

Archives and the Centenary of Federation – Did They Rate?

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This article provides a descriptive overview, concentrating mainly on New South Wales, of archival and related projects that grew out of the Centenary of Federation in 2001 and briefly outlines some of these projects and the impact of the Centenary of Federation on archives. It is not a comprehensive listing of all projects in Australia, rather a snapshot of some of the endeavours which helped raise the profile of archives in the wider community, especially in NSW. Overall the Centenary of Federation had a positive effect on archives. In New South Wales the Centenary of Federation Committee's grant program for preservation of archival and cultural materials indicates a requirement for the establishment of a permanent grants mechanism for archival materials.

Introduction

The Centenary of Federation never quite inspired the same levels of enthusiasm that surrounded the Bicentenary celebrations of 1988, and there was a latent undercurrent of criticism surrounding many of the planned activities relating to the centenary celebrations.¹ Additionally it was clear that in the lead-up to the Centenary of Federation that the money available for community projects was going to be much less than had been the case for the Bicentenary. In New South Wales, almost as soon as it came into existence, the Centenary of Federation Committee was lobbied for funds from a wide variety of sources, both within and from outside the State. Initially these were mainly for regional and local celebrations, and it was anticipated by the Committee that funds would be available for these celebrations in much the same way as they were in 1988. Perhaps fortunately for archives this was not to be the case and by the end of 1998 the focus had shifted markedly from community-based celebrations to projects and ideas that would have a lasting effect on society.

A competitive grants program was established under the aegis of the Education, History and Civics Subcommittee of the Centenary of Federation Committee and applications were called for. The response was almost overwhelming and many archives, libraries, art galleries, community groups and cultural institutions submitted grant proposals for a variety of preservation-based projects. Most States established Centenary of Federation committees and the National Committee for the Centenary of Federation distributed funds on a larger scale for national infrastructure, building and culturally-based projects. These included exhibitions and support for research which lead to a number of significant books being published, such as Geoffrey Bolton's book on Australia's first prime minister, Edmund Barton. I would now like to turn to some of the archives-based projects that grew out of the Centenary of Federation year.

Publishing projects

The National Archives of Australia was firmly positioned to publicise its role as one of the major custodians of material relating to the Centenary of Federation well before most people had thought about the forthcoming celebrations. The publication of Stephen Foster, Susan Marsden and Roslyn Russell's *Federation: The Guide to Records* was the major archival publishing event in 1998 which ensured researchers had advance warning of what was where and who held it, well before 2001. In doing my own research for the Centenary, it was often much more convenient to look at the Guide than it was to wander into the Mitchell Library reading room and look at the card catalogue! This book created a new

benchmark in Australian archival publishing history that, as far as guides go, has yet to be surpassed. It is sumptuously produced and illustrated and most usefully arranged chronologically and geographically. The Guide was widely used and purchased by libraries and archives all over the country. Unfortunately the State Records Authority of New South Wales' *Guide to New South Wales Archives relating to Federation*, predominantly written by Gail Davis, was not published until September 2001, by which time interest in the Centenary was beginning to wane. Nevertheless, this guide is a useful addition to the literature and is well produced and cleverly illustrated, though more modest than the National Archives' production.

Another major National Archives' contribution to the year was the *One Destiny* CD-ROM, which was published well before 2001 and distributed to all schools in Australia. This was an excellent multimedia product which I used extensively for at least three years when talking about various aspects of the history of Federation. The CD-ROM was lavishly populated with archival materials, documents, photographs, maps and movie clips which brought the history of Federation to life. It is regrettable that a rival commercial product of inferior quality called *Federation of a Nation* seemed to get more publicity and circulation.

The National Archives also published *1901 and All That: A Federation Resource Kit for Teachers*, which was distributed to all secondary schools in Australia and which, in 2000, was the winner of the *Australian* newspaper's 'Award for Excellence in Educational Publishing (Secondary Teaching and Learning Package)'.

Perhaps because of my membership of the New South Wales Centenary of Federation Committee, first as Mitchell Librarian and later as Associate Director at State Records, I was able to influence and educate the committee about the importance of documentation and archives and the need for a guide to the records of the committee when its work was coming to a close. Margaret Chambers was contracted to produce a guide which was completed not long after the committee wound up on 31 March 2002. A guide to the records produced so quickly after the cessation of a government entity! This must be a NSW Government record! Please excuse the pun!

