

# Reviews

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

**Julie McLeod and Catherine Hare (eds)**, *Managing Electronic Records*, Facet Publishing, London, 2005. xiii + 202pp. ISBN 1 85604 550 1. £39.95.

Considering how much attention the issue of electronic records has received in the professional literature, it is somewhat surprising to see how few monographs have been published in recent years that aim to provide a comprehensive overview of the topic. Prior to the publication of this latest volume edited by British authors McLeod and Hare, I can only point to three worthwhile such volumes: the International Council on Archives' *Electronic Records: A Workbook for Archivists* (2005); Bruce Dearstyne's *Effective Approaches to Managing Electronic Records and Archives* (2002); and the ASA's own *Selected Essays in Electronic Recordkeeping in Australia* (edited by Judith Ellis in 2000). Of these, the ICA and ASA volumes provide excellent basic overviews for practitioners, while the Dearstyne book travels well beyond the basics but suffers from being a somewhat piecemeal collection of separate essays. Given that the field is a fast moving one, there is definitely a gap in the market for an up to date volume that meets the needs of both digital neophytes and more experienced practitioners alike. I am pleased to report that, with some reservations, McLeod and Hare have filled this gap admirably.

The volume presents twelve essays by a range of international leaders in the field. Unlike the Dearstyne book, this publication benefits from a strong editorial hand in the selection of topics covered and the briefs that individual authors have been asked to deliver upon. All of the obvious (and a couple of not so obvious, but nevertheless extremely welcome) contours of the topic are mapped in a mostly logical sequence and comprehensive structure. Another of the great strengths of the book is

that it is short. At two hundred pages it can be read cover to cover, if one so desires, in just a few hours.

Of the many highlights in this volume, probably the very best comes first – a magnificent opening chapter by Canada’s John McDonald called ‘The wild frontier then years on’. In this essay McDonald revisits an article he wrote in 1995 and assesses how well we have performed in the decade since in addressing the challenges he identified at that time. He argues that, while we have been remarkably successful in developing legal and policy frameworks and standards, we have been depressingly unsuccessful in having these advances reflected in government and corporate management frameworks and in actual implementations in workplaces. Overwhelmingly, we have not tamed the wild frontier of anarchic email systems, unmanaged shared and personal drives and widespread corporate amnesia. Two of the main barriers to successful implementation identified by McDonald are a lack of appropriately skilled human resources (and indeed also the common lack of financial resources) and a lack of leadership. In many cases the lack of leadership reflects confusion over roles, responsibilities and strategic directions.

Having provided us with a depressing diagnosis, McDonald concludes by offering a range of suggestions for accelerating positive change. He argues that we need a clear and compelling vision, one that can be effectively communicated to raise awareness where it counts in organisations and governments. We need to be much more effective in communicating both our understanding of records and the importance of their long-term management to key partners in management and in the information technology industry. We need smarter systems designs and architectures, with customisable and user-friendly interfaces. We need to pay much more attention to organisational culture, context and politics. Most importantly of all, we need to substantially strengthen our human capacity and we need stronger professional leadership.

It is a measure of the success of the rest of this book that it goes a considerable distance towards providing a more detailed roadmap for delivering on the remedial suggestions made so eloquently by McDonald. Chapters 2 (Hans Hofman on standards and models), 3 (Australia’s Kate Cumming on metadata), 7 (David Stephens on legal issues) and 9 (Thijs Laeven on EDRM competencies) all provide very solid overviews of their respective topics. Together with the two excellent case study chapters 10 and 11 by Pierre Fuzeau and Australia’s Judith Ellis, these chapters focus

more on the first three dimensions of the records continuum. The case studies do a superb job of highlighting the important implementation issues: the need to identify business drivers and to obtain senior management buy-in; the vital importance of change management, project management and measuring return on investment; and approaches to performance and compliance monitoring. Vitaly, they emphasise that one size does not fit all. Every set of circumstances requires its own unique set of strategies and tactics, with flexibility and a clear eye to outcomes being the keys to success and a rigid attachment to a single process being the guarantee of failure.

The fourth dimension gets more attention in the two chapters on digital preservation (the first by David Ryan and the second by Richard Marciano and Reagan Moore) and, most intriguingly and welcome of all, in Verne Harris's chapter, 'Ethics and electronic recordmaking'. The Harris chapter is probably a world's first in the literature of electronic records, and is all the more welcome because of that. It breaks down the hitherto impenetrable barrier between what have been two of the most fertile fields of archival innovation over the past decade. Along the way Harris makes the important observation that, before we can hope to win the technical battle over electronic recordmaking, we have to win the political battle (the battle for justice) against those powerful interests who are not really interested in good governance, accountability and transparency.

As is almost inevitable in a volume of contributed essays, this book has its faults. The book loses its way alarmingly during chapters 4 to 6, with what can only be described as an idiosyncratic chapter on research by Xiaomi An placed incongruously in the middle of the two chapters on digital preservation. The Ryan chapter should have provided a high level overview of the issues and the state of art in relation to digital preservation, but largely fails to do so. This failure then makes the leap into Marciano and Moore's dense and highly technical chapter, one that most readers will fail to negotiate with any equanimity. Marciano and Moore address the difficult issue of what to do with metadata in the context of the archival preservation of digital records. Indeed, this is the key challenge that separates digital *records* preservation from vanilla digital preservation, because the preservation of contextual meaning is essential to the preservation of the 'recordness' of records. Unfortunately, I fear that this important message will be lost on most readers because the chapter is pitched at a level of technicality that is in a different

stratosphere to the rest of the book and because the reader has not had their way prepared for them through the kind of introductory chapter that should have been provided by David Ryan, but wasn't.

While Marciano and Moore's chapter is heavy going for technical reasons, theirs is not the only chapter that requires some effort to read. The problem elsewhere is the largely plodding and uninviting prose deployed by many of the authors. The topic may not be inherently sexy, but readers deserve readable and engaging prose – the kind of prose that they are given by McDonald, Harris, Ellis and by the editors themselves in their outstanding final chapter of synthesis and reflection, but conspicuously not by the other chapter authors. To be fair to these other authors though, many of them are not writing in their native tongue. While the global reach of the authorship of this book is one of its great strengths, perhaps the price we pay for this is in the lack of grace and facility with the English language that is apparent in many of the chapters.

Notwithstanding these reservations, nine out of the twelve chapters in this book are must reads for anyone working with digital records, which these days should mean just about all of us. Short of delving into some of the excellent jurisdiction-specific guidelines available on the websites of various archival institutions such as the National Archives of Australia, Public Record Office Victoria and State Records New South Wales, I would encourage readers interested in digital preservation to look elsewhere for guidance, perhaps to Ross Harvey's recent book *Preserving Digital Materials*. And I would certainly encourage digital newcomers to read the ICA workbook if nothing else. The editors are to be congratulated for assembling the best, most comprehensive and most up to date book on the topic that can currently be read by electronic records practitioners.

Adrian Cunningham  
National Archives of Australia

**Kathleen D Roe**, *Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts* (Archival Fundamentals Series II). The Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2005. xv+180pp. ISBN 1 931666 13 X. SAA member price US\$35, non-member price US\$49.00. Product code 458.

This manual is one of the SAA's Archival Fundamentals Series II and an update of Frederick Miller's original 1990 edition. It provides 'a basic introduction to the core concepts, practices, and processes involved in archival arrangement and description' and can be considered a companion work to the recently published *Describing Archives: A Context Standard* (DACs). DACs, which is the revision of Steven Hensen's *Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts*, was reviewed in the May 2005 edition of *Archives and Manuscripts*.

*Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts* thus sits firmly in the context of the North American descriptive tradition and in this respect it was both completely familiar and totally alien to this reviewer. Familiar, in that my own career in arrangement and description started in a collecting archive and was based on multi-level description and the rules of *Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts*. Alien, in that my subsequent work with government archives has been grounded in the Australian 'series system' and based more recently on electronic records. The result is possibly a 'less than successful' attempt to review the book at hand, rather than the principles behind it.

The manual is divided into four chapters which outline the function of arrangement and description and its relationship to other archival functions, the core concepts and principles of arrangement and description (from a North American perspective), the historical development of archival description, and the practice of arrangement and description. As an introduction for new archivists the book is most effective in the sections that focus on practical advice. The last chapter for example takes the reader clearly and logically through the steps and decisions involved in transferring and accessioning a collection of physical records, establishing their context, arranging and physically processing them, describing them and developing access tools. This is well supported by the appendixes which include sample finding aids and a set of simple arrangement scenarios which illustrate points about the process.

Where the manual is arguably less successful is its coverage of complex issues and concepts, which at times I felt required more exposition. An example of this is the section on the divergence of Canadian and US descriptive practices. While appreciating that the author was trying to avoid including lengthy analysis for a beginner audience I found the explanation of the fonds and the records group confusing and I was baffled by that of the series system. The description of records with multiple controlling agencies was another complex topic that raised more questions than it answered. The author notes that:

Organisations, particularly in the twentieth century, have a penchant for reorganizing, renaming, merging, and splitting that leaves a web of names and relationships to be untangled. Records for a hospital that has survived a host of mergers will pose interesting challenges in identifying how series continue, split, and change to meet functional and organizational alterations.

Peter Scott would certainly have agreed with this assessment, as the 'interesting challenges' led him to abandon of the practices that this manual is based on.

I also found myself at odds with the author's key assertion that the 'purpose of arrangement and description is to promote access' and produce finding aids. This is undeniably a prime object of the exercise but in my mind it overlooks the equally critical connection between description and preservation. In this respect the descriptive process is not just a prime opportunity to identify problems with the physical condition of the records. It is an essential characteristic of 'recordness'. In the first instance archivists and recordkeepers capture and maintain descriptive metadata in order to preserve the authenticity, reliability and usability of records.

On the whole this is a book that feels like it is looking back to tradition rather than forward to 'emerging developments and approaches'. To a large part this is due to the fact that it has so little to say about the description of electronic records, or rather that they are accommodated with such ease within the framework for describing physical records. There is no sense of a new or evolving approach to documenting born-digital records, or even the need for one. Description in this tradition is still in essence a bibliographic activity that produces surrogates of

physical objects and the impact of automation is largely seen in terms of the development of online finding aids.

A review by Stephen Hensen is printed on the back cover of the book and this declares that: 'Kathleen Roe has produced *the* definitive manual for the archival profession ... [and] taken this work into the 21<sup>st</sup> century to integrate it with all the Internet-based tools now at our disposal. This volume takes you into Kathleen Roe's warm comforting, and well-informed hands'. I cannot argue with the last sentence. I found it a comforting and knowledgeable book, but for me it is reminiscent of reading a favourite story from one's past. It evoked a time when life was simpler, more certain, and there were answers if you followed the rules. In terms of a definitive manual for the 21<sup>st</sup> century I regret that I would have to disagree.

Janine Delaney  
Archives New Zealand

**Nelson Mandela Foundation**, *A Prisoner in the Garden: Opening Nelson Mandela's Prison Archive*, Penguin Group, Camberwell, 2005. 240pp. ISBN 0 67002 949 1. \$39.95. See also <<http://www.nelsonmandela.org>>.

It is rare for books concerned with archives to appear in a bookshop in Alice Springs. Therefore I was overwhelmed to happen across *A Prisoner in the Garden* in the biography section of my local bookshop. There were two things that caught my eye about the cover of this book as I browsed the shelves, the image of a quietly defiant Nelson Mandela in the desolate prison garden of Robben Island and the words 'opening' and 'archive'.

As I flicked through this lavishly illustrated book I became quite excited at the choice of images used. Not only were there images of Nelson Mandela at different stages of his life, there were documents, posters, exhibition cases, archival repositories, gravestones, statues, and a cover of the *Bulletin* magazine. Then I started to pay attention to the chapter headings, which revealed that this book is more than a biography, it is about individual and collective memory, the use of archival material in many forms and many locations to unlock the past, and the journey through the archive and memory from prison to freedom.

*A Prisoner in the Garden* is a collective work from the Nelson Mandela Foundation's Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Cooperation Project. Verne Harris was the project manager and other members included Anthea Josias, Boniswa Qabaka, Buyi Sishuba, Ethel Arends and Mayra Roffe Gutman. The lead writer was Carolyn Hamilton, with Verne Harris, Mac Maharaj and Anthea Josias.

Perhaps it is this collective approach that makes the text so readable. The language used is accessible; the text is not weighed down with complex explanations about archival theory or practice. Yet archival theory and practice underpin and are integral to the story of the Nelson Mandela Prison Archive. *A Prisoner in the Garden* is a considerable achievement in writing about the interaction between an individual, the archival endeavour and memory. For too long writings about archival theory and practice have been dogged by language that is quite frankly dry, inaccessible and dull. That is not the case with *A Prisoner in the Garden*.

The notion of archives being in one place and in the form of paper or photographs is challenged in the first chapter titled, *An infinite record: Secrets uncovered and stories retold*. The Mandela Archive (of which the Prison Archive forms a part) is described as being 'an infinite one, located in innumerable places. It is also not confined to documents, but includes sites, landscapes, material objects, performances, photographs, artworks, stories and the memories of individuals' (p. 35). This is an archive that is not bound by walls, time or space. What binds the archive together is the iconic figure of Nelson Mandela.

As an archivist working in a government archives that also collects personal records and oral histories, who constantly refers researchers to archival material held in other archives, libraries and museums interstate, I am attracted to the idea of an archive not limited by its physical format or whereabouts but linked by intellectual means. I am also attracted to an archive where the government record (or its absence) can be challenged and/or complemented by the written and oral records of individuals and non-government organisations.

The state record and its absence are directly challenged by the records that Nelson Mandela and his colleagues kept whilst they were incarcerated. The authors show how deftly Mandela, trained in the legal profession, used the systems set up by the prison regime to defend the



rights of the prisoners and to ensure that those that were imprisoned because of their words and actions did not become voiceless or forgotten.

Mandela and his colleagues exercised considerable ingenuity to send their story out to the wider world. Mandela wrote the foundations of his autobiography secretly in his prison cell and aided by Ahmed Kathrada, Mac Maharaj, Walter Sisulu and Laloo Chiba managed to smuggle the documents out. However, the original documents in the handwriting of Mandela and his colleagues were buried in cocoa containers in the prison garden and a portion were eventually discovered by the prison authorities. Such a discovery could not remain unpunished. The authors state that:

The time delay between the discovery of the manuscript and the implementation of the punishment is, as in so many cases in the Prison Archive, a sign of hidden security concerns or procedures that bear deeper investigation. On discovering the hidden manuscript, the authorities initially considered charging the authors but to do so would have placed the manuscript in the court record, and hence potentially in the public domain. So, in an effort to suppress it, the prison regulations were altered in December 1977 and the prisoners' study privileges were revoked (p. 176).

On the page before this quote and on the page opposite are the original fragments of these documents, so painstakingly written in secret. To see these documents after reading the text adds another dimension to the story, especially that of Maharaj's tiny script. It is not a document that could have been typed on a clunky manual typewriter. Handwriting lends itself to secrecy, a more intimate act than that of a typewriter.

