Ancestral Voices: Aspects of Archives Administration in Oceania*

Monica Wehner & Ewan Maidment

Monica Wehner currently administers the State, Society and Governance in Melanesia Project, a project funded by the Australian National University in Canberra in collaboration with AusAID. Previously she worked for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau. Following fieldwork in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, in 1996, she completed in June 1998 a Masters Degree in History entitled 'On the Margins of Social Distance: Expatriate Memories of Life in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, 1970-1995.'

Ewan Maidment is Executive Officer of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau. He was previously an archivist, and then senior archivist, at the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the Australian National University.

The paper investigates archives administration in the Pacific Islands. Claims by Pacific Islanders for greater access to and control over Pacific archives and ancestral voices are considered in the light of structuralist and post-structuralist concepts of the archive.

Current theory of archives administration, and the history of archiving in the Pacific Islands, are considered in relation to Pacific Islanders' intellectual property rights over specific Island archives (such as the Western Pacific Archives and the records of the Samoan Land and Titles Court and the Tonga Traditions Committee). Liberal academics' rights of access to such Pacific archives are also considered.

The only existing systematic attempt to classify Pacific archives and manuscripts - Harry Maude's report, The Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies: A Report on Progress and Desiderata, *1967 - is reviewed and his 'manuscripts library' approach questioned. Maude's report was the basis for the formation of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau in 1968 and set its agenda for many years. In this paper, we suggest that a broader assessment of the range and forms of Pacific archives is guiding the Bureau in the post-colonial era.*

Abbreviations

ANU - Australian National University

BSIP - British Solomon Islands Protectorate

FCO - Foreign and Commonwealth Office

GEIC - Gilbert and Ellice Island Colony

NHBS - New Hebrides British Service

PARBICA - Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives

SINA - Solomon Islands National Archives

WPHC - Western Pacific High Commission

Introduction

> The archive is first the law of what can be said, the system that governs the appearance of statements as unique events. But the archive is also that which determines that all these things said do not accumulate endlessly in an amorphous mass, nor are they inscribed in an unbroken linearity, nor do they disappear at the mercy of chance external accidents; but they are grouped together in distinct figures, composed together in accordance with multiple relations, maintained or blurred in accordance with specific regularities; that which determines that they do not withdraw at the same pace in time, but shine, as it were, like stars, some that seem close to us shining brightly from afar off, while others that are in fact close to us are already growing pale. (Foucault, 1969)[1]

> Nothing is ... more troubled and more troubling today than the concept archived in the word "archive". (Derrida, 1996)[2]

At the recent *Pacific Collections Conference* in Hawai'i David Hanlon, the keynote speaker, attacked archival institutions for protecting western historicism and imperialism. He pointed to the dangers of cold detached research on archival materials, arguing that Pacific museums, archives and libraries are products of imperial practices, made possible by intrusion and displacement. Consequently, he said a particular cultural politics is implicated in their administration and use. Suggesting that 'we have forgotten to whom the knowledge belongs', Professor Hanlon called for a repatriation of knowledge and a democratisation of history. He called on archivists to both open their doors to indigenous users and broaden their holdings to include indigenous discourses.[3]

This position was reinforced by Kanalu Terry Young, who spoke at the same conference of the Hawai'ian past as an ancestral legacy belonging to contemporary native Hawai'ians.[4] Documents, he said, are as spiritual and life-giving as bones; it is the responsibility of Hawai'ian descendants to care for that legacy as carefully as the physical reminders of the past. That such documents have been suppressed, or removed from Hawai'ians' control, was demonstrated. As an example of the suppression of a document of major political, cultural and emotional significance to the Hawai'ian people, Dr Young cited the petition to the US Congress against the annexation of the Hawai'ian Islands, signed by 21,000 native Hawai'ians in 1897 and "buried" in the US National Archives for a century. Dr Young called for greater dialogue between indigenous users of the archives and the archivists. He urged record keepers to share the vision of the native Hawai'ian people, realise the value of such documents, and guide researchers in Hawai'i, and elsewhere in the Pacific Islands, to them.

Like these Pacific Islands intellectuals, structuralist and post-structuralist theorists such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida have also addressed questions of knowledge, history and the archive. Privileging semiotic systems and discursive practices in the construction of social life, they define the archive not as a record of events and actions, but as a mechanism through which events and actions are regulated and rendered meaningful.

