

Reviews

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

Sylvia Martin, *Ida Leeson: a life*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, NSW, 2006. xiv +242pp. ISBN 978 1 74114 850 3. \$29.95.

This book has been out since July 2006, which for a late-comer reviewer like me poses the problem of whether or not to read previous reviews. I did, for there are few published book-length biographies of Australian librarians and of archivists there are none, so I was keen to see how such a book would be received.

The general tone in reviews, not that there are many, is of polite interest. I found only one reviewer crass (or, if you like, honest) enough to lead his review by asking: 'Is it possible to make the life of a librarian interesting?' In other reviews this idea lurks beneath the surface, but it is there. Sylvia Martin's biography of Ida Leeson treats the whole person and discusses her home and family life, her friendships and her interests outside work, and reviewers reach for these and discuss them with relief. And indeed it is pleasing to find in Leeson's life a window on to significant parts of Australia's, and especially Sydney's cultural and intellectual life. As one reviewer remarked, Ida Leeson 'knew everyone'.

People do tend to be surprised at the wide circle of contacts that librarians often have; researchers seem to believe that the librarian or archivist who has assisted them in complex and protracted research is somehow their own special property. Later in life Leeson spoke often about the interesting people she had known and she appears to have accepted being worn out 'in the service of others', as Miles Franklin put it (xiii), but Leeson was not acquiescent in the discriminatory treatment she endured at the Mitchell Library. Appointed to the Public Library of New South Wales in 1906, by 1932 she was qualified, experienced and admirably suited for the post of

Mitchell Librarian when it fell vacant in that year. She got it, but only when John Metcalfe was promoted over her head into a newly-created position of Deputy Principal Librarian, thus ensuring a male line of succession for the Library's top job. Ida appealed, but in vain. Martin tells this story with skill and makes it the fulcrum of the book. Here was a woman who dressed and behaved like a man, who worked in a profession populated mainly by women, but who was prevented by men from succeeding at its highest level.

Martin tackles at length the issue of Leeson's style of dress with an analysis, and a dismissal, of the story put about by Manning Clark that under her plain and practical skirts, Leeson wore bloomers secured below the knee with bows. Leeson's relationship with Florence Birch is likewise treated with the openness and honesty which our generation values, mingled with the dignity and tact prized by Ida's. Some of Ida's colleagues and family were disinclined to believe in or discuss her apparent lesbianism; others sniggered at her mannishness behind her back. I came away thinking that here was a person, wearing herself out in the service of others, who has also to endure people believing about her merely what they wanted to believe, rather than considering her essential humanity. That Sylvia Martin has restored this humanity, even hampered as she is by the lack of Leeson or Birch's personal papers (they were either not kept or were actively destroyed), is the strength of this biography.

The book is written from the perspective of a library user rather than an insider. Tantalisingly, we are told that the Mitchell Librarian's correspondence files are extensive and wide-ranging but I longed to learn more from them, and not just about Leeson's contact with high profile patrons and in relation to the well-known records, such as the Angus & Robertson papers and the 'missing' volume of the Flinders log and, but the thousands of lesser cases. How did Leeson build upon the Mitchell bequest? Was there a collection policy, stated or implied? How did she discover and define it? What did Leeson *not* collect? What were the failures and the mistakes, the big fish that got away? Leeson's work to build up a New South Wales state archives section is discussed in a single sentence.

I suppose I am asking too much from a standard-length biography aimed at a popular readership. Certainly the book is beautifully written and skilfully organised, and the author affectionately invokes the atmosphere, the sights and even the smells of library days now long gone. It will make

baby-boomer academics around the country sigh for the times when you could walk into such-and-such a reading room knowing that that special librarian or archivist, whom you had known half your life, would still be there to greet you by name and show you some little gem just in.

Few institutions can offer this kind of service any more but we still want researchers' use of collections to be not just useful, but rich and exciting. Perhaps without especially meaning to be, this book is a reminder of that challenge.

Anne-Marie Condé
Australian War Memorial

Adrian Brown, *Archiving Websites: A Practical Guide for Information Management Professionals*, Facet Publishing, London, 2005. xiv + 238pp. ISBN 978 1 85604 553 7. £39.95.

Web archiving's coming of age is demonstrated by the publication of two books on this topic within months of each other. This can happen only when there is general consensus among Web archiving practitioners about a standard set of techniques, approaches and philosophies. This review is on one of these books, Adrian Brown's *Archiving websites: a practical guide for information management professionals*. The other book is: Julien Masanès (ed), *Web archiving*, Springer, Heidelberg, 2006.

The introduction to *Archiving Websites* suggests that to describe the Internet's expansion 'as dramatic is an understatement' (p. 1), as are the consequences for archiving websites, especially because much Web content is transient. Collecting and preserving elements of the Web are now the concern of a wide range of organisations, whose attempts to address the many issues posed are informed and assisted by the availability of an increasing wealth of experience. This book offers the reader an overview of current best practice and also practical guidance based on UK experience. Its intention, as suggested by its subtitle - *A Practical Guide*, is to provide a broad introduction to Web archiving, rather than a technical manual, for policymakers, information management professionals, website owners and webmasters.

The first two chapters set the scene. Chapter 1 gives a brief history of the Web and its increasing pervasiveness. Chapter 2 presents a history of Web archiving, noting the influential role of the Internet Archive and early projects such as the National Library of Australia's Pandora project and Scandinavian projects. Of particular interest to readers of *Archives and Manuscripts* will be the attention paid to archiving of government websites: for instance, the UK Central Government is noted on page 17 and is used throughout the book and in particular as a longer case study in Chapter 9.

Chapters 3 to 9 examine specific aspects of the Web archiving process: selection, methods of collecting the websites, quality assurance and cataloguing, preservation, providing access to archived websites and legal issues. Although taken as a whole these chapters provide a thorough overview of the processes involved, their coverage is variable. One of the more convincing is Chapter 3, which deals with selection. Pertinent observations are made about the challenges that selection of Web-based material pose to general principles and traditions of appraisal and selection. For instance, the rapid rate of change and linked nature of Websites, and new genres such as blogs and wikis, force us to question the validity of transferring pre-digital notions to the Web environment without major modification. One standard procedure for Web archiving is not to apply any selection criteria (such as in whole-domain harvesting), counter-intuitive to traditional appraisal practice.

Another convincing feature of this book is its numerous case studies. Chapter 4, for example, presents two case studies of how to get websites into the archive - the Number 10 Downing Street website collected by the (UK) National Archives and of the Bristol Royal Infirmary Inquiry. Other chapters also include short case studies and, as noted, there is also an extended case study in Chapter 9 of the UK Government Web Archive. Less convincing is Chapter 5, in which the coverage of quality assurance takes most of the chapter but 'cataloguing' is covered surprisingly briefly, given the now well understood importance of metadata for effective archiving and preservation of digital materials.

Chapter 9 ('Managing a Web archiving programme') pulls the preceding chapters together, presenting 'the practicalities of establishing, resourcing and maintaining a Web archiving programme' (p. 163). The extended case study of the UK Government Web Archive (pp. 178-83) included in this chapter will be of interest to government archivists in other countries.

Chapter 10 describes future trends in Web archiving such as in data storage, digital preservation, international collaboration, Web archiving tools, and Web technologies. The book concludes with five appendices, a bibliography and an index. (There is also a glossary at the start).

