# Reviews

*Edited by Adrian Cunningham*

## Publications

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**Laura B Cohen (Editor),** *Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts,*
The Haworth Press, New York, 1997. 215pp. ISBN 0 7890 0042 3 (alk
paper). US$60.00. ISBN 0 7890 0048 2 (pbk). US $30.00. Also
published as *The Reference Librarian,* No.56, 1997. 202pp. Individual
articles available from Haworth Document Delivery Service.

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About ten years ago *The Reference Librarian* dealt with the subject of reference
services in archives bringing archival issues to the attention of librarians.[1]
*Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts,* simultaneously published as a
special issue of *The Reference Librarian,* brings the reader up to date with new
challenges facing the archival profession. Guest edited by Laura B. Cohen,
it aims to address the perceived paucity of archival literature dealing with
reference issues and to bring discussion of emerging challenges in archival
reference to the notice of reference librarians.

In her introduction Cohen reflects on the rarity of articles on archival
concerns in the library literature and suggests that this can cause
'misunderstanding or ignorance on the part of librarians toward the work,
concerns, and indeed the accomplishments of the archival community'

(p. 1). *Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* provides a useful summary of the activities of the reference archivist for this audience. The stand alone paperback which has the useful addition of an index should also find an audience amongst archivists and manuscript librarians. Although some articles cover familiar debates, many offer reflections on the implications of the electronic environment. The volume as a whole gives an outline of current issues and perspectives on future challenges for the reference archivist.

The volume covers a broad spread of issues likely to impact on the reference archivist. The thirteen articles range from education of the reference archivist and practical techniques, to the influence of the Internet on the provision of reference services, outreach and marketing activities.

James Edward Cross opens the volume with an overview of the literature. It sets the scene for later articles by giving a good outline of the reference process in an archives and mentioning issues such as access and copyright concerns. He concludes with speculation about the future impact of automation and the electronic environment on the archives and reference services.

Terry Eastwood argues for the importance of instruction in public services for archivists. He outlines the objectives and features of such a course. A practical spin on the education of reference archivists appears in the article by Le Roy Barnett. He shows that a reference archivist is not born but can be made through the development of tools and behaviours which are focussed on providing the best service to the client.

A grouping of articles on descriptive techniques and retrieval by Frederic Miller, Frank G. Burke and Diane Beattie give a good overview of archival description and some of the directions being taken in this area. Miller's description of the major features of descriptive techniques provides a good foundation for the case study of the National Inventory of Documentary Sources in the US (NIDS-US) by Burke. This case study also points to future developments in the automated environment such as *ArchivesUSA*, the Chadwyck-Healey CD-ROM and a subscription Web site guide to US archival

holdings (see: http://archives.chadwyck.com/). Diane Beattie argues strongly for the use of subject access points in the description of archival materials. In support of her proposals she uses research done on the patterns of use of 'hidden groups', such as ethnic minorities, women, indigenous people and the poor, to write their history. She discusses the use of occupation, function and genre as entry points.

I doubt whether many repositories currently fulfil the types of security measures described by Richard Strassberg as necessary to prevent theft of archives and manuscripts. However, we should all heed his exhortations. His article gives warning that the market in archives, manuscripts and signatures is now more lucrative than arms dealing. The threats to material range from laptop bags with handy places of concealment to the reluctance of the institution concerned to respond quickly, openly and strongly. There is good advice about practical measures which can be taken.

The custodial debate surfaces in the articles by Greg O'Shea and Theodore S. Hull. O'Shea describes the Australian Archives electronic records policy approach within the context of international developments. Explaining some of the problems electronic records present to a traditional archival approach, he summarises the Pittsburgh and Vancouver project outcomes and describes the Australian Records Management Standard. Much of the content will not be new to Australian readers. Hull's article is a counterpoint to O'Shea, using examples of US government agency records held by the Center for Electronic Records at the National Archives and Records Administration to argue that leaving electronic records in the custody of agencies is flawed. He argues that agencies have no inherent motivation to maintain some electronic data, indeed it is not part of their prime function. Hull also describes the changing nature of finding aids and reference services for archives such as the Center for Electronic Records.

Questions about whether the role of the archivist should be a passive pointer to tools for researchers or a packager and provider of information are raised in articles on ethics and the public outreach aspects of reference work. Elena S. Danielson in her article on ethics and reference services addresses this issue as an ethical one, whereas others see it as part of role redefinition. Other ethical issues such as privacy and the gatekeeper role of the reference

archivist are also described.

A number of more challenging articles towards the end of the volume concentrate on changes in the focus of reference services and the use of the Internet. An interesting case study of the use of the Internet for reference services by the New York State Archives and Records Authority is given by Thomas J. Ruller. He highlights the necessary changes in work practices which accompany the technology. This article is a nice companion to David B. Gracy II's article on the role of the archivist in marketing the value of archives to the community, not simply acting as a pointer to resources. A fascinating aspect of his discussion is the examination of the psychological traits of archivists and how this may influence customer focussed behaviour. He places emphasis on the importance of developing relationships with users and user groups. This is a theme also taken up by Bruce W. Dearstyne. He encourages 'researcher services' rather than 'reference' pointing out the opportunities for partnerships. He outlines a number of opportunities for collaborative activity in developing documentation strategies, access policies, resourcing for programs and national information policies. His summary of the issues and challenges presented by electronic records deserves further exploration.

Many of the articles in this volume are a useful introduction to the subject, giving an historical account of developments and highlighting current issues. It meets its purpose of dispelling misconceptions and outlining achievements to those in the library field. However, for the reference archivist this volume merely touches on some of the subjects. The 'future challenges' described in a number of articles invite further work, further research, and further writing.

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## Endnotes

[1]    *The Reference Librarian*, No.13, Fall 1985/Winter 1985-86, Lucille Whalen (ed.), 'Reference Services in Archives'.

**Richard J Cox,** *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators,* The Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Md., & London, 1996. 182 pp. ISBN 0 8108 3043 4.

This book is part of a series of volumes concerning the nature of American archival theory and practice. Richard Cox envisages the series as being a 'systematic statement of archival science as practiced in the United States'. Already published in this series are: *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (1990), and *Managing Institutional Archives: Foundational Principles and Practices* (1992).

This book is intended to be a practical guide to the implementation of the 'documentation strategy' to overcome gaps in local archival collections that have arisen because of inconsistent approaches in appraisal and acquisition. As Cox states in the preface:

> I have written this present book with a strong belief that the acquisition of archives and manuscripts must be far more systematic than it has been, and furthermore, that such acquiring of manuscripts and archives will always be unsuccessful if attempted without a commitment to establishing institutional archives.

In the opening chapter Cox examines the importance of locality in American history and archives, taking a universal approach. He examines the homogenising impact of computer networks, television, advertising, and related technology, and argues convincingly that the modern individual identifies with a locality to maintain a sense of identity and self awareness. It follows that local history programs are essential in the modern world. Using the 'documentation strategy' allows archivists to deal with the volume and complexity of information that is a part of the late twentieth century, and also to document society adequately.

Cox goes on to examine traditional approaches to appraisal and acquisition – arguing that these areas are the linch pin to the successful development of a collection which adequately documents a locality. Traditional collection

development appears to be largely based on acquiring what is available, when it is either endangered or becomes available – creating bias in archival collections. Cox repeatedly emphasises the need for better education of archivists in the area of appraisal.

The 'documentation strategy' explored is 'a macro-appraisal and multi-institutional approach'. Two case studies and a practical model are used to outline the principles and practices in applying the 'documentation strategy'. Simply summarised, the 'documentation strategy' is based upon:

> a written plan to guide continuing work for the locality's documentation and a continuing advisory group that carries out the plan, monitors progress on it, and revises the plan to reflect the changing nature of locality and the successes and failures in the use of the plan.

This is achieved by five basic steps:

- Assemble an advisory group and conduct a preliminary review of the locality's development and its documentation needs.
- Evaluate the current state of documentation relating to the locality.
- Prepare a report on priority actions for documenting the locality.
- Establish working groups to document priority topics.
- Repeat steps as required.

The advisory group should involve allied professionals such as historians, librarians, major institutional representatives, and records users, creators and officers. The composition of the advisory group will determine how broadly and how adequately a particular locality is documented.

Cox has included numerous tables, figures, sample formats and diagrams in the text. This is useful in any practical guide. However, there is no index or listing of these, nor are they included in the main index. Indeed, in the copy of the book I received one page of the index had been printed blank – which effectively omitted searching for anything under B, C and D. I should also mention the rather embarrassing typing mistake on page 15,

which I believe should read 'public relations'.

Cox repeatedly argues for the need for improving the education of archivists so that the function of appraisal is critically analysed and applied. However, I believe that the ultimate success of implementing the documentation strategy would also depend on other professions including archival awareness in their curricula. Nor has Cox examined the implications of dealing with political and/or commercial masters (although, this may be a problem more prevalent in Australia).

While this text is aimed specifically at American archivists managing local historical collections, the book would be useful for anyone concerned about the problems of ensuring that adequate documentation of our late twentieth century society survives. One of its best features is its critical analysis of traditional appraisal methods – but its usefulness is not limited to archivists. Anyone concerned with the increasing complexity and volume of records and information will find this book worthwhile to read.

Sandra Blackburne
Infostuff

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**Jacques Derrida,** *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* translated by Eric Prenowitz, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1997. 122 pp. ISBN 0 226 14336 8. US$17.95 (available from The University of Chicago Press, International Sales Manager, 5801 South Ellis Avenue, Chicago, Illinois, 60637, USA).

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This book was originally presented as a lecture given on 5 June 1994 in London during an international colloquium entitled 'Memory: The Question of Archives'. The colloquium was held under the auspices of the Societé Internationale d'Histoire de la Psychiatrie et de la Psychanalyse, of the Freud Museum, and of the Courtauld Institute of Art. The lecture was originally titled, 'The Concept of the Archive: A Freudian Impression'.

Jacques Derrida is a contemporary French philosopher highly regarded for his theories within the deconstruction movement of philosophy. In this work, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression* (*Mal d'Archive: Une Impression Freudienne*), Derrida examines the contradictory concepts embodied in the notion of an archive, using deconstructive analysis .

The archive holds the memory of society. Traditionally, the archive is a public institution, yet it holds details of a person's private and personal life. It is through this conflict that Derrida analyses society's need to preserve the past. Derrida also examines the means of impression (eg writing, typing, computers, e-mail) – both traditional and technological, its virtuality and reality – and how this impacts on the structure of the archive created to keep it:

> ... the technical structure of the archiving archive also determines the structure of the archivable content even in its very coming into existence and its relationship to the future. The archivization produces as much as it records the event.

It is interesting to note Derrida's thoughts on the latest popular technology used for recording (e-mail):

> ... because electronic mail today, even more than the fax, is on the way to transforming the entire public and private space of humanity ... at an unprecedented rhythm, in quasi-instantaneous fashion, this instrumental possibility of production, of printing, of conservation, and destruction of the archive must inevitably be accompanied by juridical and political transformations.

In examining the need to remember the past, Derrida reveals a paradox. We will always have repression, secrets and forgetfulness, the drive for destruction or the drive for anarchy. 'The archives always works, and a priori, against itself.' It is this drive for destruction that threatens the desire to remember the past and the desire to archive. This contradiction or paradox is what Derrida terms *le mal d'archive* or the archive fever.

Derrida employs Freudian psychoanalysis, Marxist materialism and the

myths of Judaism to reveal the paradox of archive fever to its full extent. The implications and revelations exposed are powerful and sometimes scary reading for an archivist.

This is not a simple text to read. The language employed in the text is complicated and exacting, and sentence structure is complex. Some knowledge of philosophy is useful, but may not be necessary, to understanding the essential message of Derrida. Speaking personally, I am usually frustrated when working with translations, as I feel there may be something missing due to the translation. However, as Derrida and the translator Eric Prenowitz both discuss, by its intrinsic nature the archive can only ever be a translation of the event. Perhaps this book can also reveal the frustrations of the historian in having to deal with the results of this anarchy and order.

Sandra Blackburne
Infostuff

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**Alf Erlandsson for the ICA Committee on Electronic Records,** *Electronic Records Management: A Literature Review,* International Council on Archives Studies No. 10, Paris, April 1997. 118 pp. ISBN 0 9682361 2 X (Also available at: http://www.archives.ca/ica/p-er/english.html)

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This *tour de force* was undertaken by Alf Erlandsson on behalf of the ICA Committee on Electronic Records, chaired by John McDonald of the National Archives of Canada. As such, it belongs to the set of documents which have emanated from that body during the past year. It is a companion piece to the two other products of the Committee, *Guide for Managing Electronic Records from an Archival Perspective* and *Electronic Records Programs: Report on the 1994/95 Survey.* Available from the ICA site as a downloadable file, the review has also been recently published as one of the ICA studies.

Consisting of 11 Chapters, the Literature Review covers discussion of the new paradigm; what constitutes 'recordness'; records creation and archival participation in the design of computer systems; recordkeeping systems (incorporating discussion on research and development programs); appraisal of electronic records; intellectual control of and descriptive practices for electronic records; the issue of custody or post-custody of electronic archives; storage media; distribution and access and electronic records in Europe. The Review has four annexes - functional requirements for recordkeeping; production rules version of the functional requirements; metadata requirements for evidence - a reference model for business acceptable communications; and a bibliography on electronic records prepared by the Australian Archives.

Cited in the general introduction to the products of the ICA Committee on Electronic Records as 'an excellent overview of the evolution that has taken place in the concepts and strategies related to the management of electronic records from an archival perspective' (p.ii), it has been published because:

> the literature review could help archivists understand the broad context within which strategies such as those discussed in the Committee's draft Guide have been placed ... It is hoped that the literature review will provide an important tool for use in education and training programs that focus on electronic records. (p.ii)

The work was undertaken at the behest of the Committee in 1994, and one cannot feel anything but admiration for the thorough way it has been undertaken. Already updated a number of times, with the last update being in December 1996, the work encompasses a staggering range of thinking, issues, projects and country reports. Focussing at length on the literature available in English, it therefore looks mainly at the output of the North Americans, Canadians and Australians in this area. However the author and the Committee have obviously made extraordinary attempts to find out the state of practice and policy relating to electronic records in non-English speaking countries – particularly in Europe. Here, Erlandsson and the Committee have obviously been able to solicit direct comment and input into the report from senior European archival colleagues in non-English

speaking countries where formal written papers reflecting the state of electronic records do not exist. This provides access to information about projects and thinking not generally available in English, not yet published, or comments on the electronic records scene in particular countries direct from the correspondents. We get glimpses, for example, of projects such as the German POLITteam investigating distributed office technology for virtual government offices. It is fascinating to hear how archival colleagues position themselves in relation to such projects.

As seems often the case with ICA documents, there is no focus on any action within the Asian communities – possibly the result of a lack of material in English, or is it the English/Eurocentric view of the world? I admit to knowing little of what is going on with electronic records in our Asian neighbour nations, but Malaysia and Singapore with their vigorous national archives would be obvious places to look.

