

International Notes

Edited by Ewan Maidment

Report on the 7th PARBICA Conference, Noumea, New Caledonia, 21-28 August 1997

Correspondent Nancy Lutton

This was the fourth PARBICA conference I have attended, and the first since 1991, and I was struck by the progress made in general terms, which I will endeavour to outline below.

The meeting was to be in three parts, first a training session, secondly the conference, and thirdly an international symposium on Pacific documentation. Unfortunately, the latter did not eventuate. It was partly replaced by a number of speakers on 'Information Centres around the Pacific'. These speakers were there for a Pacific Manuscripts Bureau Meeting, which enabled them to attend the PARBICA conference as well.

The training session

The training session was held at the ATNC (Territorial Archives of New Caledonia) and organised by its Chief, Bruno Corre. The building is most impressive, purpose built and with modern equipment and furnishings, including conservation laboratory, and microfilming and photographic equipment. The stack is five storeys high. The Archives stands out on top of a hill, a little way out of town, but with a beautiful view. The program covered Arrangement, Preservation and Promotion, some visits to other public

service repositories, and some workshops. It also included a visit to the City Museum, following which a welcome cocktail party was hosted by the Museum.

The conference

There were 42 names on the list of participants representing 22 countries. These were: American Samoa, Australia, Cook Islands, England, Federated State of Micronesia and Yap State, Fiji, Hawaii, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Nauru, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Niue, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tokelau, Tonga, United States, Vanuatu and Western Samoa. In addition, George Nichols, Director, General Australian Archives, was the official representative for the International Council on Archives on Asia and the Pacific. Michael Cook of the Centre for Archives Studies, University of Liverpool, England, represented IRMT, the International Records Management Trust.

The conference was officially opened by M. Dominique Bur, Délégué du Gouvernement pour la Nouvelle-Calédonie et les Iles Wallis et Futuna, in French, as was the opening speech by Bruno Corre, Acting President of PARBICA and Chairman of the conference. It was held in the South Pacific Commission Conference room, a very modern and striking venue, which is equipped with translating equipment. George Nichols also spoke as ICA representative and read a message from Wang Gang, the President of ICA. After the Opening, we proceeded outside for the conference photograph.

The rest of the conference was in English. General business proceeded, including reports from the Acting President (Bruno Corre), Secretary General (Karin Brennan), Treasurer (Helen Nosworthy) and Editor (John Wright), a review of the membership dues and some tidying up of the constitution. It was emphasised during the discussion on the dues, that members of PARBICA *must* also belong to ICA. This caused some concern to some members, as they find it hard enough to obtain funding for PARBICA membership alone from their governments. Non-ICA members were allowed to vote (provided they were members of PARBICA) at this conference, but will not be allowed in future. It was insisted, however, that all office bearers must be ICA members, and this eliminated several promising candidates.

In the constitutional tidying up the composition of the Bureau was reduced by deleting the Deputy Secretary General and the outgoing Secretary General. This leaves the Bureau at five members and it should prove much easier to arrange meetings between conferences. In another amendment to bring PARBICA in line with ICA, it was necessary to delete the provision for the PARBICA President to be an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee of the ICA, as ICA has now appointed Regional representatives. There was much discussion on this as some members felt there would be no direct input from PARBICA. The appointee, George Nichols, was obliged to reassure members that he could represent them adequately at ICA, because of his membership and attendance at other ICA gatherings, such as the Round Table Meetings, where National Archivists are also represented, as well as his attendance at this conference.

There was also a lot of discussion about cooperation with heritage minded organisations within the Pacific Region, particularly PIALA (Pacific Islands Archives and Library Association), which was seeking assistance for an upcoming conference to be held in Pohnpei, Federated States of Micronesia. Some members of PARBICA are members of PIALA and other similar organisations. It was pointed out that PIALA is mainly made up of librarians, though its membership includes archivists and museum curators. PIALA is



Delegates at the PARBICA 7 Conference, Noumea, New Caledonia, 21–28 August 1997

a branch of IFLA. The main question discussed was whether PARBICA has enough money to support the proposed conference. This was left for the Bureau to decide. However, it was pointed out that PIALA is not a member of PARBICA, so why should we expend our small funds?

The country reports

These have always been a feature of PARBICA conferences and usually take up a considerable amount of time, as almost nobody has ever tabled a report and the delegates get carried away by their own eloquence as they talk about their problems. This time, almost everybody *did* have a written report to table, and although some read their reports, most spoke to them. It was in this aspect of the conference that improvements were most marked. The reports revealed that there are still some problems, eg in Kiribati archives are seen as the rubbish dump. The government there sees no need for archives, so that part of their history which relates to culture is likely to be lost. However, there was evidence of gradual improvements in many countries. With so many typed reports to hand, there was talk of producing these in a publication, and it is to be hoped that this will eventuate. George Nichols was most appreciative of these reports, saying they were most informative and would make it much easier for him to represent the Region.

In discussing the *PARBICA Strategic Plan* there was a strong representation from several countries to include Oral History, though one or two thought it was not really PARBICA business. Microfilming however was generally agreed to be important. The Bureau will draw up a plan.

The question of the return of the Western Pacific High Commission Archives has still not been resolved, after about 20 years of alienation. Ewan Maidment, representing the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, was able to inform the meeting that he had been corresponding with the British about the archives, and they had advised that they would be returned by the end of this year, but no country had heard anything officially. The Solomon Islands Archives, where it had been originally planned to house the archives, has a complete list of them and is willing to make copies available on request. The Bureau will obtain a copy of the list.

All the present Bureau were elected for another term, with the Vice-

President, Acting President, Bruno Corre, being elected President in his own right. The only new member is the Vice-President Margaret Patel of Fiji, who won the job from two other eligible candidates. The next PARBICA conference is mooted to be held in Fiji, provided Margaret can obtain support from her government to hold it there. There was also a bid from Vanuatu. As this conference has been so efficiently and successfully organised, we can look forward to another such the next time around.

