From System to Network? Developments in the State Records Authority of New South Wales Regional Repositories*

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In this article, recent developments in the State Records Authority of New South Wales regional repositories system are considered, building upon Don Boadle's 1995 article in *Archives and Manuscripts* which focused on the origins and establishment of the only statewide archival network in Australia. A comparative analysis of the Wisconsin statewide network in the United States and the NSW system is undertaken, outlining those elements deemed essential for the successful operation of a non-digital statewide archival network. Although the NSW regional repositories still do not provide the same degree of geographical coverage as their most successful American counterparts, the first phase of the NSW 'Archives in the Bush' initiative comprising of funding and assistance aimed at revitalising the regional repositories, has done a great deal to foster the kind of collaborative relationships that are fundamental to the success of American networks. In that respect, the NSW system can reasonably be said to have acquired the functionality of its American counterparts, justifying the claim that it has been transformed from a system into a network.

Introduction

In 2006, the New South Wales regional repositories system remains as Australia's only statewide archival network. In contrast, statewide networking principles have long been applied internationally, particularly in the United States.[1] Although not as prevalent as nationwide archival networks such as the National Archives of Australia, where a capital city repository stores records from the width and breadth of the entire state or territory, the statewide approach does offer archival institutions one distinct advantage – the ability to house records of local significance in the region of their provenance.

This paper will evaluate if and how the NSW regional repositories system has been transformed during the past decade. In doing so, it will revisit Don Boadle's 1995 conclusion that:

> Considering its unpropitious beginnings, the survival and growth of the New South Wales regional repositories system is indeed remarkable, offering a clear lesson to those who contend that statewide networks are unworkable in Australian conditions … Although senior Archives Office staff have moved away from speaking of a regional repositories *system*, and begun to think in terms of a *network*, it is doubtful whether this perception is shared by their colleagues or those responsible for administering member repositories.[2]

In the decade since this judgement was penned, the recordkeeping environment in NSW has undergone significant change including the enactment of the *State Records Act 1998* and the subsequent *State Records Amendment Act 2005*. However the question remains as to whether there has been sufficient change to warrant characterising the State Records NSW (SRNSW) regional repositories as a *network* rather than as a *system*. To answer this question it is necessary to define and differentiate these terms. For the purposes of this paper the following definitions will be applied:

> *system* – an organised or connected group of objects
>
> *network* – an interconnected group.[3]

The key difference between these definitions is the term 'interconnected'. This suggests a relationship of a more interdependent and collaborative

nature, not only between the members of the network, but also with the overarching body taking administrative responsibility for the network.

Characteristics of statewide archival networks

A large amount of archival literature exists in the United States which evaluates the progress and success of statewide archival networks. Certain characteristics are propounded in this literature as being critical to the maintenance of a successful archival *network*. The critical characteristics are as follows:

- Coverage of the entire state.

- Provision of assistance to network members.

- Fostering of collaborative interaction among members.

- Establishment of a centralised online database.

- A records loan or transfer provision among members.[4]

These criteria will be used in this paper to assess if the NSW regional repositories system has indeed progressed from a *system* to a *network* over the past decade.

Don Boadle's 1995 article is the only work on statewide archival networks in Australia.[5] It delineates the origins and development of the regional repositories system established in the 1960s under the auspices of the Archives Office of New South Wales (AONSW).[6] The impetus for its establishment had come not from AONSW staff, but from academic historians at the University of New England (UNE, in Armidale NSW) who were concerned with the lack of teaching and research resources for tertiary education, and was informed by the Wisconsin State Historical Society's Area Research Centre network. Although the then Principal Archivist at the AONSW, during a tour of the United States in 1964, saw the Wisconsin network firsthand, he and his senior officers were reluctant to develop their 'system' in line with the American model or to expand its membership. The rationale behind this decision was that the AONSW wanted only to loan records to the regions, and as a result, by 1976 the NSW system had just two members – the UNE Archives and the Newcastle Region Public Library. To these the AONSW lent records for use both by university researchers and by interested members of the public.[7]