In *The Archaeology of Knowledge* Foucault identifies specific formal regularities and structures which differentiate one discursive space from another. The primary function of the archive is to articulate relationships between the past and present: it is a discursive space in which subjects are constituted as historical beings, where events and utterances are historicised. The archive is

> at once close to us, and different from our present existence, it is the border of time that surrounds our presence, which overhangs it, and which indicates it in its otherness; it is that which, outside ourselves, delimits us.[5]

Although Derrida is also interested in relationships between the past and present, he is more willing to disrupt the 'tranquil landscape of all historical knowledge';[6] to identify ('deconstruct') its internal inconsistencies. His post-structuralist definition of the archive is less deterministic than Foucault's. His essay, *Archive Fever,* offers a 'Freudian impression' of the troubled term "archive". It is concerned with, among other things, identifying the silences, ruptures and ghosts upon which historical awareness is premised:

> Without the irrepressible, that is to say, only suppressible and repressible, force and authority of this transgenerational memory ... there would be no

> longer any essential history of culture, there would no longer be any question of memory and of archive, of patriarchive or matriarchive, and one would no longer even understand how an ancestor can speak within us, nor what sense there might be in us to speak to him or her, to speak in such an *unheimlich*, "uncanny" fashion, to his or her ghost. With it.[7]

The archive is haunted by ancestral voices, anomalous histories, murmurs which disrupt boundaries between past, present and future. Subject to forces of suppression and repression, the archive shapes collective and individual consciousness. The representation of ancestral voices is determined by present circumstances. Derrida argues that the archive is in fact not concerned with questions of the past:

> it is a question of the future, the question of the future itself, the question of a response, of a promise and responsibility for tomorrow.[8]

Political power, based on control of the archive, participation in and access to the archive, its constitution and interpretation, is a key factor underlying Derrida's discussion and one which is pursued in this paper.[9]

This paper is a preliminary investigation into archives administration in the Pacific Islands. It looks at the identification and preservation of the archives of the Pacific Islands, their ownership and commodification, their suppression and distribution. It looks at how archives, like land, have been controlled and *possessed* in the Islands by a complex and multi-faceted colonial enterprise. While our analysis deploys Foucault's and Derrida's understandings of the archive, we try to engage more politically with the concept (to reflect Islanders' engagements with it). Access to ancestral voices and knowledge remains crucial in many contemporary Pacific Island societies: it forms the basis for land entitlement.[10] Access to ancestral knowledge helps define the boundaries within contemporary life and distinguish *taboo* from everyday practice. The politics of access will be considered in the following discussion.

Part One - Defining the Archive

The English archivist, Jenkinson, argues that the primary *duty* of the archivist is 'the physical and moral defence of the archives': archivists are committed to preserving the physical and structural integrity of original documents.[11] St Lawrence, the patron saint of archivists, roasted alive for defending the Papal archives against the Goths, was not uncommitted. Nor were the defenders of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre against the Australian National University's attempt to disperse its holdings.[12]

The primary *interest* of archivists is, however, in discursive structures: in the systems of producing and keeping records; in records as a product of institutional structures and functions; and in the administrative structure of the record-producing agency. This structuralism, which Foucault explores in *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* ensures the integrity of the discourses consigned to the archives.

Archivists are formalists in that they discover and preserve patterns of documents. The archivist identifies extrinsic relationships between documents and links them in series; the series are then tied to record groups. The record groups are authenticated, not only by maintaining the cohesion of their internal structures, but also by demonstrating their provenance (that is, by showing that they are the product of a certain agency).

The detail and contents of individual documents are usually of secondary interest to archivists. The archivist aims to capture the surviving remnants of a discourse in its entirety. The documents are preserved intact (in whole or in part), consigned to a repository, arranged in series, conserved, bound, boxed, re-formatted, inventoried, calendared and indexed. The tight mechanics of archival control identify the components of a discourse, sharply delineating its boundaries and regularities. However, the rigid structures of the archive also disclose gaps, lacunae and elisions which disrupt this surface regularity. Within the archive is its Other: voices, memories, observations that resist the imposition of institutional structures and strategies of organisation.

Fixed in time and place, the archive is not representational, but a concrete discursive product of an institution or individual located in specific historical circumstances. Discursive formations can be recognised when record groups are linked to other groups with similar bureaucratic, institutional and administrative structures and functions. In the colonised Pacific Islands, examples include discourses generated within and through the activities of missions, colonial administrations, judiciaries, whalers, planters, traders, travellers, scientific expeditions and research stations, some of which Harry Maude investigates in his *Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies.*

Indigenous voices are captured rather than silenced in official colonial discourses. They are heard *directly* on occasion (for example, in the archives of Queen Pomare in Tahiti and the Cakobau government in Fiji). More frequently, they are heard *indirectly.* The words of 'Kanak' labourers, for example, can be found in the journals of Fiji Government agents appointed

to accompany recruiting vessels; they are also present in the correspondence and reports of the plantation companies. However, the land and sea are the ultimate objects of colonial discourse and desire - even more than Pacific Islanders. Colonial discourse focuses on the possession and ownership, commercial exploitation and development, of the Islands' physical and oceanic environment. The official colonial archives not only document the past of the Pacific Islands, but also bear responsibility for their future. As Derrida points out:

> the word and the notion of the archive seem at first, admittedly, to point toward the past, to refer to the signs of consigned memory, to recall the faithfulness of tradition... As much as and more than a thing of the past, before such a thing, the archive should *call into question* the coming of the future.[15]

It is for this reason that Pacific Islanders' access to the archives is crucial.