There were fewer organised social events or interaction with indigenous culture at this PARBICA conference than at those previously experienced, and indeed, some delegates wondered where the indigenous culture of New Caledonia was. A highlight was a cocktail party at the residence of Le Délégué du Gouvernement Haut-Commissaire de la République. The High Commission has a most elegant situation and the reception was most gracious. There were a number of diplomatic representatives there to meet, including the Australian Consul. Following this a tour of the JM Thibaou Cultural Centre was arranged and this took the whole of the afternoon. The Cultural Centre, which commemorates a Kanak patriot who was assassinated some years ago, is in the process of construction a few kilometres out of town. It is an enormous and unusual construction with no expense spared and it will probably rival Sydney Opera House for effect when completed.

National Archives of Cambodia: Extract from the *Second Progress Report, 1996-1997*

Correspondent: Peter Arfanis

This is the second progress report that I have written since arriving in Cambodia in August 1995 to work at the National Archives of Cambodia (NAC) as a volunteer archivist under Australian Volunteers Abroad, a program of the Overseas Service Bureau of Australia. This report highlights the progress made by the NAC in 1997 and looks at the future plans and needs of the NAC.

Given that the NAC is a government department of the Council of Ministers

and consequently its staff experience difficulties endemic in all ministries, ie they are underpaid and lack support, the progress of the NAC has been quite impressive. With the assistance of the Australian Embassy and the Australian Archives in 1995 and 1996, and to a lesser extent the Ministry of the Royal Palace, UNESCO, United Distributors Cambodia, French Embassy, Swiss Interchurch Aid, and Centre Culturel Français, the NAC has been able to make considerable progress in the classification, conservation, and public availability of its very valuable holdings.

Staff have had opportunities to increase their technical knowledge through courses offered by the National Archives of France and National Archives of Malaysia, as well as sponsorship by Banque Internationale d'Information sur les Etats Francophones for a staff member to attend international archives conferences. Much of this success can be attributed to attempts by the NAC to develop relations with other major archive institutions outside Cambodia.

During the year, processing of records of the Résident Supérieur du Cambodge continued. As a result of the development of the NAC database and the increase in the rate of data input, important files of the Resident Superior are now available for researchers to consult. The arrangement of documents has led to some interesting discoveries, including original drawings of the Royal Palace, early maps of the provinces and rare Khmer language newspapers from the 1940s, many of which have now been listed.

Of course archives are there to be consulted and it has been encouraging to see that the number of researchers using the NAC has doubled as have the requests for photocopies of documents.

Even more encouraging has been the ability of the staff to administer itself and maintain its equipment without government funding and external assistance. Staff have put in place income generating schemes which allow funds to be raised to purchase supplies to run the photocopier, repair computers, purchase stationery, etc. All equipment is in good condition, with nothing lost or becoming inoperational through neglect. With the addition of a Swiss volunteer archivist to the team for the next six months, the NAC can expect another year of achievements.

Archives document human experience and serve as civilisation's collective memory. Archives transmit cultural heritage from generation to generation. Archives also have broad administrative, legal and social value for the individual, for the community, for corporate organisations, for society as a whole. The NAC is committed to working towards establishing itself as the custodian of archives and as a consequence play an active role in this country's national redevelopment.

The results that the NAC has achieved in the past year have been very encouraging. In 1995 we planned to develop the framework to begin the appraisal, arrangement and description of records held in the repository. This was done and now we are seeing the results of this work. A database of records has been developed and is growing, finding aids have been printed, more researchers are using the archives, and staff capacity is increasing.

As encouraging as all this is, the NAC is still not able to stand on its own feet. Staff still need opportunities to develop skills and expertise, in particular in the fields of information technology and language. Assistance will also be needed to provide supplies for conservation work so that Cambodia's documentary heritage will be available for future generations.

Society of American Archivists' Conference, Chicago, 25-31 August 1997

Correspondent: Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Australian Archives

Previous reports on SAA conferences have commented on the sheer size and complexity of the event. The Society's 61st meeting in Chicago in August was no exception. The conference and associated workshops spanned 6.5 days. In the 3.5 days of the conference there were almost 70 sessions featuring around 200 speakers. To put it another way – at any one time there were eight sessions running concurrently from which the 1200 delegates might choose.

The conference

Negotiating and selecting from a program as rich as this requires some

system. I decided to attend those sessions focusing on reference and access issues. So, I attended sessions about:

- cultural and [although many see it as versus] evidential value;
- copyright reform;
- indigenous participation in archives;
- descriptions of user studies;
- privacy and confidentiality;
- entering into licensing arrangements with large commercial database enterprises for archival material;
- providing reference services to electronic records;



At the Canadian-Australian dinner, left to right: Grant Mitchell (International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies), Jim Burant (National Archives of Canada), Stephen Yorke (Australian Archives), Dieke van Wijnen (Kluwer academic publishers), Ann Pederson (University of NSW), and Tom Nesmith (University of Manitoba)

- digitising projects; and
- security.

Two sessions which I recall vividly, for quite different reasons, were on security and on cultural and evidential values. One of the liveliest and most engaging sessions was titled *A Thief in the Archives: the Case of Robert H Smith*. Archivists representing four of the institutions from which Robert Smith had stolen material in 1996 spoke about aspects of the process. They covered:

- documenting a theft and that the suspect had used the material;
- dealing with the media;
- dealing with those investigating and prosecuting the case; and
- recovering the stolen documents.