The authors reiterate the levels of secrecy that operated within the prison cells, within the prison administration and within the national security establishment under the apartheid regime. It is the story or a culture of fear and the exercise of power in effectively a police state. In such a culture the role of the government archival authority must be severely limited and indeed, compromised. I can only speculate on how imprisoned archival endeavour was in such a regime. It was not an environment where new theories about archival principles or practices could develop.

It is apparent that archival thinking and practice in South Africa has come quite a way since the shackles of the apartheid apparatus were

overthrown. *A Prisoner in the Garden* is indicative of changes that have occurred in political, social, cultural, technological and archival terms. The success of this book for me is on a number of levels, it weaves together a postmodern approach to the archival endeavour, it tells the story of the archive and taught me a history lesson on the role of Nelson Mandela and his prison colleagues in the fight against apartheid. It is also an inspiring book that reinforces why I am an archivist. For to me archival work is about collecting and making accessible differing aspects and traces of the human story.

Mandela describes in the forward to *A Prisoner in the Garden* that an archives is a 'treasure-house, one that is full of surprises, crossing paths, dead ends, painful reminders and unanswered questions' (p. 9). The metaphors of prison and garden that permeate this book could also be used to describe an archives. Archives can be locked away and guarded by custodians or they can be tended by gardeners who want to share the results of their labours.

Given Nelson Mandela's iconic status in South Africa, and indeed in the world, he is an ideal subject for such a book, exhibition and a website. I could not but wonder if there was such an individual in Australia that could be given the same treatment. I doubt it, for the strength of the Nelson Mandela Prison Archive lies partly in the strength of Nelson Mandela as a recordkeeper, in his ability to capture the imagination of the public and to form relationships with even those who guarded him in prison.

In the chapter 'A closer reading: exhibiting the prison archive' reasoning behind the choice of exhibition material and the exhibition itself are examined. The exhibition space mimicked a prison, to give visitors of feeling of what it was like to be confined and isolated, to encounter the products of a prison bureaucracy. This was done by exhibiting documents in metal trunks and wooden crates with 'new glass lids, designed to enable viewing, [which] symbolised their latter day transition into the public domain and their new accessibility' (p. 127). It is an exhibition which was meant to encourage active reading.

One of the enduring images in this book is that of Nelson Mandela at the opening of the *A Prisoner in the Garden* exhibition. He is looking at a National Geographic photograph of a joyful near naked African woman running along the beach. This image was hung in Mandela's prison cell on Robben Island and was an important image for him during the long

years of his imprisonment. Mandela is laughing and he is sharing his joy in the picture with a smiling Verne Harris. The significance of the subject matter of the beautiful young woman was picked up by the media at the exhibition. The infinite nature of the Mandela Prison Archive is demonstrated by a letter received by Mandela in response to the media coverage. The correspondent outlined how in 1975 when the image was first published, he (as a white man in apartheid era South Africa) did not give the image a second thought. He credited part of his personal growth from his old prejudices to Nelson Mandela. This letter is now part of the Mandela Prison Archive.

I believe that this book should be on the bookshelf of every archives, not only in the technical library of an archivist but also in the reference library in a search room. It and the website should also be on the reading list of our archival and recordkeeping courses as it is a vital, dynamic and exciting evocation of the life of a man, of individual and collective memory and importance of the archival profession.

Pat Jackson  
Northern Territory Archives Service

**Caroline Williams**, *Managing Archives: Foundations, Principles and Practice*, Chandos, Oxford, 2006. 248pp, including bibliography and index. ISBN 1 84334 112 3. £39.99 paperback, £57.00 hardback.

This book is an addition to the monograph literature in English on archives and how to manage them. It is also one in a large stable of titles in the Information Professional series from the British publisher, Chandos Publishing, intended to present current and practical information for busy professionals. It appears that the books in this series are expected to sell well in the short term, rather than having a long shelf life, practice changing as quickly as it does these days. It is interesting that these works, many of which deal with topics firmly based in the digital world and which are replete with references to websites and electronic sources of scholarship, are being published in traditional monograph form.

Caroline Williams has produced an accessible and scholarly text, supported by well-chosen actual and fictitious examples (Bart Simpson's

university career being one of the latter). *Managing Archives* is infused with a strong sense of practice in the English-speaking world, with examples drawn from standards, publications and projects in North America and Australasia, as well as Britain. Australian readers will recognise many examples and will note the acknowledgment of the work of Australian educators including Sue McKemish and Ann Pederson. Chapter 2, 'Principles and purposes of records and archives', gives a sound and wide-ranging introduction to the parameters and special claims of our profession. This chapter has potential as a source for informing policy makers and resource allocators who need to understand what we do and why and where we operate in an organisation. I found Chapter 3 on selection and appraisal a good summary of recent debates and developments in practice. Chapter 4 on arrangement and description I found less successful, possibly because it is difficult to combine information on standards with specific examples in the space allowed in a work of this scope.

In some chapters, distances between aspects of British and Australian practice are quite apparent. The examples and standards presented in the description section of Chapter 4 would be rather unfamiliar to most Australian practitioners. And so would the British cultural and FOI environment delineated in Chapter 6, 'Access, reference and advocacy'. In Australia, where there is no government support for lifelong learning, declining public expenditure on higher education, and very few sources of grant funding for archival projects, one can only be envious of the expansive tone of the sections of *Managing Archives* that deal with funding and government sustenance for cultural institutions. Preservation is another area where standards and priorities differ. The British Standard recommended temperature and relative humidity ranges for the storage of paper quoted on page 182 are not the same as those in the Australian Standard. And an Australian discussion of environmental hazards could not ignore the threat of calamities such as bushfires and cyclones.

*Managing Archives* is structured to present information and advice in a logical manner. The contents and expected outcomes are listed at the beginning of each chapter and the figures and tables present examples, summaries and case studies which support the text well. However, the design militates against the message – the small size of the pages doesn't accommodate the longer examples and the screen dumps are very hard to decipher. Nor does the scale of the headings and sub-headings,

combined with the extensive use of bulleted lists, necessarily help the reader absorb the material on the page. The design appears to be dictated by the Chandos template, rather than sensitivity to Caroline Williams' content.

I approached this book with two questions in mind – who is the book for and how might it be used? One audience is students in archives courses in Britain (and elsewhere). An important characteristic of this book is that it provides an introduction to key theoretical concepts and their origins, as well as describing best practice. So, for the student, the discussions of the main players and their contributions, buttressed by footnotes and references to the professional literature, would be a good place to begin and to revisit when needing references for further research. For the early career professional, Chapter 7, 'Managing an archive service', provides valuable advice on topics such as dealing with budgets, building matters and performance management, things that may be outside their previous experience. For more seasoned professionals, especially those interested in archives practice in Britain, this book should also prove useful as a reference work.

It is more difficult to say whether *Managing Archives* would be useful to the small archives practitioner in Australia. Although it has a practical bent, it is not a basic manual. There are other entrants in that field, including Gregory S Hunter's *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-to-do-it Manual* (2003) (reviewed by Julia Mant in the November 2005 issue of this journal) and another title in the Chandos series, *Building a Successful Archival Programme* (2006), by Marisol Ramos and Alma C Ortega. The latter seems to offer a more populist approach, promising to inform the reader 'without the use of technical jargon'. Then there are the latest updates in the Society of American Archivists series of manuals, with their reputation for substantial content and high production values. And in the field of archives buildings, it seems that we are destined to have different books for the different continents of Europe, North America and Australia.