Web-based projects

'Documenting a Democracy', at www.foundingdocs.gov.au, coordinated by the National Archives of Australia, was one of the major web initiatives to come out of the Centenary of Federation year. The website traces the development of Australian democracy through the key documents directing the constitutional paths

taken by each State. The documentary records of Australia's eight governments are mainly held in the archives located in each capital city. Each government archive (ie the NAA, the Public Record Office Victoria, the State Records Office of Western Australia, the Northern Territory Archives Service, State Records South Australia, the Archives Office of Tasmania, the State Records Authority of New South Wales and the Queensland State Archives) in partnership planned and produced the website, with the support of the National Council for the Centenary of Federation.

Development of the website involved the assistance of a national advisory panel of experts for the identification of the documents. Many of the documents on the site had never been seen before and some had never been seen in Australia. In raising awareness of archival materials, the *foundingdocs* website is possibly the most significant website to emerge from 2001.

Federation and Meteorology, at www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/fam/fam.html, used the rich and authoritative historical resources of the Bureau of Meteorology, and published many major articles that have been difficult to access via traditional methods. The project was funded by the National Council for the Centenary of Federation, based on the observation that the emergence of Australian meteorology as a science parallels closely the story of Federation and was both influenced by, and contributed to, the ambition of nationhood. This project brought together a range of scholarly, interpretative and historical resources, examples of which include the fourteen volumes of the Metarch Papers, a series of texts originally published by the Bureau between 1986 and 1999, dealing with the history of Australian meteorology in general and the Bureau of Meteorology in particular. A substantial amount of biographical material such as retirement notices, staff profiles and obituaries was selected and republished from the Bureau's in-house journal *Weather News*, along with other articles of an historical nature.

Science and the Making of Victoria, at www.austehc.unimelb.edu.au/smv/smv.html, was made possible through a grant from the Victorian Government and the Centenary of Federation and the Community Support Fund and is the work of the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre at the University of Melbourne (Austehc), in collaboration with the Royal Society of Victoria. The website is centred on the role of the Royal Society of Victoria, which since its foundation has played a leading role in supporting science and technology in that State. Most famously remembered for its organisation of the Burke and Wills Expedition in 1860, the Society has been involved in many developments of national and State significance - establishing the first Australian Antarctic Exploration Committee in 1886, surveying the natural resources of Victoria,

establishing the National Museum of Victoria and the observatory now in the Botanic Gardens, and national parks such as Wilson's Promontory. A guide to the Society's records from 1854 to 1988, which are housed in the State Library of Victoria, is available on its website, along with its membership lists for the same period.

This very important site has highlighted the role of archives in science, which the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre does so well, and was another most useful addition to a number of websites supported by the National Council for the Centenary of Federation. While mentioning Austehc, *The Flight of the Emu: A Hundred Years of Australian Ornithology 1901-2001* (Melbourne University Press, 2001)² was another major publication assisted by Federation money and to which Austehc provided biographical information on Australian ornithologists. Gavan McCarthy, Director of Austehc comments that 'these web-based products are "alive" and have enabled Austehc to reach out and interact with some new and interesting communities'.

The Fisher Library at the University of Sydney received a grant to digitise and make available the records of the various constitutional conventions and debates that took place in the lead up to Federation in 1901. These are available on the Scholarly Electronic Text and Image Service (SETIS) website at setis.library.usyd.edu.au.

Finally the State Library of New South Wales' Federation Ephemera site is worthy of mention (www.slsw.gov.au/fedephemera). The Library received funding from the NSW Centenary of Federation Committee to create this website and it consists of Alfred Lee's Federation Album which contains his record of Federation in 1901 and is a key document to the understanding of this period.

Exhibitions

Perhaps the largest, most expensive and most elaborate exhibition during the Centenary of Federation year was *Belonging*, a joint exhibition between the NAA, the State libraries of New South Wales and Victoria, and the National Library of Australia. This exhibition received funding from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation but regrettably never lived up to expectations, the general consensus being that it lacked direction and inspiration, was poorly designed and was inherently dull. Essentially the exhibition was intended to be a celebration of what it is to be an Australian but the 'celebration' was somewhat muted. Nevertheless, the exhibition went some way to raise community awareness of the rich cultural assets held in each institution, including archival materials. It continues its tour of State capital cities.

In sharp contrast is the more focused Federation Gallery at the National Archives where the original 'birth certificates' of the Commonwealth of Australia are on permanent display, including the Constitution Act of 1900 and the Royal Commission of Assent, signed by Queen Victoria. In this exhibition the exhibits are allowed to speak for themselves.