The four speakers were from the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, and the Universities of Kansas and Arkansas at Little Rock and Fayetteville. Each had different experiences in handling the theft and dealing



At the Canadian-Australian dinner, left to right: Sheila Powell (National Archives of Canada), Clive Smith (World Bank), and Michael Moosberger (University of Manitoba)

with the media, investigators and law enforcement. Yet they all agreed on:

- the importance of publicising, discussing and analysing thefts so that we can implement the most appropriate security measures and be better prepared to deal with theft;
- how appearances and connections can be deceptive.

At all the institutions in which he registered as a researcher, Robert Smith was judged a model patron. He had made it known that he was the nephew of a one time Governor of Arkansas and had relatives currently serving on the Arkansas History Commission.

The session on *Cultural and Evidential Values: Which Are More Important in the Information Age?* featured Terry Cook, Linda Henry and Charles Dollar. Terry Cook's paper argued for the cultural mission of archives and the need to ask ourselves whether we have adopted too narrow a definition of records. He contended that redressing the trend which sees archivists as part of the records/information schema is necessary. We must now focus on the cultural mission of archives. He called for a better strategy to balance means and ends, commenting that our focus has been entirely on the front end, for example, forging alliances, warrants for recordkeeping, appeal to action on the basis of competitiveness and the short term needs of institutions. He labelled these as means, not ends, and wondered about the cultural and heritage dimensions we have neglected in the process.

Linda Henry asked: 'whatever happened to Schellenberg's "information value"?' Her paper compared the writings of the 'pioneers' [the early American writers] with those of a group she described as 'cohort writers' (including David Bearman, Margaret Hedstrom, Terry Cook and others). Her paper:

- criticised the cohort writers for their emphasis on defining records because this has clouded the archival mission;
- commented that much of their philosophical framework is not new;
- categorised their thinking and writing as self referencing, anti-archival, a-historical and anti-historical; and

- argued that their efforts have prompted re-examination but delayed learning.

Henry's paper had a real sting and the session was notable for the sustained acclamation it received. Sadly the discussion period did not explore any of the issues raised.

Organisational developments in the SAA

SAA conferences are not only about professional discussion and debate. They provide the opportunity for organisational business to be considered and transacted. One important report which was the subject of discussion of the SAA Council, and at several of the Section and Roundtable Meetings in Chicago was the report of the Task Force on Organizational Effectiveness.

The SAA Council established the Task Force in 1995 to conduct a comprehensive analysis of SAA's governance and structure. It completed a thorough review of the governance and structure of SAA and proposed revisions to both in the report it submitted in January 1997. A copy of the report is on the Society's website at <http://www.archivists.org>

The Task Force recommended changes (to eliminate overlap, inconsistencies and detail and to provide greater flexibility of structure) to the Society's constitution, by-laws, and organisational structure to provide a framework for a more effective organisation.

It proposed fewer committees and boards and a clearer distinction between the various types of organisational entities to enable Council to focus on core goals of the Society. It called for stronger links with Sections and for a loosening of the formal ties between Roundtables and Council to provide more opportunities for members to come together to discuss issues of common concern and share information.

The Task Force emphasised that altering structure and organisation is insufficient to achieve all the Society's goals. It said that Council must provide leadership in the areas of communication, coordination and accountability. The Task Force called for better communication through SAA publications,

its web page, the opportunities offered by the annual meeting, and through regular contact between Council and SAA leadership. It noted that such change is essential for its recommendations to succeed.

Special Interest Sections on Indigenous Archives

At Chicago several participants moved to form a Native American Archives Coalition under the umbrella of the Archivists and Archives of Color Roundtable. The Coalition has articulated its mission as:

The Native American Archives Coalition serves the educational and informational needs of tribal archivists and collecting archives with significant collections relating to Native American, Inuit, and Hawaiian peoples. Members of the Coalition provide leadership promoting the best archival practice in a manner that respects the distinguishing qualities of Native American records and the traditional values of Native peoples.

The Coalition has identified its goals and initiated a listserv for its members.

A group of Canadian archivists met in June this year following the Association of Canadian Archivists' annual conference in Ottawa 'to determine what archivists and records managers and their associations can do to respond to current archival and records concerns of Aboriginal Peoples'. The discussion identified four matters for short term action including the formation of a Special Interest Section on Aboriginal Archives within the ACA. Terry Cook's report on the meeting, its outcomes and a call to action to the Canadian archival community is published in the *ACA Bulletin* for September 1997 (pp. 11, 14-15).

Meeting of the Committee on Archival Legal Matters, International Council of Archives, Spoleto, 16-19 April 1997

Correspondent: Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, Australian Archives

The first meeting of the International Council on Archives' (ICA) newly constituted Committee on Archival Legal Matters for the 1997-2000

quadrennium was held on 16-19 April 1997. The Italian State Archives hosted the meeting, with enormous generosity, hospitality and flair, in Spoleto, Umbria.

Membership of the Committee

The Committee's members and honorary consultants number fourteen. They are drawn from Austria, Denmark, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, Sweden, Switzerland, and Australia.

Achievements of the Committee over the 1993-1996 quadrennium

The principal achievements of the Committee over the previous quadrennium were:

- issuing a set of principles for national archival and current records legislation;
- compiling a dossier of disputed archival claims; and
- investigating the feasibility of creating a database of national laws governing archives.

The first two projects were completed. The third has halted pending a decision from the Executive Committee and the Programme Management Commission as to funding for the indexing and translation of archival legislation. Consequently the Committee needed to identify its priorities for 1997-2000 and to prepare a new workplan.

Priorities and workplan

Claes Grånström, the Chair of the Committee, identified nine areas (access, data protection, disputed archival claims, unidroit, copyright/intellectual property, guidelines, legal validity, database on legal texts and privatisation) of possible activity for the Committee many of which link directly with the Fourth and Fifth Medium Term Plans issued by the ICA.