So, does this book deliver on its promise to provide a practical guide to Web archiving? The answer is yes, but a mildly qualified yes. The overview it provides will be an excellent jumping off point for planning and implementing a Web archiving program. There is a considerable amount of practical guidance in the chapters and also in the appendices, which provide a list of Web archiving and preservation tools, model forms and a model job description. The content does not require a high level of IT knowledge to understand it, but it should enable the information professional to convincingly discuss Web archiving requirements with IT professionals. Some areas in the book are too briefly covered, as noted. For this reviewer, the book is too UK-centric, particularly given that one characteristic of Web archiving practice is international collaboration. Indeed the author acknowledges the significance of international collaboration at several points (for example, its mention of the International Internet Preservation Consortium on page 19-21 and elsewhere, and its acknowledgement on page ix. of the influential 'Archiving Web Resources' conference held at the National Library of Australia in Canberra in 2004). So it seems unusual that nearly all of the examples in this book are from the UK.

This book is definitely worth reading for a thorough overview of the current state of Web archiving.

Ross Harvey
Charles Sturt University

Ken Munden (ed.), *Archives and the Public Interest: Selected Essays by Ernst Posner* with a new introduction by Angelika Menne-Haritz, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2006. 215pp. ISBN 1 931666 16 4. Soft cover US\$49.00.

Archives and the Public Interest was first compiled and published in 1967 for Posner's 75th birthday. He originally wrote these sixteen essays during

the two decades between his emigration from Germany in 1939 and his retirement from American University in Washington DC in 1960.

Ernst Posner (1892-1980) may not be well known to some Australian archivists but he certainly led a very full life from his first training as an historian to his military service in World War I, where he was severely wounded, to his outstanding work in the Prussian State Archives. Persecution and expulsion from the Prussian State Archives and a six week stay in the Sachsenhausen concentration camp in November 1938 led him to emigrate with his wife to the United States in 1939 after first seeking refuge in Sweden. In America he had many achievements including responsibility for the history and administration of archives course at the American University in Washington, summer Institutes on Archives Administration which he directed for sixteen years, and membership of the Society of American Archivists from 1939 including membership of its Council from 1947-51 and terms as vice president 1953-54 and president 1955-56. He retired from the American University in 1960.

This new edition edited by Ken Munden positions the thinking of Posner in the context of his time and his experiences, especially those before he was forced to leave his post in the Prussian Privy State Archives in Berlin. Angelika Menne-Haritz, Vice President of the Federal Archives of Germany, in her introduction describes his role as a builder of bridges between the emerging archival profession in the United States and the European traditions.

The book begins with Menne-Haritz's 'Reconsidering an Archival Classic: Ernst Posner's *Archives and the Public Interest*' followed by the original introduction to the publication by Paul Lewinson, in which he outlines Posner's career and achievements both in Europe and in the United States. The rest of the book consists of Posner's essays grouped into six main categories. There is also a Bibliography and Index.

Posner had three favourite subject areas which appear repeatedly throughout his essays. These were: the development of the principle of provenance, training of archivists and the role records management has to play in archival professional self-understanding. His experiences in both Europe and North America gave him a unique perspective on archival work and professionalism.

The first section of the book looks at Basic Principles and contains two essays.

- Some Aspects of Archival Development since the French Revolution.
- Max Lehmann and the Genesis of the Principle of Provenance

The second looks at The Training of Archivists and again there are two essays.

- European Experiences in Training Archivists.
- Archival Training in the United States.

The third section is titled The European Example and has four essays.

- Impressions of an Itinerant Archivist in Europe.
- The Role of Records in German Administration.
- The Administration of Current Records in Italian Public Agencies.
- European Experiences in Protecting and Preserving Local Records.

The fourth section looks at The American Experience with five essays.

- Archival Administration in the United States.
- The National Archives and the Archivist Theorist.
- Solon Justus Buck and the National Archives.
- The College and University Archives in the United States.
- What, Then, Is the American Archivist, This New Man?

The fifth section examines Archives in Wartime with two essays.

- Effects of Changes in Sovereignty on Archives.
- Public Records under Military Occupation.

The final section is a Postscript with one essay.

- Archivists and International Awareness.

Although this publication would be of primary interest to European and North American archivists it is also of interest to Australians because it gives a terrific insight into the development of archival traditions in both continents. I couldn't help thinking it would be good to have a similar work on the history of archival thinking and the profession in Australia. While there are various works written by various authors on these subjects they are not all gathered together in a single work.

Despite the fact that the essays were written some time ago, they still have currency and relevance in today's world. We still have countries experiencing government instability and military occupations so the section on 'Archives in Wartime' is of interest as is the final section on 'Archivists and International Awareness'.

Some, however, are dated as indicated by the final essay in *The American Experience - What, Then, Is the American Archivist, This New Man?* I don't know how many women now work as archivists in the USA but in Australia, ASA membership surveys indicate that more females than males work in archives and within the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities (CAARA), three member organisations have female leaders. Despite the title of this essay I found it really interesting and thought provoking and at the end Posner asks seven questions that he would like someone to answer in 2056, the 100th anniversary of his paper.

Question One is quite lengthy and is really a series of questions looking at the archives of the Society of American Archivists and who should have responsibility for them. Question Two is about whether the Society should have an historian and if the Society's archivist should have that function. Question Three is also quite lengthy and revolves around the issue of documenting archival history and the need to have biographies of eminent professional members. Question Four is concerned with the need to have an oral history program to record professional reminiscences while Question Five asks whether there will be a history of the National Archives at some point. Question Six is along similar lines and calls for histories of the State Archives and finally Question Seven looks at capturing the memories of the records management movement. The 50th anniversary of this essay has just passed and while I cannot comment on how the questions might be answered by an American archivist, I do know that the Australian Society of Archivists could answer most of the

questions in a positive fashion which would, no doubt, be very pleasing to Posner.

I enjoyed reading this publication and it has certainly increased my knowledge of archives as a profession around the world.

Shauna Hicks
Public Record Office Victoria

Public Records Office Victoria, Aboriginal Affairs Victoria and Victorian Koorie Records Taskforce, *Finding your story - A Resource Manual to the Records of the Stolen Generations in Victoria*. Public Record Office Victoria and Aboriginal Affairs Victoria, Melbourne, 2005. 120pp. ISBN 0 9751068 2 1. \$34.95. Also available as a PDF download at <<http://www.pro.vic.gov.au/findingyourstory/>>.

National Archives of Australia, *Tracking Family - A guide to Aboriginal records relating to the Northern Territory*. National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 2006. 89pp. ISBN 1 920807 42 X. \$10.00. Also available as a PDF download at <<https://shop.naa.gov.au>>.

The cartoon on the door of my search room features a bewildered indigenous man and a woman surrounded by four towering pyramids of paper, titled respectively births, archives, libraries and churches. The context of this image is where to look for information concerning indigenous family history, how to look for your mob. There is no doubt that looking for your mob can be a frustrating experience for Indigenous people with records located in different locations, institutions and government agencies. *Finding your story - A Resource Manual to the Records of the Stolen Generations in Victoria* and *Tracking Family - A Guide to Aboriginal Records Relating to the Northern Territory* are timely and above all useful tools to aid indigenous people in Victoria and the Northern Territory to look for and find their mob.

Finding Your Story is a thoughtful and well structured guide to undertaking the journey that is the search for identity through archival records, whether those records are held in government agencies, government archives, with churches, in libraries or museums. The

resource manual is not only about finding records and connecting with kin, it is also about the emotional impact that the contents of the record may have upon the individual that reads them. An unsuccessful search can also have its emotional consequences. Hence, *Finding Your Story* provides an extensive listing of link-up, counselling, support organisations and Aboriginal cooperatives that provide support and assistance to Stolen Generations members. Chapters on the emotional journey and where to find support and assistance are complemented by the personal stories of Melissa Brichell, Merryn Edwards, Koora Cooper and Mark Rose. These stories reiterate the damage caused by past government policies of separation but also encourage others to take the important steps towards healing and self-determination by searching for their families.