The Wisconsin network, in contrast, was not the brainchild of academics. It was conceived by archivists at the State Historical Society as a means of addressing a space problem in the central Madison depository by storing local records in the counties where they were created. Inaugurated in 1949, with the objective of providing coverage of the entire state, the Wisconsin network's managers adopted a flexible approach to the definition of collecting regions, setting aside historical boundaries in favour of administrative convenience and practical considerations like the availability of suitable storage facilities.[8] This created a network where repositories collected and housed multi-format holdings that closely resemble contemporary Australian local studies collections.[9] The backbone of the network, which by 1972 had thirteen members, was the mutli-campus State University of Wisconsin.[10] No direct funding was provided to the University, but assistance was made available through the processing of archival consignments centrally at the State Historical Society headquarters in Madison. This not only ensured consistency in documentation, but enabled the Society to maintain a single consolidated catalogue (now replaced with an online database).

In four aspects the Wisconsin network differed from the NSW system. First, it was confined to purely *local* records, whereas (in spite of assertions that the AONSW system was merely housing 'duplicates' or records not required as State Archives) the UNE Archives was from the outset housing State Archives of regional or even statewide significance: a circumstance subsequently recognised by resolution of the NSW Archives Authority in 1973. Secondly, the Wisconsin network encouraged the library-based repositories to operate like library local studies collections, acquiring printed materials to augment the archival holdings. In the NSW system, the AONSW gave precedence to the records which documented the functions of the State Government. Thirdly, the Wisconsin network operated, and continues to operate, a 'transfer provision' which members consider to be the 'heart of the network'.[11] This allows records created by state and local government agencies as well as manuscripts (private records) to be loaned within the network, in the interests of facilitating access and increasing usage. Unfortunately, geographical constraints have made this service somewhat impractical in NSW, which is approximately nine times larger in area than Wisconsin. Finally, while the Wisconsin network was based on bilateral arrangements between Madison and each member repository, the network managers in Madison

worked to foster collaborative interaction by arranging regular meetings of staff from all network members. Regional repository forums have been held every two to three years recently in NSW, yet to date only one bilateral agreement has been signed between State Records NSW and a regional repository.

NSW regional repositories and the AONSW

By the 1970s the retirement of senior officers who had overseen the creation of the NSW system ensured that the Wisconsin connection was almost lost to the AONSW's corporate memory. This did not prevent the new Senior (and afterwards Principal) Archivist, John Cross, from seeking to broaden the system's membership. By 1991 it comprised six repositories. But because the AONSW divided the State using the 1944 Survey and Planning Regions, rather than with regard to administrative convenience as occurred in Wisconsin, geographical coverage was decidedly patchy.[12] Cross made several unsuccessful attempts to expand the system further: for instance, by inviting the Mitchell College of Advanced Education to cover the Central West in 1979-80, and by negotiating with Charles Sturt University (CSU) and Bathurst City Council for a Bathurst repository in 1997. However, his efforts were hampered by repeated failures to attract designated state government funding for host institutions. Assistance to the repositories was therefore mainly in-kind (shelving, boxes, preservation services, microform copies of State Archives and hands-on staff training). Repositories were responsible for organising and processing transfers of State Archives under AONSW supervision, which in practice amounted to little more than periodical repository inspections. From the AONSW standpoint there was a disappointing lack of uniformity in descriptive practices and considerable backlogs in processing. From the standpoint of cash-strapped regional universities, which housed the majority of the regional repositories, the absence of any meaningful fiscal recompense was an increasingly sore point, with Dr CD Blake, the Principal of the Riverina College of Advanced Education and later the Vice-Chancellor of CSU, repeatedly pressing the Archives Authority for direct financial assistance.[13]

As Cross admitted to the Minister for the Arts in 1994, the AONSW's regionalisation policy evolved from 'a mix of cultural, administrative and economic motives'.[14] The cultural tenet was manifest in the belief that records created in the regions would receive greatest use if they were

kept in the regions where they were created. The storage of regional records in the region of their provenance would also have both administrative and economic benefits for the Archives Authority. Storage demands in Sydney would be reduced (though in reality the space savings were quite small), and staff commitments which would otherwise be needed to transport, process and provide access to the regional records would be minimised.[15]

