

REVIEWS

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

PUBLICATIONS

Peter Brune, *The Spell Broken: Exploding the Myth of Japanese Invincibility*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1997. xvi+304pp. ISBN 1 86448 287 7.

Peter Edwards, *A Nation at War: Australian Politics, Society and Diplomacy during the Vietnam War, 1965-1975*. Allen & Unwin in Association with the Australian War Memorial, St Leonards, NSW, 1997. xx+460pp. ISBN 1 86448 282 6.

Geoffrey Serle, *For Australia and Labor: Prime Minister John Curtin*. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, Perth, 1998. ix+66pp. ISBN 1 86342 655 8

Peter Stanley, *Tarakan: An Australian Tragedy*. Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, NSW, 1997. xiv+274pp. ISBN 1 86448 278 8.

John Curtin: Australia's Wartime Prime Minister. John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, WA. CD-ROM, ISBN 1 86342 625 6.

These five works have two things in common. They were all submitted as entries for the 1998 Mander Jones awards but were deemed by the Society to be ineligible, and they all deal with aspects of Australia at war. There the similarities end. *A Nation at War*, by the Official Historian of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts, 1948-75, deals with events in Australia from 1965 to 1975 during the Vietnam War. Brune and Stanley examine campaigns in Papua New Guinea and Borneo during the Second World War, while the small book and the CD-ROM from the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library outline and illustrate the life and work of Australia's Prime Minister from 1941 to 1945.

A Nation at War concludes with an appendix detailing the national service scheme which operated from 1965 until 1972. This appendix contains a list of the birthdates - from 1 January 1945 to 27 June 1952 - drawn by ballot to determine which young Australian men were to be liable for military service and consequently available for 'Special Overseas Service' in Vietnam. These birthdates run as a subtext throughout *A Nation at War*. It was the arbitrariness and perceived inequity of the method of conscription which, more than opposition to the war itself, led to the growth of dissent and protest which culminated in the Moratorium movement and the change in the political landscape of Australia.

Peter Edwards chronicles the diplomatic and political intricacies of the period thoroughly and competently, and is, perhaps a little too consciously, even-handed and balanced in his assessment of the social divide which affected every part of the nation in the period of his study. His conclusions (that the war was the most difficult and complex challenge to face Australia since 1941-42, that policy makers proved inadequate, and that withdrawal from Vietnam was based on American attitudes towards China and was not a political victory for the protest movement) echo this approach. This book will, as befits an official history compiled with unfettered access to government records, endure as a standard account of the period. It doesn't, however, excite any of the passions that the war itself provoked and, unlike earlier official histories, is unlikely to be ever considered essential reading for an educated Australian.

Peter Stanley's *Tarakan*, on the other hand, is a book which deserves a much wider audience than it is likely to receive. He has taken 'a small amphibious operation' fought by 'a citizen army at the fag end of a long war' and, with a Bean-like understanding of and empathy for ordinary people doing extraordinary things, has shown us a great deal about war and about Australians.

This is a powerful book. Stanley's facility for juxtaposing the reality of events on Tarakan Island with reports of conferences at headquarters and discussions in war cabinet underlines his capacity both to understand the strategy and to clarify and explain the battle at a tactical level. At the same time he examines with a gentle humanity its impact on the participants. He (of course) describes the death of Diver Derrick. But at the same time he uses the agonising deaths of unknown soldiers like Troopers Hobbs and Therkelsen and Lance-Corporal Casley to question normal understandings of military heroism. He takes his reader into the battle and shows how it was fought, but he also reveals the dispiriting tiredness, the effects of filth, uninspiring food and impossible mud-covered ridges. And he shows us the nature and importance of what one veteran called 'meaningful friendships'. Stanley started his research on this book in sympathy with the prevailing view that Tarakan was an unjustifiable waste of the 240 Australian lives it cost. In the end, he concludes that ultimately it was a reasonable and justifiable use of a limited force in support of the allied war effort, although dogged from the beginning by poor planning and the inescapable politics of higher command.

Tarakan is also a well-structured book, starting and finishing with Tarakan today, covering the participants, the preparations, the battle and the aftermath, including the effects on the survivors and their families. It has impressive

appendices, including a very useful order of battle, lists of casualties, a roll of honour and an outstanding bibliography which is a model of archival citation.