Finding Your Story is presented in a three ringed folder (for easy updates, I assume, although a two ringed folder seems to me to be more practical). The style and layout of this publication is one of the keys to its success. It does not look overly bureaucratic, technical or stylised. The language used is friendly and approachable, and jargon is avoided. There is a glossary to help people with terms that they might find unfamiliar or reflects old style language. The chapter dividers include photographs of Aboriginal children, a mother and her child, two young soldiers and various institutions. These images are interspersed with the Aboriginal flag. These images serve as a reminder that this resource manual is about people as much as it is about locating records.

The section on frequently asked questions provides clear and concise answers to questions repeatedly asked of agencies that hold records on Stolen Generation members. These include simple questions such as: 'how can I get a copy of my birth certificate?' and 'can I destroy the records once I have looked at them?' The power of a document to anger, sadden and upset is reiterated and this manual constantly reminds us of that fact.

Stolen Generations' records are dispersed among a number of agencies, hence the difficulty that people may have in trying to find where records concerning them or a family member might be located. *Finding Your Story* aims to guide people through this journey, focusing on where particular records might be depending upon your life experience or your family's experience with the child protection system, State Welfare departments or other government services such as civil registration, adoption,

community sector children's home, the Aboriginal Welfare Board and Victorian Aboriginal mission, reserve and station records. A list of state government department children's homes and youth training centres since 1940 has twenty-one institutions and their localities provided. The description of what documents were on a typical ward of the state file from the 1960s to 1970s (p. 37) is in itself a potted administrative history.

Community sector children's homes and child welfare programs are given a lengthy chapter. These are organised into the different churches and religious organisations, followed by larger community service organisations and then smaller community service agencies. Under each of the church listings different institutions are listed that dealt with welfare issues. This is followed by an outline of the access conditions to the records and a contact address. A number of these organisations will also provide counselling and support if necessary. It appears that not all organisations (whether religious or otherwise) have developed an access policy to records. It is not surprising given that some of these entities may be quite small.

The chapter on birth, death and marriage records is a clear description of how to go about the process of making an application. This includes the types of identification documents required, who can access what records, and how much it will cost if a person chooses not to use the Koorie Heritage Trust to undertake searches on their behalf.

Indigenous heritage records have a place in *Finding Your Story*. Collections such as those built up by the Koorie Heritage Trust, Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Museum of Victoria Indigenous Family History Project form part of these sources. Records held in the National Archives of Australia and the Public Records office of Victoria are also included (as are a number of other institutions).

The final chapter of *Finding Your Story* is titled *My Story*. It is marked by a divider that awaits pages to follow it. This is the place where those that have embarked on finding their story can put their story. However for me, it is a rather poignant reminder that for some, their personal story is fractured or unknown.

Turning to *Tracking Family*, you may wonder why this is a guide to Aboriginal records, rather than to Indigenous records. The reason given is that the term Aboriginal reflects usage in the various Territory communities.

Compared to the presentation and layout of *Finding Your Story, Tracking Family* is a modest publication. Its purpose is slightly different to that of *Finding Your Story* as it is a guide to Aboriginal Records relating to the Northern Territory, rather than a resource manual. This does not mean that the emotional impact that archival records may have upon people trying to find family is ignored. Contacts for the various link-up organisations and counselling services available in the Territory are given.

This guide is the result of two records forums held in 2003 and jointly organised by the Darwin office of the National Archives and the Northern Territory Archives Service. Those represented at the forum included Commonwealth and Northern Territory government agencies holding records and information or providing services to Aboriginal people; churches; Aboriginal community organisations and genealogical/historical organisations.

Anyone who has used National Archives' previous guides will find the layout familiar, except that this guide does not point you to particular records series or items of interest. Instead it directs you to institutions around Australia that hold relevant collections, their access conditions and their contact details.

I must confess to dancing a little jig in my office while I read this guide, for it cleared up mysteries as to the location of many records relating to Central Australia. There is a very strong expectation among Centralians that all records relating to Central Australia should all be here in Alice Springs. While I cannot provide that service as least I can now use *Tracking Family* to refer researchers to other institutions. For example, the National Library of Australia and the Mitchell Library hold the records of various religious organisations involved in mission and welfare work, and the Noel Butlin Archives Centre holds the records of a number of major pastoral stations and pastoral companies that operated (and some continue to operate) in the Northern Territory.

Other features that are useful include a list of homes and missions including information about which organisation is now responsible for their records. There are some fifty-six homes and missions listed, included Ernabella (just over the border with South Australia) and the Kimberleys Mission in Western Australia. For all but one home or mission the location of the records is provided. The exception is Phillip Creek, a rather notorious

mission that was located north of Tennant Creek in the early 1950s. This list is not exhaustive and any information on other homes, missions or records is welcomed by the National Archives.

This publication is one that could only be done by the National Archives of Australia, as many of the other organisations that participated in the records forum (including my own) are much smaller and not as well resourced. That is not meant as a snipe at the National Archives but an acknowledgement that they have the dedicated staff and expertise to produce such a guide.

Both *Finding Our Story* and *Tracking Family* promise to be vital tools on the road to establishing identity for Indigenous people affected by past policies of separation and to encourage individuals and communities to share their histories and their stories.

Pat Jackson

Northern Territory Archives Service

Roderic Campbell, *Gordon Samuels Looking Back - A University Chancellor Reflects*, UNSW Archives, University of NSW, NSW, 2005, 160pp. ISBN 07334 2293 4.

When I was given this book I was told 'it is a good read' and indeed it is. Written in a light conversational style interspersed with quotes from Gordon Samuels it has an understated quintessential 'Australian flavour' about it, the thoughts and experiences of a 'great' public figure told in a low key style that could easily take place in the front bar of the local pub. 'This book', as the author states in his introduction, 'is the latest in a continuing series of publications from the UNSW Archives that investigate the history of the University through the thoughts and recollections of its principle players'.

Gordon Samuels, was Chancellor of the University of NSW (UNSW) from 1976 to 1994, making him the University's longest serving Chancellor. Outside of this he led a successful career as a barrister, Judge and later Governor of NSW, so his memories are certainly worth recording even without the University connection. The book is based on a series of oral history interviews conducted by Dr Julia Horne on behalf of the

University Archives and the author is careful and genuine in his acknowledgment of this contribution. The book is also indexed - a great long-term asset to any 'history' book.

The author, Roderic Campbell, is a researcher in the areas of oral history and university history, formerly at UNSW and now at the University of Sydney History Department. His passion for University History is evident, as he devotes a large section of the book to Samuels' life at UNSW and a discussion of the political realities of his roles and working with three different Vice-Chancellors at a period of great change at the University. Campbell is careful to explain how the governing structure of the University works in his introduction. This provides context for the chapter on UNSW in which Samuels explores his views and roles. This will appeal to readers who may be familiar with University life, and even those who are not, as discussion focuses on management style and working with people rather than daily University life.

The book is obviously aimed at a wide audience, given its overriding characteristics of being a good read and the human interests that arise from the main stories Samuels recounts. These range across his many life experiences from childhood in London, Oxford University, War Service as an Officer in the British Army and later work as a barrister in Australia.

In his introduction Campbell quotes from Patrick O' Farrell 'a good source is one that can tell a good story' and adds 'on this measure, Gordon Samuels is certainly a good source'. So the heart of this book is a good story. It is also primarily Gordon Samuels' story. It is well crafted and Campbell and the University Archives should be congratulated for writing and publishing it. It will, I am sure, be read and enjoyed as well as a useful research tool. If I was to criticise, maybe I would ask what has been left out. Quite probably, the oral history interviews and other material held by the University Archives will tell a more complete story and provide a more 'evidential history' to be researched at the appropriate time.