The task of a literature review is one to daunt every student working within a narrowly defined topic (just ask any thesis-writing student!). Erlandsson's review, rather than having a narrowly defined topic, seeks to: 'identify and analyse the latest thinking and theories of leading experts in the management of electronic records, and the technologies that may help in formulating strategies in this field' (p.1).

Is this an unbiased review? A tricky question, as I am in undoubted agreement with the bias, if it exists. Elrandsson, for example, seems to advocate the approach of the Pittsburgh team as a strategic way through the electronic impasse. It is indeed hard to argue against the weight of evidence provided in such a review as to the galvanising influence of David Bearman on the world archival scene, both in his role as Consultant to the Pittsburgh project and as a general archival iconoclast. So much in the literature seems to have been written as a result of or in reaction to his ideas. This is not to suggest that Erlandsson is not fair to other research projects. However it is noticeable that there is more commentary than straight presentation in his treatment of the University of British Columbia research project as opposed to the Pittsburgh project.

In certain sections, Erlandsson takes us beyond literature review and into

direct commentary – particularly in areas which he feels have been inadequately addressed in the literature (such as the issue of databases as records) or where basic concepts need explication (as in the case of some of the technical standards). In both these cases Erlandsson draws from an amazing diversity of sources – from listserv debates to standard and non-standard texts from other fields.

In reviewing the literature of electronic records management, as in the development of the literature itself, Erlandsson is forced to explore the development of the thinking underlying the theoretical frameworks. Thus, he explores issues such as the continuum and its relation to the life cycle, appraisal of electronic records, and the custody/non-custody debate. As seems to be the case constantly, we find that there is confusion about the continuum notions. Referencing Frank Upward's article in *Archives and Manuscripts* in November 1996, the major basis for the analysis is O'Shea and Roberts, who confusingly talk about the 'whole life cycle or continuum', allowing an immediate parallel to be drawn between the life cycle and the continuum. Rather than see the continuum as a way of thinking as much as a theoretical model, the somewhat glib reaction that 'where I say life cycle, read continuum' wins the day. This unfortunate reaction is becoming more prevalent and, yet again, reinforces the need to convey our continuum ideas more comprehensively.

The lack of general professional understanding of the continuum approach, and the confusion that we can ascribe to the discourse from the continuum stance, is to be seen, for example, in the discussion of metadata. Here, there seems to be a confusion of professional perspectives between: techniques suited to managing current records; using current technologies for recordkeeping processes; using current technologies for archival processes; and using current technologies for applying archival (post-hoc) descriptions to records. A significant conceptual uncertainty is revealed in the professional literature displayed for us by Erlandsson in these sections.

In some areas (metadata elements/attribution and appraisal are two which spring to mind) the literature seems to lag behind the adopted practice, at least in Australia. Here, we have pushed some of these concepts further in documents such as the AS 4390, Australian Standard on Records Management or in the Competency Standards document, than have yet

been translated into the literature specifically on electronic recordkeeping.

The review points to areas where further work is needed by the profession. Is it sufficient, for example, to discuss concepts of distribution and access in relation to electronic records from the view of an archival access regime? Hasn't the emerging digital reality of distributed information systems and various governmental thrusts for access to current government information changed the nature of public access regimes beyond recognition? The literature reviewed here begins to probe such issues with a questioning of the role of information locator systems as archival (not recordkeeping) tools, but there is clearly much more thinking needed.

Is this a document which will become a text for education and training programs? It is a terrifically useful overview of the literature and I can certainly envisage some instances where it will provide a convenient text and starting point for those new to the professional issues raised by electronic records. For those wishing to explore, understand and grapple with the issues however, there is no substitute for the original texts.

It is great to see the contribution of Australian practitioners and thinkers so prominent in such an international report. However, the review also shows very clearly the leagues we have yet to travel with implementing solutions or even partial solutions to electronic records problems. There is no occasion and no time to rest on our laurels. Alf Erlandsson, and likewise the ICA Committee, promise not to rest on their more deserved laurels with this publication, but promise to continue the Sisyphian task of maintaining the literature review up to date. Already the literature has moved beyond the static fixed point when this review was published. Many of the newest additions to the literature can be found on the web site for the Working Meeting on Electronic Records Research held at Pittsburgh in June (see http://www.lis.pitt.edu/~cerar). In time, these papers, too, will be absorbed into this significant piece of work.

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**European Commission on Preservation and Access,** *Choosing to Preserve: Towards a Cooperative Strategy for Long-term Access to the Intellectual Heritage,* European Commission on Preservation and Access, Amsterdam, 1997. $US15.00 (available from Alex Mathews, Commission on Preservation and Access, 1755 Massachusetts Avenue NW, Suite 500, Washington DC, 20036-2188, USA).

*Choosing to Preserve* is a collection of papers which were presented at an international conference of the same name organised jointly by the European Commission on Preservation and Access (ECPA) and Die Deutsche Bibliothek in March 1996 in Leipzig. In addition, the volume includes the three opening speeches and a preface by Klaus-Dieter Lehmann, Director General of Die Deutsche Bibliothek. The volume is predominantly in English – of the eighteen papers and speeches, four are in German; the rest are written in English.

As the title of the volume suggests, a recurrent theme is how libraries, archives, users and government agencies can cooperate to ensure long-term access to printed and written materials. With contributing authors from ten countries (nine European and the United States), *Choosing to Preserve* provides an interesting glimpse of the range of policies and strategies for preserving textual heritage employed in these countries. For example, one can contrast the emerging library infrastructures of the Baltic countries with the thoroughly state-of-the-art Bibliothèque Nationale de France. How international cooperation – and most particularly European cooperation – can be used to face common challenges and avoid duplication of effort, is discussed in most of the papers.

In his opening address, ECPA Chairman, Pieter Drenth, introduces the theme of the conference by highlighting the necessity to consciously *choose* to preserve our written cultural heritage, not only to avoid the loss of our means of knowing about the past, but also to help us to understand the present and future. Choice is inherent in decisions about *what* to select for preservation as well as *how* this should be done – including choices about the extent to which originals should be conserved; the adoption of techniques such as mass deacidification and paper splitting; and the

employment of microfilming and digitisation solutions. The allocation of resources to preventive preservation activities as opposed to remedial activities needs careful consideration. There are also decisions associated with sharing responsibility for preservation and the manner in which cooperative arrangements should be organised.

In 'Apples and Oranges?', Clemens de Wolf of the Koninklijke Bibliotheek (National Library of the Netherlands) highlights the difficulties inherent in selecting material for preservation. Even when the selection can be limited to *written* heritage, the competing priorities of the manuscripts of Netherlands' scholars, its most important newspapers, all the books on art history and the renowned collections of Dutch authors are almost impossible to order. De Wolf does, however, describe how, by considering three aspects – the importance of the documents to be preserved, their condition, and the extent to which they are 'at risk' – the Koninklijke Bibliotheek has been able to recommend the establishment of a national preservation program that will simultaneously tackle the treatment of the most important literary collections, the national dailies and the manuscripts.

I particularly liked the title of Fernanda Maria Campos' paper, 'Competing with the Dinosaurs'. In this paper, the Vice President of the National Library of Portugal links the recent discovery of dinosaur remains in Portugal, and the intense community and media interest which this generated, with a discussion of the importance of generating public support for preserving cultural heritage in printed form. This theme is developed by Adam Manikowski, Director of the National Library of Poland, who argues that in a society where there is little general awareness of the threat to its collections, and where the cost of rescuing books is high and the possibilities of private patronage limited, a public information campaign is essential.

The role of users and researchers is picked up also – most particularly in academic Bernhard Fabian's keynote address, and later by de Wolf who emphasises the need to involve the scholarly community in decisions regarding preservation strategies and the selection of material.

In another paper with a catchy title, 'Putting Records First to Make them Last', Trudy Huskamp Peterson, Executive Director of the Open Society Archives in Budapest, explores preservation management with particular

emphasis on possibilities for cooperation in five areas – buildings and environmental control; storage and housings; stabilising items; handling and use; and vulnerability assessment and disaster planning.

While new information technologies offer exciting possibilities for preserving access to textual material, they have dramatically increased the quantity of material produced, which also seems to be particularly vulnerable to loss. While digital projects don't receive a lot of attention in this volume, the potential of digital technologies to provide access to cultural heritage in written form is implicit in much of the discussion.

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*Janus: Revue Archivistique/Archival Review*, Special Issue, 1996, Proceedings of the International Council on Archives Inter-Regional Conference on Archival Development, Tunis, 16-20 May 1995.

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This conference of the ICA assessed developments in the administration of public (government) archives in developing nations, taking stock of progress made since 1975 when the ICA had held a general conference in Dakar on archival planning and development in the third world.

Two keynote papers were given at the Tunis Conference. The first, a critical evaluation of the ICA's role in archival development by Masisi Lekaukau, former Director of the National Archives of Botswana, tracked the growth in membership of the ICA, the direction of its programs, as well as the development of its branch structure since the late 1960s.

A second keynote paper, by Michael Roper, presented the findings of an ICA questionnaire on archival development between 1982 and 1992, distributed to national archival institutions in October 1993. 123 national archives responded to the questionnaire (but only three, including Australia,

from PARBICA, the Pacific Regional Branch of the ICA). Roper's report on the survey is detailed and well worth close examination by those researching this area. An abbreviated abstract from some of the results indicates the trends:

### Comparative archival growth rates 1982-1992

|  | Developing nations | Europe |
|---|---|---|
| **Archives repositories** | | |
| storage capacity* | +58% | +56% |
| holdings | +35% | +87% |

*Note: The storage capacity of national archives in developing countries is only a quarter of that in Europe.

| **Records centres** | | |
|---|---|---|
| storage capacity† | +67% | +10% |
| holdings | +53% | +28% |

†Note: Roper comments that Australia has by far the largest records centre capacity.

| **Staff in post‡** | | |
|---|---|---|
| professional | +46% | +24% |
| others | +19% | +22% |

‡Note: Again, there is a considerable difference in scale: an average of 74 staff in national archives of developing countries, as opposed to an average 127 staff in European national archives (211 staff, if Russia is included).

The survey results indicate a healthy growth rate in developing countries; however Roper is guarded about their rate of advance over the decade, stressing that developing countries have started from a much lower base than Europe. He further qualifies the results of the survey with his own observation that growth in developing countries has been limited by reduced budgets, including that of UNESCO; as well as military and civil conflict and natural disasters.

The remaining papers consist of case studies of a number of national archives (Costa Rica, Guinea, Malaysia, Mexico, Russia and Zambia), as well

as reports on the activities of a number of development agencies. Among the latter, Anne Thurston reported on the Public Sector Records Project set up in 1994 by the International Records Management Trust (UK) in collaboration with the University College, London's School of Library, Archive and Information Studies (SLAIS) and the Commonwealth Records Association (CRA). SLAIS had surveyed 30 Commonwealth countries, identifying

> a gap between the national archives and the government record-creating departments. The result was that in many countries, most of the records in the custody of the archives dated mainly from the pre-independence period, while the records in government departments were unmanaged. (p.104)

This picture accurately describes the disarray of post-colonial public records programs in many Pacific Island nations, which have been extremely poorly resourced and underdeveloped with, in some cases, non-existent national archives.

In response, the Public Sector Records Project is adopting a records continuum method of control developed by SLAIS, combining that method with the CRA's training materials and experience in the field, to produce 'an integrated approach to the management of recorded information which could be shared across regional boundaries' (p.106). The training modules are being trialed in various schemes in Africa and the Caribbean.

Unfortunately, as George MacKenzie's supplementary analysis of the ICA questionnaire in this issue of *Janus* shows, there were remarkably few bilateral archival aid projects in or sponsored missions to our neighbouring South Pacific Island nations in the period 1982-1992. Although Pacific Islands archivists and records managers have enthusiastically welcomed Peter Orlovich's recent recordkeeping training programs in Fiji and Papua New Guinea, they were single-handed programs which only partially met the urgent need to construct efficient public recordkeeping practices in the Islands. Concerted efforts are required by Pacific rim nations and UNESCO to fund extensive recordkeeping training programs in the Pacific Island

nations and for the provision of aid funding for the development of archival infrastructures. Such efforts help produce a documentary framework enabling sustainable resource development and legally accountable resource exploitation which may preserve the fragile environments of the Islands and their dependent communities and cultures.

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**Ann-Mari Jordens**, *Alien to Citizen: Settling Migrants in Australia, 1945-75*, Allen & Unwin published in association with the Australian Archives, St Leonards, NSW, 1997. 306pp. ISBN 1 86448 422 5.

In this book, Jordens analyses 'the considerable if inadequate efforts' of the Department of Immigration to deliver settlement services to non-English speaking migrants during 1945-75. The analysis is of particular interest in being carefully documented from archival research, conducted over 15 months during 1992-93, into the records of the Central Office of the Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs. For the purposes of this research, Jordens was granted special access under the *Archives Act* to the Department's policy files to 1975.

Jordens has checked and supplemented the archival materials through interviews with 14 oral sources, predominantly former and currently serving officers of the Department. In addition, she has included a review of academic writings in which the Department's achievements over its first 30 years generally received little acclaim or were ignored. The inaccessibility of the Department's archival records to researchers until 1995, as well as the Department's failure to publish an Annual Report until 1976 undoubtedly contributed, as Jordens suggests, to rendering its achievements in its first 30 years 'largely invisible'.

This research fills a major gap by documenting and providing a qualitative analysis of the Department's initiatives during 1945-75 to develop a wide range of innovative post-arrival programs and services to assist migrants in settling into the Australian community. From the late 1940s, officers responsible for settlement became 'agents for change' as they 'tried to devise practical strategies to assist in the economic and social absorption of non-English speaking aliens' (p.4). Jordens notes that the Department of Immigration pioneered the employment by the Commonwealth of professional social workers. They provided 'a unique personal service to hundreds of thousands of distressed, needy, ill and confused migrants throughout Australia' in the period before the establishment of ethnic community organisations with the capacity to deliver welfare services (p.58). Contrary to the impression given in this book, several of the social workers employed by the Department and by Grant-in-Aid agencies were from European backgrounds, with a good knowledge of other languages and cultures. Others such as myself were able to conduct interviews in a number of other languages and to interpret for other professionals when the need arose.

The settlement strategies devised by Department of Immigration officers were generally the products of an on-going process of consultations, conducted both within Australia and overseas. Accordingly, the programs and services developed were responsive to changing needs within the community. The Good Neighbour Council movement fulfilled an important role as a vehicle for community consultation, by involving community based organisations in government planning and generating wide community support for the Department's settlement initiatives.

Jordens refers to an unpublished December 1995 paper by George Kiddle, 'Post-arrival Services for Migrants, 1947-1981', which describes the many innovations by the Department during this period, in particular the Emergency Telephone Interpreter Service and the Grant-in-Aid Scheme, introduced in 1968. The Department increasingly sought to encourage the development of multicultural services and, in 1972, introduced a new scheme providing for the recruitment, training and employment within the Department of 48 bilingual welfare officers.