*Managing Archives* would be a worthwhile addition to your reference shelf, providing you have a generous library budget and you need a recent publication. Authors and publishers planning to publish works on archives management today certainly need to understand their market,

its size and their likely competition, as well as knowing what the book should contain and how it might be presented.

Sigrid McCausland  
Education Officer  
Australian Society of Archivists

**Caroline Williams**, *Managing Archives: Foundations, Principles and Practice*, Chandos, Oxford, 2006. 248pp. ISBN 1 84334 112 3 (paperback). £39.00.

For students, *Managing Archives* would provide a generalist text, but for the archives manager, I think the book misses the mark. It begins with broad definitions of both 'archives' and 'records', and then the obligatory comparison of Jenkinson and Schellenberg. Continuum theory is also mentioned. Overall, the beginning archivist would find it difficult to use the book as a 'how-to' manual, as concepts are introduced and briefly discussed, but there is very little exploration of practical application. Nor are there any samples and guides for the new manager, or archivist, for that matter, to take away and utilise.

While Williams is British, and the book itself has a very UK-centric bias (particularly in discussions of relevant legislation impacting on access, collection and information release), Williams does demonstrate and discuss knowledge of other national archival theories and movements. In her first chapter, she acknowledges both life-cycle and continuum theories, with a brief discussion of functions and activities, content, context and structure. She follows with discussion of international standards, used to define terms, and then provides examples, at times quite entertaining in themselves. For example, in describing the process of appraisal and disposal in terms of Judao-Christian concepts:

The life cycle concept is based on the notion that any record has a life, and that like an organic being once it has been generated it has an active life in maturity, a less active life in old age, and in the end it is discarded (it 'dies') and either destroyed (hell) or transferred to the archives (heaven). (The process of deciding on its long term future has sometimes been described as purgatory) (p. 10).

The text itself is written in a relaxed, approachable style which belies the dry content, and there are numerous attempts such as above to relate terminology and processes to more commonly held situations, and use of cultural references for the (UK) reader.

Like Shellenberg, Williams draws a definite distinction between archivists and records managers, with an emphasis on the role and importance of archives for cultural, social and historical values. There is also an emphasis within the text of the differences in the processes undertaken by archivists compared with those undertaken by records managers. An interesting segue leads into her charting the historical development of archives according to national setting – archives, libraries and museums – in terms of managing resources and materials.

More useful to the active manager of archives are the closing chapters which deal with: standards of practice for access, and the utilisation of statistics and user documentation to better meet client wants and needs; preservation and conservation; disaster response; and, briefly, electronic issues. William's thesis that there is a need to establish relevance in an increasingly technological and 'need-it-now' universe is a timely reminder to archivists. If we don't anticipate the requirements of not only our current users, but potential and future users, we will become obsolete.

I found at times that *Managing Archives* lacked an overall balance. Perhaps it is a difference in opinion, but as a practicing archivist, the brief summation of appraisal, surely one of the fundamental and central functions an archivist can undertake, is discussed in mere paragraphs, while standards and access policies are discussed in much more depth. Ironically, addressing the 'gap' in the text for the reader, is a quote Williams uses from the Tavistock Institute: 'the connection between these [archival description] standards and actual user satisfaction is not fully understood' (p. 134).

Helen McLaughlin  
University of Melbourne Archives

**Richard Pearce-Moses**, *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, The Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2005. 472pp. ISBN 1 931666 148. US\$49.00. Also available online at <[www.archivists.org/glossary](http://www.archivists.org/glossary)>.

Like many professions, archivists have developed their own terminology, borrowing words and expressions from other disciplines as well as mainstream usage and tailoring them for their own special purposes. In Australia, archival theory and practice has been influenced by English, American and European traditions and practitioners have adapted terms to suit the legal and administrative needs of their own jurisdiction.

While such adaptation is common among the archival community, it can be a barrier to effective professional discourse, particularly across jurisdictions. And it is here that glossaries of usage pertaining to individual countries or jurisdictions play a vital role by contributing to a comprehensive lexicon for the international community.

*A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, published by the Society of American Archivists under the auspices of its Archival Fundamentals Series II, provides an insight into the evolution of the archival profession in the United States and Canada since the previous edition was published in 1992. The new edition contains some 2000 entries, more than 600 cross-references, 2500 related terms, and nearly 700 citations from some 280 sources. Significantly, it includes numerous terms adopted from the fields of information technology, knowledge management and publishing reflecting how the profession has responded to the challenges of the digital age. In a further departure from earlier editions, the new glossary aims to be descriptive rather than prescriptive, providing variant definitions where meanings differ between communities of interest or discipline or where there is a lack of consensus within the profession itself.

In many respects, the publication of *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* highlights the lack of progress made in other jurisdictions to provide up to date lexicons for their own practitioners or educators. Despite periodic discussion, the International Council on Archives appears no closer to producing a third edition of its eurocentric *Dictionary of Archival Terminology* (1988) while closer to home, members of the Australian profession remain reliant on the second edition of *Keeping Archives* (1993) edited by Judith Ellis, Glenda Acland's *Glossary of Australian Usage of Archival Terminology* (1994), Jay Kennedy and Cherryl



Schauder's *Records Management: A Guide to Corporate Recordkeeping* (1998) and various online glossaries published by public records authorities.

*A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* makes an important contribution to mutual understanding among the international profession, but it is no substitute for our own lexicon. Its author, Richard Pearce-Moses, a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists and its immediate past president (2005-06), laments that he 'wanted more time to research obscure words and how meanings shifted in Canada, Great Britain, Australia and other anglophone cultures' (p. xxix). No doubt Australian practitioners will be pleased to see 'records continuum' and 'recordkeeping system' in the glossary but perhaps less satisfied by narrow definitions that do not fully embrace the concepts originally conveyed in the groundbreaking Australian Standard AS4390. Other notable omissions include 'creation', 'capture', 'business classification scheme', 'DIRKS', 'VERS', 'normal administrative practice' and 'distributed custody' although the latter appear in the guise of 'postcustodial theory of archives'. These are, however, minor quibbles given the glossary's North American audience.

The glossary is available in print and online versions. While both versions are identical in content, the online version is a more versatile reference tool as it allows for keyword searching. This capability helps readers locate terms that may not be explicitly cross-referenced in the text.

*A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* is a timely addition to the international library of archival terminology, extending its breadth through the inclusion of terms from other branches of information science that are now critical to modern archival practice. Its publication will help Australian practitioners and educators engage in meaningful discourse with their North American counterparts and with allied professionals on the local scene.

Anne Robertson  
National Archives of Australia

---

**Margaret Proctor, Michael Cook and Caroline Williams (eds)**, *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*. Society of American Archivists, 2006. 345pp. ISBN 1 931666 15 6. (paper) US\$42.00.

The idea that archivists are active shapers not passive keepers of records has become part of the canon within the recordkeeping profession in the past two decades. However, while recordkeepers exercise some powers to shape the record, they cannot divorce themselves from the political context by which the records are also shaped. The survival, nature or absence of records has a profound influence on how citizens trust government, and in the longer term, the kinds of history that can be written. Ultimately, as Derrida writes, there is no political power without control of the archive.

Building on the acceptance that archives are enmeshed within a range of power structures where there are struggles over the control and content the archives, this book seeks to investigate and thereby expose the influence of political pressures on the archival record. The twenty papers from internationally known authors look at a range of issues surrounding political pressure – where pressure can originate, what forms it takes, what effect it has, why pressure occurs; as well as a range of sources of pressure – records under pressure, society under pressure, government under pressure. While common issues are raised across the papers – privacy, accountability, access, justice, and resistance to and overcoming political pressure – they are discussed with twists and turns and from historical and contemporary perspectives, which add value to the already useful international case studies from Europe, the US, South Africa, Japan and Australasia. One immediate value of this book is the case studies from the international literature which otherwise remain inaccessible to the anglophone archivist.