Annabel Lloyd
City Archivist, Brisbane City Council

James M O'Toole and Richard J Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts*, (Archival Fundamentals Series II), Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2006. xvii +255pp. ISBN 1 931666 20 2. SAA Member price: US\$35.00, non-member price: US\$49.00. Product code 483. Available from SAA <www.archivists.org/catalog>.

This is a new version of the work of the same name by James O'Toole, published in 1990 as part of the first Archival Fundamentals Series. Several categories of readers are intended: 'the beginning archivist', 'the administrator contemplating establishment of an archives', 'the potential donor of archival material' and 'anyone interested in learning about archives' (p. xvi). The new work follows the structure of the original, being divided into parts entitled 'Recording, Keeping and Using Information'; 'The History of Archives and the Archives Profession'; 'The Archivist's Perspective: Knowledge and Values'; and 'The Archivist's Task: Responsibilities and Duties'. A new part 'Archivists and the Challenges of New Worlds' has been added and there is now a comprehensive Bibliographic Essay. That said, the new edition should be considered on its own merits, not by the yardstick of how much has been updated or added, given that so much has happened in our profession since 1990. It has much to offer, particularly to American archivists (the section on the history of the profession concentrates fairly exclusively on the history of the profession in the United States).

An alternative title for the book could be *Understanding Archivists*, as it conveys a strong picture of what archivists do, as well as explaining why and how they do it. This emphasis on how archivists behave would certainly be useful for beginners (including students as beginning professionals), administrators and donors and those generally interested in archives. It could also be instructive for higher level managers in large organisations who are made responsible for archives, usually having had no previous contact with archivists and often having little understanding of what they do. The authors also skilfully describe the motives and perspectives of other groups that archivists encounter in their endeavours, notably records managers and users, thus underpinning their insights into the behaviour of archivists. Likewise, it is encouraging to see that the discussion on why information is recorded contains sections on 'The Impulse to Save' and 'The Impulse to Destroy'. Such human factors are often omitted in other introductory works which concentrate on enumerating record types and describing the technology

that enables them. Here, you are reminded that this is not a manual, but an introduction to archives written in a discursive style, displaying the breadth and depth of its authors' knowledge and of the archives profession. Although the examples are naturally predominantly American, the sources cited are wide-ranging and include Australian contributions to the professional literature, among them some published in this journal.

The final part, 'Archivists and the Challenges of New Worlds' looks at some of the main challenges of today, although most readers would surely think that postmodernism (see pp. 133-135) does not rank with the impact of national security concerns in the post-9/11 world (see pp. 137-139) as a problem for the profession. However, the emphasis on the necessity of archival advocacy is well-placed: '[t]he better archivists can explain their work, the more likely it will be that the public and policymakers will understand both the power of records and the need for professional administrators of those records' (p. 142). The two final short summaries, 'Recordkeeping in the Digital Era' and 'Professionalism', provide succinct arguments for the interdisciplinary nature of our present and future. The Bibliographic Essay would be very useful for students (and also for experienced practitioners who want to deepen their professional reading), although it is curious that the authors cite very few online sources, despite their sensitivity towards electronic records issues and the integration of the Internet into their worldview. Perhaps they wish to encourage students to master library searching skills while the physical library remains an important location for research. I would give the last word to libraries here - universities teaching archives and recordkeeping should have a copy of this book on their library shelves, as should major archival institutions.

Sigrid McCausland
Education Officer, Australian Society of Archivists

Niklaus Butikofer, Hans Hofman and Seamus Ross (eds), *Managing and Archiving Records in the Digital Era: Changing Professional Orientations*, Hier + jetzt, Verlag für Kultur und Geschichte, Baden, 2006. 144pp. ISBN 3 03919 019 9.

The publication presents a series of papers presented at a workshop organised by ERANET (Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network) in October 2004, at which a number of experts were invited to discuss six questions exploring the extent to which professions need to cooperate, merge or change in order to meet the challenges presented by the digital age. Though some time has passed between the workshop itself and the publication of papers, the opinions expressed are still as relevant today as then and the challenges raised are ones with which we are familiar, but as yet don't necessarily have answers.

The questions discussed revolve around how best to approach the technical, social, political and organisational challenges associated with the management and archiving of digital records: what new organisational or business models are needed in the future?; do our existing theoretical underpinning serve us in the digital age?; to what extent do we need to become cross disciplined? While we have been addressing all these questions, both technical and non-technical, for some time, they are nevertheless ones that we need to continue to discuss. The value of this publication is that it is always better to have a well defined problem prior to applying a solution. The authors do this by articulately presenting their views on the challenges facing us in managing and archiving digital records.

Themes and challenges raised by the authors include the need for intervention at creation in a digital environment if we want to manage and archive digital records, the challenges of ensuring authenticity of digital records over time, the fact that technology not only poses challenges but also offers opportunities previously not available to archivists in terms of access, retrieval, marketing and user interfaces. Emphasis is also given to discussion on whether the professions of records management and archives are a partnership or different professions in the digital age. Though the authors have differing opinions, Barbara Reed sums up the view of most by stating: 'I would strongly agree that record managers and archivists are different specialisations of the same discipline'.

The authors also generally agree that archivists will increasingly need to work within specialised, yet collaborative and cross-trained teams of information professionals to deal with the challenge of managing and archiving digital material and be able to meet user demand for quick and seamless access to information from a number of sources rather than from just one archives site. Maria Guercio, in her paper 'Managing and archiving records in the digital era: General remarks from the perspective of the Italian archival model', feels that 'Archivists can be either the strong or weak element in this process of transformation according to their capability as leaders, in the defining of standards and requirements, and in the design and certification of systems'.

Though many of the challenges raised have been discussed before, some are worthy of more discussion and probing. In particular, Barbara Reed's paper 'The Tradition and Position' is not only an excellent read, it also raises vital issues in relation to information versus records management, ingest versus create/capture and the role of distributed digital repositories.

However, the question posed that interested me the most was 'Are the existing archival paradigms adequate to meet the challenge of the new digital order?' Interestingly, the authors argue that the archival theoretical underpinning, that was developed to serve the profession in a paper world, is appropriate in a digital age. There is general agreement that the records management and archival principles we operate under now are as relevant to digital formats of records as they are to paper formats. It is more a case of procedures and processes changing, rather than archival principles. However, given that this volume purported to examine changing professional orientations in a digital age, I was disappointed that this topic had not been examined more deeply, given that Eric Ketelaar raised the challenge of the impact on archival theory of the disappearance of the 'original' record in the digital age, which he stated 'makes for a major paradigm shift in archival science'. I would have liked to have seen in a volume purporting to examine changing professional orientations in a digital age, a deeper examination of whether and how the digital issues we face challenge our theoretical framework and archival principles, for if it does, that would truly indicate a change in professional orientation.

In conclusion, the challenges and issues raised in the 2004 ERPANET workshop remain as relevant today as they were then, even though much

has been achieved in the intervening period. Hence, this volume is a good launching pad for further intensive navel gazing by the archives profession to identify whether, and what, changes are needed for the archives profession to orient itself as a viable body in the digital age. This volume is therefore a valuable contribution to an ongoing conversation that we must continue to ensure that as archivists we are not only skilled and equipped for the future, but that we have the theoretical framework needed to underpin our endeavours in managing and archiving the important bits and bytes for future generations.

Dagmar Parer

Ross Harvey, *Preserving Digital Materials*, KG Saur Verlag GmbH, Munich, 2005. xvi + 246pp. ISBN 3 598 11686 1. •98.00.