Peter Brune's third book on the Papuan campaigns of 1942-43, covering Milne Bay, Buna and Sanananda, doesn't reach the level of *Tarakan*. It is nevertheless a well-wrought and moving account of three campaigns which demonstrated that the Japanese army could be defeated but at significant cost. The bibliography lists 134 interviews and 55 correspondents or personal records collections. It is the voices of these people which make Brune's story. In an often offhand way, they detail the sufferings, confusion and the personal cost of victory in the extraordinarily difficult circumstances endured by the young soldiers in New Guinea. There is scarcely a page without a paragraph or more of the words of those who took part in the campaigns, and, as in his *Those Ragged Bloody Heroes and Gona's Gone*, Brune uses these words to create his narrative and it is well created.

The John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, located in the University which bears Curtin's name, is breaking new ground in Australia. It is Australia's first Prime Ministerial Library. It is illustrating the possibilities for scholarship and education offered by a virtual archive. It is the best and most useful memorial to any Australian Prime Minister. All this befits the man who is almost universally accepted as Australia's greatest Prime Minister and who held office at the only time Australia's national security was ever seriously threatened. Geoffrey Serle's short biography of Curtin, based on his acclaimed *Australian Dictionary of Biography* entry and his inaugural JCPML public lecture as its first Visiting Scholar, enhances this memorial. Scholarly, sympathetic and very readable, *For Australia and Labor* will doubtless be in demand in schools and undergraduate programs as well as sought after by ordinary readers who want to know more of this important Australian. The text is supported by brief biographical entries of Curtin's contemporaries and a short reading list. The Curtin CD-ROM provided for review is a pre-production model consisting mainly of excellent photographs with captions, one video clip and some audio extracts.

That the first three works reviewed here were all published by Allen & Unwin in the one year says something about that publisher's commitment to Australian history and about the continuing popularity of military history in this country. It is also another reminder that the National Archives of Australia was born from the War Archives Committee and that the Australian archival record is strongest and most complete in the records of war.

Paul Macpherson

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P. Cain and A. Thurston, *Personnel Records: A Strategic Resource for Public Sector Management (with case studies from Uganda, Ghana and Zimbabwe)*, Commonwealth Secretariat, Toronto, Canada, 1998. VII + 160pp. Paperback. ISBN 0 85092 552 5. \$US 13.95.

'Empirical studies indicate that the failure rate for computer-based information systems is at least 80 per cent and often higher.' (p. 1). This quotation from the report is a timely reminder to organisations currently reviewing their management of information resources. Produced as the result of a research project conducted during 1996 in civil service agencies of three Sub-Saharan African countries undergoing re-structuring activities as part of a national process of structural adjustment, this is part of the Commonwealth Secretariat's *Public Service Thematic Series on Personnel Records*. The project was conducted under the auspices of the International Records Management Trust (IRMT) with the aim of exploring the role of personnel records, in both paper and electronic formats, in public sector management.

The report draws on an extensive collection of IRMT field reports, a review of literature in the fields of development studies, personnel management and records management, and also uses case studies conducted in Ghana, Uganda and Zimbabwe. The report is logically structured and is easy to read, using charts and diagrams to advantage. It also features a comprehensive table of contents and appendices, but is not indexed.

Despite its focus on personnel records and the project's Sub-Saharan African context, the report addresses many issues of broader concern to recordkeeping professionals and other information specialists worldwide. Readers looking for evidence of the potential benefits to organisations of involving records managers and archivists in the design phase of projects aiming to develop new information systems are advised to consult the findings of this report.

The report highlights the role of records management in improving the management of personnel information resources. Its findings note the importance of creating linkages between paper records and records held in automated systems. The report's findings also note that paper records, the only authentic source of data in the cases studied, were regularly overlooked by project managers developing new information systems for personnel records. This occurred because of the tight deadlines imposed by international organisations overseeing the projects and also due to the poor management regimes applied to the records in the past.

This report, however, does more than list the problems discovered during the case studies. Strategies for solving problems are also presented.

For example, a chart showing a list of problems noted during the case studies, is presented, along with the other project findings and possible strategies for solving each identified problem. Detailed diagrams using an analysis of business process are used to address various aspects of developing databases for personnel records, such as obtaining reliable records for a personnel database, mapping fields to data sources and cleaning up records in registries.

