

Editorial

In November 1999, Michael Piggott of the University of Melbourne Archives addressed the National Scholarly Communications Forum Round Table No. 10, Archives in the National Research Infrastructure, with a paper entitled 'A National Approach to Archival Appraisal and Collecting' (www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/nscf/roundtables/r10/r10_piggott.html).

In reviewing the current approach to appraisal and collection of our documentary heritage he reflects on the means by which non-governmental archives are preserved and asks:

Who is documenting the sex industry; biotechnology companies; pre-war delicatessens; Cochlear, developers of the famous bionic ear implant; and 'fringe' enterprises such as the Polygot Puppet Theatre and the Flying Fruit Fly Circus?

In this issue, all the articles take as their common starting point the question: how well have we documented 20th century Australia? The areas covered: Indigenous people, Australian literature, rural and regional Australia, protest movements, and sport are of course not comprehensive of the Australian experience of the twentieth century, but serve as examples of all the possible cross-sections of Australian society.

Other areas have been the subject of recent attention: business archives by Terwiel, Ville and Fleming's guide to Australian business records (Department of Economic History, Australian National University, 1998) and now the University of Melbourne's Documenting Australian Business project; trade union records by the Australian Trade Union Heritage Resources Gateway project; and the archives of science by the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre (see *News Notes* in this issue on all these projects). There remain of course many other areas to be explored: which archives do actively collect the records of youth culture: grunge music, raves, clubbing, text messaging and chatrooms?

These articles present different ways of answering the question posed: surveying what is readily found through accessible finding aids, analysis of actual collections against the collecting policies of key institutions, assessment of the representativeness of existing collections, tracking the serendipitous path by which collections come to be preserved in archives, and examining the motives of those who collect. Ultimately all beg the question: is the current framework the best way to ensure the documentation of Australian society for future generations?

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