From the beginning the reader of this book is left in no doubt that the library and archival professions are far from relaxed and comfortable about addressing the concerns of preservation of digital materials. And why should they be, when 'preservation of digital materials is *the* single most critical issue faced by members of the library and recordkeeping professions'? (p. xi) Luckily this book is not stress-inducing, but quite the contrary, as the author reassuringly invites the reader to join him on the path to mapping the complexities of preservation in the digital era. The book does not purport to be exhaustive on the topic, it is a very readable slim volume at just over 250 pages, nor is it a do-it-yourself manual. Rather, it provides a distillation of contemporary principles, practices and policies that are in place both locally and internationally across a wide range of institutions. As such, the book serves as a good introduction to the field for the lay person and as a ready reference tool for practitioners already in the field.

In a relatively short period of time - just over a decade - a rich body of work on digital preservation has been produced by many fine minds. This is clearly evidenced by a Google search, which returns countless references to digital preservation. These would take days, if not months, to read. Dipping into this body of rapidly expanding work can be bewildering (the acronyms alone are worthy of a book!) It is anxiety inducing for the lay person grappling with the fundamental questions: why do we preserve digital materials?; what do we preserve?; how do we

preserve?; and how do we manage digital preservation? These four questions underpin the structure of Ross Harvey's book and provide a welcome and clear pathway through a complex field that is still very much evolving.

It is not unreasonable to seek to address the above questions by relying on the tried and tested paradigms that libraries, archives and recordkeepers have deployed through the decades to deal with information, records or artifacts in physical formats. However, as *Preserving Digital Materials* explores each question, Harvey argues that the old paradigms are inadequate to fully meet the challenges of effectively preserving and managing digital material. As an example, Harvey notes 'preservation, in the pre-digital paradigm, was usually applied retrospectively' (p. 10). However, in the digital era, such a strategy almost guarantees loss of content, context or structure, owing to software, hardware and format obsolescence. A quick glance at the table on page 39, which lists the expected usable life of some of the physical carriers of digital content, quickly dispels the notion that benign neglect or passive preservation is viable in the digital realm.

Harvey then moves on to a wide-ranging debate about how to determine what digital material is selected for long-term preservation, the role of traditional appraisal/selection criteria and the emergence of new approaches. Interestingly, Harvey states that the appraisal theory and practice of the archival profession has far greater relevance in the digital context than the selection criteria model of the library world. The emphasis of the archival profession on identifying significant records at the point of creation, or early in their life, is a major factor in ensuring that preservation and management strategies which guarantee ongoing access are implemented.

In the later part of the book, Harvey carefully dissects the digital preservation strategies themselves, considering the advantages and disadvantages of the various options. He notes that there is no one true solution. Instead 'the key lies in their effective combination' (p. 156). This is borne out by the six major case studies included in the appendix, which highlight the experiences of Australian organisations with varying resource bases, actively engaged in the management and preservation of digital material. In the final section of the book Harvey looks at management issues and concludes with the four major challenges faced by managers responsible for digital preservation: integrating digital

preservation into mainstream preservation work; funding it; recruiting and keeping appropriately skilled staff and the issue of scalability - establishing practices suitable for both large and small institutions.

If you have been waiting for the digital preservation 'silver bullet', this book will not provide your answer. What *Preserving Digital Materials* does offer is a guided tour of the complexities of digital preservation, without inducing anxiety, and an invitation to explore further, using the extensive bibliography. Harvey's book provides a snapshot of progress over the last decade, and that progress is impressive and set to escalate. Get this book so that ten years from now you can remind yourself of where we were.

Cornel Platzer

National Archives of Australia

Geoffrey Bolton, *In the service of the company: letters of Sir Edward Parry, Commissioner to the Australian Agricultural Company*. Volume I: December 1829 - June 1832.

Transcribed and edited by the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU Archives Program, 2005. ANU E Press. ISBN 1 920942 28 9 / 1 920942 29 7 (online). \$30.00.

Geoffrey Bolton has sketched the brief and turbulent career of William Barton as Accountant to the Australian Agricultural Company between 1827 and 1831, when he was dismissed following a series of quarrels. It was an unfortunate beginning to an Australian life, which was probably intended to be brief - just long enough to allow this youngest son of a London merchant family to make his fortune before going home, but which became a life-long migration to New South Wales. Barton emerges as a prickly, even a ridiculous character, fated to never quite prosper for long. He features often in the letters transcribed here, as Parry chides him, responds (generally politely and patiently) to his accusations, and finally sees him off the premises.

Does the story of these long-dead feuds and slights matter? Are not the stories of the Company's pastoral ventures, which continue to the present day, and with coal at Newcastle, much more important, as a major

contribution to the early history of capital in Australia? Not to speak of the displacement of the original owners of these domains? Well, probably they are, but I found the Barton/Parry correspondence completely engrossing. Eighteen years after his dismissal by the Company, Barton and his long-suffering wife Mary Louisa became parents for the eleventh time. That infant, Edmund, was to become Australia's first prime minister, a key figure in the achievement of Federation and a central figure in the first steps to the attainment of Australia's independence as a nation. Did his father bring him up with stories of Sir Edward's and the Company's intransigence? Is there a clue here to at least some part of the genesis of Barton's personal crusade to unite Australia's colonies, a passion which took this bright and personable young man to the greatest position in the land? Bolton does not venture on this speculation in his fine biography *Edmund Barton* (2000), although he offers an intriguing suggestion that Barton shared with his father mood swings that would today be diagnosed as a bipolar disorder, but such questions about the Barton family leap from the pages of this estimable collection of letters. It is a reminder that the full archival record of our prime ministers and their formation as parliamentary leaders is distributed through many archives and other collections across Australia and the world.

The fragile letter-book transcribed here for the first time by Dr Pennie Pemberton makes a wealth of such material available. There are dozens of starting points for speculation, and possible contributions to a host of stories of New South Wales in the early nineteenth century. Parry's energetic hands-on management of the company and his wide ambitions in an era when the great chartered enterprises of earlier centuries still offered potent models for British entrepreneurial capital become vividly apparent. Still establishing its operations in Australia - its million-acre land grant taken up only in 1826 - in 1830 Parry was canvassing the possibility of exporting coal and horses to India and coal to Mauritius. This was an era of globalisation, long before the term became fashionable. To merchant capitalists such as Parry, the whole world was a potential market. After all, much of it was now ruled by Europe, and the tide of Empire seemed unstoppable.

A small part of the extensive archives of the Australian Agricultural Company held by the Noel Butlin Archives, this volume is attractively printed and well-indexed. It would be useful to know whether it is printed on archival paper, and I dislike the so-called perfect binding of such

paperbacks intensely. I wonder if the transcription will last as long as the original? However it can be downloaded free from ANU's E Press site at <<http://epress.anu.edu.au>> or ordered as a print-on-demand copy for AUD\$30, along with Volume II (1832-34). This is a superb contribution to the understanding of the history of the nineteenth century in Australia, and a forceful reminder of the great significance of the collections at the Noel Butlin Archives Centre at the Australian National University.

Michael Richards
Old Parliament House, Canberra

Shaune Lakin, *Contact: Photographs from the Australian War Memorial collection*, Australian War Memorial, Canberra, 2006. 283pp. ill. ISBN 0 97519 046 6HB. \$84.95, softcover also available.

Books about institutional photograph collections are similar to the archival materials they house, in that they represent the politics of their construction as much as what it is they seek to represent. Institutions shape meaning of the materials they hold through a range of collecting, documentation, exhibition and publication practices. As such, analysing each of these forms reveals information about the state of thinking and politics within the institution. So, not only is it important to look at the book itself, but to try to unlock possibilities or at least speculate as to *why* a book is like it is.