Interesting parallels can be found within developed countries, such as Australia, that share elements of a common cultural heritage with the countries included in the study. One example is the registry system, common to former British colonies (including the three countries that participated in this research project). Although the obstacles to the introduction of new technologies in developing countries are greater than in developed countries, similar issues, such as a tendency to exaggerate the ability of computer-based systems to meet user needs, are faced in all countries. Another factor shared with Commonwealth countries around the world was the need to reduce government budget deficits. The three countries examined were all seeking to reduce the cost of their civil services as part of structural adjustment programs designed to achieve greater efficiencies in their national economic performance. The ability to 'downsize' the civil service was seen as necessary to the process of making financial savings. In all three countries, governments lacked sufficient information about the size and nature of their civil service, resulting in a perceived need to implement automated personnel records systems.

Along with the value of records as source data in automation projects, the report addresses the need for greater involvement by recordkeeping professionals in the design of systems, an issue that has been highlighted in the literature by Australian writers such as Sue McKemmish. The findings also highlight the need for the necessary technical infrastructure to be in place to ensure the success of automation projects, including professional skills and senior management with a realistic understanding of the issues.

Because they examine the role that an understanding of recordkeeping requirements can play in the design and development of computer-based information systems, the report's findings are relevant to all those interested in improving information management, whether they are recordkeeping or information technology professionals. Overall, the report is well worth consulting for those wishing to find some examples of the value of applying a knowledge and understanding of recordkeeping requirements in situations that may appear very different to their own, but which in fact offer some interesting parallels.

Marie Adams

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Margaret Hedstrom and Sheon Montgomery, *Digital Preservation Needs and Requirements in RLG Member Institutions: A Study Commissioned by the Research Libraries Group*, Research Libraries Group, Mountain View, California, December 1998. 16 pp. (Available at: <http://www.rlg.org/preserv/digpres.html>)

In 1996 the Research Libraries Group (RLG), in conjunction with the Commission on Preservation and Access (CPA), published a report, *Preserving Digital Information: Report of the Task Force on Archiving of Digital Information*. *Digital Preservation Needs and Requirements in RLG Member Institutions* examines the way that a particular group of institutions is addressing digital preservation issues and, to that extent, follows up some of the conclusions reached in the RLG/CPA report. This particular study is based on a written survey sent to the 158 member institutions of the RLG, and interviews conducted with a selection of the respondents.

The study had two main aims:

- to gather baseline data on the nature and extent of digital preservation problems in [RLG] member institutions and the status of their digital preservation programs; and
- to identify needs and requirements of [RLG] member institutions in meeting their responsibilities for preserving digital information.

Survey questions were designed to gain a picture of the state of policies and practice and to identify any obstacles or barriers encountered in the implementation of preservation strategies.

Digital Preservation Needs and Requirements does not attempt to outline the problems with digital media, or even some of the strategies and policy solutions which have been canvassed in recent years. Instead, it acknowledges that the vulnerability of digital media and the problems of technology and software obsolescence have been well defined. It provides reference points to studies that have been published in the last few years attacking the policy framework problem, but does not analyse their advantages or failings. This report contributes to the discussion by providing some base-line data about the activities of a subset of the interested players (custodians and preservers).

The survey concentrated on how institutions were dealing with those materials for which they took long term preservation responsibility in digital form. The authors were not concerned with the use of digital media as an access tool alone. Their interest concentrated on materials acquired originally in digital form or those produced as a result of conversion to digital format.

The purpose of RLG in such a study was clearly to assess the needs and strengths of its member institutions. Traditionally a consortium of larger research libraries, RLG has extended its role across different sectors and national boundaries in recent times. While still largely North American-focused, RLG membership now includes a spectrum of organisation type, including archives and museums, large and small; university and public libraries; historical societies; and independent research collections. The survey of RLG members, some of whom are potentially major leaders in the field, is useful as a small reflection of the broader sector.

34% of the 158 RLG members responded to the survey. This is a good response rate for survey exercises, but gives quite a small overall sample. Respondents were primarily from the United States. Other countries represented were Australia, Canada, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United Kingdom but, with the exception of the United Kingdom, all were represented by only 1 or 2 responses each. As might be expected, responses were dominated by libraries (38), though some of these would include manuscript or archival collections.

The small nature of the survey population is a limitation of the report. The authors recognise and reflect on this limitation of their survey when they draw general conclusions. In particular, they note the nature of the survey population, the size of the survey population and its potential bias towards those institutions motivated and involved with digital preservation, and the differences in terminology used by RLG members to describe digital preservation activities.