This policy was endorsed in 1997 when the Ministry for the Arts released its *Principles for Regional Programs by State Government Cultural Institutions*.[16] Of particular relevance was Principle 8 which stated that 'material relating to the history of local communities should, in general, remain within those communities, preferably in a local collecting institution'.[17] The Ministry's document, together with the *State Records Act 1998*, created 'a strong imperative for a comprehensive, adequately resourced network of regional repositories'.[18] Conversely, the enactment of the *State Records Act 1998* also provided SRNSW and the regional repositories with a further challenge – namely the huge quantities of local government, university and health sector records which the Act (unlike its 1960 predecessor) deemed to be State Archives.

Review of regional repositories

In 1999 SRNSW's new Director, David Roberts, commissioned a review of the regional repositories system. The trigger was an announcement during the State election campaign by the Minister for Agriculture, Richard Amery, that SRNSW would from its existing budget provide the University of New England and Regional Archives (UNERA) with a permanent grant of $50 000 per annum. Amery's announcement was widely interpreted as a response to strong lobbying from the Vice-Chancellor of UNE, Professor Ingrid Moses.[19]

The comprehensive review of the regional repositories system commenced in April 1999 and concluded in September 2000.[20] The primary considerations behind the review were to:

- Identify and clarify the major issues and challenges affecting regional archives.

- Develop a blueprint for improving the management and accessibility of archival records in regional New South Wales (in conformity with Government policy).

- Assist in the process of obtaining financial support for the network.[21]

A detailed issues paper which addressed these considerations was compiled by Richard Gore, Manager, Archives Control, in May and June 1999. It was distributed for consideration by 152 local councils and 160 historical societies in NSW.[22] A meeting of key stakeholders was meanwhile convened in Sydney on 13 July 1999 attended by senior officers from SRNSW, staff from the Ministry of Arts, managers of the six regional repositories, representatives from the Royal Australian Historical Society and the History Council of NSW, and members of the two professional societies, Australian Library and Information Association (ALIA) and Australian Society of Archivists (ASA).[23]

The overall tone and frankness of the issues paper was refreshing. Gore summarised the current state of the network by stating that:

> While the network gives State Records a presence in regional New South Wales, and does improve accessibility to some archival records, it is some way from being a comprehensive, viable statewide network.[24]

Major concerns highlighted in the document included the uneven geographical coverage of the six current regional repositories,[25] funding issues, new considerations that emerged as a result of the enactment of the *State Records Act 1998,* archival practices in the regional repositories (predominantly the variations and discrepancies that existed in arrangement and description) and some administrative and infrastructure problems. The issues paper concluded by offering strategies for the future, concentrating on what was required to constitute a viable network, the number and location of the regional repositories, possible funding alternatives and suggestions about how these options should be prioritised.[26] Yet the level of response that SRNSW received to the issues paper must have been disappointing. Only 18 historical societies (11.25% of those circularised) and six local councils (3.9%) offered any formal response. SRNSW was nevertheless pleased that the majority of respondents supported the ideals behind a regional repository network,

particularly the principle of keeping original records in the region of their provenance.[27]

The report on the findings of the review, entitled *Archives in the Bush: Review of Arrangements for Preservation and Access to Regional Archives in New South Wales*, was presented to the State Government in September 2000. As well as reiterating the major issues which impact on regional archives, the report offered recommendations for the future with the aim of revitalising the network. Four alternatives were proposed: do nothing; obtain recurrent funding for operational costs; obtain recurrent funding for infrastructure and enhancement projects; or utilise grant funding for infrastructure, coinciding with recurrent funded enhancement projects.[28] SRNSW proposed that the third option would be the most beneficial because:

> the regional model of archives management currently in place is the most cost-effective way of meeting State Records' and the Government's objectives for regional areas. These objectives will not be fully realised unless all host institutions are assisted through supplementary funding, and financial assistance is given to specific infrastructure projects to allow the network to expand and achieve full coverage of the State.[29]

The report concluded by recommending that the State Government:

- Make a commitment to the regional model for archives management.