This book presents a subtle challenge to our contemporary mantra of the relationship between good governance and good recordkeeping, through providing examples of where records fit in the fine balance between democracy and despotism. And for teaching purposes, there is nothing quite like the study of failure of accountability at a range of levels and contexts to cut the conscience of the next generation of recordkeepers. This book of case studies is a fine tool by which we can examine some of the contexts in which archivists have and continue to work and struggle, and to teach core professional issues within a real world context. As

such, it deserves to become a standard text for recordkeepers to learn by and also learn from.

We make assumptions about political pressure which also run through this book – that all political pressure is bad, and that all political pressure is external. However, these are challenged in the numerical and intellectual centre of the book, and there are papers looking at resisting political pressure. However, there remains something passive about this book. Having read fascinating analyses of the corruption of due process through the exertion of pressure from a variety of sources, could this book have been enhanced by a stronger examination of the roles played by professional organisations when members are faced with the ethical dilemmas raised by some kinds of political pressure? By externalising the sources of political pressure are we somehow saying that political pressure is out of our hands? Or could this book have examined how we as recordkeepers can be sources of, as well as subject to, political pressures?

Having read dilemmas across the world, what new can we learn from this book for Australian contexts? There is the not uncommon Australian experience due to political pressure through funding controls that ‘the lack of attention to records and the indifference of politicians are perhaps as damaging for records as overt abuse’ (p. 120) and we may wish to watch international approaches to e-democracy and how it affects access to information and accountability. However, is it likely that political pressure on the record will decrease, are recordkeepers well prepared for dealing with these pressures, what are we as a profession to do in the face of such pressure? If we accept that political pressure is not always bad, how can we as archivists harness and then turn the pressure back onto its source as an advocacy strategy for additional funding, or for shifting the nature of the political pressure?

On completing this very important book, I was left with a more sobering question – what happens when the pressure gets too much? Can we do more than leave enough echoes in the archives to ensure that those in future are able understand the range of political forces which shape the nature of the records and which explain our actions in the face of political pressure?

**Hilary Golder**, *Politics, Patronage and Public Works: The Administration of New South Wales, Vol. 1, 1842-1900*. UNSW Press, Sydney, 2005. 268pp. ISBN 0 86840 511 6. \$59.95.

Hilary Golder is one of my favourite historians. I thought I should get that out on the table immediately. She and I have crossed swords for some years, including appearing together on a podium during an Australian Historical Association Conference, discussing appraisal and the 'destruction of history' (as I provocatively slanted my remarks). She is one of my favourite historians because she has been heard to say that she was 'housetrained' at the National Archives of Australia into accepting that some form of culling of the huge mass of government documents is necessary if a public service operation – and its receiving archival institution – is to operate efficiently.

In this book – commissioned by State Records New South Wales – Golder comes to grips with the complexities of administering the colony of New South Wales in a period of enormous growth, and in so doing she makes what to some might be a dry topic come to life. 'Rollicking good yarn' is a phrase that sprang to my mind as I read it.

The scope of the subject is huge, comprising as it does the administration of the colony from the end of transportation and a new colonial constitution, through the gold rush period, and into the era of major infrastructure investment, ending just prior to Federation. Golder has a solid background in writing about administrative history, and here she excels previous efforts.

The book is divided into two parts, 'The View from 1842' and 'Democracy and Development'. The former discusses how the NSW administration was organised and financed in 1842, with Chapters 2 and 3 looking back onto the factors that delineate New South Wales – the convict era and how a small population was managed and serviced in a large geographic area. Chapter 4 returns to 1842 and discusses what it was like to work in public administration in that year.

This first part introduces the themes that weave through the second part and which, indeed, can still be seen in the way New South Wales operates today, including the gravitational force of the major city. The six chapters of the second part of the book examine the basis for responsible government in 1856, the role of patronage in the public service, how the

government departments were established and their functions allocated, the importance of the gold discoveries, the issue of land allocation, reform in the public service, and then the Public Service Act of 1895.

Democracy and development are the central themes of the second part of the book, and this is where the patronage part of the title comes into play. With little in the way of separate political parties, the New South Wales Parliament was comprised of factions who sought to achieve and retain influence by bringing supporters onto the public payroll, often in positions for which they had no experience. This did not always lead to the most efficient of administrations. It is why the reforms of the Public Service Act of 1895 were so significant, with the Public Service Board ensuring the service was removed from the control of the politicians, with political intervention in recruitment and promotion banned, with exams for entry, and competitive promotions. This led to a clear maturing of the business of the State. It was a 'business' of public service that became central to the way the new federated Commonwealth operated.

The narrative of the chapters is illustrated by numerous anecdotes highlighted in shaded boxes and drawn from particular documents, often quoting from them at length. This is an extremely effective use of primary resources, and could well be copied by other authors who might find it a way of making their sources more accessible to others. This use of primary records, from institutions including State Records and the State Library, helps make this a work of admirable scholarship. This, combined with Hilary's concise and direct writing, make the book far from a dry read. Read it and you will see resonances of today, with unaccountable ministerial staffers, deregulation, attempts at privatisation and unwarranted political interference in what should be a disinterested public service concerned with efficient administration.

This book shows how well a historian who knows how to identify and interpret archival material can reinforce their arguments with little need for polemic or perceived bias. It is a relief to see the stuff we archivists care for used in such an accessible way.

Steve Stuckey

**Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton (eds)**, *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries*, Australian Academic and Research Libraries, vol. 36, no. 2, June 2005, Australian Library and Information Association, Kingston, ACT. vi + 216pp. Soft cover. ISBN 0 86804 563 2. \$37.00 ALIA member, \$49.00 non-member.

In December 2004 the State Library of New South Wales and Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Sydney hosted a two-day colloquium, *Libraries and Indigenous Knowledge: A National Forum for Libraries, Archives & Information Services*. Ninety participants and an expert panel of speakers explored 'the complexities that library, archives and information professionals must engage with in meeting the needs of Indigenous people and managing Indigenous knowledge within their organisations' (p. 3).

Professor Martin Nakata, Director of Academic Programs, Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, and Professor Marcia Langton, Professor of Australian Indigenous Studies, University of Melbourne, edited and compiled the colloquium papers, many of which were authored by Indigenous Australians.

This rich work covers wide territory, from Indigenous to Western, local to global, traditional to contemporary. The editors and authors urge us to move beyond our 'own disciplinary knowledge base' and out of our comfort zones to engage with the 'intersections' between separate spheres of knowledge: Indigenous knowledge and the established principles and practices of libraries, archives and information services (p. 6). Nakata and Langton remind us at the start that understanding these intersections 'requires multi-disciplinary and collaborative conversations, scholarship, research, and practice with Indigenous cultural experts, academics in related fields, technology and software developers and providers, legal experts, other vested interests, such as governments and Indigenous organisations, and funding agencies' (p. 6).

What is meant by 'Indigenous knowledge'? In Chapter 1, 'Indigenous Knowledge, the Library and Information Service Sector and Protocols', Martin Nakata, Alex Byrne, Vicky Nakata and Gabrielle Gardiner place Australian Indigenous knowledge in a global context by offering several definitions including the World Intellectual Property Organization's definition of 'traditional knowledge' systems. They then identify ways in which Indigenous knowledge has been documented in Australia,

historically and currently, by whom and for what purposes, in urban and remote regional areas. In summary, 'Indigenous knowledge is understood to be the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples. In Australia, a common misunderstanding is that this equates Indigenous knowledge to 'past' knowledge, when in fact Indigenous people view their knowledge as continuing' (p. 9).