The survey results give information about institutions' holdings, formats, existence of policy statements, training, and perceptions of future developments in digital preservation. Many of the survey results are presented in the form of graphs together with explanatory text. One interesting observation was that half of the respondents acquire unique digital material while nearly two thirds are converting material to digital form as a preservation strategy.

Quantity is difficult to measure. Partly this is because there is no commonly accepted method of measuring and comparing quantity of digital material. The survey asked for both number of files and volume (eg. megabyte, gigabyte, etc.) Often the response was an estimate and some had difficulty accounting for both elements. The variety of formats held also was broad. Although most holdings are very recently created or acquired, there are already problems in managing formats and providing access to some material.

The survey found variation in development of policy relating to digital materials. One area of concern highlighted by the authors is that existing policy may cover acquisition or creation issues, but seldom deals with storage

or migration issues. The lack of existing models appears to be one of the barriers in this area. In many instances, migration occurs in an *ad hoc* or project manner rather than in a planned and proactive way. Staff expertise in dealing with digital materials is clearly an area of need for many institutions. A clear conclusion was that all respondents were looking for leadership in the cooperative development of solutions.

The report is well structured and includes an executive summary, findings, recommendations, the survey instrument and list of participants. While the recommendations are not large in number, they focus on practical implementations addressed not only to RLG, who commissioned the report, but also to member institutions and service providers who will be crucial to progress in the area of digital preservation.

This is one of several studies published since the 1996 RLG/CPA report. What this particular report contributes is an examination of the actual 'state of play' in digital preservation for RLG member institutions. Two years on, it gives an indication of what is being achieved. The disadvantage of the report is that the survey results are limited in scope. They provide some basic data and illustrate the wide gap between the models and their practical implementation. This is a small but useful report which gives a picture of how some organisations are currently placed in dealing with digital media and suggests what areas might be pursued further. It indicates that the archival community could usefully be doing broader surveys of current activity (which could be compared with the RLG survey). I could not help concluding that current work in Australia, such as Public Record Office of Victoria's VERS project, will be important in providing models internationally as well as in Australia.

Kathryn Dan

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David Parry (for consultants Information North), *Virtually New, Creating the Digital Collection: A Review of Digitisation Projects in Local Authority Libraries and Archives - Final Report to the Library and Information Commission*, Library and Information Commission, London, 1998. 129pp. ISBN 1 902394 00 3 (available from Information North, Bolbec Hall, Westgate Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE1 1SE).

This report is the result of a project to survey the local authority library and archive sectors of the United Kingdom and determine

how much [digitisation] has already been done... and what new projects should be initiated by means of converting collection material currently held in traditional formats to digital format.

The review also has a stated objective of delivering 'criteria for defining the relative importance of materials or collections'.

While the report specifically addresses the state of digitisation projects in the United Kingdom, it also provides a well-structured and concise overview of critical issues and relevant information sources in the field of digitisation internationally. As such, it would be a useful introduction for any organisation contemplating a digitisation project, but which is not yet familiar with the territory.

The report sets out the general background and policy context for the review and summarises the findings of a postal survey and other investigative research, such as interviews with focus groups. As might be expected, of the 146 organisations that responded to the survey, just over half had either undertaken, were currently engaged in, or had definite plans to undertake digitisation projects. The report outlines the nature of the material digitised (i.e. photographic, text based, maps, audio-visual etc.), the means by which access is provided (stand alone or networked systems), and the technical platforms for conversion (including both hardware and software).

Critical issues are set out in chapters on *Copyright and Intellectual Property, Standards, and Selection of Material for Digitisation*. In general, the review reveals a need for a cautious approach to digitisation, offering warnings such as the following statement relating to standards,

At the present time, some projects are carried out without much reference to relevant standards. At best this creates resources which may well be very useful but which lack the capacity to become part of any present or future resource discovery network, or to stand the test of time technically. At the worst they can be a poor allocation of resources.

Further sections include a comprehensive listing of completed, current and planned projects and an annotated bibliography on digitisation and related issues. There is also a URL list of relevant international web sites that provide information on digitisation projects.

The report makes a number of recommendations, which specifically address the local library and archive sector in the United Kingdom and are perhaps less interesting to readers outside of this sphere. However, the key point recommends the establishment of a central agency with expertise in digitisation and sets out the core functions for such a body, and it will be interesting to see whether this agency materialises and fulfills its brief.