The interviews conducted with former staff were relatively few, and I

thought the book would have benefited from the collection of a wider range of views through more extensive consultations with former staff and community social workers of that era. In the preparation of this review, I contacted three former officers of the Department who generously provided background papers and information: George Kiddle, former First Assistant Secretary, Ethnic Affairs Division [Reference 10, p. 275 to his title is inaccurate]; Brian Essai, former Director of Settlement Services; and John Hemer, former Coordinator, Grant-in-Aid Scheme. The views expressed in this review are, however, my own and are not attributable to anyone consulted.

Stephanie Lindsay Thompson

**Rosalind Kidd**, *The Way We Civilise: Aboriginal Affairs - The Untold Story*, University of Queensland Press, St Lucia, Queensland, 1997. vii+389pp.  ISBN 0 7022 2961 X.  $19.95.

*The Way We Civilise* details the history of the administration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs in Queensland from the earliest days of the colony to the present day.  It focuses in particular on the period since 1897 when legislation was passed enabling the state to regulate all aspects of Aboriginal life, ostensibly to protect those Aborigines deemed to be most vulnerable to abuse or neglect.  One hundred years later the health, living standards and education of many Aboriginal and Islander people in Queensland are still appalling.  Rosalind Kidd's book documents the complex history behind the persistence of these inequities.

Through meticulous examination of the records of the government agencies charged with Aboriginal and Islander administration, Dr Kidd is able to demonstrate how the actions of successive Queensland governments, the Aboriginal affairs bureaucracy, and the management of the competing interests of those involved with indigenous people impacted so disastrously on the lives of Aborigines and Islanders.  It is a harrowing story: systematic

appropriation of the wages and pensions paid to indigenous people; minimal funding of housing, health services and essential facilities on missions and settlements; forced relocation of individuals and communities; and unwillingness to allow Aborigines to manage their own lives. The deliberate subversion by governments and the bureaucracy of honourable intentions meant that reform efforts rarely resulted in beneficial outcomes.

Rosalind Kidd was the first non-government person granted access for research purposes to the files of the Aboriginal affairs administration in Queensland. The resulting PhD thesis (from which this book is derived) was forwarded to the Department, but it took little interest until Dr Kidd was due to appear as an expert witness. The case involved seven elderly Aboriginal people from Palm Island who brought the systematic underpayment of their wages to the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission in 1996. Dr Kidd's evidence included copies of documents obtained from departmental files, which demonstrated quite clearly that the government knew its actions were wrong. The State's lawyers tried but failed to prevent this evidence being tabled and the enquiry acknowledged that it was crucial to its finding that the government had deliberately, knowingly and intentionally discriminated against the Palm Islanders. The Queensland Government sought to ignore the decision but after the threat of action in the Federal Court it conceded defeat and settled the matter in April 1997.

The Crown Law Department subsequently demanded the return of all of Dr Kidd's research notes, although to date it has taken no action to secure them. Directives have also been issued that all Cabinet documents, which in Queensland means all documents determined by Cabinet to be Cabinet documents, must be removed from files made available to approved researchers, and that all legal advice on files must be enveloped. These measures are impeding access to the kind of information which made Dr Kidd's evidence so vital in the Palm Island enquiry, and which is likely to be necessary to secure justice in other cases brought by indigenous people against the Queensland Government.

At the Oral History Association conference held in Alice Springs in September 1997 there was much discussion about the relevant value of oral

and written evidence in relation to native title and lands rights claims. While there are obviously many circumstances in which the oral evidence of Aboriginal and Islander people is of paramount importance, Dr Kidd's research indicates that there is also much crucial evidence in the archival record to substantiate what people knew or suspected but could not prove. The Queensland Government's subsequent measures indicate all too clearly their interest in hiding the truth about the past rather than facing up to it in the true spirit of reconciliation. As individual archivists we are rarely in a position to challenge such actions, but as a profession we have a moral obligation to voice our concern about the deliberate suppression of information vital to understanding and coming to terms with the past.

*The Way We Civilise* is an important book for everyone who cares about the future of this country. There can be no more fitting tribute than that of Professor Marcia Langton in the Foreword: 'Good history, such as Dr Kidd writes, can have the effect of assisting in the pursuit of justice. I thank her for her courage, persistence and scholarship'.

Baiba Berzins
Archivist and Researcher
Sydney

**Trevor Livelton**, *Archival Theory, Records, and the Public*, The Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, Lanham, Md & London, 1996. 192 pp. ISBN 0 8108 3051 5. US$ 38.50.

There is an unforgiving saying, I think sourced from legal circles, which states that 'if you can't explain it, you don't understand it'. Can you explain the term 'public records'? It is not defined in either edition of *Keeping Archives*, and the definition presented in the Australian Council of Archives 1993 glossary illustrates what complications that simple adjective 'public' can cause. Would your definition be meaningful regardless of political system, national culture or era?

Attempting a universal answer is precisely what Trevor Livelton does in his *Archival Theory, Records, and the Public*, a work based on his masters thesis 'Public Records: A Study in Archival Theory' completed at the University of British Columbia in 1991. Such translations are not always smooth, but the result under notice is highly readable. This is partly because of the author's open and often wry style, and partly because it is relatively uncluttered with references. If there were any of the increasingly prevalent self indulgent mini-essay references, they were left in the thesis.

Livelton's purpose is entirely encompassed by the book's title and reaffirmed in the five chapters – the opening two on theory, the third on 'records', the fourth linking them to public records, and the last exclusively on 'public records'. Described another way, his book develops, presents, defends and illustrates uses of a definition of the concept of 'public records'. The sequence is deliberate. Initially the everyday, then the archival and then the author's own favoured use of 'theory' is established. Following this, various definitions of 'record' are analysed, primarily and predictably those of Schellenberg and Jenkinson. Gradually the pieces of a preferred definition of 'public records' are marshalled, reminiscent of Jenkinson's own method of building up and refining the various component features of his famous definition of archives.

In summary, Livelton's conclusions are that information is intelligence given, documents are recorded information, records are documents made or received in the conduct of affairs and preserved, and public records are documents made or received and preserved in the conduct of governance by the sovereign or its agents. All this is sensible, once one understands what is meant by governance and in particular by the sovereign, and unremarkable too, though we might note in passing that William of Ockham would be pleased with the word count. Concepts such as evidence, business activity and transaction, now keywords of the Australian recordkeeping consensus, are presumably superfluous or already there by implication.

In arriving at his definitions and defending them, the author deals with a number of convenience terms which have developed within the archival world. When exploring records being made/received and preserved, for example, the notion of 'non-records' is considered. Regardless of how

temporary or transitory are the records being preserved, they are rightly shown to be records. A more topical scenario, looking at the relevance of intent in relation to the definition's '... and preserved ...', might have involved e-mail, especially where in the absence of clear corporate policy there are contradictory actions (eg involving collectively backed-up mail yet individually deleted messages). Another testbed was the semi-official or semi-private record, including the record of Jenkinson's semi public body. Logically these are shown to be nonexistent categories. As public officials and private individuals we may be able to wear two hats at once, but only one of 'us' can create or receive records at any one time 'for document-generating functions can only be performed one at a time, and the functions of ruling and being ruled are mutually exclusive'. A third area of practical situations easily accounted for in applying the definition involved records created or received and preserved by the sovereign's agents exercising delegated authority, highly relevant in view of the accelerating use of outsourcing by governments in Australia. A fourth application of the definition covered public access to public records, which is examined in a separate appendix.

One measure of a successful book is the thoughts it triggers. Livelton serves us well through his explanation of theoretical thinking and his defence of its importance to archival studies. In being reminded of the disagreements on the nature and relevance of archival theory within the North American literature, we may wonder at the virtual silence about them here, despite the expectations the ASA's 1995 *Debates and Discourses; Selected Australian Writings on Archival Theory, 1951-1990*, raised, as well as the question begged in the subtitle. In the last year or so one or two have tried to argue that being theoretical and being practical are not opposites and to contribute to our theoretical understandings, but there has been little else in the main forums at least. Livelton should inspire us to keep at it. He returns often to points and concepts from his first two chapters to help analyse the meaning of 'public records' and apply it to real life dilemmas, deciding what are or are not public records. Incidentally, this application, towards the end of the long last chapter, could readily be used as mini case studies in teaching. Overall, a great little book.

Michael Piggott
Australian Archives

*New Zealand Archives Futures, Essays in Honour of Michael Hoare, Archifacts,*
Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ),
Wellington, October 1996.  ISSN 0303 7940.  ISBN 0 473 04288 6.
(Available from the ARANZ, PO Box 11-553 Manners Street,
Wellington, New Zealand, for NZD 22.50 plus, for orders from
Australia, NZD 6.00 for postage.)

The key themes for me in this collection of papers are the role of archives
in documenting society, and the vital role of archives in the functioning of
liberal democratic societies.  Defending these roles is not just 'New Zealand
Archives Futures', it is the future of the profession.

This edition of *Archifacts* is based on papers presented at the ARANZ annual
conference in 1996, at a time of high publicity for recordkeeping issues in
that country.  Contributions are largely drawn from the recordkeeping
professions, with additional perspectives from other disciplines such as
journalism and the law.  21 essays of varying quality and length are a lot to
browse through.  Abstracts would have been useful to help distil some of
the themes.

As a student of archives and records management (Monash) and a
practitioner in current records, I appreciate writings which seek to examine
the broad social context within which we operate.  While the subjects of
most of these essays are specific to New Zealand's current archival situation,
the collection provides a framework for examining archives in society.
Recordkeeping professionals must ensure that structures are in place to
capture and maintain the record, in a way which does not compromise the
record's authenticity and integrity.  Many writers in this volume address the
proposed restructuring of the New Zealand National Archives, and the
possible impact on its 'primary constitutional role, that of ensuring the long-
term accountability of officials and politicians' (Patterson, p. v).  Catalytic
events such as this often force self analysis, and in this case have resulted in
an assessment of where the profession stands now, and what role it should
take in society.

The proposal for restructuring the New Zealand National Archives is in

the spirit of the New Zealand government's down sizing and rationalisation programs, and is based on a separation of the organisation's policy, purchasing and provider functions.  This would see the Chief Archivist physically and functionally removed to a purchasing position, with a business manager responsible for the provision of archival services, including custody of the national archival collection.

A purely economic approach may see archives as a business activity of government.  By examining the broad social context it becomes clear that the role of archives is as an instrument of society, rather than as an enterprise of government.  I felt that the strongest analyses of the proposed changes came from those writers who highlight an archives' essential role in government accountability, rather than focussing on a more nebulous heritage role.

Brian Easton, a public policy analyst, examines the 'aims of government', and points out that the government has not allowed for the costs of 'commitment to liberal democracy' (pp. 56-58).  Easton questions the benefit of reducing to monetary terms a resource such as the National Archives holdings, when the real value lies in its accountability role.  Stuart Strachan highlights the benefits for society of a strong National Archives by looking at the issue of responsibility for defining archives policy.  The role of archives and recordkeeping professionals must be understood within our environment, which is in a constant state of economic, social, and political change.  It is part of our role to keep abreast of those changes.  In writing about education and training for archivists and records managers, Margaret Morgan takes up these themes, identifying familiar issues and changes in the workplace.  Morgan points to the paradigm shift within archival theory as a response to those changes, and that the move to a more holistic approach to recordkeeping ensures that we continue to fulfil our role.

Two senior archivists write of the importance of facing the economic realities of our environment.  According to Sarah Tyacke (Keeper of Public Records, London) these economic realities have caused a reshaping of practice in the PRO.  Ray Grover (former Chief Archivist of New Zealand) writes of the importance of archivists understanding the immediate economic and political environment within which they work, in order to defend the real work of archives keeping.

Within the records of society are representations of individuals. Privacy and access issues are explored by a group of essays which include discussion of the proposed destruction of census schedules. The importance of society's need to know must be balanced against the individual's right to privacy. Kathryn Patterson, the current Chief Archivist, discusses this important issue in relation to access policy. The Government Statistician, L. W. Cook, identifies the guarantee of confidentiality as the reason for the high compliance rate in collecting New Zealand's census data, and therefore for the accuracy of the data. Cook points out that society is mapped according to government requirements. Census questions are framed within the dominant social paradigm. How well does such information represent the individual? Richard Hill gives strong examples of the way 'official' information can misrepresent the individual, and that this should be an important part of access considerations.

That these essays are dedicated to the memory of Michael Hoare is testimony to his role in the development and strength of the archival profession in New Zealand. The papers take up the challenge of some very significant issues for the recordkeeping professions. The process of analysing our environment enables us to refocus on the roles of archives in society, and of our roles as individuals and as a profession.

Rachel U'Ren
KPMG Melbourne

*Perspectives on Archival Education in Canada*, *Archivaria*, Vol. 42, Fall 1996, Association of Canadian Archivists, Ottawa. ISSN 0318 6954

Presented under the title 'Perspectives on Archival Education in Canada' are five articles born out of the 1995 annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists in Regina, Saskatchewan. Prominent archival educators Terry Eastwood, Tom Nesmith, Carol Couture and Barbara Craig assembled to present their views on the past, current status and the future

directions of archival education in Canada. The session was aptly entitled 'The Body in Question: What Will the Archivist Need to Know in the Twenty-First Century?' Further to the formal discussions printed in *Archivaria*, a commentary by Timothy L. Ericson, archival educator and the Director of Archives and Special Collections at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, has also been included.

Thematically centred on the challenges facing archival education in the approaching millennium, these five articles reflect the spirit of both optimism and pessimism which seems to mark the profession as it nears the twenty-first century. Indeed, while one is left with a sense of what it might be possible to achieve in the future, it is not without the knowledge that it will be a confronting and demanding task.

Ultimately these articles seem to encourage consideration of the future of archival education in light of the substance of what the archivist needs to know rather than the structure in which that learning will occur. At its crux are questions such as: How and with what knowledge does the profession need to equip archivists for the twenty-first century? What form of education is required to provide the theoretical and practical skills necessary? How can education prepare future archivists to deal with a rapidly changing technological environment?

Terry Eastwood puts forward a general framework for the creation of appropriate circumstances for archival education – a survey of the past and present orientation of archival education and some observations about how it can respond to contemporary needs. He identifies matters which are now constantly on the archival agenda: the need to prepare archivists to apply computer technology to all aspects of their work and the need to train them in management skills. There is a particular emphasis on issues of context and the development of an interrelationship between archives and their context, which is critical to understanding the past and present generation of archives.

Tom Nesmith, on the other hand, offers a particularly futuristic vision where the knowledge that needs to be acquired by the profession will depend on the kind of future anticipated for archives and archivists in the next century. For him the most critical aspect is neither the practices nor

techniques imparted by archival educators, but rather the modes of thinking encouraged. The question becomes not 'What should the archivist know?' but 'How should the archivist be thinking?' As do the other authors, Nesmith emphasises the need to balance the humanistic/liberal tradition of archival education with expertise in administrative/technical matters. The article concentrates not on the specifics of an archival curriculum, but on the future of the profession and how its professionals need to be intellectually prepared.