- Endorse the blueprint for revitalisation and expansion of the regional repository network, as outlined in the report.

- Endorse the preferred option (option 3) for funding support as a priority for framing Budget forward estimates for 2001-02 and following years.[30]

As a direct result of the report and a corresponding budget submission, the Premier of NSW announced on 29 May 2001 that funding (in addition to the $50 000 per annum already promised to UNERA) would be made available over the next three years to support the recommendations proposed by SRNSW.[31] Funding for the 'Archives in the Bush' initiative totalled $950 000 for the three years, and was to be allocated as follows: $350 000 in 2001-02, $350 000 in 2002-03, and $250 000 in 2003-04.[32] The

host institutions of the six existing regional repositories were invited to submit proposals for infrastructure, documentation and preservation projects, and an offer of capital funding was also made available to any potential host institution that was committed to taking on the regional repository role in the Central West, where no facility had previously existed.[33]

It appears that, in spite of this dedicated funding, SRNSW did not anticipate that the regional archives system in NSW would be rapidly transformed into a network to rival the more prestigious, experienced and well-resourced networks in the United States: 'Given the low base from which we are starting, and the relatively modest funding available, steady rather than spectacular progress can be expected over the next three years.'[34] It also was anticipated that substantial progress on projects would depend on the level of commitment that host institutions were prepared to make, the degree to which stakeholders in the regions supported the initiatives and the projects being undertaken, and, finally, upon whether additional funding could be sourced from elsewhere. Significantly, an examination of SRNSW's working files suggests that those officers engaged with the review were quite consciously seeking to foster collaborative relationships of a more interdependent nature with the regional repositories and their staff, the type of which remain a defining characteristic of the more successful archival networks in the United States.[35] This shift in mentality towards the regional repositories *system* by SRNSW staff, who were now obviously keen to see a *network* vision evolve, could be viewed as a pivotal and defining moment in the long term progression from a *system* to a *network*.

To consolidate this momentum SRNSW appointed a project officer in 2001 who had specific responsibility for overseeing the distributed management of State Archives. Duties included liaising with staff in regional repositories and local/regional offices of State Government agencies; convening an initial meeting of regional repository managers in November that year;[36] and commencing consultations aimed at drafting distributed management agreements that would formalise relationships between SRNSW and institutions which hosted regional repositories. In making these arrangements SRNSW's officers accepted that the building blocks of the network would of necessity be bilateral arrangements between itself and host institutions, but recognised that arrangements needed to put in place to promote greater and more regularised interaction

both between itself and regional repositories and between regional repositories themselves.

Thus far the negotiation of formal distributed management agreements has progressed less quickly than SRNSW envisaged because of budgetary constraints and institutional instability in the public (and especially in the regional university) sector. The only agreement concluded to date is the *Deed between State Records NSW and Charles Sturt University regarding Distributed Management of State Archives*, which was signed at Wagga Wagga on 2 March 2005 by CSU's Vice-Chancellor and SRNSW's Director. The deed includes clauses detailing arrangements for the transfer of control over records required as State Archives, storage and preservation, appraisal and documentation, public access, recall/transfer of custody, staffing, monitoring and reporting, insurance, compliance timetables, amendments and variations, dispute resolution and duration/termination. Budgetary constraints have meanwhile operated to restrict the convening of regional repository forums, the first of which SRNSW's current Director saw as providing:

> opportunities for … regional repositories [staff] to build and strengthen relationships with their peers, provide input into State Records' policy and strategies that affect regional archives, receive updates on relevant topics and discuss issues of special interest to regional repositories.[37]

A second forum was held in Sydney in June 2004, and a third in Wagga Wagga in May 2006. Less formal, but more regular, contacts have been maintained among staff in some of the regional repositories, particularly Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (CSURA) and University of New England Regional Archives (UNERA).