Anyone looking for a 'how-to' manual on digitisation would not find what they need within this publication and would be better advised to consult other sources such as *Digital Imaging for Libraries and Archives* [A. Kenney and S. Chapman, NY, 1996], (reviewed by Colin Webb in this journal in 1997). However, the report does provide a good account of the main issues to be considered in establishing a digitisation project and as such would be a useful resource for anyone assigned with managerial responsibility for digitisation projects. In particular, it highlights the fact that perhaps the best chance for success in implementing digitisation projects will arise from pooling the resources and experience of institutions with similar concerns.

Kylie Scroope

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Henk J. Porck, *Mass Deacidification: An Update of Possibilities and Limitations*, European Commission on Preservation and Access, Amsterdam, 1996. 53pp. ISBN 90-6984-162-2. \$US15.00. Available from the Council of Library and Information Resources, Publication Orders, 1755 Massachusetts Ave, NW, Suite 500, Washington DC 20036-2124.

Acidity in mass-produced modern papers is widely recognised as one of the major preservation problems affecting most library and archival collections. Chemical treatments to combat acidity (and associated symptoms of weakened and embrittled paper) have been utilised by conservators for many decades. However, these treatments have traditionally involved a relatively high degree of risk and labour intensive application and have therefore only been utilised on a small scale. In recent decades there have been a number of initiatives both in Europe and the United States to develop so called 'mass deacidification' procedures that can be applied on a much larger scale than has previously been possible.

This report briefly summarises the *Batelle*, *Bookkeeper*, *DEZ*, *FMC* and *Wei T'o* systems of mass deacidification, and other processes combining deacidification and paper strengthening technologies, such as the *Buckeburg*, *graft-copolymerization*, *paper splitting* and *Vienna* processes. For each of these systems the report provides:

- an historical overview of its development;
- a brief and general explanation of the techniques and chemistry involved;
- a summary of findings on the efficiency of each process; and

- an account of how the process has been applied in library and archive institutions.

Although some of the processes have been found to be positively beneficial in alkalising paper, a number of post-process conditions such as the presence of odours, cockling and distortion of papers, dissolving of inks, and discoloration of papers, are evidence of the risks involved with the blanket application of chemical processes on a large scale.

While there is some cost analysis comparison between different processes on a per unit basis (averaging roughly \$10.00 US per book), there is no analysis of plant and equipment establishment costs, and only brief consideration of the staffing resources required for full operation of the various processes. It is also not stated whether the costs described encompass staff resources required to ensure a proper selection of appropriate material is made, or whether it only covers actual processing costs. Given the risks involved, and the importance of appropriate selection, mass deacidification is not likely to become a useful tool for preserving archival material where there is a high degree of variation in types of papers and inks even within a single item. It is, however, possible that many of the early teething problems have since been eliminated to an extent that lesser value book collections could be effectively treated this way. For example, see accounts of further development of the *Bookkeeper* process being used by the Library of Congress, available online at:

<http://palimpsest.stanford.edu/byorg/abbey/an/an21/an21-7/an21-702.html>

In evaluating the relative merits and limitations of the processes, the author raises a number of important questions and attempts to answer them. The Evaluation section includes consideration of how materials are selected for processing, and what the actual benefits are likely to be for such materials. Another issue which is touched on briefly, but could perhaps have been more fully analysed, is the relative benefits of mass deacidification in comparison with other preservation strategies such as copying. From an Australian context, the most pertinent question raised is whether institutions should implement mass deacidification processes immediately, or wait until an 'ideal' system has been developed (thereby implicitly acknowledging that the systems available currently are not ideal). The author recommends against a 'wait and see' approach, arguing that if commercial enterprises working on mass deacidification are not supported they will simply withdraw from the market. To date, and to the best of my knowledge, none of the major Australian collecting institutions have undertaken or are planning mass deacidification projects. A large factor in this is likely to be the establishment costs involved. Given our geographical

isolation from the large population centres in Europe and North America where the systems are currently concentrated, I suspect that most Australian institutions will not consider diverting funds from existing preservation programs in the near future to take up mass deacidification.

Kylie Scroope

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GUIDES

The Archives Authority of New South Wales, *A Guide to New South Wales State Archives Relating to Aboriginal People*, Sydney, May 1998, 70pp. ISBN 0 7310 1737 4. \$28.00. (Also available at: <http://www.records.nsw.gov.au>).

