

Transaustralian *Archives and Manuscripts*

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The fiftieth anniversary of *Archives and Manuscripts* warrants a celebration, in which the multitude of *A&M*'s Australian readers will be joined by their overseas colleagues. Presently more than 150 individuals and institutions outside Australia receive *Archives and Manuscripts*, either as a member of the Australian Society of Archivists (51 associate, institutional and professional members) or as a subscriber to *A&M* (100). One-third are in Europe (21 in the United Kingdom, 6 in Central and Eastern Europe, 20 in the rest of Europe), one-third in North America (11 of which are in Canada). *A&M* arrives in 18 Asian countries, while New Zealand and the rest of the Pacific count 36 members and subscribers. Bob Sharman remembers that when he took over the editorship of *A&M* in 1959, there were about 25 overseas subscribers (half a dozen university libraries in the US, and a few libraries in Britain, on the continent of Europe, in Canada and New Zealand). When he handed *A&M* over in 1975, the number of overseas subscribers (almost all of them institutions) had grown to about 40 or 50.¹

In these early years of *Archives and Manuscripts* the patrons of the overseas subscribing institutions will have browsed or read *A&M* to keep informed about the new section of the Australian Library Association and, more generally, about the Australian archival endeavour. On the other hand, *A&M* tried to counterbalance its insularity by reporting occasionally about developments overseas. In volume three one finds an account of the Washington congress of the International Council on Archives (1966), reports of visits of Australian archivists to Germany and – to my surprise – an article by Dutch archivist Herman Hardenberg about the administrative practice underlying the Dutch Manual of 1898. In 1973 *A&M* reprinted another article by Hardenberg on archives in The Netherlands. That made up for the

comment Gibney had made before in an article on the abortive project of a Public Archives Bill in 1928 (volume 4, issue 6), writing that in the 1920s the 'only serious work in modern Archives was in fact being done by the Germans, who were enemies and the Dutch who, though neutral, were completely incomprehensible'. ICA congresses were reported on (London 1980, Bonn 1984, Paris 1988 – each attended by a dozen Australian archivists) and, since 1985 (volume 13, issue 1) *A&M* carried a section 'International Notes'.

In 1976 *A&M* became the journal of the newly founded Society of Australian Archivists. That foundation crowned the Australian archivists' emancipation from the library profession and signalled the professionalisation of the archivist. It coincided with the publication in the late 1970s in *A&M* of a number of articles which exceeded parochial interests and which had an impact on a larger overseas audience: Russell's 'Archival Ethics' (volume 6, issue 6), Powell's and Hurley's articles on personal papers (volume 6, issues 7 and 8), the series of articles by Scott, Finlay and Smith on 'Archives and Administrative Change' (volumes 7, 8 and 9). The latter confirmed, in the eyes of the non-Australian beholder, the innovative approach by Australian recordkeeping professionals, which had been introduced in the international arena by Peter Scott's article in the *American Archivist* (1966) (and 'may be the most original and significant paper the *American Archivist* has ever published', according to Colin Smith²), after some groundwork by Ian Maclean in the same journal (1959) and succeeded by Scott's further remarks on the record group concept in the *Journal of the Society of Archivists* (1974). With a hint of remorse Gibney and Sharman wrote in 1975: 'Articles which made a real contribution to the understanding of archives management were sometimes written, not for *Archives and Manuscripts*, but for overseas professional journals' (vol. 6, no. 5, p. 195).

A&M's significance for Transaustralian archival enterprise became well-established in the 1990s. Glenda Acland's 'Archivist: keeper, undertaker or auditor' (vol. 19) and 'Managing the record rather the relic' (vol. 20) became 'classics' right away. Sue McKemmish's 'Evidence of me' (vol. 24) and Frank Upward's two parts on the records continuum (vols. 24 and 25) are part of the international archivists' sacred canon. In the 1990s too, the Australian professional community unfolded itself wide-open to archival scholarship from abroad, by inviting foreign speakers to ASA

conferences, by embracing David Bearman and Terry Cook like they had taken in Schellenberg some 35 years earlier, and by publishing in *A&M* papers by important authors from overseas. The first mention of postmodernism (at least in English) by an archivist in an article title appeared in *A&M* as early as 1994 (vol. 22): Terry Cook's 'Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era'. All gurus in current international archival science made an appearance in *A&M*, thereby confirming the eminence of the journal: Bearman, Cook, Cox, Duranti, Eastwood, Harris, and Hedstrom – to name a few at the beginning of the alphabet.

But *A&M* is appreciated abroad not only because of the articles by non-Australian experts. When we look into the body of publications students of archival science all over the world have to master, we find the articles on administrative change (by Scott et al.) on the reading list at the University of British Columbia, while McKemmish's and Upward's submission to the Inquiry into Australia as an Information Society (vol. 19), Acland's 'Managing the record rather the relic' (vol. 20), and Hurley's 'What, if Anything, is Function?' (vol. 21) are required reading for students in Pittsburgh (Acland's paper also in Thailand), and Reed's article on metadata (vol. 25) in Amsterdam.³ There are other Australian authors on students' reading lists (*Keeping Archives* is widely used abroad as a textbook) too, but one can safely say that *A&M* is accepted abroad as a useful source of teaching material.

Archives and Manuscripts' renown is also reflected in the archival literature. I have not undertaken a real citation analysis which would have revealed the exact position of *A&M* in the ranking of archival journals. However, browsing a national journal (*Archivaria*) and an international journal (*Archival Science*) and limiting my search to articles on archival theory and methodology, revealed that *Archives and Manuscripts* articles are frequently cited abroad. The footnotes in the two 2001 issues of *Archivaria* refer fourteen times to *A&M*, while the 2001 volume of *Archival Science* contains eight references to *A&M*. I did not include the references in Sue McKemmish's article on the records continuum published in *Archival Science* which, of course, contains many references to *A&M*. Like McKemmish, other Australians are contributing to foreign archival journals. The observation Gibney and Sharman made in 1975 holds true today. *Archives and Manuscripts'* international prestige

is based on its proper contents, but is also promoted by *A&M*'s authors writing in other journals. *Archives and Manuscripts* and its foreign companions serve as show cases of Australian scholarship in archivistics.

A show case, a window for the Transaustralian world to look onto Australian archival endeavour: may that function of *Archives and Manuscripts* continue to prosper in the next fifty years!

Endnotes

1 Information provided by Bob Sharman and the Editor of *Archives and Manuscripts* to the author.

2 Colin Smith, 'A Case for Abandonment of "Respect"', *Archives and Manuscripts* vol. 15 (1987) pp. 154-68, here p. 155.

3 Masahito Ando et al. (eds.), *What students in archival science learn. A bibliography for teachers* (International Council on Archives Section for archival education and training, Tokyo 200), available on <www.ica-sae.org/bibliography/bibliography.html>.