A significant proportion of the Committee's discussion was devoted to identifying:



Left to right: Lucio Cabrera (Mexico), Josef Zwicker (Switzerland), Claes Granstrom (Sweden), Poul Olsen (Denmark) at the meeting of the Committee on Archival Legal Matters - Spoleto, Italy, April 1997

- the dimensions of these broad areas;
- how and why they have an impact on archives;
- what sorts of projects might usefully be shaped to meet perceived archival needs; and
- what priority these projects have.

The Committee agreed that in addition to any project work it might take on it had two ongoing responsibilities:

- to provide advice about specific national or international legal issues in response to questions from members and the Executive Committee; and
- to alert the Executive Committee to legal trends or significant cases affecting archives.

The Committee resolved to work on four projects in the 1997-2000

quadrennium. The projects are:

- personal data: access and protection;
- new technology and copyright: the impact on the archives;
- legal status of records belonging to former public bodies being privatised; and
- issues relating to the authenticity/validity of records in the electronic environment.

How the Committee will work

Given the geographic dispersal of members it was agreed that the four working groups would develop their own routines and methods for achieving their goals. The expectation is that communication will be via e-mail, facsimile, post and telephone and any informal meeting that can be arranged because members happen to be in the same city for other reasons.

The Committee as a whole will meet once a year so that:

- working groups can report and workshop progress; and
- the Committee can take stock of its work.

Our Hungarian colleagues offered to host the next meeting in Budapest in October 1998. George Nichols, Director-General of Australian Archives, has extended an invitation to the Committee to hold its 1999 meeting in Canberra.

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau

Correspondent: Ewan Maidment

Dr Brij Lal has continued as Chair of the Management Committee of the Bureau since Adrian Cunningham returned to the National Library of Australia in January 1995. Ms Kris Rogers acted as Executive Officer until my appointment to the position in March 1995 on secondment from the

Noel Butlin Archives Centre, RSSH, ANU. In 1995 and 1996 Ms Maureen Kattau, of the ANU Library, assisted with the administration of the Bureau's office for one day a week during the absence of the Executive Officer on field work. In 1997 Ms Monica Wehner has been providing regular part time administrative assistance.

The Library of the University of Auckland became the seventh member of the PMB consortium in 1995. The additional member, together with confirmations of continuing support for the Bureau's activities by a number of the on-going member organisations, has made financial support for the Bureau strong and stable.

Over and above regular meetings in Canberra, the PMB Management Committee met at Hilo in July 1996, in association with the Pacific History Association conference, and in Noumea in August 1997, in association with the PARBICA meeting, thus providing opportunities for representatives of all the overseas members of the PMB consortium to work closely together. The level of member participation in the decision making processes of the Bureau has consequently increased.

Apart from overseeing Pambu microfilming projects and determining general strategy, the Management Committee has revised the PMB constitution and operating instructions, partly to facilitate Pambu membership for cash strapped Pacific institutions. The Committee also agreed to the purchase of a new Pambu microfilming camera. Digitising PMB products was deferred by the Committee as it is considered that the technology is still experimental and that the Bureau does not have the resources to take risks. Archival orthodoxy is that microfilm does provide the most stable preservation reformatting. Since the technology for digital reformatting from microfilm is being perfected, the new microfilm camera will provide the opportunity to make the best possible microfilms should the Bureau wish to produce digital products from its microfilms in the future.

The Bureau began an extensive program of field work in the Pacific Islands in 1995. Surveying and microfilming trips to Papeete, Suva and Nuku'alofa in that year produced 84 reels of film consisting of archives and manuscripts of the Catholic Archdiocese of Papeete, theses written by students of the Pacific Theological College in Suva, archives of the Fiji Trades Union Congress and records of the Tongan judiciary.

A further 53 reels have been produced in Australia during 1995, consisting of minutes of the Methodist Church of Australasia Overseas Mission, transcripts and other research papers of Rev Dr Lindsay Lockley, newsletters of the London Missionary Society published in Sydney and Auckland, and a thesis on the transfer of power from Australia to Papua New Guinea by Christine Goode.

In 1996 the Bureau continued its field work in the Pacific Islands. Its overseas microfilming projects produced 104 reels of microfilm from three expeditions, totalling ten weeks, to Suva and Nuku'alofa in March, and to Auckland, Papeete and Hilo in June/July and to New Zealand in October. Work on the PTC theses and the archives of the Archdiocese of Papeete and the Tongan judiciary was completed. The microfilming project at the Fiji Trades Union Congress was continued and work was commenced on the fragile archives of the Methodist Church in Fiji. A great deal of material relating to the Solomon Islands was filmed in New Zealand, consisting of good runs of major Honiara newspapers, pre-war archives of the Tulagi Branch of W R Carpenter & Co Ltd and parts of the archives of the NZ Methodist Overseas Mission.

Material copied in Australia in 1996 included Craig Symons's patrol and native local government survey reports of the Minj Sub-District, Western Highlands District 1960-1961, and correspondence and other papers of Rev Thomas and Mrs Nellie Simpson relating to their service with the Methodist Overseas Mission, New Hanover 1936-1942. Some Vanuatu papers were also filmed in Australia: the business and family papers, 1899-1935, of Adolphus Zeitler, a planter based on Api (Ringdove Bay); and a commercial report by Corbin de Mangoux (Banque de Indochine), *Etude sur les Sociétés aux Nouvelles Hébrides*, 1930. Documents relating to Tama'aiga titles disputes – Tuimaleali'ifano title – in the Land and Titles Court, Western Samoa, were also filmed. A series of Tongan government letter books, 1873-1890, the original volumes now dispersed in archives in Melbourne and Nuku'alofa, were re-united on microfilm.

In December 1996 Mr Albert Speer lent the PMB five folders of Sir Albert Mauri Kiki's papers on the formation of the Port Moresby Workers' Association and the Pangu Pati. Lady Elizabeth Kiki originally brought these down from Port Moresby. Mr Speer, who was a foster father of Sir Albert,

has also provided the PMB with correspondence, diaries and reports relating to his own work as Medical Assistant at Duna and Health Administrator in Port Moresby, 1948-1970. These are currently being microfilmed. Ian Watkins's Papuan Patrol Reports, 1934-1936, have been made available for microfilming by his son, Peter.