What is possible when different knowledge systems engage with one another? The value of this compilation lies, for me, in the questions the contributors have asked about these complex relationships. Nakata and Langton 'would suggest that developing understanding of complexities requires the profession to do more than understand Indigenous concerns and perspectives on issues. It requires, as much, an unsettling of established practice, and the questioning of some of the assumptions on which accepted practice rests' (p. 3).

Alex Byrne examines traditional library principles and practices, and challenges the Enlightenment assumptions that underpin them, in his thoughtful and provocative 'Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries: An Afterword'. These assumptions include the notion of 'a non-judgemental stance which places the professional outside the knowledge as the facilitator of the system' (p. 212) and 'the universality of knowledge and the right of all to access it' as espoused in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (p. 212). 'This professional orthodoxy conflicts with the privilege inherent in Indigenous knowledge, its highly contextualised relevance and appreciation, its conditional accessibility' (p. 212).

The sixteen-chapter volume includes research summaries and commissioned reports; case studies; descriptions of information services (eg Indigenous Knowledge Centres in Australia and overseas); recent approaches to building collections, repatriation, access arrangements and indexing strategies; and general advice on the management of Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. Unfortunately, the term 'libraries' in the title of this multi-disciplinary compilation is misleading.

More than ten years have now passed since the 1995 release of the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* (ALIA Press, Canberra). Martin Nakata, Alex Byrne, Vicky Nakata and Gabrielle Gardiner discuss 'the effectiveness of the Protocols as a strategy to address Indigenous information issues' in

Chapter 1. In Chapter 11, 'Meeting the Challenges of Indigenous Information Needs', Alana Garwood-Houng revisits the development of the Protocols and reports on their review, which is now underway (p. 149). One of the outcomes of the colloquium has been a renewed commitment to promotion and dissemination of the Protocols.

While a number of contributors have presented in-depth reports, others have provided the kind of practical information identified by respondents in the review of the Protocols as means of improving them (p. 201). As the volume is not indexed, this information is dispersed and best identified by browsing the chapter introductions which serve as abstracts.

To me the richest papers are those that explore what Alex Byrne calls 'the dimensions of power inherent in these clashes of knowledge systems' (p. 214). It is the exploration of tensions and dichotomies, and resulting possibilities, that informs this work. Nakata's and Langton's foreword and Byrne's 'Afterword' skilfully pull the collection together, adding brackets in an attempt to set out limits for the reader's response.

In Chapter 2, 'Exploring the Gupapuynga Legacy: Strategies for Developing the Galiwin'ku Indigenous Knowledge Centre', Joe Neparrnga Gumbula presents four full-colour diagrams which he created to represent the arrangement of Yolngu knowledge systems and society in northeast Arnhem Land. The diagrams demonstrate the 'level of complexity to the way that digital materials held by the [Centre] must be [managed and made] accessible to community' (p. 26).

In Chapter 5, 'Traditional Indigenous Biodiversity-related Knowledge', Langton and Zane Ma Rhea examine relationships between language diversity and loss, accurate documentation of 'traditional Indigenous knowledge' and the 'capacity of [Indigenous] communities to develop economically sustainable livelihoods' (p. 54).

Issues of ownership, authority and power are further explored in Chapter 13, 'Indigenous Knowledge and Archives: Accessing Hidden History and Understandings'. In two case studies Lynette Russell discusses the problems she has encountered in 'accessing private and confidential knowledge' (p. 170), which is often distressing to family members, and the challenges this presents to archives.

In the final chapter, Nakata et al remind us that 'all peak LIS organisations have a legislative mandate to preserve the documentary heritage of the



nation and to provide LIS services for all Australians' (p. 206) and this includes Australian Indigenous knowledge.

As Nakata and Langton describe:

when we consider the challenges associated with Indigenous knowledge and libraries and archives, we are not talking solely about the liberal project of equality and inclusion. It is patronising to take the view that changing practice is limited to ensuring libraries adjust practice to include Indigenous people so we can access our own materials. More fundamentally it must be about recognition of and respect for continuing but still distinct knowledge traditions. It must be about developing a set of practices that recognise the entanglement of the two traditions as they move forward together in a somewhat problematic tension (p. 4).

We must not forget that the work coming out of Australia in regard to the issues surrounding Indigenous records and information services is pioneering work. In the United States, the Society of American Archivists is looking to Canada and, especially, to Australia in developing protocols for dealing with Indigenous (Native American) materials and archival services.

How do we go about adjusting our professional practices to engage with the challenges and complexities presented in these papers? It is not simply about consulting with key stakeholders, nor understanding the issues, nor improving access to information in records. As Nakata and Langton suggest at the start, it requires deep commitment to ongoing dialogue, meaningful collaboration, the questioning of norms and real, long-term investments – in the knowledge that 'Indigenous people are at the heart of the matter' (p. 5).

Jane Thimke

State Records of South Australia

**Martin Nakata (ed.)**, *Evaluation of the Northern Territory Library's Libraries & Knowledge Centres model*. Northern Territory Library, 2006. 111pp. ISBN 0 646 46076 5. available at <[http://www.dcdsca.nt.gov.au/dcdsca/intranet.nsf/pages/ntl\\_lkc](http://www.dcdsca.nt.gov.au/dcdsca/intranet.nsf/pages/ntl_lkc)>.

It is wonderful to see the Northern Territory Government commission a research team, lead by Professor Martin Nakata (Jumbunna IHL, University of Technology Sydney), to evaluate the model of the Northern Territory Library's Libraries and Knowledge Centres.

The evaluation, which took place in 2005, provides a background of the Library and Knowledge Centres (LKC) model and the desire of the Northern Territory Library Service to have external input into the relevancy of the model in its early development stage. The authors look at the current status of the LKC as they currently stand in the Northern Territory and general issues that may affect their operation. The authors finally makes a series of twelve recommendations for the LKC's ongoing success.

The evaluation includes much discussion that would be of interest to archivists and information professionals, particularly those who are currently working with Indigenous collections in libraries, archives and museums around Australia. The evaluation looks at issues relating to the retention of Indigenous Knowledge (IK), the impact of information technology on library services and the importance of intellectual property rights and Indigenous Knowledge.

The report looks at the changing context of public libraries and the shift in the last decade to knowledge based economies now facilitated by digital technologies and the affect that this may have on local communities. How can remote communities benefit from these information changes? What sort of technology and infrastructure needs to be put in place for this flow on affect to take place?

The authors look at the important questions of how a community can retain and control its own cultural heritage in these changing contexts and how communities can bring back knowledge to the LKC held in other cultural institutions. As an overriding principle, the authors make a significant point that:

Whatever the associated debates about the place or value of IK in contemporary Indigenous life, about the issues

surrounding documentation, storage, access and utilisation of knowledge, it is largely accepted that Indigenous people themselves must determine their own interests, processes and activities in relation to their own knowledge.

The continued debate in the evaluation about appropriate creation of databases for holding collections, information technology issues, digitisation of material, standards, security and staff training are all important and current issues relevant to the archival profession.

The Northern Territory Library's response to the evaluation (also available online) provides a further response by the Northern Territory Government to the LKC programs and highlights their ongoing commitment to ensuring the success of the model.