'Archives in the Bush'

SRNSW had indicated from the outset that funding made available through the Archives in the Bush program would not be divided equally amongst the six regional repositories. The determining factor in allocating funds would be the relative size of holdings of State Archives. Despite the fact that the regional repositories could bid for funds for either documentation or infrastructure projects, SRNSW envisaged that the vast majority of funds would go towards documentation projects. It meanwhile

was hoped that infrastructure funding could be utilised to establish regional repositories in the State's Central West and Hunter regions.[38]

SRNSW received project proposals from all but one of the six repositories.[39] The following is a brief summary of the projects undertaken by the regional repositories during the three years of Phase One of the 'Archives in the Bush' initiative:[40]

Charles Sturt University Regional Archives (CSURA)

As the largest of the regional repositories, CSURA undertook a documentation project to arrange and describe its holdings of State Archives from CSU and its precursor institutions, making use of the Australian series system and listing to item level in a standardised electronic format. Funding for repository management and reorganisation projects was also granted. Two major infrastructure projects (an extensive upgrade of the airconditioning system and the installation of a security system) were funded on a matching (dollar-for-dollar) basis by CSU and SRNSW.

University of New England Regional Archives (UNERA)

UNERA also undertook a documentation project to focus on the corporate records of the university and of amalgamated councils. Smaller projects including map collection re-housing and media source preservation were also funded, along with the upgrading of the airconditioning system, repository security improvements and repository reorganisation.

Outback Archives – Broken Hill

Initially 'Archives in the Bush' funding supported preservation microfilming of pre-1920 council minute and rate books, and the purchase of additional repository shelving. Funds were also secured to upgrade the control system for the airconditioning and commence a documentation project.

University of Newcastle Archives

Funding was provided to commence work on a documentation project concentrating on the item level listing of hospital and school records in a standardised electronic format.

Newcastle Region Library

The main projects at the Newcastle Region Library were the preservation microfilming of council and Water Board rate books.

SRNSW also provided training for archivists who would be undertaking the documentation projects and provided each repository with an individually tailored resource package containing items such as temperature and relative humidity data loggers, acid free boxes and wraps, and disaster bins.[41]

SRNSW used the five original priority areas outlined in its submission to Government to assess the achievements of the projects at the regional repositories during Phase One of the 'Archives in the Bush' initiative:[42]

• infrastructure

• documentation and preservation

• training

• reporting

• information technology.

By focusing on these five specific objectives, SRNSW was able to analyse and determine the key priority areas for future improvements to the regional repositories system. The priority areas were: further work on documentation (which remains SRNSW's most important priority) with records of state and local government agencies and the entire health sector in need of attention; infrastructure issues, including the addressing of storage constraints in the regions, repository management and reorganisation, improved environmental and security controls, and finding a host institution to act as a regional repository in the Central West region; collection re-housing and preservation strategies, including

the supply of conservation materials to the regional repositories; archival management advice; and further training for repository staff in the key areas of documentation and access.[43]

One objective that was deemed by SRNSW to have been addressed very successfully was the priority area of information technology. Earlier in this paper it was indicated that a defining characteristic of the successful Wisconsin network is its centrally managed online database which is used to facilitate standardised documentation procedures and to assist network members in the provision of reference and access services. The development of a similar online system by SRNSW, and its introduction to the regional repositories, was accompanied with hands-on training of regional repository staff through SRNSW-funded placements at its Western Sydney Records Centre. This allowed regional repository staff members to meet with SRNSW colleagues and facilitated subsequent liaison during the system's implementation phase. These contacts have produced more collaborative relationships which ought to help to sustain the regional repositories network in years to come.

SRNSW developed a Web-based version of its State Records Control System (SRCS) as the central instrument of a new Business Operations System (BOS), which allows regional repositories to store data locally as well as in the SRCS. This software has been vital to the success of the documentation projects undertaken by the regional repositories, whose archivists are now able to enter remotely into the SRCS the agencies, series and consignments of their State Archives holdings. In addition, BOS has the functionality to link access directions and disposal authorities to the series and consignment registrations, as well as to provide reports. The entered data can then be viewed and searched through State Records' website using Archives Investigator.