The voices of Pacific Islanders are finally heard directly and clearly in the discursive and political transformations leading up to and following the post-colonial period in the Pacific Islands. At first these voices are subversive, articulated through political activity, uprisings and organised labour movements. Later, they are reinforced through the establishment of indigenous political parties, churches, credit unions, businesses and the non-government press. The challenge of all contemporary archival programs in the Pacific Islands is to ensure the preservation of these indigenous discourses in environments where existing archival infrastructures are often weak and resources limited. Before addressing the contemporary questions, however, it is profitable to first review the history of documentation strategies in the Islands.

Part Two - Formulation of Documentation Strategies for the Pacific Islands

Colonial administrations, missions and businesses naturally accumulated records of their activities in the Pacific, but did not formalise arrangements for the preservation of their archives until after the Second World War. However, as Oceania has provided important sites for scientific research since the 18th century, natural history and ethnography museums in Europe, America and the Pacific, sometimes in association with universities, have been assiduous collectors in this field. They have acquired not only Pacific artefacts and biological specimens but also manuscript and archival materials documenting their own Pacific expeditions and other activities. Museums' efforts parallelled the collecting activities of the great manu-

script libraries which, together with learned societies, were the major repositories for formally accessioned Pacific archives before the War.

Despite this ad hoc activity, upon arriving in Australia in 1942, General MacArthur discovered that there was a scarcity of strategically useful knowledge about the Pacific Islands. This scarcity was deeply felt during the Second World War. An extension of the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) Command, the Allied Geographical Section, was formed as a result, in order to produce a comprehensive intelligence record of the area in which Allied troops were engaged in military operations. The Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University (ANU) was established after the War in part to maintain that research effort and to meet Australian foreign policy needs. Australia was not alone in this trend. The development of the Research School at the ANU parallelled a new orientation toward Pacific studies at the University of Hawai'i in the post-war period and the consolidation of Pacific scholarship and documentary resources in New Zealand's universities.

Bibliographic control of library materials relating to the Pacific Islands was also extended in the post-war period, by bibliographers such as Father Patrick O'Reilly, C.R.F. Taylor, Ida Leeson, Floyd Cammack, Renée Heyum and Philip Snow. The principles of bibliographic control were extended from published material to archives and manuscripts: Phyllis Mander-Jones was commissioned in 1964, by the National Library of Australia and the ANU Library, to begin cataloguing South Pacific and Australasian archives in Britain. Father Amerigo Cools began his epic arrangement and description of the Catholic archives in the eastern Pacific in the late 1960s. Andrew Thornley arranged and listed the archives of the Methodist Church in Fiji in 1970.

The new technology of microfilming was another significant factor in the post-war period preservation and extension of access to archives relating to the Pacific Islands. In 1948 the Australian Joint Copying Project commenced microfilming archives and manuscripts in the UK relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, producing thousands of rolls of microfilm before the project concluded in 1986. The South Pacific Commission's *Project for the Preservation of Manuscripts on Island Languages* microfilmed over 100 grammars and dictionaries in the period 1951-1957, before being taken over by the National Library of Australia. In the late 1960s the Central Archives of the Western Pacific in Suva microfilmed the *Fiji Times* and commenced microfilming records of the Fiji colonial administration and the Western Pacific High Commission. The Pacific

Manuscripts Bureau was formed in 1968 to systematically pursue projects aimed at making preservation microfilm copies of Pacific archives, manuscripts and rare printed material in the field, thereby securing copies for the region's manuscript and university libraries. In the 1980s the archives of the US Trust Territory government in Micronesia were microfilmed, in collaboration with the University of Hawai'i Library, producing over 2,200 rolls of microfilm.

Alongside the post-war collecting, cataloguing and microfilming work of the manuscript and university libraries and church missions, there was a parallel but distinct development of government archives repositories in both the Pacific rim and the emerging Pacific Island states. An Archives Division of the National Library was formed in Australia in the immediate post-war period to take custody of Commonwealth Archives. State archives were formed in Australia in the 1950s and 1960s, largely from the State Libraries. A National Archives was established in New Zealand in the mid 1950s.

The Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission were formed in Suva in 1954. In the mid 1950s Jim Gibbney, an Australian archivist, carried out surveys of records which survived the War in Papua New Guinea. These archives were intended to form the basic holdings of the PNG National Archives and the Records Service (established in 1972). The French Polynesian Territorial Archives was formed in 1962, although it was not until 1987 that the Territorial Archives of New Caledonia was established. Government archives were formed leading up to and following independence in Vanuatu, Kiribati, Tuvalu and the Solomon Islands during the 1970s. With the emergence of new entities in Micronesia in the 1980s, a Trust Territory Archives was established in Saipan. In each case archives legislation followed, aimed at controlling the administration of non-current government records. Only Tonga, Nauru, Western Samoa in the South Pacific and the states of Kosrae and Chuuk in the Federated Stares of Micronesia failed to develop government archives administration and legislation.[14] By the late 1970s the regional government archival organisations had formed an alliance under the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA). The recent publication of a *Directory of Libraries and Archives in the Pacific Islands* attests to the growing strength of the Pacific Islands' archival infrastructure.[15]

The combined efforts of the great state and national libraries, the university research libraries and the colonial and post-colonial government archives, together with reformatting and copying programs, have produced an

institutional framework of archives administration which has provided at least a partial infrastructure for the preservation and control of Pacific archives. Examples of how these efforts bridged the transition from colonial to post-colonial Oceania will be considered in the next two sections.

Part Three - Suppressing the Western Pacific Archives

The Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific began, in 1954, the process of organising the records of the British Colonial administrations in the Pacific. This took place under the direction of Dorothy Crozier, who had worked as a research assistant in the Department of Pacific History at the ANU.[16] The Archives at that time held the records of the Fiji government and the constituent parts of the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC).[17]

The WPHC had been established in 1877 as the central administrative point for British colonial interests in the Western Pacific outside Fiji. Until 1951, the office of the High Commissioner of the Western Pacific was vested in the Governor of Fiji. In August 1951, however, a separate High Commissioner was appointed and the High Commission Secretariat was moved to Honiara, along with all the records of the High Commission accumulated after January 1920. The Secretariat remained in Honiara until the abolition of the High Commission at the time of Solomon Islands independence in 1978, while the records were progressively transferred to the Central Archives in Suva as they became redundant. There, Dorothy Crozier, then later Ian Diamond, began the professional work of arranging and describing the records.[18] In 1971, following the independence of Fiji, the Western Pacific Archives was established as a separate organisation and Bruce Burne was appointed to administer them.

Bruce Burne had trained in the Commonwealth Archives, but also had helped set up the National Archives of Zambia following the break-up of the Rhodesian Federation in 1961. He had managed the selection and transfer of parts of the Rhodesian archives to Zambia, a process designed to facilitate uninterrupted transfer of administrative power from the colony to the newly independent state. This process was aided by the progressive and technically advanced practices, including extensive micro-filming, adopted by the Rhodesian Archives, probably the most innovative archival institution at that time in the British Commonwealth.[19]

Burne's role at the Western Pacific Archives was similar to his earlier experience in Zambia. The records were arranged into their respective record groups, WPHC, GEIC, BSIP, NHBS, etc., to enable them to be trans-

ferred to the independent Pacific Islands nations succeeding the colonial administrations. Precise and detailed series and item lists were made of all the holdings. The High Commission Secretariat's general correspondence-in, a series which could not be broken up, was microfilmed to 1926, along with other material, for distribution to successor governments and research libraries.

Following the abolition of the WPHC, the Western Pacific Archives began to wind up its operations by transferring records of the GEIC to the Kiribati and Tuvalu governments, the BSIP to the Solomon Islands government, and the Samoan Consulate records to the National Archives of New Zealand. It was expected that the WPHC Secretariat archives would also be transferred to the Solomon Islands National Archives (SINA), as Honiara was the last site of the High Commission. A repository was built to accommodate the archives and was equipped with microfilm cameras and a film processing plant in the expectation that microfilming would continue there. Although there was uncertainty over moves towards independence in Vanuatu, it was nevertheless expected that the NHBS archives would eventually be transferred to Port Vila. However a Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) decision redirected the WPHC and NHBS records and other remaining parts of the Western Pacific Archives to London, where they remain today.