It is wonderful to see that not only is the Northern Territory making a serious commitment to Indigenous communities to ensure that services are delivered in an appropriate way and that Indigenous culture and knowledge is being retained and managed by the community. Government has sought this external evaluation to ensure that they are in fact on the right track. There is no doubt that other States and Territories would benefit from developing similar models. The Northern Territory Government and research team led by Professor Nakata should be congratulated for being responsible for such an insightful and important review of services.

Kirsten Thorpe  
State Records NSW

**Collections Council of Australia Ltd.** *Summit on Digital Collections, Adelaide, 16-17 August 2006.*

In mid August representatives of Australia's digital collections gathered in Adelaide for a *Summit on Digital Collections* organised by the industry peak body, Collections Council Australia Ltd. The objective of the Summit was to agree a framework for cross domain collaboration encompassing

Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums (GLAM). The Summit included thirty-five events over two days, consisting of presentations, workshops and a digital collections showcase that introduced delegates to the best Australia has to offer in terms of digital collections projects. Presentations guided the work of the workshops and provided the basis for the development of a whole of GLAM perspective.

To focus the minds of delegates on cross domain collaborative possibilities, drivers and emerging opportunities, the Summit included presentations on:

- The state of play within each of the GLAM domains.
- UK and EU activity on digital collections.
- The Commonwealth's Digital Content Industries Action Agenda (DCIAA).<sup>1</sup>
- Infrastructure issues in the delivery of broadband services.

On day two of the Summit, delegates voted on the top three issues common across the sector (an effective industry assertion of priorities for funding), specific proposals from domains and *aims, principles and issues* making up the framework. With more than 180 delegates from four different domains represented at the Summit, the possibility for degeneration into Dilbert like farce was omnipresent. This challenge was managed adroitly by Dr Michael Henry from the Strategy Shop who chaired the three working sessions of the Summit.

The situation of delegates proved no less challenging with the extent and pace of the program, high level discourse and the multi-disciplinary character of the Summit posing problems for some. In reviewing the work of the Summit, the extreme compaction and size of the program makes for sins of omission and interpretation that any reviewer would wish to avoid but are inevitable. Subject to this caveat, what can be said of the work presented to the Summit and its achievements? The near impossible is attempted here through the lens of themes that emerged over the two days.

### ***Digital Content Industries and Demand Pull***

Following the Summit's official welcome delivered on video by Senator Helen Coonan, Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, David Dawson, *Head of Digital Futures, Museums, Libraries*

and Archives Council (UK) delivered the keynote address. In an effective presentation, David explored important digital content industry enablers and their role as demand drivers for digitisation of cultural heritage collections. The UK Government has invested fifty million pounds in digital content creation. An important thrust in UK Government policy and direction is the key role played by digital collections in the support of educational content production. According to David, engaging the Playstation2 generation with digital collections requires personalisation, innovative methods for creating and managing learning objects (eg e-portfolios) and new approaches to engagement and learning. Computer gaming and the assertion of learner ownership via the ability to contribute as well as receive content from collections were seen as key enablers of e-learning. Cultural heritage collections can also supply digitised content and interpretive content that makes for engaging gaming scenarios. Good examples of non-gaming classroom applications included downloaded newsreels in the teaching of history and an online poetry collection. Aspiring young poets can contribute as well as download poems to the archive.

E-learning is also poised to become a major demand driver of digitisation in Australia. A notable partnership in the archives domain has developed between the Learning Federation and the National Archives of Australia (NAA). Presentations later in the program by Anne Lyons on NAA's Virtual Reading Room (VRROOM)<sup>2</sup> and Learning Federation's<sup>3</sup> Mr Stuart Tait provided insight into the potential of this sector.

### **Domain Views**

With the international scene set, attention turned to the state of play across each of the four Australian GLAM domains. CAARA Chair Tony Caravella delivered a sobering message to delegates about the challenges faced:

Without urgent coordinated action across the cultural collecting domains, Australian cultural content is at risk of either not surviving and/or being marginalised. Designing and implementing regimes for selecting, creating, acquiring, describing and delivering access to digital collections requires complete re-invention of systems, approaches and practices in collecting institutions. This presents both challenges and opportunities.<sup>4</sup>

Acknowledging the innovative and quality of character of existing projects in its working papers for the Summit, Collections Council Australia Ltd argued that there is 'a growing need to coordinate these initiatives more effectively to improve their use, impact and sustainability'.<sup>5</sup> Further, citing work by Library and Archives Canada:

the management of digital information requires an inter-disciplinary approach that draws on the strengths of disciplines such as records management, library science and data management, etc. As organizations move towards greater information sharing and collaboration, there will be an increased need to develop enterprise-wide, cross-sector, interoperable metadata, architectures and standards. Clearly, the issues are national in scope and a national strategy involving all concerned groups and organizations is warranted.<sup>6</sup>

In two presentations that addressed the wider policy context of the Summit and set the scene for workshop deliberations, Tom Kennedy (Chair, Strategic Industry Leaders Group, Digital Content Industry Action Agenda) and Colin Griffith (Chair, Digital Content Working Group, National Broadband Strategy Implementation Group) reinforced the need for national action. As measured by Nielsen Net Ratings, Australia's (.au) digital collections online attract an insignificant audience compared with comparable offshore digital collections, defining a growing online digital collections data deficit. Putting the deficit into a demographic perspective, young Australians appear to have turned off Australian digital collections content online in favour of offshore content. Without the rollout of further broadband network capacity, the deficit might be expected to grow, as international users of Australian digital collections become frustrated by delays and a lack of richness and immersion from what is available in the .au domain.

As Tom Kennedy explained, the wider policy agenda also throws up a carrot in the form of the Federal Government's *Digital Content Industry Action Agenda*.<sup>7</sup> The plan envisages a doubling in the value of Australia's Digital Content Industry to \$42 billion by 2015. Digital heritage collections are important supply side enablers of various kinds of digital content production including digital video, interactive television, e-learning and games. As the saying goes, timing is everything. The *Summit on Digital*

*Collections* took place in the context of a window of opportunity provided by the Agenda.

### ***Online Strategy and Digitisation***

Observing changes in visual literacy and cognitive behaviour between baby boomers who determine the nature and pace of digitisation, and generations X and Y, a succession of presenters (David Dawson, Tom Kennedy, Colin Griffith, Stuart Tait and Angelina Russo) suggested the need for careful scrutiny of assumptions that underpin current approaches to digitisation and online strategy. Much of this discussion took place under the mantle of Web 2.0 (sometimes wrongly), e-engagement, personalisation and immersive, interactive Web applications. Innovative, immersive digital collections websites were presented or showcased by Jonathan Cooper (Art Gallery of New South Wales) and Sebastian Chan/Fiona Cameron (Powerhouse Museum).

Failure to align online strategy with market needs and to build strategic partnerships, results in digitisation initiatives that fail to make the transition from projects to ongoing programs that operate on a sustainable basis. Sustainability was a buzzword for the Summit. Buzzwords are inescapable at any meeting of minds on online strategy. Some buzzwords can be ignored and some convey a message that should be heeded. Sustainability is a message that should not be ignored by any archivist or institution contemplating digitisation initiatives. Too many projects begin promisingly, but fail to make the transition from project to program because of poor strategy and business planning.

### ***Digital Preservation***

Digitisation is ultimately futile if no program is in place to ensure the persistence of digital reproductions. All sectors face this challenge. As eloquently conveyed by Tony Leschen (State Library of South Australia), Warwick Cathro (National Library), Ross Gibbs (National Archives of Australia), Michael Carden (National Archives of Australia) Justine Heazlewood (Public Records Office of Victoria), Tony Caravella (State Records Office WA/CAARA) – this challenge is greatest in the Library and Archives sectors which are uniquely affected by the phenomenon of ‘born digital’. For galleries and museums unique sectoral challenges also exist, but on a much smaller scale. Cherie Prosser (University of SA) and Jonathon Cooper (Art Gallery of New South Wales) described digital

preservation problems in contexts where preservation of the hardware/software used by artists suggested the need for museum, rather than migration type approaches.