Progress made during Phase One of the Archives in the Bush initiative from State Records' perspective is clear:

> The Archives in the Bush grant funding program has been very successful in its first three years of implementation. However, there is still a lot of work to be done for the network to reach its full potential, and the host institutions are likely to face continuing pressure on their budgets.[44]

Under Phase Two of the initiative, the funding available from the State Government for the 2005-06 financial year has been significantly reduced.

Grants to each repository will again be dependent upon the size of its holdings and how effectively it utilised previous grants issued under Phase One.[45] This latter assessment, undertaken by SRNSW, will be based on the identified priority areas of documentation, infrastructure, collection rehousing and preservation, records and archives management advice and ongoing training of repository staff.[46]

It is reasonable to assume – on the basis of CSURA's experience – that the managers of the various regional repositories and their host institutions are likely to share SRNSW's upbeat assessment of the benefits of Phase One of the Archives in the Bush initiative. It needs to be noted, however, that the present paper has concentrated on the SRNSW perspective rather than that of the regional repositories. This is due to the fact that the research undertaken to date has drawn on the records of SRNSW, not those of the regional archives. The latter will be addressed in due course and should present an equally illuminating analysis of the recent developments in the NSW regional repositories system.

Network or system?

It is worthwhile to revisit Boadle's 1995 judgement and consider whether SRNSW's regional repositories system might now more accurately be described as a network. Earlier in this paper, certain characteristics evidenced in networks operating in the United States were highlighted as being critical to the maintenance of a successful archival *network*. These characteristics were:

- Coverage of the entire state.

- Provision of assistance to network members.

- Fostering of collaborative interaction among network members.

- Establishment of a centralised online database.

- A records loan or 'transfer provision' among network members.

Measured against these criteria the NSW network now satisfies the second, third and fourth of these characteristics, but not the first or the fifth. During Phase One of the 'Archives in the Bush' initiative, senior SRNSW managers repeatedly attempted to extend the coverage of the

network, commissioning feasibility studies and approaching possible host institutions in the Central West and North Coast regions with offers of contributions towards the capital costs of establishing repositories. While there presently are indications that a partnership between North Coast councils and Southern Cross University may result in shared responsibility for a repository to serve their region, SRNSW is no closer to finding a host institution in Bathurst, Orange or Dubbo. The absence of a regional repository serving these localities thus remains a significant problem for SRNSW, and is the main issue that requires resolution before 'network' status on the Wisconsin model can be attained.

The operation of a 'transfer provision' is also problematic for SRNSW. The primary areas of concern are: the difficulty in gauging the demand for a loan service; access issues centred on the researcher's assumption that records are available in the location where they are normally stored; increased risk in transporting archives over long distances; and the very high cost of financing a scheme of this nature. As noted earlier NSW is much larger than the State of Wisconsin and the population is more sparsely distributed. The state of NSW is over 800 000 square kilometres, whilst Wisconsin is approximately 90 000 square kilometres in area. Therefore, costs and risks would be increased significantly in the operation of a transfer provision in NSW.

Geographical difficulties aside, there is no reason why SRNSW should not adapt the Wisconsin model in this way to accommodate the very different circumstances that prevail in Australia. After all, the NSW regional repositories have from the outset been responsible for the management not merely of *local* records (as in Wisconsin) but of records required as State Archives. In spite of some ups and downs in the 1980s and early 1990s, the two largest regional repositories (UNERA and CSURA) have at their best functioned as professionally managed archives (rather than as library special/local collections on the Wisconsin Area Research Centre pattern).[47]

Conclusion

Perhaps the most encouraging development in the evolution of the NSW *network* is a noticeable shift in mentality on the part of management in the regional repositories and, more importantly, in SRNSW itself. This perceptual change, which is the nub of the quotation from Boadle's paper,

has occurred in the years since 1995. SRNSW does now certainly view the regional repositories system as a *network*, despite the deficiencies identified above. Through Archives in the Bush funding and the projects which that funding made possible, SRNSW has fostered an attitude of collaborative responsibility with the regional repositories. Although the *network* may still require some refinement, SRNSW has demonstrated it has a long-term commitment to the policy of regionalisation, the regional repositories in NSW and the principles underpinning statewide archival networks. This encouragement will hopefully open the way for all New South Wales regional repositories to take a more proactive role as participants in a functional network environment.