The International Council on Archives and PARBICA raised objections to the FCO's seizure of the Western Pacific Archives in 1978, but to no avail. The Solomon Islands government also made a submission to the FCO in February 1980 calling for the return of the WPHC Secretariat records; this effort was also unsuccessful. In 1992 the Director of the SINA, John Naitoro, wrote,

> Most historical records about the Solomons are 13,000 miles away. Our country has been deprived of 100 years history. It is paramount that these records be returned as soon as possible.[20]

The separation of the WPHC records from the constitutional governments of the Western Pacific, which have a right to the records of the governing body of their territory, has resulted in a dispersal of the collective written memory of the Islanders. The consequences in terms of aberrations in public policy and practice cannot be overlooked. At least the Solomon Islanders do have those BSIP archives which survived the War, whereas the entire archive of British colonial administration of Vanuatu (NHBS) remains alienated from the ni-Vanuatu.[21]

The possession and control of archives is necessarily political. Foucault maintains that archives form the basis for identity development and the awareness of relations, continuities and discontinuities between the past and present. The FCO's hesitancy in repatriating the Western Pacific Archives amounts to a failure to repatriate memory. Where control inhibits access through distance, it also creates silences and absences. As Derrida has argued, archives are directed as much towards the present and future as the past. The struggle for repatriation of the past is a struggle for the right to control and possess the present.

Part Four - Repossessing Pacific Islands Archives: the Samoan Land and Titles Court and the Tonga Traditions Committee

The Pacific Islanders' customary taboo on genealogies frequently extends to other records in their personal possession,[22] and, naturally, beyond personal records to state documents, especially where land and power are involved. Ulrike Hertel Akuino, the Samoan Museum and Archives officer, writes that the records of the Land and Titles Court in (Western) Samoa

> contain probably the most confidential documents in this country. While court decisions and announcements are available to the public, other records like party statements or genealogies are highly protected from unauthorised access. They constitute rights on chiefly titles, and with this access to land, power and other rights.[23]

The Court's files on the highest chiefly titles are locked in special cabinets in the strong room, and only senior records staff and especially authorised personnel have access to them.

There is no central repository for government archives in the Kingdom of Tonga. The Ministries of Justice, Land and Education, the Prime Minister's Department and the Palace Office each keep their own archives. Access to this material requires formal Cabinet permission. Some earlier government archives, consisting mainly of Premier's Department records, have been transferred to the LaTrobe Library in Melbourne and the National Library of New Zealand.[24]

The Tonga Traditions Committee was established by the late Queen Salote, the long-reigning, highly cultured ruler who made active personal efforts to have Tongan village traditions recorded by chosen assistants. She also organised assistants to transcribe large sections of the Wesleyan mission and other relevant archives held in the Mitchell Library in Sydney during the late 1950s and 1960s. The staff and records of the Committee remain

in the Palace Office under the direct control of the Deputy Private Secretary to the King of Tonga.

In 1990 the late Fabian Hutchinson, a professional archivist, was contracted by the Australian Government's South Pacific Cultures Fund to microfilm the Tongan Traditions Committee records in Nuku'alofa for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau. Hutchinson was sent to Tonga, but the project did not have total local support and no microfilms were made of the Traditions Committee archives. In the post-colonial Pacific, local control over archives has become an increasingly important factor in determining what projects are possible for the Bureau to undertake. As there is an urgent need to make preservation copies of the Traditions Committee records, the current Secretary, the Hon. Tuivanuavou Vaea, is presently seeking funding for an in-house microfilming program which would maintain direct Tongan control over access to the records.

While the Western Pacific Archives remain beyond the access, control and possession of many Islanders, the archives of the Samoan Land and Titles Court and the Tonga Traditions Committee are very much possessed and controlled by Islanders. In the past, liberal academics often had the expectation of unlimited access to and control over the use and interpretation of Islander discourses and histories. This situation is beginning to change. Appropriate protocols are being established which recognise Pacific Islanders' rights of ownership and control over access to their archives and material culture.

Part Five - Documenting the Pacific Islands: Operations of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau

Defences of archives are typically systematic and methodical. Generally they begin with a survey of the type carried out by Harry Maude in his report, *The Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies: A Report on Progress and Desiderata,* produced in 1967. This report was commissioned by G.D. Richardson, then Mitchell Librarian, following a move instigated by the Sinclair Library at the University of Hawai'i to form an association of Pacific research libraries. Maude's report surveys Pacific "manuscripts" at a schematic level. It outlines the scope of Pacific documentation, suggests surveying and copying programs, and recommends the formation of an Association of Pacific Research Libraries

> to complete library holdings and improve bibliographic control in the case of printed works, and to promote the location, cataloguing and copying of manuscripts relating to the Pacific by the establishment of a jointly-operated Manuscripts Clearing Centre.[25]

This association was never formed, but the report resulted in the establishment in 1968 of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, based at the Australian National University. The Bureau is a collaborative joint copying venture, supported initially by the Sinclair, Mitchell, Turnbull and ANU Libraries and the National Library of Australia, and now, additionally, by the Library of the University of California at San Diego, the University of Auckland Library and the Yale University Library.[26]