In late February/March 1997 the Executive Officer made 35 reels of microfilm on a field trip to Port Moresby, Honiara and Yandina. In Port Moresby research records held at the Kanudi Research Station of the PNG National Fisheries Authority as well as archives of the PNG Trades Union Congress were filmed. In Honiara records held in the Archdiocesan Archives at Holy Cross Mission, including station correspondence, records relating to World War II and the Mission journal, *Na Turupatu*, 1911-1958, which is mainly in the Gari language of Guadalcanal, were filmed. Continuing the PMB's Solomon Islands newspaper project, early issues of the *BSIP News Sheet* and the *Solomons Toktok* were filmed at the SI National Archives. Archives of Levers Pacific Plantations Pty Ltd and Levers Solomons Ltd were filmed at the Russell Islands Plantations Estates Ltd headquarters in Yandina.

In late August and early September this year some survey work was carried out in Noumea and extensive surveys and some microfilming was done in Port Vila on a trip organised around the meeting of the PMB Management Committee in Noumea which coincided with the general meeting of PARBICA being held in Noumea 25-28 August. In all 15 rolls of 35mm microfilm were made in Port Vila consisting of various manuscripts and rare serials held at the National Library, some colonial government records, commercial papers and a genealogy held at the National Archives and some journals of the artist Nicolai Michoutouchkine.

An article by Adrian Cunningham and Ewan Maidment, 'The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau: Preserving and Disseminating Pacific Documentation', was published in *The Contemporary Pacific* (Vol.8, No.2, Fall 1996). The PMB helped convene an archives session at the Tonga History Association conference in Canberra in January 1997. The speakers, Professor Futa Helu, Dr Elizabeth Wood-Ellem, Dr Peter Orlovich, Bruce Burne and Ewan Maidment, surveyed the history, current management, research uses and possible future administrative arrangements for Tongan official archives. The Bureau is currently organising a resources session for the Pacific Islands

History Workshop to be held in the Coombs Building in December this year. A Pambu home page was launched in May this year within the auspices of the South Pacific Information Network (URL: <http://sunsite.anu.edu.au/spin/RSRC/PMB/>). The homepage represents the beginning of a more concerted effort to use the World Wide Web for publicising the activities of the PMB. The Bureau's newsletter *Pambu* continues to be issued in May and November.

Over the Horizon: Extracts from a Report on a Visit to North America and Europe, May-June 1997

Correspondent: Greg O'Shea, Electronic Records and Records Standards, Australian Archives

General points

The AS 4390 Australian Records Management Standard was a 'hot' issue wherever I went. It clearly has put Australia and Australian recordkeeping on the map. I only wish I was getting a percentage of sales given the number of people who asked me how they could get hold of a copy!

The catalyst for the interest lay in the recent ISO TC 46 decision to defer elevation of the Standard to international status. I understand there were sufficient votes in favour from the members of TC 46 to have the Standard adopted as is but that some major countries including the USA, UK and France voted against. This led to the decision to refer the Standard to a committee for further work before elevation. From what I could gather TC 46 (covering Information and Documentation) has little or no records related representation and most of the countries had little opportunity to see or evaluate AS 4390 before the vote was taken. I gather most TC 46 representatives spoke to their respective National Archives before attending the meeting at which the vote took place. In a sense the vote was taken sight unseen and without an opportunity for an Australian to put the Standard into context. Certainly at the ICA meeting in the Hague, after I had the opportunity to provide some of the background details, many agreed that AS 4390 would provide a very sound basis for adoption as an ISO Standard.

The 'Heiner' case was raised often enough in various 'quiet corners' to be of concern, particularly in relation to the role played by the State Archivist of Queensland in the destruction of documents. The extent to which the unfolding events were influencing the perception overseas of Australian 'archivy' was difficult to gauge but it was evident that many were somewhat amazed. It is heartening to see upon my return the recent statement by the ASA Council on the issue. On a more positive note it was also interesting to note how many people were very complimentary about how active and productive Australian archivy appeared to be.

The fact that both these issues were very topical overseas is in part attributable to the success of the Aus-archivists listserv.

Working Meeting on Electronic Records: Pittsburgh May 29-31

The meeting was held against a background of research over the previous decade which has led to the general conclusion that:

- it is technically possible to create and maintain reliable and authentic records in electronic form;
- electronic records management and preservation issues are handled most effectively if these issues are considered while planning for and designing new systems applications;
- implementing effective programs for managing electronic records entails significant changes in organisational and individual behaviour; and
- traditional archival and records management programs and institutions must assume new responsibilities, work with a broader range of professionals, and change their approaches to regulation and service delivery in order to have an impact on recordkeeping and long-term preservation.

Critical success factors for archival programs include a compelling organisational need to address electronic records management issues, consistent and sustained effort, an audience and support at the highest administrative levels, demonstrable solutions and integration of archival concerns into institutional planning and budgeting processes.

The working meeting was officially described as:

An invitational meeting for fifty *researchers* (25 US and 25 from around the world) to explore the state of current research in detail and workshop each others approaches with the objective of identifying outstanding issues and promising approaches to future research that has been either completed or is underway. The ultimate goal of this working meeting is to develop highly specific research agenda items that can be used by research institutions and other organizations to move the field forward in its ability to effectively capture, maintain, and use electronic records.

[It is significant to note that after the US, Australia provided the next largest group of participants with seven. The participants included representatives from national/state and corporate archival institutions, government agencies, universities and libraries, and private consultancies.]

