together to produce the novel *Come in Spinner*, and how Dorothea Mackellar felt in 1906 about a would-be plagiariser of her poem,

originally entitled *Core of My Heart*, whose line 'I love a sunburnt country' is familiar to so many Australians (the manuscript of the poem is also on display).

The paid work of women as journalists, illustrators, designers, commercial artists and editors is included through the experiences of women such as Mary Marlowe (who was Dorothy Dix), Thea Proctor, Constance Roberston and Louisa Lawson. There are examples of women who wrote and were artists such as Nancy Kilgour, and there are writings from artists such as Margaret Preston and illustrations from authors such as Finola Moorhead. This sense of the complexity of the lives of its subjects and the evident research behind the selection of material are two of its strengths. Another is the design and physical layout which succeed in displaying disparate works in different media in an uncluttered and inviting way. The Library has also managed to create a contemporary space within the Dixson Galleries' traditional confines.

This exhibition reminds us that the State Library of New South Wales is indeed fortunate in the breadth and depth of its holdings. The *Work of Art* is also a celebration of the efforts of the Library's staff over the years in assembling, documenting and preserving its diverse collections of documentary art and personal papers (among others) so that they can now be put on public display. That the Library itself has a place as an institution in Australian cultural life comes through in the exhibition, in the examples of Daphne Mayo, the sculptor who created the famous bronze doors of the Mitchell wing, and Nita Kibble, the Library's first female librarian, in whose memory a prize for Australian women writers has been established. The changing 'Ongoing Work' section, which will feature the work of six different contemporary artists and writers adds another dimension to the exhibition. This section serves to underline the continuity of women's experience in the creative arts—how they continue to experiment and to network, though the latter now may take different forms (the Net rather than the pen). Films and documentaries which complement the exhibition's themes were also screened last year in the Library's regular movie program, showing how a major institution can present an integrated approach to public programs.

The *Work of Art* will whet the appetite and tempt many people to do research in the collections, to read some of the works discussed, to look for the work of the artists or perhaps to get on to geekgirl on the Net. Rebecca Thomas' gallery guide captures the flavour of the exhibition and is itself an aid to further exploration of Australian women's creative work. Apart from its general appeal, this exhibition has much to tell archivists about the interpretation and use of material from manuscript, printed and pictorial

collections in exhibitions. Other institutions may not have resources approaching those available here, but they can learn something from this example about how to display archival material to celebrate aspects of their own particular histories, whether these be as collecting or in-house operations.

Sigrid McCausland  
University of Technology, Sydney

**Selling a Dream/Promoting Australia to Post-War Migrants.** Australian Archives exhibition, Old Parliament House, Canberra, 6 November 1995 – 23 June 1996.

On a wet evening in mid-1971 I sat at Bank Station on the London Underground waiting for a train to Clapham South. From across the tracks a wall poster radiated sunshine in my direction—NEW SOUTH WALES: COME AND TEACH IN THE SUN. Beneath the message was the image—a bronzed, smiling young man on a surf beach dressed in speedos, academic gown and mortarboard and clutching a swag of school books. A call to NSW House, followed by a brief foreign exchange calculation, and I worked out that a first year teacher in sunny Sydney was taking home twice what I was earning in a London bank. Looking back on it I suppose I had bought what the Australian Archives exhibition at Old Parliament House—*Selling a Dream/Promoting Australia to Post-War Migrants*—is all about, the prospect of more money and better weather in Australia.

In the fantasy Australia created by the Department of Immigration's public relations teams of the 1950s and 1960s the image was the message. And this exhibition is all about images—large photographs of surf beaches, modern kitchens and living rooms, power stations, farms, classrooms, hospitals and factories full of happy smiling people radiating good health, full employment and adequate leisure time. This Australia was all sunlight, air and the contentment of one's own home on the quarter acre block. To the northern European worker, driven indoors by dismal winters, hemmed in by industrial urban vistas, and plagued by job insecurity and poor pay, the Australia depicted in these glossy ads must have seemed a workers' paradise on earth. Pack up your troubles and get thee to Australia or, as a famous slogan used in Britain in the 1960s had it—'In Australia I will!'

The photographs, and the large central display featuring a 1959 Department of Immigration film, are the most effective part of *Selling A Dream*. Forget for

a moment the text panels. Stand and breath in the bright and optimistic fragrance of the sunny southern land fixed in bright gloss. One can sense the feeling of open skies and opportunity these images must have conveyed to those stuck in the daily grind of Manchester, Liverpool or London.

From above you as you seep in the sunshine, snowfields, sweeping landscapes and energy of this developing country come the voices. These are recordings of the immigrants themselves—a few of those 3 000 000 who between 1945 and 1970 sought a new life 'down under'. Surprisingly most of them substantiate the dream image—jobs *were* plentiful, there *was* a better life for the kids, Australia *was* lush and bountiful!

So where are the required tales of disenchantment to balance this optimism? They are foreshadowed in possible future exhibitions on the migrant theme. A suggestion box provides a printed slip with the following future display ideas to tick if you would like to see them followed up: The Two Year Contract, 1947–1952: The Lost Years—'enemy aliens' interned in Australia during wartime; Comings and Goings, i.e. those who returned home as well as those who stayed and Life in Australia's Migrant Hostels. Stories and images generated from that material might present a very different picture of the postwar immigrant experience to *Selling the Dream*.

There is much of interest in the text panels but I have one quibble—were all postwar migrants really asked to assimilate? One panel asserts—'migrants were to assimilate'. Was this really the case for at least half the emigrants these images targeted—the British? Watch the film—*The Way We Live*—and listen to the narrative. It is all about how the Australia of the late 1950s is really a sunnier version of the old land, complete with Scottish kippers in the deli—a 1950s version of W. C. Wentworth's 'New Britannia in another world'. If some misguided Poms took this film as their guide they might have thought that it was easier to live in Wollongong than to brave a day trip to Calais or Boulogne! Some, to their cost, believed this and never adjusted to the reality of Australian life.

I also wondered if this sort of film was really shown on TV as is suggested by the display. It is projected to the visitor in a mock TV cabinet. Surely in 1959 the commercial stations in the UK would not have screened what is straightforward advertising for the Australian way of life. More likely these films were used by Department of Immigration personnel as they traipsed round UK provincial towns and cities offering Australia nights to prospective emigrants.



*Selling A Dream* is certainly worth a visit. It will undoubtedly bring back memories for those who fell for the message. For those born here it might help them realise what sorts of ideas about their homeland were put about overseas by their representatives in the 1950s and 1960s.

And while I was at *Selling A Dream* I was sold a new dream for today's Australia. Two delightful young ladies, from a Department of Immigration PR firm, were handing out material on how to become an Australian citizen. Those modern props of the message merchants were much in evidence—T-shirts, stickers, badges and balloons exhorting me to JOIN OUR FAMILY NOW. Times may have changed but the message remains the same—in Australia I can claim a piece of that sunshine for myself which belongs to every sworn up member of the happy Australian family of the 1990s.

Richard Reid  
Australian War Memorial