In Victoria the Public Record Office of Victoria (PROV) led a partnership with the Royal Historical Society of Victoria and the Parliament of Victoria to develop a touring exhibition, *Our Nation's First Capital: Federation and the City of Melbourne 1901-27*. Funding was received from the National Council for the Centenary of Federation to develop the exhibition and tour it to seven Victorian venues. The eight themes explored within the exhibition were: *Melbourne Celebrates, Children's Celebrations, White and Male, Two Parliaments, One City, Political Cartoons, A Permanent Capital, A Common Defence, and Melbourne: Our Nation's Proud Capital*.

The exhibition comprised seven modules, three of which were linked by two arches, echoing the use of arches in the original Federation celebrations. The exhibition's central visual focus as visitors entered the exhibition space was a film module over two metres high. All the exhibition's modules had text panels that told stories of the period 1901-27, when Melbourne was the Federal capital.

Our Nation's First Capital used reproductions of records, photographs, film and text to convey its stories. It featured a stereoscopic viewer, photo album, original film with narration, voting booth for or against the republic, and an audio reveal unit. A walking tour brochure of Melbourne was developed, and an online tour was featured in the exhibition and on PROV's website. Catalogues, education kits, postcards and posters were also produced.

The exhibition was designed to tour to a number of venues including Portland, Ballarat, Melbourne, Bendigo, Shepparton, Mildura and Wangaratta, and therefore a minimal amount of original material was used. In Queen's Hall, Parliament House, the venue hosted an extended version of the exhibition comprising a great deal of original material from PROV and other organisations that was unsuitable for touring.

Treasures on display included the 1891 Female Suffrage Petition, and the exhibition drew over 60,000 visitors. Both the physical and online exhibitions drew attention to the holdings of PROV and the role of archives in general. The exhibition helped to place the relevance of archival collections in the mind of the viewing public, and promoted access to a broader audience. Students were a specific target audience.

Another Victorian exhibition relating to Federation was curated by Lynda Weller from the City of Port Phillip. This display related to the landing of the Duke and Duchess of York at St Kilda Pier. Also in Port Phillip, was a display entitled the *Life and Times of the Former Cities of St Kilda, South Melbourne & Port Melbourne during the years 1895-1905*. While the 'landing' display remained static at the St Kilda Town Hall, the Life & Times display travelled around the various libraries within the municipality for about four months and, with each move, was focused to complement the city it was located in at the time.

These displays were created using historical records from the archives, the local library and the art and heritage collection. Materials were scanned from copies of letters, photographs, postcards and newspaper articles to ensure originals were preserved, though some original materials and artefacts, such as the Town Clerk's hat and weights, were used for short periods. In a separate cabinet at the Town Hall, special attention was focused on the bouquet given to the Duchess of York by the Mayor of St Kilda. A photograph was found of the bouquet, the flowers were identified and a replica was made out of silk which featured on the brochure advertising the exhibition. The process of creating and making available this rich vein of archival material has led to the establishment of an annual display at the City of Port Phillip.

In New South Wales, *Unity and Nationhood* was the name of the State Records Authority's travelling exhibition which used no original materials. However, it featured copies of State archives which explored three different themes to celebrate the Centenary of Federation. The first theme depicted the 'road to Federation' looking at the key concerns of the colonists - defence, communications, trade and immigration, and featured the role of the National Australasian Convention of 1891, the submission of the Australasian Federal Constitution to the electors of NSW and the proclamation of Federation. The second theme dealt with how Federation was celebrated in 1901 and during the 50th anniversary celebrations in 1951. The third component of the exhibition looked at how the Australian nation has been built since 1901. This part of the exhibition focused on the selection, dedication and planning of Canberra as well as the wider concept of the development of Australia's national identity.

Throughout 2001, the exhibition travelled around New South Wales visiting Armidale, Lismore, Goulburn, Wagga, Tenterfield, Broken Hill, Bathurst, Eden, Dubbo and Kingswood. David Roberts, the Director of the State Records Authority of New South Wales, described the exhibition as a great opportunity to showcase the State's archives relating to such a historic event to people in rural and regional areas of the State and in this regard the exhibition fulfilled its role.

In Queensland the State Archives prepared a display related to Federation which was open to the public at the Runcorn repository from September 2000 to June 2001. In addition a smaller travelling version of the display was sent to Brisbane, Rockhampton and Landsborough for short periods during 2001. The Fryer Library at the University of Queensland held a special function for its Friends group on 11 November 2001 called 'Exploring Federation: A Queensland Spin', the function consisting of lectures by Associate Professor Clive Moore and Dr Ray Evans on aspects of Federation. A number of items from the collection were also displayed, including ephemera relating to Federation, photographs and original documents.