Warfare and photography are natural partners in that they share a common language, for example 'point and shoot', and like tourism photography, war photography collapses the space between a distant theatre of war and the sitting rooms at home.

This book is self-described as 'the first, authoritative survey of the Memorial's photographic collection and of the history of Australian war photography'. The preface of this substantial book outlines the intent of Charles Bean, the founder of the War Memorial, that the collections were to be created and preserved to tell the story and commemorate the history of the participation of Australian men and women at war. Over time, photographs from this incredible collection have also been used to describe, reflect and remind us of a particular part of a national culture.

The book begins with promise - an extraordinarily sentimental photograph by Frank Hurley of an Australian light horseman collecting anemones - which challenges many perceptions of photography, manhood, and war at a time when colour photography is rare. The book ends with a discussion on a perceived shift in nature of conflict photography from it having been photojournalism/documentary to it becoming art through photographic style, the reducing scope for publication, information technology developments and exhibition practices. In between these two ends, the text brings together enough history of the conflicts and the administrative context and politics of the production of photographs on the battlefronts to provide context for the approximately two hundred photographs from most post-photographic theatres of war. It also provides links in the text to other photographs on the War Memorial's website which further exposes the collection to the keen researcher.

As a history of war photography in Australia this is a useful text. A predominant theme which ricochets through the book is the understanding by key administrators that photographs act as a filter shaping the way that war is perceived, described and documented, and therefore have to be carefully managed. The tensions surrounding ideas about photography and its role in shaping ideas and emotions about war as records/evidence and as propaganda are played out in different ways in different conflicts, and at times are a source of conflict with those employed to create the photographs. This provides useful context in which the official photographic archive was created.

However, as an authoritative survey of the collection, this book has some curious inflections. The first sentence in the book 'they are an impressive body of men' (p. 1) is a portent for some of what follows. The role of the Australian War Memorial is both documentary and commemorative and photographs are placed centrally in both these functions. That many different kinds of photographs were taken by professional and freelance photographers, by service personnel and by nurses, which all make up a mosaic of perspectives on the experience of war, is discussed, as is the commissioning by the Memorial of photographs of contemporary military activities overseas. However, the book contains predominantly documentary and propaganda photographs in theatres of war, and also discusses how they are used in subsequent wars to engender national sympathies. The most powerful representation of war from my perspective

is the pair of self-portraits taken by a soldier before and after a patrol showing traumatic effects of war service, and is a good example of the descriptive captioning style in this book. In terms of commemoration, there is one photograph showing soldiers at the grave of the first soldier to die on active duty in the Sudan in 1885. Curiously, while photographs are used as part of the Memorial's and the nation's commemorations - for example it is stated that photographs are now etched on memorials - there are no photographs of the act of national or community commemoration relating to war in Australia including at memorials, ANZAC day marches or even building the War Memorial itself.

There are some other silences in the selection of photographs in this book. There are several photographs of nurses, but there are only two landscape photographs *by* one nurse, leaving women's voices of their experiences of the theatre of war for the most part suppressed. Similarly, there are four photographs of Aboriginal people (a wedding during World War II identified as Indigenous in the index but not the text, a 1942 corroboree, a contemporary photograph of member of the Norforce patrol, and an Indigenous soldier in Korea), yet no photographs are identified as being taken *by* Aboriginal people.

More broadly, the selection of photographs shows the very male domain of warfare, yet the experience of war has always been more than this in Australia. Photographs of troop departures and a return parade are seen, but there are only two photographs of home front propaganda and both are for WWII, there are none of the preparations of war at home or the war effort in Australia, air raid shelters, overseas or Australian soldiers in Australia, the theatre of war on home turf in Broome and Darwin, war brides, and the list goes on. Any national story of war also has to include dissent, and while there is a photograph of WWI deserters, and of soldiers voting in the second conscription referendum in 1917, there are no photographs of protests about war, which is etched onto the memory of many who were stirred into action by the photographs now reproduced in this book. If this book is an authoritative survey of the Memorial's photograph collection it has to be asked, on whose authority have these kinds of choices been made? Whether the choice in selecting this particular view of war is deliberate is open to speculation without talking to those involved, and making the politics of the production of such works a project in its own right. One can only hope that the messages which come through in the selection of photographs represent the current

politics of the institution and the production of the book, rather than the collecting activities of the institution.

The presentation of the book is interesting. It makes a clear distinction between the politics of production of news photographs and photographs 'for the historic record', and there is considerable discussion about the reproduction of photographs as propaganda. However, there are few reproductions showing the *use* of a photograph for this purpose. Yet almost in complete contrast to the original politics of production, the photographs are reproduced with a uniform beauty that gives the photographs a very bland but 'high art' feel. This tension between the very functional context of production and their reproduction in this book is to an extent bridged by the style of captions which contain useful contextual information on the photographer and photograph. But this book could have been much more visually exciting had reproductions of photographs from a range of formats been used which also demonstrate how the captions used in the press shaped the meaning of the photographs, thereby demonstrating the purposes for creation, and ongoing histories and uses of these images in shaping national imaginations.

A discussion about the shift in style of the photographs from documentary to art appears in some ways to lend justification for the presentation and style of the book. All but two photographs are reproduced as raw photographs, and there is only one photograph which is reproduced showing real signs of wear and tear - as an object with a history of human interaction and emotion relating directly to its content as a wedding photograph (of an Aboriginal couple). There are no reproductions of non-photographic materials to provide evidence of associations between formats, photographers' notebooks, soldiers' diaries, marks from censors, or the kinds of cameras used. Isolating photographs from all other formats lends credence to the belief that they are seen for their content alone rather than context providing meaning, as art objects in their own right, and therefore appears to reflect the discussion about the shift from documentary to art photography.

Having discussed at length the changing ideas about photography which influenced their production in wartime, it would have been useful to illuminate this historical discussion with a contemporary interpretation of the thinking behind the Memorial's collections. Similarly, it could have addressed the idea that photographs are always constructions and never

simple reflections, and that meanings are imbued over time and by those who interact with the photographs, as institutions and individuals. Instead of this, there is a reflection on trends in conflict photography in shifting towards being seen as art through exhibition practices of institutions and the market for such works. But why are these photographs perceived as art by major cultural institutions; what does isolating the photographs from other material forms do to the evidential values of the photographs? Does it make the content of individual works more sacred than the stories that the archival collections can tell?

After reading this book, I am left wondering who is the intended audience? The writing is at its best when discussing ideas about art rather than photography and a better edit of the text could have had removed repetition. The style of the book lends an air of the sacred to the photographs. While the text is interesting and covers new ground on the history of Australian war photography, it is at times laboured and overly academic for a general audience. Short biographies of the photographers would have also been useful at the end of the book, as would a history of the Memorial's collecting, and some sense of what the collection within the institution actually looks like. The index is more interesting for what it does not include than as a discovery aid.

However, my lasting concern relates to understanding the origins of the ways that such authoritative institutional publications shape public ideas about the subject matter of the collections, and the values accorded to the specific forms of materials. There are many works which present complex and diverse understandings of war and commemoration using archives including those of the War Memorial. Nevertheless, the staff at the Memorial have to tread an interpretive minefield between a range of contemporary political and military interests and their broader professional purview, and I can only speculate that comments I have made are likely scars from having to wend a tortuous political way through these forces. Perhaps those selecting the photographs chose to represent this visually on the cover with a photograph showing men in single file following in each other's footsteps over a sand dune. Creating institutional works such as this which please the Institution and a broader audience is no easy feat, and I have pointed to possible origins of some of my concerns. That being said, through reproducing a selection of photographs and providing a history of Australian war photography, this book opens up the photograph collections of the Memorial to a broader

set of eyes and minds. In the longer term it will hopefully stimulate further research on the photographs in the context of the other equally rich archival collections.