Kirsty Thinee and Tracy Bradford, *Connecting Kin - Guide to Records: A Guide to Help People Separated from Their Families Search for Their Records*, NSW Department of Community Services, [Sydney], September 1998, 382pp. ISBN 0 7310 4262 X. Available free of charge from the Department of Community Services, phone: 02/9716-2222. (Also available from: <http://www.community.nsw.gov.au/>).

The Archives Authority of New South Wales, *A Guide to New South Wales State Archives Relating to Aboriginal People* is divided into two sections; Part 1 covers the 'Archives of the Aborigines Welfare Board, 1883-1969' and Part 2 lists 'State Archives from other Government Agencies, 1788-1992'. *Connecting Kin - Guide to Records*, was produced by the NSW Department of Community Services to help people, dislocated from their families due to policies of separation, locate their kin. The list of records is broken down into 4 parts; NSW Government welfare agencies, non-Government welfare agencies, public hospitals and NSW Government non-welfare agencies. The date range of records covers from 1862 until the present. As Aboriginal people formed part of the group who suffered from family separation, there is a slight overlap between the two guides. Both guides point to other agencies and organisations which may assist people in locating their families.

Both guides have been produced in response to increasing public demand and have benefited from extensive community consultative processes. To reach a wider audience, both guides are available in both paper and electronic format. Whilst the electronic format is conducive to updates, it is beneficial to continue producing a paper version so that the information

can reach people in communities where the infrastructure for Internet access does not yet exist.

In compliance with the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services*, the guides inform the reader that series titles and descriptions may contain language reflective of the time in which they were written and are not intended to offend. The records are not only individually described, but are also placed within an administrative, social, legislative and historical context.

The guides:

- clearly explain access conditions, restrictions and, if restricted, where or from whom permission is required;
- location and opening hours of reading rooms;
- define archival terminology (*Connecting Kin* also includes a glossary); and
- describe the relevant series, indicating title, date range, arrangement and reference number, indicate whether an index is extant, identify any gaps, and cross-reference to related series.

In addition, *Collecting Kin* includes indications of quantity and a general index to the guide.

I believe that both guides make an invaluable contribution. However, *Collecting Kin* is easier for the novice to interpret.

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MULTIMEDIA

Ann Pederson, Mark Brogan and Alin Huma, *Documenting Society*, CD-ROM Version 1.1, School of Computing, Information and Mathematical Sciences, Edith Cowan University, Perth, Western Australia, 1998. ISBN 0-7298-0383-x. US\$75 (for individual continuing education, single user licence).¹

Launched at the Australian Society of Archivists Annual Conference at Fremantle in August 1998, *Documenting Society* has been produced by Western Australia's Edith Cowan University as 'an interactive multimedia short course on the fundamentals of recordkeeping for organisational and

societal purposes.' It is offered as an academic course to accredited course providers and as a fully self-contained continuing education/training course. The course is supported in three distance learning modes: traditional print, CD-ROM and through the Internet, with a clear target market both within this country and also (perhaps particularly) beyond Australian shores. The CD-ROM version is the subject of this review, which will touch on the features of the medium and its utility in Distance Education in addition to the course philosophy, structure and content.

The publicity information on the *Documenting Society* homepage advises that,

Documenting Society will introduce students to the concept and importance of memory in business and society. The evolution of written forms of communication, information and communications technologies and modern concepts of record are explored. The nature and functions of an effective recordkeeping regime in modern business and government are described. The transformation of recordkeeping by information technology and the theories of evidence and accountability in democratic societies form an important theme within this unit.

Elsewhere it is noted that:

The content highlights the key considerations and decisions all record-keeping specialists must face in developing and managing recordkeeping regimes appropriate to their needs. Great attention has been paid to the importance of sound policies, procedures and documentation in obtaining successful outcomes.²

The unit comprises the standard components of a Distance Education course - a *Study Plan* or weekly schedule for an average Australian University 14 week semester and a *Guide* which contains the instructional content linked to a number of mandatory readings with options for further reading. The Guide also incorporates a linked Workbook, which provides a focus for the range of exercises arising from each of the 10 unit modules. Its purpose is to guide and reinforce the learning experience and provide a vehicle for assessment as required. The Workbook can be easily down-loaded into the student's word processing program for ease of use and dispatch for assessment. To these course materials have been added a range of still images and five video clips. An interesting feature is the use of interactive diagrams which respond on mouse-over with text and a more detailed voice explanation. These have been incorporated 'to explain important recordkeeping theories' and are a particularly attractive feature. The opening page displays an interesting thematic linking of three images representing society, memory and technology. All together, it presents well, is visually appealing and provides some variety to enhance learning and make it more stimulating for remote or lone students.