Maude's schematic survey, in *The Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies,* of the forms and geographic distribution of Pacific archives and manuscripts attempts a comprehensive anatomy of records relating to colonial Oceania. He classifies Pacific manuscripts in the following categories:

1. Government records
2. Records of discovery and exploration
3. Travellers' accounts and impressions
4. Diaries and correspondence of European residents in the Islands
5. Mission records
6. Trading and shipping records
7. Log books, journals and other records of whalers
8. Records connected with the labour trade
9. Planters' records and material connected with expatriate agricultural production
10. Political polemics
11. Vernacular material of all kinds
12. Unpublished research material
13. Miscellaneous
14. Tape recordings and oral histories

Both Maude's formal categorisation of Pacific archives, and his geographic survey, are in need of revision and updating so that the archival arrangements of the post-colonial independent Pacific Islands governments can be addressed. There are also gaps in the scheme of the survey: archives of the Pacific judiciaries, and of Pacific educational, medical and scientific institutions, for example, were not included.

More fundamentally, there may be a conceptual problem in the underlying aim of Maude's survey. Originally the survey was to form the basis for a catalogue of discrete Pacific manuscripts rather than archival record groups. The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, which was formed as a result of the report, was in charge of producing this catalogue, and has in fact created an extensive card catalogue of Pacific Islands documents, a resource regularly used by researchers. However such a catalogue does not accommodate archival record groups as it is based on the methods of control and registration of manuscript libraries rather than the principles of archives administration.

The great Pacific research libraries - the Sinclair, Turnbull, Mitchell, and National Library of Australia - were engaged in *collecting manuscripts rather than managing archives.* In conjunction with Pacific scholars, they organised the Bureau to track, copy and index Pacific manuscripts, conceived mainly in the form of discrete documents rather than archival record groups. Microfilming, as a process, allows for the selection or privileging of documents within a series, rather than systematically copying a complete series, irrespective of content. It was therefore an ideal tool for the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, and to some extent its catalogues and indexes reflect this approach.

Maude's report was not just a taxonomy; it was a manifesto and a program. It formed the initial basis for the operations of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau. In its first 20 years, the Bureau tracked down and microfilmed the papers of approximately 400 individuals, including many little known manuscripts. The Bureau did not have an exclusive focus on manuscripts: it systematically pursued mission archives, sometimes in collaboration with church archivists, such as Father Theo Koch who arranged and microfilmed the archives of the Oceania Marist Province; the Bureau set up the New England Microfilming Project to copy the American whaling records; and it also secured microfilms of some records of key Pacific trading companies.

Since the completion of Maude's report Pacific archives have continued to accumulate, both in the Islands and elsewhere, and have increasingly been transferred to the custody of archival institutions and arranged in record groups. The main work of the Bureau now focuses on archival record groups in the Islands. Working with Pacific Islands organisations which have custody of original material, the Bureau is now arranging and describing records in accordance with archival principles, rather than manuscript library techniques. The microfilm camera is being utilised to systematically

copy whole series rather than selected documents. Some other shifts of emphasis in the work of the Bureau are perceptible also. For instance, the Bureau is now making regular surveying and filming trips to the Islands; and the range of material microfilmed has broadened to include more contemporary material and material of interest to a wider variety of academic disciplines.

The Bureau's aim, now, is to microfilm more records produced by Islanders themselves (for example, records relating to economic and political issues, such as the Fiji coups and the Bougainville crisis). Working closely with archival, academic and other organisations in the Islands, the Bureau now has a program in place aimed at helping to ensure the preservation of at-risk Pacific Islands archives. These might include the records of political parties, businesses, trade unions, churches and other NGOs, judicial archives, scientific records and the post-colonial press.[27]

The Bureau's current projects are selected and organised by a combination of factors. Recent work has taken place within a geographic strategic plan. In 1995 work commenced in French Polynesia, microfilming archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Papeete; this has led to further projects in the area.[28] In 1996 the Bureau re-commenced field work in Melanesia, after a break of more than 20 years. The project started in the Solomon Islands, where archives of the Catholic Archdiocese of Honiara were filmed together with records of Levers Pacific Plantations Pty Ltd at Yandina; some copies of Solomon Islands newspapers held in the National Archives were also filmed. Further runs of the Solomon Island newspapers held by Dr Ian Frazer at Dunedin were filmed, as well as archives of the NZ Methodist Overseas Mission relating to the Solomon Islands held in Auckland. In 1997 the Bureau re-commenced operations in Vanuatu, filming newspapers and several archival record groups held in the National Library and National Archives in Port Vila. Arrangements were also made for filming Supreme Court judgements and New Hebrides British Service archives. The Bureau is now discussing possible projects to commence in Samoa in 1999; in the following year, it plans to begin work in Micronesia.