Endnotes

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1 'Survey of Archival Networks', *The Midwestern Archivist*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1982, pp. 98-129. This survey published in 1982 identified at least nine statewide archival networks operating in the United States.

2 D Boadle, 'Origins and Development of the New South Wales Regional Repositories System', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 23, no. 2, November 1995, p. 284.

3 *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

4 See 'Survey of Archival Networks', *The Midwestern Archivist*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1982, pp. 98-129; RA Erney, 'Wisconsin's Area Research Centres', *American Archivist*, vol. 29, no. 1, January 1966, pp. 11-22; R.A. Erney & FG Ham, 'Wisconsin's Area Research Centres', *American Libraries*, February 1972, pp. 135-140; RA Cameron, T Ericson and AR Kenney, 'Archival Cooperation: A Critical Look at Statewide Archival Networks', *American Archivist*, vol. 46, no. 4, Fall 1983, pp. 414-432; JA Fleckner, 'Cooperation as a strategy for Archival Institutions', *American Archivist*, vol. 39, no. 4, pp. 447-59. The entire issue of *The Midwestern Archivist*, vol. 6, no. 2, 1982 is devoted to the topic of statewide archival networks in the United States.

5 Boadle, *op.cit.*, pp. 274-88.

6 In 1998, the AONSW was renamed State Records NSW (SRNSW).

7 Boadle, *op.cit.*, p. 282.

8 RA Erney, 'Wisconsin's Area Research Centres', *American Archivist*, vol. 29, no. 1, January 1966, pp. 11-22.

9 'Survey of Archival Networks', *op.cit.*, p. 121. Typical holdings included 'State Archives, County & Municipal records, manuscripts, photographs, oral histories, maps and local history reference libraries.'

10 RA Erney & FG Ham, 'Wisconsin's Area Research Centres', *American Libraries*, February 1972, pp. 135-40.

11 *ibid.*, p. 138.

12 DJ Cross, 'Regionalisation of the State Archives: A Policy Review', Archives Authority of NSW, p. 5, 1991. In 1991 the six regional repositories that constituted the system were: the University of New England and Regional Archives at Armidale; the Broken Hill City Library; the Charles Sturt University Regional Archives at Wagga Wagga; the Newcastle Region Public Library; the University of Newcastle's Auchtumy Library; and the University of Wollongong Archives.

13 CSU2268/30-31, File No: M113, 'College Archives'.

14 State Records NSW file AO90/80P. Letter to the Hon. PEJ Collins (Treasurer and Minister for the Arts) from DJ Cross, p. 1, dated 3/3/1994.

15 SRNSW file AO90/80P. Report from DJ Cross of meeting with Hon. PEJ Collins and Hon. Ray Chappell, p. 1, dated 7/3/1994.

16 *Archives in the Bush: Review of Arrangements for Preservation and Access to Regional Archives in New South Wales*, SRNSW, p. 8.

17 *ibid.*, p. 30.

18 SRNSW file 99/0135. Issues Paper, *Review of Regional Archives in NSW*, p. 4.

19 CSURA file 01/363. Media release dated 10/3/1999.

20 SRNSW file 99/0619. Notes regarding 'Archives in the Bush' and the University of Wollongong Regional Archives, pp. 1-3.

21 *Archives in the Bush: Review of Arrangements for Preservation and Access to Regional Archives in New South Wales*, p. 4.

22 *ibid.*, p. 5.