The CD-ROM has standard external packaging with coloured identity labelling and author details as well as specifying the hardware (both PC and Macintosh are supported) and software requirements for its use. Curiously, particularly given its topic of recordkeeping, the CD itself (the review copy at least) is not identified or labelled in any way. For ease of installation on the user's machine it contains for downloading the software needed to access it including the video and animation features. For a PC, a Pentium processor (75 MHz+) running Windows 95 or 98 with a minimum of 16MB of RAM available for this application and a sound card is required. Software requisites are an internet browser plus some plug-ins - Netscape Navigator (v3.01+), QuickTime system extension/plugin and Shockwave plug-in, are suggested although it can also be easily supported with plug-ins to Internet Explorer. Accessing the ROM via both browsers was trialed for this review with Explorer proving more consistently successful, especially to launch the video clips and animation features, although this will no doubt depend on the particular user's computing environment.

The Course is structured into the following 10 modules:³

- Communication, Memory and Recordkeeping
- Development of Recordkeeping Principles & Professions
- Introduction to the Recordkeeping Regime
- Disposal Acquisition & Appraisal
- Records Organisation and Control
- Preservation and Storage
- Records Access and Use
- Managing the Recordkeeping Regime
- Managing the Recordkeeping Regime: Relationships, Promotion & Education
- Managing the Recordkeeping Regime: Information Technology

Each module is broken down into a varying number of themes or sections preceded by the module *Objectives* and concluded with a *Summary*. The learning objectives for both the course and each module are comprehensive and sound. Modules have been expertly compiled with a logical flow within sections resulting in a well constructed product.

The Workbook exercises are well connected with the course content to which they relate. They are presented in a variety of ways - framed as questions or completing a table or guided authoring of specific documentation -

reflecting a skilled usage of pedagogical techniques, although one in particular stood out for totally 'leading the witness.' With respect to a designated reading which is a significant contribution to the given issue, 'Are there any biases, unsupported contentions or weaknesses in [the] arguments?' which will immediately lead the student to presume there are and to seek them out. The Workbook exercises hotlink in from the relevant 'activity' spot in each module (for example, view the film clip or read an article and then complete a Workbook exercise).

The *Documenting Society* Homepage proudly proclaims its mixed cultural heritage: 'Although Documenting Society has Australian/American parentage, we believe that it reflects the seminal literature and experiences of the international English-speaking community.' Indeed, the wealth of experience in two very different archival traditions and the international content the author brings to this product is very apparent. Its major strength lies in the wide range of resources on which the course content is based,⁴ the presentation (generally as linked objects) of many of these resources direct to the student's desk top and the extensive additional reading lists. The distillation and synthesis of these often contradictory resources into a cohesive education product for 'universal' Anglophone application is a significant and laudable undertaking. But those seeking the essential characteristic of the distinctive and innovative Australian recordkeeping tradition will be sadly disappointed.

The content of *Documenting Society* is built around the framework provided by the CADS model with reference to what is identified as Process Oriented Management. CADS (Control, Accessibility, Disposal and Storage) we are informed, is the professional management model utilised by Australian Archives and is 'very useful and effective as a conceptual device for looking at and/or analysing *what is involved in managing any body of records, anywhere, in any time.*' This particular model derives from what could be seen as the 'middle period' of the Australian national archival authority's existence, prior to the current renaissance. CADS and the many variations of it that have arisen in Anglophone countries are introspective and record-centric models based on archival processes. The course successfully revolves around this model while touching on or exploring a variety of other views and perspectives. Another framework concept divides records and archives activities into two domains - the office domain and the repository domain.