Apart from the geographic plan, several other factors have determined the Bureau's selection of projects. Consideration has been given to the degree of risk to the survival of the original documents, their accessibility; and a focus on contemporary material has been developed. At risk materials have been given the highest priority, overriding other considerations. For example, the Bureau arranged and microfilmed the archives of the Fiji Trades Union

Congress following near-destruction when the FTUC building in Suva was fire-bombed during the 1987 coups. The Tongan judicial archives held in Nuku'alofa were arranged and microfilmed by the Bureau after narrowly escaping a fire in 1995. The Bureau has been arranging and micro-filming the research archives of the PNG National Fisheries Authority at an abandoned fisheries research station at Kanudi near Port Moresby.

The Bureau's microfilming activities increasingly reflect the discourses and voices of Pacific Islanders. Bureau priorities have changed to reflect the political changes taking place in the Islands. All projects are carefully negotiated through appropriate protocols; some microfilm titles are under restricted or closed access. Restricting or closing access to microfilms protects them from unauthorised access while also guaranteeing Pacific Islanders' control over them. Certain epistemological boundaries (inhibiting access to *taboo* records, for example) have been re-asserted in the post-colonial Oceania. The Bureau has shifted its policies in accordance with these boundaries.

Conclusion

This paper has considered in a preliminary way the theory, practice and history of archives administration in the Pacific Islands. It has focused on issues of control, possession, and dissemination of records, and the implications of these practices on social memory and knowledge in the Islands.

Maude's *Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies* attempted in 1967 to comprehensively survey Pacific archives, with a view to ensuring total accessibility for Pacific scholars. It was premised on two assumptions: that a survey of this nature could be accomplished, and that it was the right of a western historian to undertake it. As a commissioned internal document, Maude's report was not widely distributed in the Pacific Islands.[29] The knowledge and information contained in the report served largely the needs of western academics from institutions on the Pacific rim.

Similar epistemological assumptions underpinned archive administration and regulation during the colonial period. Much of the colonial enterprise was predicated on a desire to possess knowledge of the Islands and physically transport it to the metropolis. Archives were an important source of knowledge about Pacific Islanders and the physical and oceanic environment of the region. Their appropriation took place in tandem with the acquisition by imperial museums of Pacific Islands material culture and, in the case of Australia, aboriginal skeletons. Consigned to the metropolis, the archives

acquired associations and meanings often destructive of Pacific Islands cultures. It is the legacy of this heritage possession with which David Hanlon and Kanalu Terry Young are concerned. Western academics can no longer assume a right of access to all local knowledges, interpreting without reference to the protocols and politics of post-colonial Pacific Island societies. Archivists need to take into account the right of Islanders to set their own epistemological boundaries: to determine what knowledge can be accessed and by whom. This is particularly important in the case of *taboo* records. This understanding now informs the current practices of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.

Indigenous input into the administration of Pacific archives is crucial, for it puts into question the legacy of colonialism's representations. It gives voice and presence to the Other - enabling Pacific Islanders to deconstruct and identify what Derrida terms 'the archives' internal inconsistencies'. Scholars and activists such as Epeli Hau'ofa argue that the 'use of language helped to reinforce [in Oceania]... colonially established social stratification along ethnic divisions'. Indigenous workers in Melanesia were belittled as 'boys' while Europeans were extolled as 'masters'.[30] This legacy is perpetuated in post-colonial Oceania. Hau'ofa points out that the small island states are represented as too small, too isolated and too resource-poor 'for their inhabitants ever to be able to rise above their present condition of dependence on the largesse of wealthy nations'.[31] He argues that 'as a region we are floundering because we have forgotten, or spurned, the study and contemplation of our pasts, even our recent histories, as irrelevant for the understanding and conduct of our contemporary affairs...We have tagged along with this for so long that *we have kept our silence* even though we have virtually been defined out of existence'.[32] For indigenous intellectuals, such as Kanalu Terry Young and Epeli Hau'ofa, securing access to the archives of Oceania is a means of giving a 'new and optimistic' voice to Pacific Islanders.[33]

Archival infrastructure does exist in the Pacific. Perhaps it is not so much a matter of democratising the archival space (as Hanlon suggests), but of giving due recognition to those archivists, including many Pacific Islanders, trained in the technical arrangement and description of Pacific records. Although archival principles were introduced during the colonial period, they are not intrinsically colonial. These structural processes preserve and protect discourses and voices. They enable Pacific Islanders' repossession and rewriting of their colonial legacy.