I was invited to speak on the first day about *Developing Policy Frameworks*, along with Luisa Moscato (RMO NSW) and Peter Horsman (Dutch National Archives). Other Australians in attendance were Steve Stuckey (AA), Adrian Cunningham (NLA), Barbara Reed (Monash University) and Glenda Acland (University of Queensland). Each session involved presentations by the speakers, breakout groups and reporting back by designated group leaders.

A number of practitioners were a little uncomfortable about being described as researchers and being told that what we needed was more research, a theme which was to have some resonance throughout the three days and lead to the odd moment of tension. This feeling was particularly strong amongst archivists from major national/state archives.

I was somewhat apprehensive about the potential for conflict at Pittsburgh given the personality mix and the various representatives of the University of British Columbia and University of Pittsburgh positions in attendance. Given the past conflicts this was not unreasonable. At one point prior to the event I naively thought the meeting may have been designed to develop a rapprochement between the two camps. While I'm pleased to report that (largely due to some behind the scenes orchestration) peace and harmony reigned, rapprochement was not on the agenda. This is particularly significant when we discovered what the real agenda was. Read on ...

The meeting was held primarily for the benefit of Gerald George, Chairman of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), for the purpose of improving the chances of continued funding for university research projects on electronic records. For example, the Center for Electronic Records and Archival Research and the Functional Requirements for Evidence in Recordkeeping Project at the University of Pittsburgh have received funding grants.

The NHPRC is the funding arm of the US National Archives and Records Administration responsible directly to the National Archivist. The reason such an elaborate event may have been held for Mr George's benefit was, I understand, because he and presumably National Archivist John Carlin are under significant political pressure to alter funding priorities away from areas such as electronic records research toward areas such as the records of the 'Founding Fathers'.

On the last day Mr George made it plain that it would be difficult to sustain funding without progress. The extent to which the meeting achieved its real agenda (and immediate objective) is dramatically illustrated by a recent posting to the Electronic Records listserv. The message contains a press release about the new priorities for the NHPRC. While the Founding Fathers make it back to number one, electronic records comes in at number two! Good news, but Mr George's call for progress needs to continue to resonate.

The Association of Canadian Archivists Conference, Archives as a Place of Custody, Memory and Information, Ottawa, 4-7 June 1997

With a theme like this the conference was perhaps a dangerous place to be for post-custodial archivists from Australia. Not to be daunted four of us (myself, Glenda Acland, Barbara Reed and Steve Stuckey, who delivered a paper) rode into town on our post-custodial steeds to face the 'music'. The conference was significant for another reason. It marked the 'retirement' of two major figures in the Canadian and international archival scenes, namely Jean-Pierre Wallott (the National Archivist) and Terry Cook (National Archives). Jean-Pierre is literally retiring and Terry Cook is leaving the National Archives for fresher fields.

On the evening before the conference the National Archives Gatineau

Preservation Centre at Gatineau (in Quebec – across the river from the Government and Parliamentary buildings in Ontario) was officially opened by the Governor-General. A reception and tour of the building followed. Only a photograph can provide an adequate impression of the building itself but you wouldn't be too far off the mark if you have ever seen the Pompidou Centre in Paris, with its inside out approach to architecture. For the technically minded the building has 60 kms of shelf storage in four different environments for all media.

Each of the three days of the conference was divided into sub-themes; Archives as a Place (Day 1), Archives as a Place of Custody (Day 2) and Archives as a Place of Memory and Information (Day 3). I have not tried to do an exhaustive catalogue of the conference. This was impossible anyway with a number of concurrent sessions. I trust through my snapshot a flavour of the significant content will emerge.

Day One: Archives as a Place

The Keynote address by National Archivist, Jean-Pierre Wallot, took the form of a retirement speech as he was due to finish work at close of business two days later after 12 years in the position. This vantage point afforded him the opportunity to range widely over the philosophical highways and by-ways of archival science (a common theme throughout much of this conference).

Monsieur Wallot displayed some eminent intellectual flexibility on the point of post-custodialism. Generally I concluded he was in favour but at one point when he contrasted the realism of the distributed regime with the trustworthiness of agency custodians, I wasn't so sure. However, not long after that he discussed the complementary nature of the 'Bearman' vs traditional approaches, then concluded that archives are already post-custodial and that archivists need to engage with and keep abreast of real world issues. Further he reasoned that place cannot be reduced to a mere physical or functional place. On other points he stressed the importance of use (over mere custody) and the need for us to be much more open to new ideas and new professions, and that individual professions are dead. Probably the most thought-provoking statement was the view that archives are not places of immutable meaning, that documents are not objective but merely

reflect the bias of their creators.

The rest of the morning a very broad range of territory was covered on the subject of archival buildings and their history, development and how this changed with the mores and values of the times. Wolf Buchmann (Germany) contended that archives are a symbol of the evolution of democracy (presumably only in democratic countries), Lily Koltan (Canada and manager of the Gatineau Project) managed to change my entire view of architecture, using Gatineau as an example, by characterising it as a seething sexual conflict between the male and female aspects of the building! Both Michael Kurtz (USA) and Sarah Tyacke (UK) struck similar chords with descriptions of the movement of their main centres of operation out of cramped quarters in the CBD to spacious and rather luxurious quarters in the suburbs at College Park and Kew respectively. Interestingly, also in both cases, their former sites have been devoted largely to genealogical inquiry centres!

Day Two: Archives as a Place of Custody

The highlights of the day were in the morning sessions. The day began with the second 'retirement' speech of the conference. In a personal highlight, Terry Cook addressed the concept of post-custodialism, very adroitly disassociating it from the thorny issue of custody and the concept of place, the main theme of the conference.