Carol Couture argues for the renewed significance of archival science as well as a broadening of the mission of archivists who, while they are custodians, need also to be scientific appraisers and disseminators of the material in their custody. This entails involvement with records from the moment of their creation and a necessary integration of archives and records management as part of the broader structure (undoubtedly something currently reflected in the Australian approach).

Barbara Craig, like Couture before her, strongly emphasises the need for research, and she shifts the focus of that research to inside the archival institutions themselves. The amalgamation of research in the work place with formal teaching programs aims to diversify the methods employed in archives research and promote both research and a variety of approaches in archives education programs. She nominates three particularly deserving areas of research – archives history, archives and technology, and practical case studies (commencing with appraisal).

Anticipating the future is fraught with difficulties. Even more difficult is predicting what knowledge the profession will require on a collective level to secure its own viability. If there is a weakness then it is perhaps that the articles suffer from being solely Canadian in their outlook. One might even suggest that the perspective of the debate be expanded to an international one to encompass a more pluralistic and diverse approach.

It is perhaps a quote from Tom Nesmith that will stay with this reader the most: 'To ask what an archivist will need to know in the twenty-first century is, in a way, the wrong question. It is better to ask how should an archivist *think* in the next century?' It serves as a reminder that, while the archivist needs to adapt to an increasingly electronic and technologically advanced environment, it will be the collective intellectual approach that will

determine how successfully this can be achieved.

While the authors are in general agreement, as a collection these articles present an interesting array of possible directions. Although thematically centred on 'archival education' now and into the approaching century, it is quite a broad canvas. Not surprisingly, the authors have chosen to draw their own, quite personal, picture of the future.

Caroline Watson
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*Voices: The Quarterly Journal of the National Library of Australia,* Autumn 1997. $12.00 (available from Sales and Distribution, National Library of Australia, Canberra, ACT, 2600).

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The Autumn 1997 edition of *Voices* takes as its theme the use of private papers in historical research. Five of the articles are based on presentations given at a seminar, hosted by the National Library in March 1997, entitled 'Private Lives Revealed'. A sixth article also takes up this theme - Katie Holmes focuses on the use of women's diaries in the writing of history. This paper had been presented at a seminar on women's writing in 1995.

All six articles have different points to make regarding the use of private papers. Chris Tiffin, in 'Private Letters and the Fortunate Voyeur', argues that researchers experience textual voyeurism when reading other people's personal papers. He then illustrates how the letters of Nora Murray-Prior can be used to illuminate some of the early literary works of Rosa Campbell Praed. These letters can be interpreted in this way, a way which is different to how Rosa Campbell Praed would have understood them, because we are not the intended audience.

John Thompson's article is called 'Windows onto Australia: Steps in Constructing the Oxford Book of Australian Letters'. As an editor of what will be an anthology of Australian letters, John Thompson is involved in selecting letters which construct a 'kind of personal, oblique history' of Australia; letters that are 'representative of the Australian epistolary genre and temperament'. These letters, then, must be representative of all Australians, through succeeding generations. Thompson explains how this selection is to be achieved.

As already mentioned, Katie Holmes is interested in using women's diaries to challenge traditional ways of understanding history. She argues that women use diaries to record their own stories by focusing on what is important to them, as individuals, and as women. These diaries can be used to show how women make sense of their lives. Katie Holmes argues that personal diaries allow the historian a non-traditional perspective from which to reconstruct stories of the past.

David Marr's article, 'Only What's Private Matters', looks at the ethical question of making public material that may be thought too personal. Marr suggests that the benefits of using personal papers in the writing of biographies must be measured against the negative effects of invading the personal privacy of people still living. He argues that 'pain is the key to what can and can't be published'. This article is interesting in highlighting these considerations, in an area where they are most likely to be prominent – that of biography.

Patricia Clarke's interest in women's letters and diaries has given her an appreciation of the richness, and the limitations, of this resource. Her article, 'Life Lines: Nineteenth Century Women's Letters and Diaries', discusses the problems of finding collections of personal papers which allow a complete representation, or picture, of Australian women. The main problem she highlights is that most of the surviving papers were written by middle and upper class women.

The last article to deal with the theme of private papers is 'Private Papers and a Sense of Place' by Peter Read. Read looks at poems written from a desire to express an emotional connection with a particular locality, but

not written for publication. He identifies three characteristics of such writings: they are concerned with particularities; they use activity and sensation as tools of expression; and they have a nostalgic longing for a past identified with a specific place.

The rest of the journal contains poetry, prose fiction, book reviews and two more articles. I must confess to being disappointed that these didn't strictly conform to the 'private papers' theme. However, the articles by Peter Coleman and Desmond O'Grady on the *Bulletin* and journalism in the 1950s to the 1970s made very interesting reading.

Overall, this issue of *Voices* is pleasing to read. The mixture of poetry, fiction and scholarly articles is nicely balanced. The content of the first six articles makes an interesting collection, touching upon various aspects of historical research without any overlap. And finally, the visual presentation of the journal itself is attractive. Each article uses pictures for illustration which are engaging in themselves, and which adds interest to the writing.

Lynda Barraclough
State Library of Queensland


## Reports


*Indigenous Australians: Records of National Cultural Significance. A Report of the Archives Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council,* compiled by the Stuartfield House Consulting Group, Canberra, 1997. ISBN 0 642 25984 4

Throughout the 1980s and 1990s in Australia a substantial movement has emerged in this country amongst people of conscience and goodwill to achieve a formal reconciliation between Indigenous and European Australians. It has been a difficult struggle and one which has had to contend with community ignorance, prejudice, political opposition, inertia and

sometimes blatant denial that the present generation has any need to atone for the sins of omission, commission and ignorance from another age. At the political level in recent times, criticism has emerged of the so-called 'black arm band view' of Australian history, a cry which too easily plays into the hands of the ignorant, the frightened and the ill-informed. History, it is argued, can be forgotten, the legacy of guilt denied as simply an inconvenient impediment to the progress which might be made towards a better future.

It is in this context that much important work is being done in a number of different areas and specialisations to deal not only with the legacy of Australia's 'black history', but also to ensure that ways are found which will assist Indigenous Australians to claim back so much of their personal and collective history which has been appropriated by the instruments and agencies of the state. It is important to state that some very good work is being done in the archives, libraries and museums to acknowledge the sometimes difficult and painful reality that these many repositories hold records of various kinds, as well as objects and even skeletal remains, which bear fundamentally on the history of dispossession and exploitation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. But those of us who work in these three inter-related professional specialisations will also acknowledge that much more yet remains to be done in the determination of a new working relationship between our institutions and the wider community of Indigenous Australians.

For many institutions, an important first step has been to identify the existence of holdings of material which relate to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and to ensure that these materials can be made more easily accessible to those who need or want to have access to them. Some agencies have already produced guides to holdings while in others work is progressing to meet this objective. In some agencies, but in too few, Indigenous staff members have been appointed. In some agencies, but again in too few, special client services have been shaped which might better meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander user groups.

Responding in part to the recommendation of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody concerning the accessibility of all

government archival records pertaining to the family and community histories of Aboriginal people (Recommendation 53), the Archives Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council determined in 1995 to commission a project '... to identify and survey the current state of access to records relating to Indigenous Australians'. This guide, prepared for the Archives Working Group by a specially commissioned consultant, is the result. In selecting Paul Macpherson, formerly a senior staff member of the Australian War Memorial and a person well-versed in cultural collections management, the Working Group secured professional skills of a high order. Within the limits of a consultancy that had a short time frame and no resources for travel to repositories or for extended research or analysis, this guide is nevertheless an important and useful initial step in the efforts now being made to raise the level of awareness of all Australians to a body of records of national cultural significance.

The guide is neatly and efficiently arranged and appears in an attractive and manageable format. It contains details and descriptions of records in more than fifty-five institutions Australia-wide and its chief value is that it greatly minimises the enormous time and effort presently spent tracking down and identifying indigenous records. It is no criticism of this guide to say that it is not comprehensive. What is important is that it has appeared and that its existence will draw attention both to the intrinsic importance of the records it does identify and to the desirability of further records being reported.

For traditionalists, it is pleasing that the guide appears in hard copy but it would be interesting to know if the Archives Working Group has plans to mount this information on to the Internet. Perhaps the Australian Archives Home Page would be a suitable site where links could be provided to specialist indigenous sites such as that for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Library and Information Resource Network (ATSILIRN). No mention is made of this possibility but it is an option which surely promises wider access to this important, useful and timely guide as well as reminding potential contributors of the need to enrich and extend the information which is now available.

Archivists have for some years and in their own right been at the forefront

of the efforts being made by cultural, heritage and recordkeeping agencies to raise the level of their services to all Australians and especially to Indigenous Australians. In this context it is important to recall the pioneering efforts of archivists such as Baiba Berzins, the late Fabian Hutchinson and Kathryn Frankland. The production of this guide is a tangible expression of this commitment and a practical example of the imperative 'just do it'! More needs to be done and, as Paul Macpherson implies, more could be done with a greater or dedicated investment of resources. It is to be hoped that, having achieved this very useful outcome, the Archives Working Group might – from a position of moral strength – argue the case for the resources to build on this valuable initiative.

John Thompson
National Library of Australia

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**Statistics Subcommittee of the Australian Council of Archives (compiler),** *Australian Archival Statistics 1991-95,* Australian Council of Archives, 1996. 128pp. Members $15.00, non-members $20.00 (available from ACA, The Executive Officer, Suite 4, 12 Ellingworth Pde, Box Hill, Victoria 3128).

**Environmetrics Pty Ltd.,** *Report: Market Research into the Use and Non-use of Archives in Australia by Key User Groups,* The Archives Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council, August 1996. c.100pp.

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These two modest looking, low-cost publications were interesting additions to the archival bookshelf during 1996. They are both the outcomes of projects of the Australian Council of Archives, in the latter case the ACA providing representatives to the Archives Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council which funded the Environmetrics market research using the ACA constituency to provide user contacts. Neither publication is a

scholarly study but, notwithstanding, they add to our professional knowledge by providing much needed data on the archival scene in Australia.

The Statistics Subcommittee of the ACA, established in 1994 under the Convenorship of Mark Stevens, further developed Peter Crush's pioneering work in the area of the definition and collection of archival statistical data. This publication represents an accumulation and analysis of the statistics gathered from returning ACA members, 1991-1995, with data collected for several years prior to that not included. Annual updates will be available from the ACA web site (http://www.aa.gov.au/AA_WWW/ProAssn/ACA/ACA.HTM) and as paper copy from the ACA. This sort of data is most usefully available from a web site thus breaking from the earlier decision of Council to forward the initial publication only to those members who had been able to contribute. Other members may now discover not only its uses but also to what extent their data are used in a named form so that they can make a judgement about future contributions.

The Convenor's Introduction sets the scene for the publication explaining the extent of its coverage and the problems for an 'archival' data collection based on measuring processes in the nation of the records continuum. I am pleased that this point is acknowledged and look forward to seeing it mature into a more rounded data collection methodology suitable for a range of uses in the ACA constituency in the years to come. A copy of the 1995 incarnation of the ACA Statistical Return is included for reference at the end of the publication. The Introduction provides references to further reading on the contexts of statistics in archival management, in particular an article by Paul Conway in the Spring 1987 *American Archivist* from which the idea of the ratio analysis tables on 'intensity of care' and 'intensity of use' derived. While I appreciate what it is that these tables are demonstrating, I have some reservations about their suitability and inclusion.

The publication is a collection, repeating the figures given by each responding institution without moderation or independent confirmation. The main body of the publication consists of tables detailing, for each of the years 1991-1995, the institutional statistics supplied under the headings 'Holdings', 'Arrangement & description', 'Reference services', 'Repository buildings', 'Personnel', 'Funding', with provision for explanatory notes as appropriate. The first few tables give aggregate figures including aggregates

by sector. Identified institutional responses follow, enabling the discernment of such details as the total official shelving figures for Australian Archives (622,411metres in 1995 for those who are interested) or that for the same year that there were 40 search room visits recorded at the University of Western Australia Archives. Data are also given for one non-ACA member and indeed non-Australian archival institution – the National Archives of New Zealand – 'for comparative purposes' but also undoubtedly as a result of the heritage of the Convenor.

ACA 1996 President Ross Gibbs's Foreword examples his own successful use of the comparative statistics in a detailed submission for a Parliamentary Enquiry. I expect such comparisons are more useful in the state government sector where it is more evident that like comparisons are being made. However in other sectors, for example universities, which have currently a greater range of funding variables and organisational models, where corporate record repositories and collecting archive as well as a mixture of the two can all be called university archives, the comparative data has less meaning. Perhaps this is something to be watched in the current climate of minimalism. The Statistics Subcommittee recognised such comparison difficulties and invited respondents to provide details of their 'Mission & Profile' as an aid to interpretation. These statements are contained towards the end of the publication under the heading 'Role and Profile Statements' with all institutions listed alphabetically by first word of their name rather than within sector groups.

The Environmetrics project, also the topic of a paper by Gillian Savage at the 1997 ASA Conference in Adelaide, used a variation of the commercial 'market research' technique to 'gather information about the reasons why people who interpret Australia's history, culture and society use or do not use archival records as part of their research'. The Archives Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council commissioned this project, the first national study on users and non-users of archives, as a base from which to develop strategies and programs aimed at increasing the awareness and use of archives by intermediaries. Intermediaries include users such as historians, journalists and teachers who have a multiplier effect, 'in that a single intermediary can communicate with large numbers of people'. For the purposes of this project the term 'archives' is used loosely 'to describe any repository holding a collection of records'.

The project investigated awareness and knowledge of archives, effective promotion of archives, physical service requirements of users and intellectual service requirements of users. Seven groups of users were identified as the key intermediary user groups for the project – writers, teachers, historians (professional and amateur), visual media producers and researchers, journalists, curators and genealogists. The investigative methodology included sixty eight personal interviews in each capital city, forty with a cross-section of users and twenty eight with non-users matched as far as possible with the users in occupational category. Two focus group discussions were held in Sydney and Melbourne with users. A national telephone survey resulted in 305 telephone interviews with samples of the intermediary groups, selected at random from industry and association lists. A number of archives also were contacted to supply visitation data, which were used for estimating the effective impact of key users. The report contains as appendices the various questionnaires used in the project and lists the archives which supplied both the names of users and the data for multiplier estimation.