Endnotes

*A version of this paper was given at the Pacific Representations Conference, University of Canberra, 24 September 1998. The views expressed in this paper do not necessarily express those of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau's Committee of Management.

1. M. Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge,* London, Tavistock, 1972, p. 129.

2. J. Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression,* Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996, p. 90. Originally presented as a lecture, London, 5 June 1994.

3. D. Hanlon, 'The Chill of History: the experience, emotion and changing politics of archival research in the Pacific', paper delivered at the 23rd Annual University of Hawai'i Pacific Islands Studies Conference, *Pacific Collections,* Honolulu, 5-7 November 1998, and published in this volume of *Archives and Manuscripts.* Dr Hanlon noted that he was not suggesting that independence or self-government would produce decolonisation of knowledge.

4. K.G.T. Young, 'Rethinking the Native Hawaiian Past', paper delivered at the 23rd Annual University of Hawai'i Pacific Islands Studies Conference, *Pacific Collections,* Honolulu, 5-7 November 1998.

5. Foucault, op. cit., p. 130.

6. Derrida, op. cit., p. 28.

7. ibid., pp. 35-36.

8. ibid., p. 36.

9. ibid., p. 11.

10. *Chiefly title and continuities in kastom. 'Kastom:* traditional political, social, religious and economic structures, and their associated practices, systems of knowledge and material items.' From the Vanuatu Cultural Centre homepage at http://artalpha.anu.edu.au/web/arc/vks/contre.htm

11. H. Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration,* London, Percy Lund, Humphries & Co., 1965.

12. Including key Pacific records, such as the Burns Philp archive, the records of the British New Guinea Co., CSR's Fiji records and the papers of Sir John Gunther.

13. Derrida, op. cit., pp. 33-34.

14. P. Orlovich, *'Archival Training in the Pacific Region', Archives in the Tropics: proceedings of the Australian Society of Archivists Conference, Townsville,* May 1994, Canberra ASA, 1994, p. 19.

15. A. Cunningham and S. MacDougall, *Directory of Libraries and Archives in the Pacific Islands,* Canberra, Australian Library and Information Association, 1997.

16. A.I. Diamond, 'The Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission', *Journal of Pacific History,* vol.1, 1966.

17. The British Solomon Islands Protectorate (BSIP), the New Hebrides British Service (NHBS), the Gilbert and Ellice Island Colony (GEIC) and the High Commission Secretariat, as well as certain records relating to the Pitcairn Island Colony, Tonga and the British Consulate General for the Western Pacific.

18. A.I. Diamond, 'The Establishment of the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission', *Archives and Manuscripts,* vol. 2, no. 8, May 1965.

19. B. Burne, interview, Oral History Unit, National Library of Australia, May 1998.

20. In 'Our Cultural Heritage: oral and written history', R. Crocrombe and E. Tuza (eds.), *Independence, Dependence and Interdependence: the first 10 years of Solomon Islands independence,* Honiara, IPS, USP and SICHE, 1992, pp. 116-127.

21. *Ni-Vanuatu* is the term for the indigenous citizens of Vanuatu.

22. A claim to a genealogical inheritance can lead to other claims such as land entitlement or the use of land. Hence the protectiveness over genealogical information in some Pacific Island societies.

23. Letter to the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, 1 July 1998.

24. Orlovich, op. cit., pp. 24-25.

25. H. Maude, *The Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies: A Report on Progress and Desiderata,* 1967, p. 45. Copies of the report are held in the National Library of Australia and at the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau.

26. Sinclair Library, University of Hawai'i at Manoa, Honolulu; Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales, Sydney; Alexander Turnbull Library, National Library of New Zealand, Wellington.

27. For further details see A. Cunningham and E. Maidment, 'The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau: preserving and disseminating Pacific documentation', *The Contemporary Pacific,* 8 (2) 1996, pp. 443-454.

28. The Bambridge family papers; the archives of the Diocese of Taiohae in the Marquesas, and possible collaboration with the Territorial Archives on micro filming parts of its holdings.

29. cf. S. Latukefu, 'The Collection of Oral Traditions in Tonga', *Australian UNESCO Seminar: Source Materials Related to Research in the Pacific Area, National Library of Australia, September 1971,* Canberra, AGPS, 1973, p. 24. Dr Latukefu was struck by the absence of a single native Pacific Islander as either chairman or speaker on the first draft program for the seminar.

30. E. Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', *The Contemporary Pacific,* no. 6, 1994, p. 149.

31. ibid., p. 150.

32. E. Hau'ofa, 'The Ocean in Us', *The Contemporary Pacific,* Fall 1998, p. 409. Our emphasis.

33. Hau'ofa, 'Our Sea of Islands', op. cit., p. 148.