Terry began by asking some rhetorical questions. Can one be an archivist if one doesn't work for an archival institution? If you are responsible for the creation or establishment of recordkeeping systems can you be an archivist? He answered his own questions by saying that in Australia, the answer would be YES, in North America the answer would come in less equivocally as MAYBE NOT. He didn't speculate about Europe. In Terry's view the concept of 'place' is problematical as 'place' is losing its concrete physical meaning. The concept of archives without walls and on the Internet is changing our view of what the archival function is all about. In the electronic world the medium is no longer the message as a path to meaning and, as Terry said, 'that changes everything!'

Terry sits squarely in the post-modern school and sees post-custodialism

in the same vein, which essentially is a move away from the traditional approaches to managing records toward a wider variety of strategies. He stressed the importance of seeing this process as evolutionary rather than a move from black to white. He rightly raised questions about some aspects of the post-custodial position but is equally critical of the custodial approach for its failure to deliver on electronic records.

In a move to clarify some of the misconceptions about the post-custodial position and to move the debate in the right direction, Terry argued that while the post-custodial position doesn't preclude custody, more importantly, what we really needed to do was see beyond the issue as merely about the acquisition or non-acquisition of electronic records. He was firmly of the view that post-custodialism (and the move to find appropriate strategies for managing electronic records) was really about moving out of the archival institutions to begin to influence the records creation process.

To quote Terry: 'No records will be available to preserve unless archivists intervene in the development of recordkeeping systems'. In the high point of the entire conference, Terry went on to argue that in that vein both the Pittsburgh and Vancouver Projects are post-custodial! This is the case because both projects are predicated on early intervention in the records creation and systems development process! At that moment I thought: 'The "war" is over, peace should reign supreme, this should scuttle once and for all these rosy notions about archives as a place'. Of course, I quickly pulled myself together, knowing that wouldn't happen, particularly in view of the speakers to come, but I was at least heartened to hear such clarity in a general sea of diversion and obsfucation.

The second session of the day went by the theme of *Physical Control vs Intellectual Control: an Archival Dilemma*. I couldn't quite see at the time why these issues were pitched in the form of a dilemma as if we can't have one without the other. However, reference back to the conference theme (*Archives as a Place*) suggested that the sub-text was: can we have intellectual control without physical control *in the archives*? Thrown into the ring for this round were Eric Ketelaar (Dutch National Archives), our own Steve Stuckey, and Terry Eastwood (University of British Columbia). Three continents covered and three fairly distinct positions raided, as it turned out.

Eric Ketelaar began by speculating whether there was any such thing as a European position given the cultural variations. This manifests itself in different recordkeeping traditions, particularly between the Teutonic vs the Latin traditions. While there was no attempt to take a strident position on Archives as a Place v Post-custodialism Eric made it clear that whatever the answer it needed to be free of ideology and not dictated by theoretical constructs. He suggested the way forward cannot be based on theory but strategy. Examples cited included the European Commission DLM Forum (on Electronic Records) and the UK PRO Places of Deposit regime.

Steve Stuckey followed, somewhat provocatively taking the stance of a 'heretic', and cataloguing the approaches to archival management in this country in an attempt to provide an understanding of our hybrid system to contrast with the North American and European position. He began by emphatically stating that he saw no dilemma or conflict between physical control and intellectual control. He demonstrated this by cataloguing the Australian approach in terms of what many in North America and Europe might see as 'heresies' (although he became increasingly dismissive of that word as he progressed). In Steve's view the central question in any argument about distributed custody or distributed management relates to who controls the records, not who has possession of the records. The question is not *where* the archives are – they can indeed be part of a place of custody, memory and information, however widely you want to define the physical archives – but rather the question is *what* an archives is. The 'heresies' Steve catalogued are as follows:

- the custody of the federal archives was from inception distributed between two organisations (there being no National Archives);
- in Australia the Australian Archives does not own any of the records in its custody – ownership and control remains with the creating/controlling agencies;
- the records remain geographically where they were created;
- the abandonment in the 1960s of the record group concept [at the National level] in favour of the series concept;

- from the 1960s the attempt to establish intellectual control over ALL records, irrespective of value, in all agencies of the Federal Government;
- a firm abandonment of any notion that Australian Archives would become a data archive;
- the acceptance of a distributed custody arrangement for electronic records that have to remain in electronic form to enhance their value;
- the wholehearted commitment to the records continuum model rather than the records life cycle;
- the explicit defence of a distributed management framework where custody is only one part of a process where the Archives is just one player in the game, and where achievement of the goals of the Archives is linked closely to those of others in a partnership;
- acceptance of the principle of functional appraisal, across government as a whole; and
- the acceptance that the very bureaucratic environment in which we operate is being changed fundamentally by massive privatisation, outsourcing of core government functions, and a strong push for self-regulation of all parts of Australian business, including the business of government.

Terry Eastwood had the last word and wasn't buying any 'heretical' post-custodialism. Terry felt that intellectual control without physical control was problematical, only being prepared to concede that the heretical position made sense in regard to access. He argued that post-custodialism had grown out of a situation of too many records and too few archivists, presumably yearning for a time when archival institutions had less of the former and more of the latter. Of course economic rationalism has had a critical role to play in modern archival administration, probably far more critically than post-modernism, and it is highly unlikely that more archival storage and archivists will eventuate.

The results? One for, one against and a bet each way - a draw!

Day Three: Archives as a Place of Memory and Information

Ian Wilson, Archivist of Ontario, began the day with a treatise on the social function of archives. He covered a wide range of territory from research as interaction with the community to the selection of records with a view to the social context (as opposed to just the political context). Ian waxed somewhat lyrical about archives as sacred sites and places of pilgrimage and the history of the Canadian archival tradition. Interestingly, the Canadian National Archives has a 125 year history and is one of the few which has a national collecting responsibility (as opposed to AA as the Archives of the National Government). Also interesting is that the National Librarian reports to the National Archivist.

Later in the morning we received two fascinating insights into the national archival regimes of Switzerland and Sweden.