Joanna Sassoon
Edith Cowan University

Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler and Diane Vogt-O-Connor et al, *Photographs: Archival care and management*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2006. 529pp., ill. ISBN 1 931666 17 2. US\$84.95 (SAA Members US\$59.95).

Photographs present as much of a challenge to manage archivally as to unlock their rich research potential. As a form, photographs are valued by researchers mostly as illustration and therefore are understood as individual items for their aesthetic values and information content. However, in bulk, and in association with other forms of material, photographs have extraordinary research potential. One of the main challenges facing collection managers is to demonstrate to decision makers that the archival values of photographs are worthy of documentation and preservation. However, with most researchers wanting individual items, the cost versus the value of documenting and managing photographs as archives is a rarely won battle.

This book rises to many challenges relating to the management of photographic archives and is an update of the 1984 edition of this book. Not least, this book attempts to introduce how to manage the specific format of photographs, while including standard archival strategies for each stage of the work. In terms of audience, the challenge for this book is that it has to be of value to organisations of different scale and scope and with staff with a range of capacities. And it succeeds in this in several ways.

Firstly, running through this book is a solid foundation of archival principles - provenance and original order - and the reader is introduced to ways of developing systems to appraise, organise, preserve and access whole collections which are underpinned by these core principles. Secondly, the authors recognise that organisations of different scale and scope require a range of options to assist in decision making and setting

priorities. Risk based decision-making is a feature of this book. While occasionally it lends itself to the more litigious US context, it recognises that most decisions relating to the management and care of archival materials are undertaken in less than ideal circumstances. Thirdly, this book presents the idea that managing archival photographs involves more than simply preserving the physical object, and that context shapes meaning.

Beyond the useful chapters on how to understand and manage the physical object, this book brings in another foundation - what is important to know about photographs before you can manage them. To this end there is a useful chapter on reading and researching photographic materials. Suffusing the appraisal and accessioning chapters are ideas about the 'values and uses of archival photographs'. The foundation principles of provenance and original order, which are introduced at appraisal, are carried through documentation to access. Almost at the centre of the over five hundred page book is a chapter on integrating preservation and archival procedures and this outlines the way that preservation is incorporated into various phases of archival work. The chapter on legal and ethical issues is interesting in terms of concept but naturally has a US legal bent and the chapter on outreach covers useful ground for thought and activities.

A book with such a broad ambit is likely to be used as a major reference source, and is therefore written in an accessible style, and by a range of authors. It contains very useful examples, tips and advice, and forms for the administration of photographs which can easily be applied to the Australian context. And the book blends some contemporary theory with ways to interrogate materials and processes in a covert and useful way. However, on occasions it stumbles in terms of the flow of ideas from beginning to end, and its balance is much more on the 'how to', rather than raising questions relating to how to think about, or why do we do things the way we do. What is important is that the idea that a photograph is merely an illustration is undermined throughout this book, by the word archival in its title and through normalising photographs into standard archival processes and thinking in most of the book. This is the book's great value. As such, it is hoped that this will encourage a change in how photographic archives are managed through the introduction of archival principles.

In updating this book there are new illustrations and much more in-depth discussion and advice. However, the chapter which brings this book into the twenty-first century, the one on digitisation, is the disappointment. This chapter could have built on all the introductions of archival thinking behind the processes which have been discussed in preceding chapters in terms of appraising, documenting and preserving the archival values of photographs. However, it bookends with the preservation of the physical object chapter more than how to bring all the archival values which to date have been documented into the digital world. While it raises issues about trusted digital repositories and issues of costing long-term digital sustainability, it does not look at how digitisation can preserve and enhance archival values of photographs.

This important book fills a particular niche in the administration of photographic archives. Nevertheless, it still leaves room for a work which explains why we do things the way we do, and for one that addresses the challenges of documenting and preserving photographs at their time of creation rather than when they are consigned to the dustbin of history. It brings together a large volume of information in an accessible format, and provides guidance on access to an extensive range of sources on the Web. It is hoped that it will raise the practice of managing archival photographs in all kinds of repositories, from the well-funded national institutions to the local and volunteer historical society. Read carefully, this book, with all its breadth and depth, provides an opportunity to build an understanding of how to manage photograph collections archivally and to shift our professional practice to a solid archival footing.

Joanna Sassoon
Edith Cowan University

Waverly Lowell and Tawny Ryan Nelb, *Architectural Records: managing design and construction records*. Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2006. 197+40pp. ISBN 1 931666 19 9. US\$62.00.

This new book from the Society of American Archivists is authored by two of the acknowledged US experts on architectural records, and is intended as a manual for archivists who have the responsibility of caring for them. The authors prefer the term 'design records' to 'include those

created by architecture, landscape architecture, and industrial design firms, and those generated by related processes such as engineering and construction' (p. 2 note 2). It is a very US centric book, starting (at the citation above) with omission of the public sector as an acknowledged creator of design records.

The successive chapters cover: A brief history of western architectural practice; creation of design records, types of project records; appraisal; arrangement and description; preservation administration; identification and preservation maintenance of common visual media and supports; research and use.

The illustrations are well chosen and very well reproduced on the alkaline art-paper pages. As well as black and white illustrations throughout the book supplementing the text, there is a forty page special section of colour illustrations. They are an integral part of the explanations, examples and advice and do the job very well indeed. I found the illustrations of obsolete and current CAD processes and renderings in particular one of the most valuable parts of the book.

As will have been discerned from the list of Chapter headings above, the contents fall under two broad headings: recognition and understanding of the record creation processes and record types; and advice about how to manage them in archives programs.

The chapters on records processes and types are likely to be the more useful for an Australian audience. Brushing over Chapter One, which hops (understandably but not very usefully) from eighteenth-century France to the American colonies, the chapters on creation processes and types of records are practical, clear and useful, and well worth reading even for those with considerable experience in this field of archives. The paradigm is the private firm rather than the public sector design/drafting office, or the regulatory authority (such as municipal building departments), but the commentary is valid and useful across the board. Discussion is not limited to graphic design records (plans and the like) but covers also textual (paper and electronic) records created by the design process. Basic advice (what is a signature block, the difference between a section and an elevation) and more advanced advice (types of documentation typically found in project files, and business relationships and contractual deals underlying typical design and construction projects) are delivered seamlessly.

The chapters on managing these records as archives are in general less relevant to an Australian readership. For example, the discussion on appraisal starts off with a useful if basic discussion about the general factors affecting appraisal decisions (the life cycle is alive and well here) and the thrust is towards collection building. The arrangement and description chapter similarly is oriented mainly towards treating an acquired collection (say from a design firm or prominent individual architect) and ensuring all records in the collection are arranged and described in an integrated way.

The conservation chapters contain much that is useful for identifying physical formats and diagnosing actual and potential problems, but little that would help managers of very large collections (such as those accumulated under regulatory regimes) for whom access to hands-on conservation facilities is limited. Passive conservation measures, for example, are not discussed. The discussion of the preservation of CAD digital materials is a worthwhile read for archivists who otherwise lack exposure to the evolving field of digital solution strategies.

The reference and use chapter looks at problems caused by the unwieldy physical format of plans and drawings, and access issues such as intellectual property (more relevant to Australians since the Free Trade Agreement) and the practicality and desirability of controlling subsequent use made of records to which access has been given.