The findings detailed in the report will come as no surprise to the experienced archives manager. The report is sprinkled with illustrative quotes from users interviewed which cover the full gambit from 'reverent respect for the ability of experienced archivists who could think dynamically and laterally', to lamentation that archival 'catalogues' were not subject based or as one inventive journalist would have it, chronological. That old chestnut 'there's not much point in preserving material if it can't be used' was present. Popular but far from new requests included archives that were open at night and on the weekend and the comfort factor for people who need to spend long hours in a search room. Of particular appeal to archivists will be the user comments, 'Archivists can find things even if you give them the wrong reference', and on the difficulty of finding aids, 'If you want something you have to know what exactly you want. It's not easy to search under general categories'. Perhaps the sort of user quotes to put on our products in good marketing style.

The findings of the report are supported by data tables which are itemised to the type of user at specific institution level. However in some cases the sample is too small for it to be useful let alone meaningful to a particular institution. Having supplied a brace of user names for this project, after

obtaining the appropriate consents to cover privacy concerns, it was disappointing to see a sample of one was used for the University of Queensland despite the generous responses of this unidentified user. I expect the findings are more useful to the federal and state institutions whose users provided the significant core of those interviewed and for whom this project was essentially commissioned. Market research may well have its place in trying to attract new users and seeking their opinions on current products, but what is needed now is an authoritative and more scholarly study on user trends. This would enable planning not only for specific custodial institutions. It would inform and underpin strategies for the so-called postcustodial age.

Neither of these publications will set the archival world on fire but they are both worth reading as state-of-the-nation-type additions to our knowledge of archives in this country. I'll await with interest the arrival of more scholarly additions to their family, particularly on use and users, which will increasingly be a key area of archival institutional endeavour as the Internet and its tools develop and advance.

Glenda I. Acland
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**Manuals**

**Archives Authority of New South Wales,** *Steering into the Future: Electronic Recordkeeping in New South Wales,* Sydney, 1997. 12pp. ISBN 0 731309 111

**Australian Archives,** *Managing Electronic Messages as Records,* Canberra, 1997. ISBN 0 642271 100

I have to admit that I approached the task of reviewing these two booklets

with some trepidation. Life has taken me in new and interesting directions in the past year and I feel somewhat out of touch with the hard realities of electronic recordkeeping. When I expressed my reservations to the book reviews editor, he confidently asserted that I would be ideal, since my rustiness would enable me to evaluate whether the booklets met their stated objectives of providing useful and pertinent guidance to the practising recordkeeper.

*Steering into the Future* (Records Management Office [RMO] of New South Wales) aims to highlight the concepts of electronic recordkeeping and introduce some of the tools that recordkeepers can use when trying to implement an electronic recordkeeping regimen. Sophisticated page layouts with a clever use of white space, strong graphics and carefully chosen colours engender confidence in the content of the booklet. The clear section headings, highlighted gold text and well designed charts are particularly effective in conveying the most important concepts.

The overall tone of the booklet is helpful and supportive. The author uses a spare and elegant prose style that makes for easy reading and clear communication. It is obvious that a great deal of intelligent thought has gone into both the content and the design and I was left with the impression that practising recordkeepers would find it both encouraging and useful. I would certainly make it required reading for all state government CEOs.

However, as the RMO realises, booklets such as these can only go so far. A lot of detail lies behind the statement on page 7 that the espoused methodology 'requires a multidisciplinary approach' involving 'management principles, the law, a range of technologies, audit processes and systems design'. It is here – as we all know – that the devil is.

*Managing Electronic Messages as Records* (Australian Archives) is a far less digestible document. Presented as a policy statement with a set of accompanying guidelines, its stated objective is 'the effective capture and management of electronic messages as records'.

Frankly, after the sophistication of *Steering into the Future* , it makes rather dull reading. Concentration is not improved by the large blocks of black text on grey paper without any graphic relief. The document is conventionally arranged (purpose, scope, objective, background etc.) and

I thinks suffers in comparison to the more imaginative use of headings in the previous booklet.

Both documents present essentially the same concepts for discussion but it is there that the similarity ends. I had some difficulty in determining at whom *Managing Electronic Messages as Records* was aimed. While *Steering into the Future* is obviously designed to support and encourage practitioners in their endeavours and adopts a tone that is appropriate to that audience, *Managing Electronic Messages as Records* uses autocratic language with liberal sprinklings of technical and legal imperatives. While I can see the point of doing this when attempting to intimidate recalcitrant senior managers, it makes alarming reading if it is aimed at the struggling practitioner. I read my way through all the 'shoulds' and 'musts' of both the policy and the guidelines and by the time I reached the section on 'data management practices', my only question was HOW was I supposed to achieve all of these requirements? Unlike *Steering into the Future*, the guidelines did not reassure me by directing me, at this point, towards other, more detailed and substantial sources of assistance. Unfortunately, if not intimidated by the tone, I think most recordkeepers would certainly founder on the language of this document. Things get particularly impenetrable in the section entitled 'Capture as Records' where, apart from being befuddled by 'user interface layers' and 'application platform interfaces', we are told that everything depends on the 'technological and organisational environment' – undoubtedly true but not really very helpful. Brief statements on issues of such technical complexity add little to the value of this document as a basis for action for practising records managers and archivists and may well make many of them decide that it is all too hard.

I do not mean to be unduly harsh in my comments on this booklet but I think that it is critical that we begin to provide our recordkeeping practitioners with highly disciplined, focussed and practical advice and assistance in this difficult area. *Steering into the Future* can legitimately claim to do just that - *Managing Electronic Messages as Records* needs a lot more work before it can make the same claim.

Vicky Wilson
JS Battye Library of West Australian History

*Australian Historic Records Register Thesaurus,* National Library of Australia, Canberra, 1996.  167 pp.  ISBN 0 6421 0672 X.  $40.00

The promotional blurb for this publication, which stems from the Bicentennial Historic Records Search, has it 'an invaluable resource' for classifying 'Australian historic material, especially archival records ... specifically designed to cater for the needs of the Australian cataloguer, indexer or archivist ... which overcomes many of the shortcomings encountered using Library of Congress headings in the Australian context'.

The claim for the Thesaurus being a boon to archivists is belied by the 136 strong list of occupations A to Z from which Archivists are astonishingly excluded. Architects, Firefighters (but not Fishermen) are there along with the more obscure Swampers (who could do with a scope note) and Ventriloquists, but no Archivists.

From an archivist's perspective another drawback is the confusion of narrower terms lumped together under the umbrella 'go term' Records. Here are found Labels, Letterheads, Menus, Postcards and Swapcards, which surely should be classed as ephemera.  Archives appears as a related term.

Turning to one of the Thesaurus' strong points, the scope notes are often definitive or useful guides to the sense in which terms should be used, for example 'Barques - SN: sailing vessels with three or more masts square rigged on all but the aftermost mast'.  Equally explanatory notes are found in John McKinlay's *List of Australian Subject Headings*, compiled in 1981 for the Cataloguers' Section of the then Library Association of Australia, another thesaurus developed with the aim of meeting the shortcomings of LCSH.

Further comparisons can be disturbing.  Take Graziers.  The *List of Australian Subject Headings* gives a direction 'See Pastoralists'.  Conversely the Thesaurus endorses 'Graziers: Use for Pastoralists'.  Spelling varies; Bush fires and Life saving in McKinlay's List, Bushfires and Lifesaving in the Thesaurus.  Again, while processing papers of a onetime Moderator of the Presbyterian Church I had cause to consult another authority, the 1996 Occupations thesaurus recommended for contributions to the *Register of*

*Australian Archives and Manuscripts.* This cites 'Clergy UF [use for] Ministers of religion', yet the *Australian Historic Records Register Thesaurus* qualifies Clergy with an S, signifying a 'stop' or 'illegal' term.

Collaboration between compilers of thesauri should occur in order to avoid such contradictory usage of terms. The user is not to know 'Who pretender is and who the King – God bless us all, that's quite another thing!' (an old Jacobite toast).

The difficulty with thesaurus construction is how to decide what is an acceptable term and what is not. In the case of the Australian Bibliographic Network (ABN) a new term must be justified at some length to an expert sub-committee before its adoption is allowed.

An all-embracing Australian thesaurus is promised for 2001, by which time ABN will have been replaced by a national bibliographic utility with Australian content as its key feature. While specialist thesauri will always have a place, one hopes their compilers will take their cue from the high standards set by ABN. In the meantime, the *Australian Historic Records Register Thesaurus* could stand some revision.

Roger André
Mortlock Library of South Australiana

(Note: The helpful advice of Joyce Searle, Manager, Database Management, State Library of South Australia, is acknowledged in preparing this review.)

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**Judith Doig,** *Disaster Recovery for Archives, Libraries and Records Management Systems in Australia and New Zealand,* Centre for Information Studies, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga, 1997. 157pp. ISBN 0 9490 6035 6

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In March 1985 fire broke out at the National Library of Australia. Upon hearing the news we were all asking similar questions. How could this

happen? To the National Library? Surely not! However, it was true. That is the nature of disasters. They can occur anywhere at any time. Over the next few days the major disaster that had overtaken this national institution, its collections, its staff and its relatively new building was major news in Australia and overseas.

While this event has not been the worst disaster to befall Australian cultural institutions, it was pivotal in raising disaster awareness in the region and the development of disaster planning as we know it today. Judith Doig's book, *Disaster Recovery for Archives, Libraries and Records Management Systems in Australia and New Zealand* is Australasia's latest publication addressing disaster planning for paper based collection material and is a most welcome resource.

Doig starts with an informative overview of major disasters involving cultural collections around the world and in Australia and New Zealand. She illustrates the many types of disaster that can befall collections such as flooding, fire, equipment failure, arson and vandalism, earthquake and structural failure with actual local disaster events, many from recent times. The events chronicled here uniquely serve as a history and a warning of the types of disaster event we should be aware of in our own disaster planning activities.

Disaster recovery is more than just treating damaged collections. There are many essential management issues to be considered in developing an effective disaster plan. Doig devotes the next chapter to guiding us through getting started in planning for disasters, detailing areas which can often be forgotten in the rush to get disaster plans on paper. These include plan management, the cost of disasters, funding for planning, risk analysis, management of staff and public relations. She also provides useful information on recovery techniques for water damaged paper records and books. However this information seems out of place in a section detailing disaster management and the book may have benefited by the inclusion of a section devoted entirely to recovery techniques.

Chapter Three begins with advice on how to write a disaster plan but deals more with steps to follow in responding to and recovering from disaster

incidents. Although every disaster incident has a different set of circumstances, the core steps to follow in response remain similar. Assessment, initial action, response actions and project management issues are detailed and clearly reflect experience gained from past disasters.

Workplace safety, morale, communication and counseling are now essential parts of any disaster plan. Doig provides advice on this often neglected human side of disaster planning, dealing with the needs of staff involved in disaster recovery.

Staff are the most important resource in any disaster plan. To ensure disaster plans work staff training is essential. Staff training in disaster awareness, preparedness and recovery is what makes the plan work. The final chapter covers the training issue and provides us with topics, outlines and approaches to take when structuring and designing a training session. A pleasing aspect of this section is that it covers more than just recovery actions, focussing on awareness raising, plan management and maintenance, and training resources within Australia and New Zealand. For those who favour the use of disaster simulations in training, Doig comprehensively details the setting up and running of a full, realistic disaster recovery simulation. While simulations can be expensive and time consuming to conduct, they are of great value to key disaster personnel.

The scale of disasters and related issues can often be difficult to visualise. Too often staff are confronted with a disaster situation that seems insurmountable in the short preparedness and recovery time frames available. Doig illustrates many parts of her book with scenarios focussed on raising and discussing possible problems. This use of scenarios gives the reader a realistic view of the needs of disaster planning.

Since the 1985 National Library fire Australasia has developed significant expertise in the field of disaster planning and recovery. Doig has brought together the ideas and opinions of many people involved in disaster planning in the region to create a useful working tool for those responsible for caring for cultural collections.

Kim Morris
National Library of Australia

**Multimedia**

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**International Records Management Trust,** *The Return to Democracy: Accountability and Documentary Evidence in The Gambia* [Video], UNOPS, July 1997. 28 minutes. (IRMT 28 Russell Square London WC1B 5DS.)

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As an African student of recordkeeping and a newcomer to the profession, reviewing the video highlights the daunting prospects faced by African recordkeeping professionals. They not only have to be capable of delivering efficient and effective records systems as a means of ensuring accountability, transparency and the protection of citizen's rights, but also be able to deal with the social-cultural attitudes that impinge on recordkeeping and accountability. If accountability through recordkeeping is to have any meaning there is a need to change people's attitudes towards government activities. The colonial legacy and the type of governance in most African states, until recently, have left people feeling rather apathetic about government activities. There is a need to make people aware not only of their rights but also of their obligations and responsibilities if democratic governance and accountability are to be sustained.

The video was conceived, written and directed by Anne Thurston. It was produced by the International Records Management Trust as a part of the Management of Public Sector Records Project, and financed by the UNDP Program for Accountability and Transparency. Although focusing on The Gambia, it is relevant to most African countries and a strong visual statement of the power of records as 'arsenals of democratic accountability and continuity', to quote Terry Eastwood.

The return to democracy by most African countries, some of which were under some form of party socialist state or military rule, brought to the fore the urgent need for accountability and transparency in government. The video highlights the linkage between recordkeeping, accountability and democratic governance. Accountability depends greatly on sound

recordkeeping to capture, maintain and make available documentary evidence of the activities of government. This is illuminated in the video through its portrayal of the total dependence of auditors on records.

The video highlights the need to build recordkeeping partnerships with those who share the need for accurate, reliable and accessible records and the accountability players, eg auditors, accountants, lawyers, and senior administrators. It also demonstrates that accountability players transcend national boundaries in the form of international organisations and aid donors. The globalisation of economic and government interests makes democratic governance an issue of world-wide concern. The international aid donors would like to see accountability in the disbursement of funds they provide for projects. However, the onus is on the society as a whole. Recordkeeping, which is the basis for accountability and continuity, is the responsibility of every individual; from the farmer in the village to the trader in the street. On this point, however, there is a catch in that the level of literacy in most African countries is very low, making the profitable exploitation of information as an authoritative resource rather difficult.

The risks and opportunities of electronic recordkeeping and its implications especially in a developing country environment are covered. For this reviewer, the opportunities of electronic recordkeeping seem to far outweigh the risks even in an environment where the supply of power is not assured. The Canadian government gives assistance to The Gambia in an attempt to improve records management, especially of financial records which are a source of great concern in that government assets are being stripped by the very people charged with responsibility for them. The threats associated with electronic recordkeeping and the implications for accountability are also explored.

Another vital point the video focuses on is the need to develop and strengthen the professional capacity of recordkeeping practitioners and senior administrators if effective and efficient records management programs are to succeed. Moreover, the pursuit of sound recordkeeping needs to be supported with relevant legislation. In The Gambia they are moving forward on this through the enactment of the *Records Management Service Act* and the inclusion of records management programs in the re-

structuring of the civil service. As governments became more committed to accountability they should also commit themselves to the protection of the integrity of documentary evidence, not only for the purposes of accountability but also for posterity.