Christof Graf (National Archivist of Switzerland) produced a very sound argument for post-custodial strategies but then sullied the waters by expressing scepticism for distributed policies only to suggest later other solutions might be required in special cases! He rightly argued that accountability and evidence were at the core of the archival function and that archival institutions need to work closely with the records creators. The Swiss GEVER Strategie was cited as an example. He was honest in admitting the financial and technological consequences of the custodial approach but indicated that privacy legislation required transfer of records to the archives. Strangely, Christof then suggested there might be a requirement for other solutions in special cases. This, of course, is precisely the point, a recognition that archival institutions can't deal with electronic records by adopting a purely custodial line.

Erik Norberg (National Archivist of Sweden) was somewhat more pragmatic in his approach. He stressed the political and technological realities. The Swedes, for example, have a process of government which favours openness and a transparency of public documents. This means a more seamless access regime requiring agencies to be very much concerned with records creation and archival transfer issues. The National Archives is involved in taking custody of records with personal information at an early stage and have done so since the early 1970s. Erik suggested that with the

quantity involved he sees the ultimate transfer of records to the National Archives as an alternative rather than mandatory.

After lunch I chose *Archives and New Forms of Electronic Communication* from a list of concurrent sessions. The basic issue was the burgeoning Internet and its impact on the archival function. The presentation from the first speaker Tony Gregson, an archival consultant, was memorable if only for the quote (in reference to the Internet): 'if you have users in the Archives then something is wrong!' The next speaker Margaret Hedstrom spoke on the 'Internet as a Social and Transactional Space', making the very relevant point that the Internet was more than just a bunch of linked websites. She characterised the Net with reference to four broad archetypes, the Net as:

- digital library (but largely uncontrolled);
- new communications medium – the e-mail metaphor;
- electronic marketplace – the electronic commerce metaphor; and
- a gateway to new experience.

All these metaphors had implications for the community generally, but archivists in particular have concerns with the need for secure transactions, a requirement to standardise metadata, ensuring the authenticity and integrity of transactions, the management of context and the building of trusted systems.

Conclusion

While the conference was ostensibly about *Archives as a Place* I came away wondering whether the organisers had counted on the widely differing views of speakers on what this might actually mean. In her summing up, Maria Guerico (National Ministry of Culture, Italy), rather than summarising the views expressed during the conference before putting her own views, seemed to be reading from a prepared statement designed to assert the primacy of the custodial view. There was certainly no concession to the view put by Terry Cook that the profession has really moved beyond the point where custody is the primary issue in the preservation of records in modern administrative environments. While admitting some bias towards the post-

custodial position I still left the conference feeling that Cook's inclusive position outlined on Day 2 (suggesting that both the so-called University of British Columbia and the University of Pittsburgh positions called for post-custodial approaches) best encapsulated a rationale for the most effective strategy for the management of all modern records.

The ICA Electronic and Other Current Records Committee meeting, The Hague, June 19-21 1997

The new Committee on Electronic and other Current Records (CECR) met for the first time in the Hague. The Committee is the result of a number of mergers of ICA committees decided upon at the Beijing ICA Conference in late 1996. The CECR Committee merges the functions of the former Electronic Records and Current Records Committees.

The new Committee's members are:

John McDonald (National Archives Canada – chair)*

Greg O'Shea (Australian Archives – secretary)

Michael Wettengel (Bundesarchiv – Germany)

Hans Hoffman (Rijksarchivdienst – Netherlands)*

Mike Miller (National Archives and Records Administration – Washington)

Paola Carucci (Universita degli Studi di Roma)#

Christine Petillat (Archives Nationale – France)

Ivar Fonnes (Riksarkivet – Norway)*

Zhao Zhongxin (Chinese National Archives)

Niklaus Buetikofer (Swiss Bundesarchiv)*

Ian McFarlane (Public Record Office UK)

[Continuing member from the former ER Committee (*), the Current Records Committee (#)]

Given the new CECR was meeting for the first time with an expanded brief the meeting was devoted to determining the scope of the Committee, the relationship to the ICA Strategic Plan and the other ICA committees, and the projects/products which we considered would meet the ICA Executive Committee requirements. On the first day we were very fortunate to have the views of Eric Keteelar, from the ICA Executive Committee, on where he thought we should be aiming.

To summarise the outcomes from the meeting I will provide details of the scope and the project plan agreed upon by the Committee.

Scope

- CECR will look at the general record keeping landscape across the whole of the life-cycle (continuum) to support the achievement of the archival function;
- CECR will merge ER issues into the general stream of records issues;
- focussing on the conception, creation and maintenance of records ensuring archival requirements are part of recordkeeping requirements; and
- provide assistance to archives to help carry out their roles in relation to recordkeeping in creating institutions.

This scope will not discriminate by format, will not address the overall role of archival institutions and will be cognisant of the interrelationship with other ICA committees.

Initiatives

The initiatives which the Committee decided should be pursued are:

- Part II of the Guide to Electronic Records;
- Functional requirements for electronic recordkeeping (pitched at the systems development level);
- Core competencies for archivists/records managers;

- Appraisal (macro);
- Cost-benefit (recordkeeping requirements generally);
- Transfer of responsibility (ie custody/ownership);
- Internet/intranet (recordkeeping issues);
- The Australian Records Management Standard (likely involvement with ISO TC 46 process);
- Context (requirements in the broadest sense including metadata);
- Terminology; and
- Recordkeeping principles (somewhat similar to Corporate Memory, but shorter).

The most significant outcome of the meeting, from my perspective, was that a committee made up largely of Europeans was positively disposed toward the Australian Records Management Standard and felt comfortable with the necessity for archival involvement in the creation phase of the records life cycle (using their terminology). This is quite a move forward from previous traditional European approaches. Indeed, the very nature of the Committee, covering Electronic and Other Current Records, also demonstrates an acceptance by the international archival community generally of the need to move away from traditional approaches.