It is not the purpose of a review such as this to dissect in detail the course content. Nevertheless, the matter of its Australian characteristics deserves some further comment. Specifically American concepts and terms such as 'record centres'⁵ and 'non-records' are used while 'registry' is difficult to find. The course is replete with all the current professional 'in-words' such as recordkeeping, records continuum, recordkeeping regime, functional

analysis etc. The modules explain these terms and place them globally in archival endeavour. In so doing, most have lost their particular Australian usage - at least as I understand it. For example, the essence of record-keeping, as the definition in AS4390⁶ attests, is much more than a merging of so-called traditional records management and archives administration processes. Indeed, while AS4390 is dealt with in one module, its contribution is not fully exploited within the course content.

However, it is with the course's interpretation of 'records continuum' that I had the most difficulty. Its articulation in *Documenting Society* more closely aligns to Canadian Jay Atherton's 'continuum' of combining records and archives processes than the fundamental rearticulation of recordkeeping principles provided with the Australian Records Continuum framework.⁷ In module 2.03, as one of its animated objects, a diagram designated as 'The Records Continuum' is presented. It follows immediately after an introductory sentence, 'The 'heart' of the new agenda is Frank Upward's evolving Model of the Records Continuum.' At first I was startled, as this is not the published Records Continuum model as I know, nor, upon utilising its nice technological features, is it the Records Continuum as I understand it. On closer examination a small blue * is present at the end of the introductory sentence. This acts as a button linking to a footnote style explanation contained the Workbook: 'The model above was developed by the author. Frank Upward and Sue McKemmish have provided their own model in *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow: A Continuum of Responsibility* which is also recommended reading.' (with a further link to the article and the RCM itself). Returning to the animated model and without attempting to write the 'Hitchhikers Guide to the Records Continuum',⁸ I have real conceptual difficulty with any recordkeeping model which declares that a record is created and then the record is incorporated into a recordkeeping system. One of the essential qualities of 'recordness' is the incorporation of the document, DIO or whatever into a recordkeeping system - formal or informal.

Documenting Society is a good product technically and pedagogically which is sure to appeal to distance education students. Those looking for renaissance recordkeeping or signature Australian philosophy will not find them here. It seems to present Australian recordkeeping through American rather than Australian eyes, but perhaps that is the price one pays for dual national parentage. As an 'entry-level' course its approach is to emphasise processes, while touching upon a comprehensive range of professional issues beyond those which it develops in detail, thus opening many doors for ongoing professional exploration. It has a cohesive conceptual framework which may well have the universal appeal that the authors intend. It draws on and interprets a comprehensive range of literature and connects

the student to these resources, many of which might not otherwise be so readily available. It is well worth the individual continuing education licence for this feature alone. Congratulations to Edith Cowan University and the authors for such a well-executed product.⁹

Glenda Acland

Endnotes

1. Full details of the scale of licence fees (all in US\$) can be found at <http://Kandinsky.fste.ac.cowan.edu.au/docsoc/orders.htm> - that an Australian product is priced only in US\$ is extraordinary, marketing initiatives and the 'global economy' notwithstanding.
2. <http://Kandinsky.fste.ac.cowan.edu.au/docsoc/>
3. The Course Overview provided at the *Documenting Society* homepage at <http://Kandinsky.fste.ac.cowan.edu.au/docsoc/> lists 12 modules as a result of the sequential interpretation of two double-barrelled module titles.
4. The majority of sources are, in order, American, Australian, Canadian, International Council of Archives, British.
5. Although spelt according to *The Macquarie* not *Webster's*.
6. AS4390 1996 *Australian Standard: Records Management*, Standards Australia, Homebush, NSW, 1996.
7. There is of course scope for a series of articles around understandings of the continuum concept, as the recent postings on the AUS-ARCHIVISTS listserv attest. Nevertheless, as a pioneer of the use and application of this concept in Australia and a recordkeeper currently working at the leading edge of professional development predicated on continuum thinking, I feel justified in making this statement.
8. I believe Barbara Reed is the author of this evocative name amongst the many that have been used in recent times in records continuum circles.
9. Australia has a long tradition of distance education which in recent decades has been buffeted by the ever-changing political landscape with regard to its provision in particular and to tertiary education in general. Edith Cowan was the first Australian University to provide a Distance Education Course specifically in Archives and Records in 1994 and subsequently to produce CD-ROMs of specific units. As Australian universities struggle with political, economic and self imposed demands to re-invent themselves as paying enterprises, competition for the international student dollar has heightened. To make a name in the global education marketplace course designers must inevitably look towards the 'internationalisation' and universality of appeal of course content, while retaining a degree of specialisation or particularity as their special drawcard.