Preservation and arrangement and description projects

A large number of projects were funded by the New South Wales Centenary of Federation Committee in 2000 and 2001. The judges were drawn from the major cultural institutions including the Art Gallery of New South Wales, State Library of New South Wales, the State Records Office and the Powerhouse Museum. Nearly \$700,000 was spent on these projects and the response to the grants program demonstrated the need for a permanent program of a similar nature to assist small archives and galleries in the preservation and cataloguing of their materials.

Highlights include grants to the Society of Australian Genealogists (SAG), the Institution of Engineers, Dr Elizabeth Brown of the Royal Botanic Gardens (Sydney) and the Uniting Church for a range of projects involving archival materials. (See the appendix for a full listing.) The SAG received its grant to conduct a survey, and possible microfilming, of church registers in the dioceses incorporating the Federation towns of Tenterfield, Bathurst and Corowa (ie the dioceses of Armidale, Bathurst and Riverina). The project was called 'Preserving Peoples' Parishes'.

The survey sought to establish the location of original registers, their condition, period covered and type of record (eg either baptism, marriage, burial or confirmation). The location of registers varied depending on denomination and diocese, but as a result of the survey, the Society undertook, with the permission of the Registrar of the Anglican Diocese of Armidale, to film the registers of that Diocese which had not been filmed previously. Many of these registers were still held by the individual parishes.

Copies of the microfilms were supplied to the National Library of Australia, the Mitchell Library and the Diocesan Registry at Armidale as well as a copy held by the SAG. This project established that there is still a great deal of microfilming preservation work to be done in this area to ensure that church registers survive for the benefit of future generations.

The Institution of Engineers received a New South Wales Centenary of Federation grant for work on the Julius Poole and Gibson collection. Disposal recommendations for the collection and advice on where these records should be housed were made and carried out by the Institution.

This final snippet from Anthea Harris at the Royal Perth Mint highlights the importance of the related issue of archival security. Anthea reports that the Mint's Visitors Book contains the signatures of many people who came to Perth for the Royal Visit in 1901, including those from the Goldfields and naval ships docked in Fremantle Harbour. Regrettably the page for 24 July 1901 has been torn out. An annotation states that the 'preceding leaf containing Royal Signatures stolen from this book between 27th March and 19th April 1912'. The page has never been returned. You cannot preserve what is not in your possession.

Conclusion

The Centenary of Federation, like the Bicentenary, helped briefly to focus Australia's attention on history and the archival basis of history. There were many more projects relating to archives than could be reported on here, but I hope the few I have selected will prove that the celebrations surrounding the Centenary of Federation in 2001 did have a positive and lasting effect on the well-being of archives and their place in the consciousness of every Australian. The State Records Authority of New South Wales will be submitting a proposal to the NSW Government in the near future. It hopes to build on the work of the NSW Centenary of Federation grants program by providing an ongoing source of competitive grant funding for small archives in New South Wales.

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their assistance with this article. I acknowledge that I have freely used information from the various websites mentioned in this overview.

Appendix

The following table shows the New South Wales Centenary of Federation Committee history grant recipients for the archiving, preservation and cataloguing of historic materials.

Recipient	Project	Amount
Museums and Galleries Foundation (NSW)	South Coast conservation program	\$20,000
Art Gallery of NSW Archives	Preservation of Sydney Camera Circle archives	\$5,000
Australian Museum of Flight	Conservation of photographs	\$10,000
Australian Music Centre	Preservation and cataloguing of music collection	\$3,000
Australian Red Cross NSW	Archiving of Australian Red Cross records	\$20,000
Balranald Shire Council	Cataloguing historic materials	\$7,500
Baulkham Hills Shire Library	Cataloguing of culturally significant materials	\$15,000
Bega Valley Historical Society	New technology to keep old artefacts	\$6,000
Blacktown City Council Library	Microfilming rates assessment books	\$5,000
CB Alexander Foundation	Cataloguing contents of Tocal Homestead and farm buildings	\$12,500
Calvacade and History of Fashion	Display of Australian costumes and textiles	\$4,000
Campbelltown and Airs Historical Society	Catalogue photographic collection	\$4,000