The video makes a very good teaching tool both for students of recordkeeping and for all those concerned with the management and use of records; all those who are at risk for failing to keep accurate, reliable and authentic records; and those concerned with accountability in 'young' democracies. As a visual statement the video is very explicit and has a sobering effect on an African student of recordkeeping and a newcomer to the profession like me. The video has the potential to reach a wide audience and it is a very powerful proclamation on behalf of the recordkeeping profession.

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**Public Record Office of Victoria,** *Victoria: Buildings and Builders* [Interactive CD Rom], Melbourne, February 1997. $24.95

This is obviously the electronic age. Rather than simply producing guides and hard copy publications as a means of promoting some of its holdings, the Public Record Office of Victoria has created an interactive CD Rom. This particular CD Rom deals with historical buildings within Victoria.

Most archives have collections of architectural plans and drawings of buildings. The Public Record Office has taken five examples from its holdings and instead of simply providing reproductions it has interwoven them with photographs, images and stories to illustrate 'who and what brought these buildings alive last century', to quote the opening narration. There is a range of subjects to choose from: Parliament House; Government House; Ballarat Gaol; City of Geelong; and Sale Swing Bridge.

The program is relatively easy to use. You just follow the icons and navigate your way through a range of choices. There is a help service, though it is actually a diagram which simply labels and describes each icon. Having chosen a particular building you are given a brief introduction about its history. You then have several choices. You can hear an array of stories, or select to see other, more detailed drawings. A number of plans have a 'zoom in' capability so you can get close ups too.

Along the way you will hear a series of anecdotes about many of the buildings. Life at Government House during the late 19th century is recounted by Agnes, the kitchen maid, complete with a grating Cockney accent. Why the actress playing Agnes had to be a Cockney is not clear, though she has obviously come straight from an Eliza Doolittle audition. Agnes recounts some great moments. A regular highlight of her career was the AJC Derby Day with its subsequent social gatherings at the House and all the work that went into preparing for the big events. There is even some film footage from the 1896 Derby Day, which was held three days before the celebrated 1896 Melbourne Cup. With true Victorian propriety Agnes confidentially tells us that the female staff at the House slept upstairs and the male staff downstairs. The stairs that separated the two groups were known as the 'virgin staircase'.

Clicking on Ballarat Gaol we hear the tawdry story of James Johnston, a stock and station agent who committed forgery and, in an effort to avoid disclosure and ridicule, murdered his wife and four children and then attempted to commit suicide. There are re-enactments of his trial, including extracts from the prosecutor and defence attorneys and the judge. James Johnston was hanged in 1891. The sound effects even extend to the trap door swinging open!

Turning to Sale Bridge we learn that the architect was John Grainger, father of the pianist Percy Grainger. The latter walked over the bridge and, as an accompaniment, we hear some of his original music. There is even an animated display of the bridge opening and closing.

For the City of Geelong there are references to the court house and court, powder magazine, police station, gaol and the harbour master's quarters. For each building there is a dossier icon which tells you who the architect

was, key dates involving the building's construction, its cost and other snippets of information including the materials from which it was built.

Overall, the CD is informative. It is easy to use, just a simple case of following the icons. It's a very good way to promote your holdings widely and to make them both accessible and entertaining – not just the archives but the stories they tell. The graphics are good. There is one criticism that I will make. The background music is often annoying, rather than soothing, while the narration is in progress. It's certainly not the sort of music you'd want to hear if you were trapped in a lift overnight. The Public Record Office is to be commended for its foray into this type of activity. It is a simple program, but it's informative and it's fun.

To operate the program you will need Windows 3.1 or Windows 95 running on a 16MB MPC-II compliant Intel Pentium based microcomputer fitted with a sound card option. In addition, you will need a quad speed CD Rom drive. Your display monitor characteristics should be SVGA 640 x 480 pixel screen capable of 32000 colours (High Colour).

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## Conferences

**Archives and Reform: Preparing for Tomorrow,** 1997 National Conference of the Australian Society of Archivists, Adelaide, 24-26 July 1997.

Australian Archives has five Graduate Administrative Assistants (GAAs) in 1997 and we were all given the opportunity to attend the National Conference and Annual General Meeting of the Australian Society of

Archivists this year in Adelaide. We had been asked to prepare a report on the sessions for the Australian Archives internal newsletter and were pleased to be given the further opportunity of preparing a review for this journal. Rather than summarising the sessions this review presents our own impressions as first time ASA conference-goers.

This group of GAAs comes from diverse backgrounds including computer science, medieval studies and human ecology as well as archives, record and information management studies. These varied backgrounds meant that we came to Adelaide with a range of expectations. In general, we expected to experience the world of the professional archivist where ideas and opinions were shared, controversial papers were presented and discussed, and lots of associations were developed using that nineties corporate tool of 'networking'. What we found was an assembly of faces to match already familiar names, valuable presentations from experts outside of the archival profession, and an insight into the Australian archival community. The opportunity to gain the necessary experience, particularly in the format of the AGM, was invaluable to help us participate in future gatherings of this nature.

What we did not find however was the discussion and possible controversy that we expected from such a collection of professionals. The range of speakers and papers presented was broad, and the speakers from outside the profession were of particular interest to us, but even these were not probed by questions from the floor. It seemed that questions were a luxury provided only if there was time, and, even then, time only permitted for one or two questions per speaker. It was possible, indeed encouraged, to provide feedback, questioning and opinions to speakers outside the forum of the group discussion, but this was a daunting proposal for unknowns like us, and not to the benefit of the general profession.

The lack of controversy can only be put down to the apparent cohesiveness of the archival community in Australia. For us to be free of internal bickering and divisions is important in maintaining our impressive international image, but one would think that some element of critical analysis must exist for the profession ever to advance. We do not doubt this does exist, but if not at the level of the professional association's annual conference, then we wonder

where? We assume it happens at workshops and seminars held throughout the year.

This brings us to the dichotomy that became evident between practising and research-based bodies that exist within the archival community. This issue was raised in relation to the recent Pittsburgh Electronic Records Research meeting, which was discussed during the Electronic Records Special Interest Group Meeting. It is a common dichotomy reflected in the policy and functional sections of government as well as the management and staff sections of any modern organisation. We see professional bodies such as the ASA as holding an important role in bridging existing gaps between research and practice. For this reason we expected to see a greater number of conceptual papers presented, perhaps by Masters students or similar. This would have served the dual purpose of involving researchers in the conference proceedings and publicising new people and ideas within the association.

The majority of papers presented were practically focussed and a number of themes, intended and not, emerged. The most obvious of these was that of reform and the archive of the future, the theme of the conference. This issue is of particular importance in the present economic, political and social climate. An unproductive, inefficient section in any organisation is no longer acceptable and, just like any other business function, archives are being forced to justify their existence and operate more efficiently. Archivists, as a professional group, can no longer sit on the bench when it comes to playing the corporate game. This provides us with a range of great opportunities at the same time as daunting challenges. This is a wonderful chance for us to escape the shackles of an image that places us in the basement surrounded by dusty old boxes and to assert our expertise and relevance to our respective organisational colleagues, and potentially the community at large.

Before an archives can positively assert itself on the wider organisation, we need to examine ourselves and develop clear concepts of where we fit in the scheme of things, our core functions, our clients and how to reach them, and our allies and how best we can use them. All of these issues were addressed at various stages during the conference, suggesting the need to fit into the corporate community is reaching home for recordkeeping professionals.

The fact that we have been able to put together a collection of our thoughts from the conference is evidence enough that we were stimulated and our attention captivated throughout the three days. I hope also that this review shows that we, the fresh blood in the profession, have our own ideas for the future of a professional association such as the ASA. Our experience of the conference has inspired us to become involved and contribute to the future direction of the association and the archival profession in this country.

Helen Cross, Gay Hogan, Saraven Peacock, Tonia Vincent, Sandra Willmott
Australian Archives

**Business Analysis and Recordkeeping: Building Partnerships**, seminars organised by the Monash University Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records, Melbourne, April and May 1997.

It was with some anticipation that I attended these workshops. My interest in functional analysis and its application to recordkeeping has evolved over the past few years from participating in the development of function-based finding aids at the Public Record Office Victoria. The two workshops, each of two days, were presented as a series of modules so that participants could choose to attend only those sessions which most interested them. The April workshop primarily focussed on various applications of functional analysis for archival appraisal and description.

Issues raised were followed up in the May workshop which looked also at the potential application of several business analysis methodologies to current and historical recordkeeping.

The key presenters of the April workshop were Roelef Hol and Bert de Vries, Manager and Deputy Manager of the PIVOT project, Netherlands National Archives (NNA). The PIVOT project has attracted international interest in recent years because of its innovative approach to appraisal which draws extensively on analysis of the context of records. The project emerged

to deal with the appraisal and description of the massive quantity of records created in government offices since the Second World War, many of which were poorly managed and inaccessible. A legislative change, which reduced the transfer period from fifty to twenty years, left the NNA faced with a quantity of records which could not be managed by traditional document-level examination of records for archival selection. The project objectives, therefore, were to devise a method for selection and description which could deal with the large quantities of modern records. The methodology had to also have continuing benefit into the future, that is, to be seen to influence records management practice in order that future archival work would be manageable. The method took around three years to develop.

Central to the PIVOT approach is the institutional analysis. A first task of the project was to map the contextual territory by identifying the policy fields of the Netherlands central government between 1940 and the current day. This analysis provides a device for dividing up the more detailed research into 'handelingen' (actions of government) and to provide a context for the 'handelingen'. Approximately 130 policy fields have been identified. Research projects were then established by agreements made with each administration. Although the high-level support and funding given to the project both impressed and disheartened those attending, it was made clear that the method was chosen because it was seen to be more cost-effective than the traditional document-based approach.

The research into government actions is conducted by teams of researchers provided by the National Archives and by each administration. The research is approached from four angles:

- what is the legal authority for action;
- how do policy processes interplay with action;
- what records input into and result from action; and
- how do actions relate to organisational structures.

The resultant institutional analysis is seen to have three main applications.

Firstly, it is the basis for the production of Basis Selection Documents which link actions (handelingen) to appraisal criteria. In developing the

PIVOT methodology the National Archives redefined their selection objectives and articulated appraisal criteria applicable to actions rather than records, based upon a concept of the value of records deriving from the value of government action. The six criteria, in summary, require records to be selected as archives if they relate to actions which show:

- the formulation of the main lines of policy;
- the evaluation of main lines of policy;
- accounting for policy to others;
- the reconstruction of organisations responsible for policy;
- the manner in which policy was to be implemented; and
- the actual implementation of policy in particular circumstances of national significance.

This is a clear move away from the traditional approach of appraising the value of records through item by item examination. The second application of the analysis is in the formulation of record inventories in which files selected as archives are being listed by action. The analysis is also being applied to the development of a classification scheme for the management of current records. This application of the analysis is still being explored, but is proving to be well received within the administration concerned.

The extensive questioning of Hol and de Vries following their presentation demonstrated the participants' interest in many practical implementation issues of the PIVOT methodology. The opportunity for further exploring the implications of the PIVOT approach was provided by the afternoon panel session, chaired by Chris Hurley, and throughout the next day. Important issues which were raised included: the lack of a shared language of functional or business analysis; the scaleability of analysis and the need for a point of view; the contingency of functions and the significance of both time and space dimensions in functional analysis.

Several definitions of function and functional analysis were presented from the information technology and business analysis fields to demonstrate how we need to be careful in our use of terms which already have established meanings within various professional areas. Even amongst our own there

are claims on the use of certain words. A nice example of this came from de Vries, who explained that they altered their translation of the Dutch term handeling from function to action after their first meeting with archivists in Sydney. Chris Hurley argued the importance of scale and point of view when defining and analysing functions. Functions exist at many levels of a continuum, from the detailed operations of a software application through to the workings of an entire social system. Where we choose to focus our analysis and what we choose to call the beasts we discover (functions, activities, transactions, etc.) will depend on our point of view and the purpose of our analysis.

The Dutch, for example, have chosen to focus their analysis on two levels of functional ideas (named policy fields and actions) which are useful for appraisal and descriptive work. In the PIVOT project the rigorous analysis of high-level policy fields has established a perspective from which the further analysis of actions is undertaken.

The contingent analysis and documentation of context (including functions) through time as well as space sets recordkeepers apart from those who classify abstract ideas and those who analyse functions in the space dimension only. For contextual control we are interested in what happened, and when. The mapping of the contextual domain by the Dutch has both a time and space dimension to it in its coverage of all policy areas of the central government (space dimension) throughout the period from 1940 to the present (time dimension). All actions identified in the detailed research must fit within this time/space map.

The method and applications of the PIVOT project proved to be an interesting contrast to the Australian practices described on the following day. Michael Piggott began with a description of various developments in Australian Archives' traditional disposal and descriptive practice and sought to place functional analysis within this tradition. In Australian Archives' disposal practice the analysis of functions within the boundaries of a single agency has been the traditional basis for the definition of disposal classes. In some cases there has been analysis of functions which cut across agency boundaries, such as the general disposal authorities for housekeeping functions and GDA 21 relating to the intelligence function. Nevertheless,

there is no overall functional context for the disposal classes and the resulting schedules ascribe sentences to categories of records based on ideas about the evidential or informational value of those records. What distinguishes the PIVOT method is the formulation of appraisal criteria which are applicable to actions rather than records, and the functional mapping of the entire domain which establishes the perspective and context of the appraisal decisions.

Jan Riley of All Saints College presented a work-in-progress report of a software application she has developed for use in the Western Australian independent school context. The application is designed to manage a variety of archival processes to do with both intellectual and physical control. Of particular interest is the inclusion of function entities within the contextual control module of the application. The function entities are linked to both record creators and to records (she has used the terms agency and series to represent these entities).  The system therefore enables you to see who was responsible for a function at any given time and to see what records exist which relate to that function.

Although Jan's software exemplifies a growing trend in separating functional and structural entities for archival control, she acknowledged that her current functional entities have no definite conceptual basis. Moving away from appraisal and description, Helen Smith introduced us to an interesting project under way at BHP to develop a function-oriented Global Business Classification Scheme for the company.  When a need arose to classify documents for the implementation of Document Management Systems the Archives took the opportunity to propose a classification scheme designed around a top-down, hierarchical analysis of the functions, activities and transactions which support the goals and strategies of the company.

Archives argued that this approach to classification supports information resource use and sharing in a distributed environment, accountability of decision making by linking functions to documents, compliance with the Records Management Standard AS 4390, as well as standard folder structuring in the desktop environment.

In the first phase of the project the top level of the classification scheme

was developed. This was done through a workshop process, facilitated by a consultant, which involved participants from the major business groups of the company. The exclusion of archives and records personnel from this process (except as observers) aimed to ensure the classification scheme would be a comprehensive and accurate reflection of the major functions of the Company and would be owned by the business groups involved. The top level of the scheme is deliberately generic to support its continued relevance through time and change. Customisation of the classification scheme below the top level is the responsibility of business areas subject to customisation guidelines prepared by archives. It is intended that customised versions of the lower levels will be registered. At this stage there has been no exploration of how the scheme could be applied to disposal or archival control within the company. The question of whether the same functional analysis can or should be applied to both current and historical recordkeeping is an area which, I believe, has yet to be given due consideration.

