

# Editorial

This issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* focuses on business archives. Within the Australian archival community, business archives and archivists have played a significant role in the evolution of our approach to professional issues. Together with the large body of archival materials derived from Australian business houses, business archives have provided a rich resource for a range of research interests. In recent times we have seen a declining interest in the continued support of business archives. Some in-house archives have been closed while others have had their budgets significantly reduced. In the area of collecting archives we have seen a move away from collecting business archives to other aspects of Australian life. Additionally we have seen the potential for closure of collecting institutions, as was the case of the Noel Butlin Archive Centre.

The articles in the issue are intended to provide some insights into what has or is happening here and overseas with regard to business archives. Dr Hilary Golder sets the scene looking at the relationship between researching and writing history and the role of archives and archivists in that process. This article repeats the text of a paper Dr Golder presented to the New South Wales Branch of the Society in September 1999.

Increasingly consultants are being used by business to carry out a range of recordkeeping tasks. Judith Ellis has provided a first for this journal by writing an article from the view point of a consultant. Judith explores the range of roles consultants can take in business archives and provides examples drawn from her own experience.

Karen Benedict, another consultant, examines reporting structures for business archives. Karen has wide experience both as a practising business archivist and a consultant. She has drawn on this experience to make some suggestions on the most appropriate placement within reporting structures for an in-house business archive. Although Karen uses research and examples from the United States, Australian archivists should readily identify with the situations described.

The origins and development of the Melbourne University Archives are examined in Leigh Swancott's article. Leigh examines the emergence of the institution and its collection in the early 1960s into one of Australia's premier collections of business archives. In following the origin and development of the Archives we are also provided with an overview of some of the developments in the collecting of business archives in Australia.

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A different view of business archives is provided by Henrik Fode and Jorgen Fink. These authors provide us with a view of the Scandinavian business archives scene. In doing so we not only see a long tradition in archival practice we also see that business archives have been part of that tradition. The Scandinavian experience shows that there is integration services across all sectors of the archival community.

The final article from Lesley Richmond provides us with another perspective for business archives. Lesley gives us an overview of the Scottish business archives scene. Working at the Glasgow University, Business Archives Centre has given Lesley a unique position in seeing almost all aspects of business archives development in Scotland over the past 10 or so years. Of particular interest to Australian business archivists is the continuing role of the Scottish Business Archives Council, unlike the Australian Business Archives Council that effectively ceased to function in the early 1970s.

It is hoped that this collection of articles in some small way rekindles interest in business archives. What we as archivists need to remember is that the archival community is made up of many sectors. For us to succeed in our mission we need to look broadly at our community and appreciate the variety of institutions that make Australia's archival community. With particular regard to the role and function business archives Lesley Richmond hit the nail on the head when she said:

*There are two kinds of business archivists: the in-house corporate archivist who is employed by a business to preserve, maintain and exploit, for the good of that business, its records and the archivist employed by a collecting repository which specialises in records of business. The remit of both types of archivist to the collection/s that they manage vary greatly but the mission of both is to preserve, maintain and ensure use of the records.'*

Bruce Smith

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i Lesley Richmond, "The Art of Appraisal. An essential tool for business archivists", *Janus*, 1999.1, p 65.