Canterbury City Council	Canterbury area early records preservation project	\$7,500
Centennial Bakery Museum	Restoration of photographic record of Hurstville Bakery	\$6,000
Cessnock and District Historical Society	Historical photographs project	\$10,000
Coffs Harbour Historical Society	Photographic conservation	\$5,000
Convict Trail Project	Constructing convicts, cataloguing the builders of the Great North Road	\$10,000
Coolamon Shire Council	Exhibition on the history of the Shire's Country Women's Association	\$15,000
	Archiving of records	\$10,000
Dungog Historical Society	Catalogue museum collection	\$4,000
Fairfield City Library	Exposing Fairfield's past	\$10,000
Gilgandra Shire Council	Coo-ee Flag conservation	\$7,500
Great Synagogue Sydney	Microfilm historic records	\$10,000
Professor David Green	Document and record textile collections of the Pioneer Women's Hut and Temora Rural Museum collection	\$20,000
Hawkesbury Museum of Local History	Conservation and cataloguing of photographic collection	\$2,500
Holy Trinity Anglican Church Dubbo	Restoration of registers and historic minutes	\$10,000
Institution of Engineers Australia (NSW Division)	Arrangement and description of Julius Poole Collection	\$10,000
Inverell Shire Council	Arrangement and description of shire council archives	\$7,500

Jerilderie Historical Society	Archiving of historical society material	\$15,000
Kempsey Shire Council	Indexing of the <i>Macleay Argus</i>	\$2000
Kenmore Hospital Museum Collection	Developing a catalogue of Kenmore Hospital Museum's Collection	\$7,500
Kogarah Council	Kogarah Council archives project	\$10,465
Ku-ring-gai Historical Society	Digitisation project	\$5,000
Liverpool Regional Museum	Restoration of Charlotte Bartlett's gown	\$6,000
Macleay River Historical Society	Preservation of archival materials	\$2,000
Marlene Cutler	Arrangement and description of Collarenbri local history collection	\$5,000
Museum of Printing, New England	FT Wimble Collection: The story of print in Australia	\$7,500
Museums and Galleries Foundation (NSW)	Outback conservation program	\$20,000
Museums and Galleries Foundation (NSW)	North Coast conservation program	\$20,000
Nambucca Shire Council	Mary Boulton Pioneer Cottage and Museum	\$2,000
National Trust of Australia (NSW)	Preservation and scanning of historic slides collection	\$4,000
National Trust of Australia (NSW)	Restoration of farm machinery at 'Saumarez'	\$12,000
New South Wales College of Nursing	Preservation of historical collection	\$15,000

Newcastle City Council	Australian Agricultural Company archives arrangement and description	\$5,000
Nimmitabel Court House and Lock up Museum	Historic preservation of archival materials	\$5,000
Oaks Historical Society	Yerranderie Scrolls preservation	\$5,000
Parramatta City Library	Digitisation of photographs	\$7,500
Presbyterian Church of Australia	Preservation of heritage photographs	\$10,000
Raymond Terrace Historical Society	Conservation of Oddfellows drop scene	\$2,000
Richmond River Historical Society	Conservation of Aboriginal local history collection	\$9,000
Royal Botanic Gardens	Preservation and cataloguing of moss and liverwort collections	\$20,000
Royal Society of NSW	Conservation of heritage materials	\$5,000
Rylstone Shire Council	Establish database of historic photographs	\$10,000
Society of Australian Genealogists	Microfilming church records of the Federation towns	\$15,000
Spastic Centre of NSW	Arrangement and description of medical collections	\$5,000
St Johns Ambulance Australia	Archival preservation	\$12,500
St Patrick's Cathedral, Parramatta	Preservation of St Patrick's archives	\$5,000
St Peter's Anglican Church, Campbelltown	Arrange and describe archives	\$4,000
State Library of NSW	Federation ephemera digitisation project	\$20,000
Sunnyfield Association	Archival conservation	\$10,000
Sydney Day Nursery Children's Services	Preservation of historic documents	\$10,000

Uniting Church in Australia	Preservation and archiving of church history	\$12,500
University of Sydney Library	Australian Federation full text database	\$20,000
Walcha Council	Assistance with archives at the Local History Centre	\$20,000
Wellington Historical Society	Cataloguing and conservation of historic materials	\$15,000
Wildlife Foundation of Australia	Management plan for the Wirrimbirra Sanctuary Collection	\$10,000
Windellama Historical Society	Arrangement and description of archival collection	\$3,000
Woollahra Library	Conservation of the Paddington Society Archives	\$10,000
Yass and District Historical Society	Preservation and cataloguing of photographic collection	\$4,000

ENDNOTES

¹ The Centenary of Federation refers to the celebration of the federation of the Australian colonies to become the Commonwealth of Australia on 1 January 1901. The Bicentenary refers to the commemoration of 200 years of European settlement on the Australian continent, dating from Captain Arthur Phillip's landing at Sydney Cove on 26 January 1788.

² See www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/bsparcs/spons/SP00005.htm.