The April workshop concluded with an opportunity to have a go at some functional analysis using a case study of a pharmaceutical company and a government regulating body. What emerged from this task was a list of issues and questions for further discussion and research.

The May workshop brought together a mostly different group of participants to hear about approaches to business analysis undertaken to meet objectives other than recordkeeping. It was a chance to see whether different approaches offered tools or products which could be relevant to our recordkeeping needs. Three presenters from the areas of strategic planning, risk management and business process design described the objectives and methods of the business analysis they undertake. When we assessed the approaches of the three professionals many similarities were evident between the methods used for strategic planning and for business process design. In both cases the objective of the analysis determines the scope and level of analysis. The identification of specific functions and processes appears to be based around common sense, convenience and relevance to the objective: there are no hard and fast rules. As the purpose of the analysis is to meet an immediate and particular business need it may be of value to current recordkeeping but seems unlikely to have relevance

through time for historical recordkeeping. The risk management approach was significantly different.

The method of analysis is much more concerned about the interaction between structure and function and the accountability of individuals, business units or the organisation as a whole. In this respect the risk analysis methodology could be a valuable tool for identifying recordkeeping risks (the risk of not creating or capturing evidence of transactions, for example), but may not have wider applicability to recordkeeping.

Glenda Acland and Anne Picot described their experiences of using functional analysis for various current recordkeeping purposes. Acland explained how a generic analysis of functions developed for categorising transactions for file level control also assists the University of Queensland to identify decision making points where the corporate record is made and has been useful for managing records through administrative change. Picot described how the products of two independent organisational analysis projects, one for determining the custodians of business systems and the other for activity based management, are being adapted for current recordkeeping purposes within the NSW Roads and Traffic Authority.

Picot found that the classification of activities for activity based management, with some massaging, has proven useful for controlling file creation.

The workshop sessions on the final day generated much discussion and debate about the nature of functional analysis and its application to current and historical recordkeeping. A number of propositions put forward by Barbara Reed were debated by several focus groups and an encouraging consensus was reached on most. Another task of the focus groups was to place the various purposes of functional analysis in the dimensions of the records continuum.  This exercise proved to be not particularly useful, as in many cases the analysis could be seen to apply at each dimension depending on your point of view. I would have found it more interesting to have further explored the characteristics of functional analysis for different purposes in order to assess the extent of common ground and therefore potential for integration.

Although my head was spinning with thoughts by the end of each workshop, I felt satisfied that I had been stimulated and challenged by a conceptual and practical issue of increasing relevance to the recordkeeping profession.

Tony Leviston
Public Record Office of Victoria

**Electronic Document Management - The New Frontier,** speakers' papers, Melbourne, 10-11 July 1997.

Speakers at the *Electronic Document Management* conference held in Melbourne in July 1997 sought to address the challenges that the management of electronic documents and records present to information professionals. Aptly sub-titled *The New Frontier,* the conference papers were contributed by professionals with various perspectives on electronic document and records management strategies. The papers provide the reader, especially someone new to the profession, with an opportunity to gain a broad understanding of current opinions, programs, and proposed solutions. In short, they present a snapshot of where various organisations stand at this moment in time in their approach to electronic document management and managing electronic records. Contributors from corporate organisations, government institutions, university and research organisations, and a private law firm, were able to provide reports on developments, obstacles, and successes in particular aspects of information management.

The papers are introduced by conference chairperson Rosemary Kaczynski of MRMA Document Management Consulting who identifies the main issues as technological obsolescence, the requirement for control of the flow of information within a recordkeeping system, and the establishment of universal standards governing the format and control of information.

The problem of obsolescence within information technology is daunting.

Ross Gibbs, Keeper of Public Records at the Public Record Office, Victoria, reports that due to ongoing technological innovation, certain amounts of electronic information will eventually become irretrievable. Unless a solution is found, this process will be perpetual. John Meyer also pointed to technological obsolescence as having dire consequences for the Australian Taxation Office, whose ability to audit electronic documents of a financial nature could be compromised. For Gibbs, the solution is a difficult but obvious one: the effects of technological obsolescence will be reduced by the development of a 'simple application format' established as a common standard to allow for the migration of records from superseded systems.

Many of the speakers refer to the electronic *document* in their management strategies. Indeed the title of the conference is *Electronic Document Management*. The theoretical shift from document management to record management is an idea that the student of information management has to grapple with. Warren Gribble of the Australian Quality Council defines the record in terms of evidence of a business transaction or conduct of affairs. Gibbs takes this further by defining the shift from document to record. This occurs when the document becomes 'part of a particular business process or transaction, so that it may be used later as evidence'. Both speakers use the term 'transaction' and 'evidence'. From a student's perspective, document management caters for the management of the information contained, whereas records management is concerned also with the context and evidential nature of the document.

The constant flux of information in organisations means that those involved in its management must know what records they need to retain and what records they need to dispose of. The conference speakers provide much relevant advice regarding management strategies for this problem. Warren Gribble of the Australian Quality Council suggests that the definition of authorities and responsibilities relative to specific electronic records, along with an analysis of business activities, will aid in specifying their appropriate retention and disposal. This leads into an opinion voiced by many of the speakers, including Tim O'Grady of the CSIRO and Patrick Turner of Kodak, that effective management of electronic records requires effective metadata standards. Frank Upward gives the example of the Dublin Core metadata initiative, which provides a generic set of elements to act as primary

descriptors for electronic record control. To this formula, Ross Gibbs adds that the record must be described at its creation so as not to risk losing any of its 'contextual information'.

Ian Dockeary of South West Water Limited proclaims that 'information professionals search, they do not surf' the Internet, implying that information managers should be able to apply a carefully planned and methodical search of the Internet for relevant information. This can be done with a thorough knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of a range of web search engines. Jennifer Douglas of Mallesons Stephens Jaques, Solicitors, and John Meyer of the Australian Taxation Office provide interesting details on the legal status of electronic documents. The former deals with key Internet legal issues such as copyright, trademarks, privacy, obscene material, defamation, and misleading conduct; and the latter with the challenges the Australian Taxation Office faces with regard to auditing commercial transactions on the web. Tim O'Grady of the CSIRO reports on the current status of this organisation's Intranet facility, which seems to be an effective tool in the sharing of information throughout the CSIRO.

The speakers sought to address the particular difficulties that information managers will encounter as they deal with electronic documents. The papers also give a valuable insight into the current state of play relating to the standards governing electronic records in Australia today. They provide a readable summary of these viewpoints for those who are concerned with the current status and the future of electronic document and records management – students and professionals alike. The most significant theme of the papers is the call for uniform electronic recordkeeping and technological standards, to reduce the risk of losing information due to obsolescence of technology and non-standardised administration of electronic records. Hopefully the task of developing standards will form the basis for the future of the information manager's approach to electronic documents.

Duncan Hartwig
Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records
Monash University

**Have Your Records Been Doctored? New Imperatives for Health and Medicine Recordkeeping**, conference organised by Australian Science Archives Project and Centre of the Study of Health and Society, University of Melbourne, Parkville, VIC, 17 July, 1997.

'Medical practice, as we know it, is based on recordkeeping.' This statement was the opening of the keynote address to the conference I attended as an independent participant with a background in clinical laboratory science and an interest in science archives. My hope was to be both informed and entertained. I was not disappointed. Speakers included medical doctors, health care administrators, medical records administrators, academics, lawyers, medical historians and archivists. One focus was on traditional archival and recordkeeping issues. Another was good medical recordkeeping, both current and archival, and its impact on good medical practice and research. Several speakers addressed the influence of information technology on medical information management.

Gavan McCarthy, Director of the Australian Science Archives Project, addressed two of these topics in his keynote address. He opened with a short lesson on what makes a 'record' a record. Then, using his local GP's index card system as an example of a well-accepted and workable recordkeeping method, he suggested that current IT systems cannot effectively deal with some requirements of an adequate system. These included positive identification of authorship, a lasting medium, and easy retrieval of information. An essential requirement is the ability of a record to exist over time without the danger of being altered or 'doctored'. With the GP's file card system the record is actually created in the presence of the patient and therefore implies the patient's agreement to the record whereas a computerised record might require some signing off by the patient as security. He concluded that the IT industry has not yet developed adequate tools to manage records. The relationship between current medical practice and recordkeeping must be carefully examined before adequate IT systems can be developed.

John Snowden, a solicitor in the area of health law, gave an entertaining and alarming talk on the legal aspects of recordkeeping. He stated that the best defence in court for an organisation or an individual was to have created and kept good records. Poor records were taken to indicate poor work practices and the lack of records, deceit. He gave an example of deliberate falsification, or 'doctoring', of medical records, which had resulted in prosecution of a physician and a hospital for malpractice. Issues were the importance of accuracy in medical records and the necessity of their being absolutely up to date. I was surprised that ownership of medical records was not addressed as a legal issue.

Bronwyn Hewitt and Robyn Weymouth, archivists at Women's and Children's Health Care Network, reported on a survey of 12 Victorian hospitals.[1] This was perhaps the most disheartening session for professional archivists and record managers. Of the hospitals surveyed only nine had professional archivists or record managers many of whom were part time or voluntary. The archivists interviewed by Hewitt and Weymouth felt that they were provided with inadequate facilities and resources for archival work. Few hospitals had documented records policies. Administrative staff were untrained in records management issues and were ignorant of legal requirements pertaining to archives and records. All but one of the hospitals surveyed were public institutions. Government cost cutting could perhaps be blamed for poor facilities and part-time positions but not for lack of knowledge. The presenters suggested that accreditation pressures in the future might exert a positive influence on recordkeeping issues.

General practitioner Doris Young discussed methods of recordkeeping currently used in clinical practice. She stressed that the overriding concern of clinicians is to improve the quality of patient care and that good medical record creation and management are important elements. The Royal College of General Practitioners has guidelines for recordkeeping, but not all physicians follow them. The College also has established standards for computerised records. Young found that although only 6% of GPs currently use computer-based systems, most would accept the technology if improved patient care would result. Patient attitudes to computer-based records could be an interesting survey topic.

The final panel discussion should have been the most useful part of the conference. However, being pressed for time at the end of the day, it seemed disorganised and was overshadowed by presentations from the floor. John Clement, forensic dentist to the Victoria Police, expressed his disgust at the recent destruction of hospital dental records. They can be vital for identification of human remains in police investigations and disaster situations. He had been negotiating with the hospital to preserve records after a record cull in 1995, and was dismayed that records were still being discarded. Employees from the Public Record Office took the floor to explain their difficulty in developing and implementing appropriate disposal schedules and practices. The current volume of records creation and the issues of records storage, management and access are obviously major problems for archivists, medical records managers and health care administrators.

'Have Your Records Been Doctored?' was certainly entertaining and informative. I was entertained by the passionate attitudes of the record-users and the recordkeepers. I was surprised at the varied issues and problems in the area of medical recordkeeping and would have welcomed more discussion on many of the topics. I was motivated by this stimulating conference to begin a Graduate Diploma in Archives and Records Management.

Brenda Le Grand
Monash University

I would like to thank Rosetta Manaszewicz for sharing her notes and thoughts on the afternoon session and also Gavan McCarthy for providing a copy of his talk and a press release on this conference.

## Endnotes

1   The authors were referring to general administration staff, not to medical records administrators, who have strictly documented and regulated records policies and practices.

**Old Institutions - New Images,** hosted by the John Curtin International Institute, Curtin University of Technology, Fremantle, 29 July-1 August 1997.

This was a 'big picture' conference that provided the opportunity to stand back and look at formative influences on Australian cultural heritage through trends across a number of disciplines. The stated focus was on the legacy left to Australia and other colonial outposts by Britain, through three major themes:

• Cultural Institutions and their Political Context

• Architecture and Town Planning

• The Documentary Record.

Each of the three days was devoted to one of the themes. Unfortunately many delegates selected only the day which focussed on their specific field. This did affect the cohesiveness of the conference. Mixing the themes throughout the three days, or reducing the length of the conference might have altered this.

I attended two full days of conference sessions: Architecture and Town Planning and The Documentary Record. Speakers had interpreted their briefs variously, with some sessions pitched at the level of the specialist scholar, and others more accessible to the uninitiated listener from a related but separate discipline.

The Architecture and Planning sessions on day two provided a novice with an excellent overview of the development of planning and architecture in Australia and other colonies. The major British and other cultural influences came through clearly, although there did seem to be undue emphasis on Canberra and New Town. Dr John Stephens, on the Kalgoorlie pipeline, and Barbara van Bronswijk, on Independent Schools in Western Australia, presented interesting accounts of cultural influences in the local area. It was intriguing to note how heavily all these scholars use archival

maps and plans, and to reflect on the relatively low priority given to preserving them, in WA at least.

Joan Domicelj's talk provided a stark reminder of how little attention has been paid to the influences of Aboriginal heritage and the natural environment in contrast to the short British occupation.

The range of site visits on the Thursday afternoon was impressive, from the central heritage precinct of Perth to a 'Fremantle clubs walk', a tour of the new John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library and a tour of Kwinana, a reborn New Town. Attendance at visits of such wide appeal unfortunately appeared to be limited mainly to those attending the Thursday sessions, a result of the patchwork registrations.

On day three, The Documentary Record, it was fascinating to note the similarity in the ways that three major institutions have 'reinvented' their Old Institutions to achieve New Images in response to a changing world. Sarah Tyacke, Keeper of Public Records in the United Kingdom, George Nichols, Director-General of Australian Archives and Dr Lynn Allen, Chief Executive Officer of the Library and Information Service of Western Australia, all described a shift from the idea of merely acquiring and fiercely guarding their treasures to a policy of removing the traditional barriers and making those treasures available to the wider community.

Dr Cathie Clement outlined the changes in the research interests and motivations of historians and their changing needs as researchers. The perennial users' chant of, 'we hate microfilm', was given a new slant – could an institution be held liable if poor microfilming concealed part of the evidence needed by a researcher involved in litigation?

Other aspects of documentary heritage were covered in Max Burnet's entertaining account of the UK influence on computing in Australia and Professor Wallace Kirsop's presentation on the extraordinary British dominance of the Australian publishing scene.

In summing up, Dr Maggie Exon discussed some of the major preoccupations of archivists – the galloping technology, mutating software and unstable storage media. She reflected that while adequate records of

the past had managed to survive under a regime of 'benign neglect', electronic records would not. If the challenge could not be met, there was a distinct possibility that, 'historians of the future might not be able to write the story of our present'.

The conference finished on a light note with a spirited hypothetical featuring the international conference speakers and a number of well-known Perth identities discussing Australia's future. This clearly illustrated the cultural influences, both past and present, that will shape that future, a fitting summation of Old Institutions – New Images.