### ***Discovery, Access and Networking***

The interconnection of digital collections via common distributed enquiry protocols and tools enhances discovery and access, reduces consumer burden and brings other benefits. Joy Suliman (Collections Australia Network) and Greg Wallace (DNC Services) provided insights into work being done by CAN with OpenSearch and benefits brought by CAN to smaller collections, particularly in the Museum and Gallery sector. CAN (formerly Australian Museums OnLine) provides a shared portal interface to participating collections.<sup>8</sup> Another strategy for interconnection that value-adds content was demonstrated by Gavan McCarthy from the Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre. In the Australian Dictionary of Biography (ADB) Online,<sup>9</sup> entries are linked by query to PictureAustralia, enabling ADB Online to leverage content from another digital collection.

Culturally appropriate access to Indigenous digital collections was canvassed by Dianne Hosking and Craig Green from IATSIS. The potential for insensitive, ill-conceived approaches to bring about de facto colonisation online was clearly conveyed.

### ***Conclusion***

It was observed from the floor that the Summit involved an 'historic' first. For the first time the four sectors of digital heritage collections had been brought together to explore the potential for cooperation and collaboration for mutual benefit. Outcomes from the Summit are earmarked for progression by Collections Council Australia Ltd on behalf of the sector, primarily through the Cultural Minister's Council. Whether the Summit comes to be regarded in hindsight as an 'historic' event, or otherwise, will very much depend on the efforts of Collections Council Australia Ltd and others to capitalise on the opportunity provided by the DCIAA.

From the standpoint of the Archives Domain, assessing the significance of the opportunity presented by the DCIAA is problematic. DCIAA is pitched at digital content production for export markets, but since most digitisation activity in the Archives domain addresses a predominantly domestic audience, the potential of DCIAA is at best unclear. Not all



collections suffer from this drawback. Some digital collections, such as the Australian War Memorial and National Film and Sound Archive, have a better collections profile in terms of the objectives of DCIAA. Further qualification about the value of DCIAA to the Archives Domain arises from the small number of references (two) found in the parent report document.<sup>10</sup>

Viewed as an 'evolving' rather than 'fixed' agenda for action on digital collections, to be shaped by Collection Council and others, DCIAA may prove worthwhile. An important handle here, is the importance accorded by all domains to digital preservation. The idea of a cross domain Australian Digital Archives Alliance put to the Summit by Tony Caravella on behalf of CAARA and later by Ross Gibbs of NAA, might form one element of a digital preservation action plan. With no national infrastructure for digital archiving or the delivery of digital preservation services, the reusability of content found in digital collections cannot be assured. As David Dawson's discussion of the National Knowledge Bank initiative in the UK showed, the importance of digital archives to growing digital content industries is understood elsewhere.

With substantial changes to its initial proposal, Collections Council obtained 'stakeholder buy-in' to move forward with its cross domain agenda. Workshop prioritisation of the three most important issues facing the sector resulted in a short list comprising digital preservation, funding, research and skills and training. In effect these were 'no brainers' that might have been articulated without the benefit of the Summit and at this level Dilbert analogies beckon. It was also disappointing to find that innovation did not make it into the short list of issues. With the emergence of the Semantic Web,<sup>11</sup> the sector has historic opportunity to build broader credibility and commitment through innovation. However, as the Summit Blog<sup>12</sup> shows, many worthwhile ideas were produced in workshops displaying creative thinking about issues, strategies and action planning.

In the afternoon session of day two of the Summit agreement was canvassed on key propositions concerning the role of Collections Council in moving forward the work of the Summit. These concerned:

- Work on coordinated standards and protocols across the four domains.
- Working regionally, nationally and internationally to improve research.

- Facilitating easy engagement with our history and culture.
- Building sustainable systems.
- Promoting high visibility.
- Researching and promoting awareness of the social, community and economic benefits of digital collections.<sup>13</sup>

In the last session of the Summit, Dagmar Schmidmaer (ALIA) and Ross Gibbs (NAA) placed the work of the Summit within the larger context of Government processes involving resource allocation and the opportunity to leverage from the DCIAA. The bite was put on Collections Council to report to Ministers within fourteen days and to develop a detailed national digitisation strategy for delivery in October.

How the domains are currently working within available resources to produce some surprisingly sophisticated digital content with good technology foundations was on show via the Summit showcase. Nick Thieberger's presentation on the work of the *Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC)* was inspiring.<sup>14</sup> Strategic partnerships involving four universities, Grangenet and the Australian Partnership for Advanced Computing underpin the success of this modestly funded project. In terms of institution based projects, NAA's Digitisation on Demand and other digitisation projects (Julie Faulkner) and Australian War Memorial's Enterprise Content Management and digitisation projects (Mal Booth) were also standouts. The window into the world of projects up and running provided by the showcase, demonstrated that the Archives domain is currently punching above its weight in terms of digitisation.

Mark Brogan  
State Records Office of Western Australia

## Endnotes

1 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (Australia), *Unlocking the Potential: Summary. Digital Content Industry Action Agenda*. 2006. Accessed 20 August 2006 from <[http://www.dcita.gov.au/arts/film\\_digital/digital\\_content\\_industry\\_action\\_agenda/dciaa\\_report](http://www.dcita.gov.au/arts/film_digital/digital_content_industry_action_agenda/dciaa_report)>.

2 National Archives of Australia, *Virtual Reading Room: VRROOM*. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <<http://www.naa.gov.au/vrroom-splash/index.html>>.

3 The Learning Federation, *The Learning Federation Schools Online Curriculum Initiative*. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <<http://www.thelearningfederation.edu.au/tlf2/>>.

4 Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, *Digital Archiving in the 21st Century: Archives Domain Discussion Paper*. Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities, 2006. p. 3.

5 Collections Council of Australia Ltd, *Summit on Digital Collections Working Papers*. Collections Council of Australia Ltd, 2006. p. 8. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <[http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Portals/0/Summit%20Working%20Papers\\_8%20AugustFinal.pdf](http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/Portals/0/Summit%20Working%20Papers_8%20AugustFinal.pdf)>.

6 John McDonald, *Toward a Canadian Digital Information Strategy: A Review of Relevant International Activities*, 2006. p. vii.

7 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (Australia), *Unlocking the Potential: Summary. Digital Content Industry Action Agenda. op.cit.*

8 Collections Australia Network, Australian Culture Heritage Collections Online. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <[http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/exhibitions\\_item/12](http://www.collectionsaustralia.net/exhibitions_item/12)>.

9 Australian National University, *Australian Dictionary of Biography*. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <<http://adb.anu.edu.au/index.php>>.

10 Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (Australia), *Unlocking the Potential: Digital Content Industry Action Agenda. op.cit.*

11 Scientific American, *Future of the Internet: Net Neutrality and the Semantic Web*. Accessed 23 August 2006 from <<http://www.sciam.com/podcast/>>.

12 <<http://collectionscouncilofaustralialtd.wordpress.com/>>.

13 Collections Council Australia Ltd, *Summit on Digital Collections: Web blog*. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <<http://collectionscouncilofaustralialtd.wordpress.com/>>.

14 Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources, 'PARADISEC: Safeguarding research in Australia's region', 2006. Accessed 22 August 2006 from <<http://paradisec.org.au/>>.