23 SRNSW file 99/0135. Minutes 'Review of Regional Archives: Issues Paper Meeting', 13/7/1999, p. 1.

24 Issues Paper, *Review of Regional Archives in NSW*, p. 4.

25 *ibid.*, p. 4. The problems with the current distribution of the repositories in NSW are threefold. Firstly, two repositories are located in Newcastle (Newcastle Region Library and the University of Newcastle). Secondly, three of the repositories (Wollongong and the two Newcastle repositories) are very close to Sydney. Lastly, the regional areas of the Central West, South East and North Coast have no regional repositories, although SRNSW is currently exploring the possibility of a regional repository maintained through a partnership between the Northern Rivers Regional Organisation

of Councils and Southern Cross University. It should be noted that on several occasions in the past local government and/or universities have shown interest in establishing regional repositories in the Central West (either Dubbo or Bathurst). Problems with recurrent funding have invariably been a major stumbling block.

26 *ibid.*, pp. 7-10.

27 *Archives in the Bush: Review of Arrangements for Preservation and Access to Regional Archives in New South Wales*, p. 5.

28 *ibid.*, pp. 20-22.

29 *ibid.*, p. 1.

30 *ibid.*, p. 25.

31 SRNSW file 01/0261. Letter to P Perram (General Manager Bathurst City Council) from D Roberts, p. 1, dated 6/8/2001.

32 SRNSW file 01/0302. 'Archives in the Bush' funding.

33 SRNSW file 01/0261. Unfortunately, to date, no host institution has filled the void in this region although CSU and Bathurst City Council reached the point of detailed negotiations with the AONSW/SRNSW.

34 SRNSW file 01/0302. 'Archives in the Bush' funding.

35 *ibid.*

36 SRNSW file 01/0521. Minutes of meeting of regional repository managers, 30 November 2001.

37 SRNSW file 01/0521. Critics of American archival networks note that they often 'provide only limited communication between the institutions involved', and consequently are ill-placed to deal with serious conflict between members. 'Given the informality of the structures and, in some cases, the infrequency of the network meetings, networks can only be effective if their conflicts are minor and isolated'. See RA Cameron, T Ericson and AR Kenney, 'Archival Cooperation: A Critical Look at Statewide Archival Networks', *American Archivist*, vol. 46, no. 4, Fall 1983, pp. 414-32 and esp. p. 427.

38 SRNSW file 98/0168. Minutes of meeting regarding University of Wollongong Archives, 5 November 2001. SRNSW file 99/0619. Notes regarding 'Archives in the Bush' and the University of Wollongong Regional Archives, pp. 1-3.

39 No proposal was received from the University of Wollongong Archives for Phase One of the Archives in the Bush initiative. The repository has however successfully participated in Phase Two of Archives in the Bush.

40 SRNSW file 01/0302. 'Archives in the Bush' funding.

41 *ibid.*

42 SRNSW file 03/0239. *Progress Report on Archives in the Bush Funding Program,* pp. 1-2.

43 *ibid.,* p. 3.

44 *ibid.*

45 CSURA file 05/143.'Archive in the Bush' funding 2005-2006.

46 SRNSW file 03/0239. *Progress Report on Archives in the Bush Funding Program,* pp. 3-4.

47 Stakeholders – whether academics or community members – have at times pressured the university-based regional repositories in the NSW network to operate more like local studies collections on the Wisconsin pattern. Boadle has reported that CSURA has been a case in point, not least because its academic sponsors established it in 1973 as a library special collection, with historical source material in a variety of formats. (Don Boadle, 'The Historian as Archival Collector: An Australian Local Study', *Australian Academic and Research Libraries,* vol. 34, no. 1, March 2003, pp. 14-31.) It began functioning as an autonomous archives in 1977-78, but during the period 1983-1993 pressure from community and, to a lesser extent, academic users resulted in reversion to the local studies model with serious consequences for collection development priorities, as Boadle has demonstrated in 'Academic or community resource? Stakeholder interests and collection management at Charles Sturt University Regional Archives, 1973-2003', *Australian Library Journal,* vol. 52. no. 3, August 2003, pp. 273-286. There is some evidence of similar tendencies in other regional university archives: see Don Boadle, 'Documenting 20th Century Rural and Regional Australia: Archival Acquisition and Collection Development in Regional University Archives and Special Collections', *Archives and Manuscripts,* vol. 29, no. 2, November 2001, pp. 64-81.