Jennifer Edgecombe
University of Western Australia

**Working Meeting on Electronic Records Research,** sponsored by the Center for Recordkeeping and Archival Research, University of Pittsburgh and organised by Archives and Museum Informatics, Pittsburgh, 29-31 May 1997.

The stated aims of this international invitational meeting were to bring participants up to date on progress in electronic records research and practice, identify outstanding research issues and reach consensus on a future research agenda. An unstated aim of the meeting was to secure for electronic records research a larger slice of the US National Historical Publications and Records Commission's funding budget in the face of vigorous competition from the advocates of historical publishing projects.

The meeting was attended by a stellar cast of fifty electronic records luminaries from nine countries. From the Australian point of view it was extremely encouraging that seven of the fifty delegates were from down under, a reflection not only of the international recognition that Australian electronic records experts currently enjoy, but also I suspect of the close links that have emerged between Australia and the Pittsburgh school.

Expectations were high, perhaps unreasonably so. With the recent conclusion of the three year research and development phases of both the Pittsburgh and the University of British Columbia/US Department of Defense Projects, it was anticipated that this meeting would be of watershed significance. Given the well known rivalry between these two projects, some of us anticipated that there may have been some unseemly and time wasting altercations between the members of the opposing camps. To my relief this did not eventuate. Perhaps the presence of Gerald George, President of the NHPRC, put everyone on their best behaviour? Instead the overriding creative tension during the meeting was that between researchers and practitioners.

I heard lots of muttering in the corridors from practitioners who are crying out for practical solutions to their real life electronic records problems and who feel that much of the research work is overly theoretical and divorced from their reality. This muttering exploded into open session on the final afternoon when Laura McGee of the Dallas City Archives passionately asserted that, after five years of research and very little practical progress, she was losing her 'reason to believe'. For their part the researchers were inclined to respond to this criticism by saying, 'well, we have done the research – its up to you guys to implement it. Don't blame us if there has been a lack of practical progress!'

I found this split between researchers and practitioners to be very unfortunate. Coming from Australia where there is very little funded research, I feel that the North Americans should be more appreciative of their fortunate situation. There is no doubt in my mind that substantial progress has been made over the past five years through the various research projects, so much so that there is now considerable confidence in both our understanding of the problem and our capacity to tackle it. One is inclined to forget just how overwhelming the problem seemed five years ago. While the problem is still daunting, there is much less abject pessimism extant than used to be the case. Indeed the frustration expressed by the practitioners was itself a reflection of the belief that it *is* possible to manage electronic records properly, even if not many people have actually done it yet in real life. This is very different to 1992, when the majority view was that we were facing a disaster for which there were no solutions.

Nevertheless, there was some point to the criticisms of the practitioners. For many archivists and records managers in small to medium sized organisations, application of the mind numbingly complex Pittsburgh and UBC models and specifications would be a case of using a sledgehammer to squash an ant. There is undoubtedly a need for a simplified set of guidelines or a 'dummy's guide to electronic records'. A number of delegates highlighted our unfortunate tendency to overcomplicate matters. For example, Wendy Duff compared the glacial progress on archival metadata to the rapid development and advance in the 'Dublin Core' set. It is perhaps because archival metadata specifications are so highly developed and top heavy with detail that they have been difficult to implement. In contrast, the Dublin Core caravan has constantly reminded itself that 'this is not rocket science folks', and has taken the approach of locking experts in a room and telling them not to emerge until they have agreed to a simple set of specifications. While the comparison is perhaps unfair in that Dublin Core has a very limited set of objectives, for which original research was somewhat less essential, it is instructive all the same.

In the midst of this tension between researchers and practitioners it is pleasing to be able to report that progress by Australian practitioners in applying the research findings, particularly in the field of recordkeeping policy development, was very warmly received by most, if not all, of the delegates. Greg O'Shea was greatly relieved to be able to report progress made by the Australian Archives without getting into yet another wrangle over the custody issue. His main argument was that we now know enough about electronic records to move from the 'talking' phase into a 'doing' phase. The presentation by Luisa Moscato from the Records Management Office of NSW was perhaps the hit of the meeting. While most Australians are well aware of the value and significance of the work being carried out under David Roberts's guidance, it was clear that Luisa's presentation was the first time that this message had hit home to most of the international ER community. Without wishing to appear too nationalistic, the impression created was that, while the rest of the world moans about the lack of implementation, Australia is quietly getting on with the job and not trying to pretend that the problem belongs to someone else.

From where I sit the major real life problem facing electronic

recordkeeping professionals is that records creators are continuing to use proprietary software platforms which have poor recordkeeping attributes. The time is now overdue to engage the commercial software developers and vendors in our discourse. It should no longer be beneath our dignity to commence a dialogue with grubby commercial interests. We now have enough understanding of what needs to be done to enable us to talk with authority to these stakeholders. An encouraging alternative approach, being pursued by Richard Lysakowski of the Collaborative Electronic Notebooks Consortium, is to develop his own commercial software packages in the hope of generating interest from the IT industry's major power brokers, using the logic that today's product is someone else's prototype.

Other outstanding issues and research topics that were identified include:

- the broader societal warrant for recordkeeping (notwithstanding Maria Guerico's efforts to blast Wendy Duff's and David Bearman's concept of warrant out of the water by claiming primacy for the supposedly universal legal/juridical conceptual framework for archives);

- the metadata requirements for long-term preservation of records (as opposed to the existing Pittsburgh metadata specifications which meet the relatively short-term functional requirements for organisational recordkeeping);

- the functional requirements for personal recordkeeping;

- the problems of managing and preserving hybrid print/electronic record series;

- guidelines for levels of acceptable loss of content, context and structure over successive migrations;

- the levels of loss and expense associated with different migration strategies;

- how to avoid the necessity for reappraisal at migration, in other words how to create self-migrating records;

- the use of automated migration agents and transformation utilities;

- how best to audit/authenticate migrations;

- the need to 'piggy back' migration research on research into the Year 2000 problem;

- the need to develop agreement amongst ourselves on common semantics, syntax and terminology;

- how to explain concepts and issues to our clients in comprehensible English rather than in jargon and the need to listen and respond to the needs and concerns of our clients;

- how to promote sound recordkeeping practices in unregulated environments;

- the need for rapid prototyping of models and potential strategies;

- the influence of the Internet and the emergence of virtual recordkeeping entities on the nature of records creation and retention;

- the potential role of 'surrogate' records;

- the need to synthesise models for business processes and recordkeeping;

- the need for case studies of risk to demonstrate what happens to organisations that do not keep their records properly;

- further investigation of records creation behaviour in order to be able to design more effective user interfaces for recordkeeping software;

- the need to agree upon a core set of generic, reusable metadata elements;

- the need to engage on a broader front with other groups who have an interest in metadata and digital preservation issues;

- the role of encryption in ensuring the security and inviolability of records; and

- the need to further foster multidisciplinary teams to tackle research and implementation projects.

From the above list I hope it is clear just how much ground was covered in the three days of dense discussion and analysis, so much so that it is

impossible to do it justice in a mere review. As David Bearman pointed out in his concluding remarks, the fact that we are now asking a different set of questions compared to five years ago demonstrates just how much progress has been made in that time and how much work there is still to do. Interested readers are encouraged to visit the Web site for the meeting at http://www.sis.pitt.edu/~cerar/er-mtg97.html for further details and individual papers.

Adrian Cunningham
National Library of Australia

## Exhibition

**The Sparrow Starvers: Block Boys 1890-1930**, an exhibition of documents from the City of Sydney Archives, Sydney Town Hall, 21 April - 27 June 1997.

This exhibition is a load of old horse manure. Cartloads of it in fact. Tucked away within the Victorian splendour of Sydney Town Hall, it tells the poignant story of those most lowly of Council employees – the young boys who swept the streets of Sydney during an era when the main source of pollution in the city was horse droppings.

Sydney might have been quieter and more picturesque before horse-drawn vehicles were replaced by motor cars, but few people nowadays would give much thought to the fact that horses meant manure – and somebody had to get rid of it. How interesting it is, then, to learn from this exhibition that from the 1890s to the 1930s the City Council employed 'a small army of boys' to keep the streets clean. The boys' work was dangerous and dirty as they ducked traffic and scooped shit. Their wages were meagre, their status low, and their youthful behaviour was not well tolerated.

Their story is told in framed enlargements of photographs from the City

of Sydney Archives. Here are boys on street corners with their brooms and scoops, boys loitering in back lanes, boys in or out of uniform depending on the prevailing edict of the City Council, and vistas of city streets before and after the coming of the motor car era. Complementing the photographs is a well-chosen array of documents – Council minutes, memos and reports; notices of dismissal; letters from concerned citizens; newspaper clippings; and drawings and designs for uniforms and push carts. The matters covered in these documents would have affected the lives of many of Sydney's poorer families, since it was their sons who were employed as block boys. It is ironic that the documents should now be displayed in the richly furnished room from which many of them would have emanated, the Town Clerk's office.

The exhibition labels are clearly expressed and informative. Apart from the stylish exhibition brochure and poster, there are no fancy graphics here, and no elaborate design concepts. The exhibition is plain but elegant. It does, however, have one simple problem that could have been avoided – lack of orientation. There is no concise statement of what the exhibition is about. The exhibition poster (one copy in the Town Hall entrance, another propped on the mantelpiece in the exhibition room) does not fulfil this function, particularly since the terms 'block boys' and 'sparrow starvers' would be unfamiliar to all but our most senior of citizens. What is needed is an attractive introductory panel, with a paragraph of text, to entice casual Town Hall sightseers into the room, and to set the scene for the story that follows.

During my visit I surreptitiously watched as several people came and went. The longest stayers were two senior ladies who took in much of what there was to see and chatted about it as they circumambulated the room. The shortest visits lasted around 15 seconds as people stuck their heads in the doorway then disappeared. Visitors who actually made it inside the door paused, as I had done, to get their bearings before approaching any of the exhibits. Even the eight-minute ladies, who had evidently planned their visit, at first cast about for somewhere to begin. The provision of an introductory panel, which is fairly standard exhibition practice, would have helped all of these people.

As a good exhibition should, *The Sparrow Starvers* works on more than one
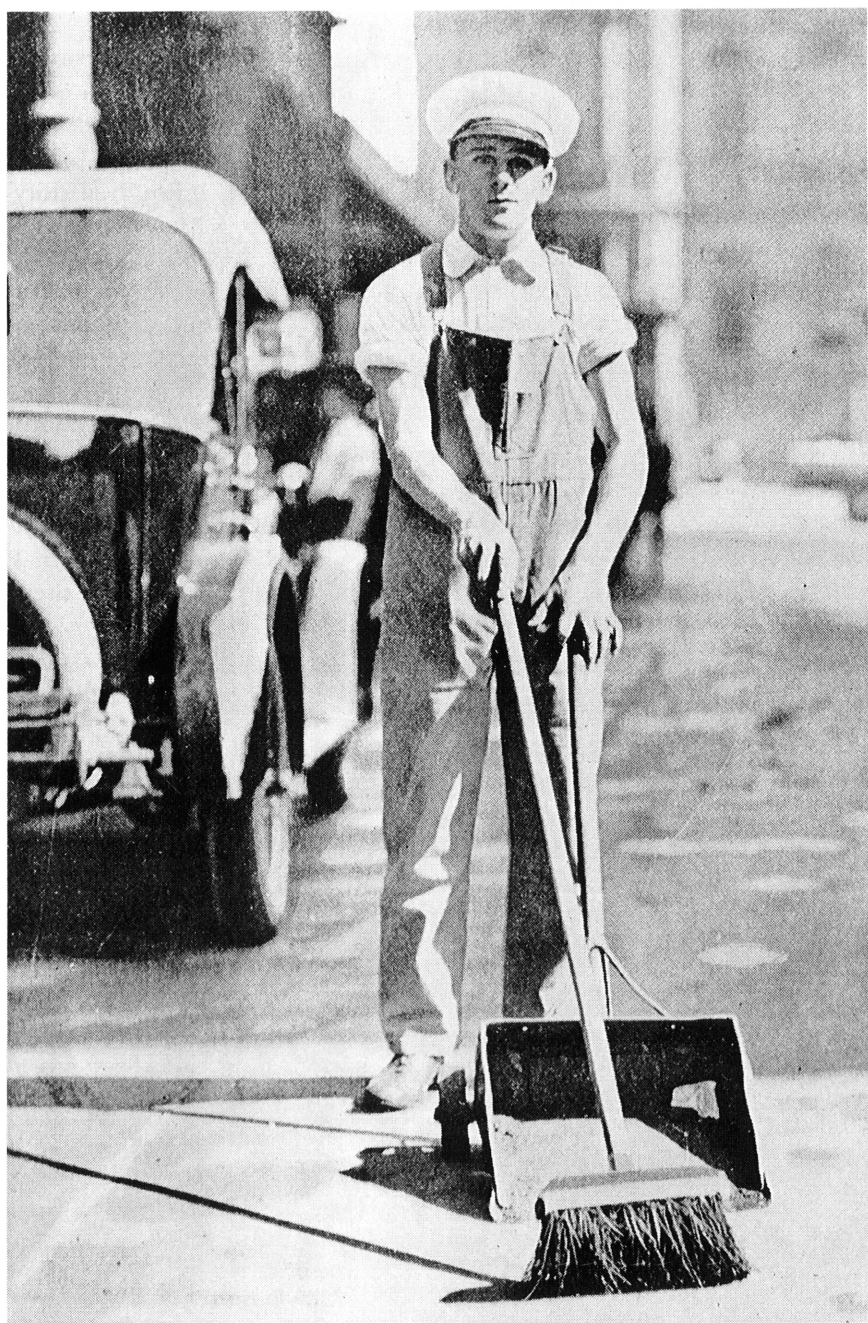
level. Ostensibly it presents a little-known fragment of the rich history of Sydney. But on another level it is a demonstration of 'how history is done'. The documents on display are no mere illustration of a story plucked from 'history'. Perceptive visitors will realise that they are the raw material (albeit just a sample) from which the exhibition's authors have drawn their story of the block boys.

It would further enhance visitors' appreciation of 'how history is done' if authorship were acknowledged. Unfortunately, nowhere in the exhibition or brochure is the name mentioned of any person who worked on either of them. This is a pity, not only because it fails to give credit where it is due, but because it presents the exhibition as having some sort of anonymous institutional authority. There is a widespread (but not universal) convention for developers of historical exhibitions to remain anonymous, often because their institutions' managements do not allow the publication of credits. It is a convention that should be resisted because exhibitions, like journal articles, books, and documentary films, reflect the viewpoints of their authors.

In fact, credit for developing this interesting exhibition should go to the City Archivist Mark Stevens, and Archivist Renato Perdon. Exhibition labels were written by Mark Stevens and the essay in the excellent brochure is by Shirley Fitzgerald, the City Historian.

Megan Hicks
Powerhouse Museum, Sydney