This is a worthwhile addition to the professional library of any archivist with responsibilities for design records, but it is a foundation manual not an advanced discussion. I will certainly be encouraging the other archivists at the City to dip into it.

Mark Stevens
City of Sydney Archives

Peter J Tyler, *Humble and Obedient Servants: The Administration of New South Wales, Vol. II, 1901-1960*. UNSW Press, Sydney, 2006. 267pp. ISBN 0 86840 824 7. \$59.95.

This volume completes a two part history of the New South Wales public service, commissioned by the State Records Authority and sponsored in

part by the New South Wales Government's Sesquicentenary of Responsible Government Committee. Volume I by Hilary Golder, covering 1842-1900, was published in 2005 and noticed in *Archives and Manuscripts* November 2006 (p. 207). Like its predecessor, this book is handsomely cased and all in all is what would once have been called a weighty tome.

The organisation of the book is chronological, with an initial chapter reflecting on the situation of the public service in 1901, then subsequent chapters progressing through eras defined by successive premiers: for example 'Labor Gains Office: Premiers McGowan and Holman 1910-1920'; 'Building for the Future: Premiers Cahill and Heffron 1952-1960' and so on. The use of break-out boxes to provide supplementary information is continued from Vol. I, and is a useful and attractive feature. Illustrations are integrated into the text and are well chosen and effective.

Although the title mentions the administration of New South Wales, this is not an administrative history. It aspires to be a high-level general history of the public administration of the State, with emphasis on the personnel tools at the disposal of the government, but I think even this ambition is incompletely realised. Tyler focuses largely on the Public Service Board (PSB) and its attitudes to and methods of control of the larger public service. He does not examine other agencies or their functions in any sustained way.

There are useful discussions of administrative dynamics, many of which resonate today, such as experiences with super-departments, and the ongoing presence of political patronage in senior appointments. For example, the fallout of the Lang government's amalgamation of transport administration in the early 1930s (pp. 145-146). But these are not sustained, partly because the era by era framework adopted does not allow for extended discussion of a theme. The contrast with Hilary Golder's volume is significant here. The broadly chronological framework adopted is subordinate to the teasing out of key strands of ongoing importance (such as frontier settlement and the logic it imposed on nineteenth-century New South Wales governments and the public service, and the *modus operandi* of key hands-on operators like Henry Parkes).

The narrow view taken of the public service - and through it of government functions - also impacts. One of the main themes that can be wrestled from the book is the involvement (entanglement if you prefer) by the

government with new business activities. Post-World War II social programs are the most obvious examples, and are explored in useful detail. But others are hit-or-miss because the book omits functions and agencies not under the umbrella of the PSB. Trawling was, so there is an enlightening section on the government fishing department that operated 1915-1923. But there is no attention to how or why the government got into the electricity generation and distribution business in 1935, or how and with what policy and political objectives it was managed. And this because the fishermen were ruled by the PSB but the electrical people were a quango. One can understand the need to keep the book within bounds, and PSB rule provides a consistent if arbitrary organising principle, but really, wires before whitebait I feel.

Tyler is an engaging writer and carries the reader along. He is good at explaining complex issues clearly, and has a deft touch for inserting the telling anecdote. The limitations of the book are a pity, but it is a good read and, with its companion, will be a foundation volume for public historians and their ilk (including archivists) in the State.

Mark Stevens
City of Sydney Archives

John Bender and Michael Marrinan (eds), *Regimes of Description: In the Archive of the Eighteenth Century*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California, 2005. 304pp. 15 illustrations. ISBN 0 8047 4742 3. US\$24.95.

By its title this collection of essays would appear to contain enough relevant key words to qualify it for review in an archival journal. However, on closer examination of the table of contents it would appear that the terms 'regimes' and the 'eighteenth century' give a truer indication of the focus of the work. The role of changing, competing and interacting world views in the age of enlightenment provided the back drop for the meeting of scholars that led to this publication. Although published in 2005, the works captured in this volume date back to a meeting held at Stanford University, California in January 1996 under the sponsorship of the Stanford Seminar on Enlightenment and Revolution. The title of the original conference was also *Regimes of Description*.

This is not a publication for the faint-hearted archivist or those not prepared to do some substantive thinking in response to the scholarly output from eleven of the presenters at the original meeting. It is perhaps a timely reminder that in an age of almost instant access to vast quantities of information there are still scholars and scholarly processes that allow time for in-depth research, thought, reflection and high quality expression of ideas. The publication of this edition took a leisurely nine years but this is not evident from the work itself. The quality of the articles speak to a timelessness, a considered reflection on the nature of human enquiry and the development of intellectual practice that will ensure its value well into the twenty-first century.

Interestingly, the original conference had as one of its aims 'the archaeology of the nature and history of description in the digital age'. That is, it sought to gain insights into contemporary descriptive practices that utilised digital technologies in the sciences and the arts right down to the level of binary data representing things like the human genetic code. From this perspective this collection of scholars from the postmodern era were perhaps attempting to reflect on the core challenges that digital technologies were bringing to the regimes of description in the quest for human knowledge especially in science, the arts, linguistics and history. This is a field that should be of interest to archivists dealing with contemporary records. The message is clear that the context in which records may need to be assessed is broader, in an historical sense, than could be reasonably expected to be understood by those working within the realm (paradigm) in which descriptions are made and records are created. With perhaps just one or two exceptions the essays do not address this theme directly but this does not detract from the insights gained from the detailed examination of descriptive practices from a period two hundred to three hundred years past. In his detailed review of this book, GM Adkins notes and addresses the lack of 'a concluding essay to bring together eleven unique essays into an easily intelligible whole'.¹ In his conclusion he reflects on the paradox of mereology that *Regimes of Description* confronts, namely the reflexive relationships between the parts and the whole, and consciously acknowledges, in the spirit of the book, that 'In rendering their particularity intelligible as a whole, I have ignored much of the sophistication and erudition that makes them unique'.

But to return to the text, the authors' specialty areas ranged from history of science to linguistics, political economy, art, literature, architecture, and aesthetics. As the blurb suggests, the essays

... are broadly concerned with the hermeneutic constraints of description - textual, visual, and otherwise - as they manifested themselves in the 18th century. The essays consider such issues as cultural and gendered specificity of scientific descriptions of nature, disparities between part and whole in the description of works of art, and pre-Kantian attention to medium and message in aesthetic description.

Although *Regimes of Descriptions* presents itself in the language of postmodernism, which may initially alienate those who find this particular form of expression off-putting, the essays, as a rule, are well constructed narratives that introduce the reader to detailed and complex worlds which defy the simplistic interpretations so often associated the labels 'pre-modern', 'modernism' and 'postmodernism'. The interpretation of the world and the way it is described and recorded is a fundamental activity that can be seen in cultures and societies of all types. In the Western intellectual tradition the Age of Enlightenment and the associated period of modernity are often characterised by the influence of emerging scientific practice and its reliance on reductionism and the detailed study and therefore descriptions of parts, of detail, of the specific, in a mode that attempted to approach objectivity, but which tended to avoid dealing with the complexity of the whole (whatever that might be). However, as these essays reveal there was no simplistic over-arching world-view (hegemony) that constrained the interpretative (hermeneutic) activities of the time but a dynamic diversity of practice and intricacies of thought (dialectic) that endeavoured to make sense of the complexity of life.

The connection with the digital age may not be immediately obvious but the challenges posed by computer technologies could be seen as analogous to the challenges posed by the new ways of thinking that came with the age of enlightenment. In the *Archives of the Eighteenth Century* the records, in which the descriptions were embedded, were predominantly paper-based. This technology was stable and well tested. Indeed, mental health patient registers of the 1520s and child welfare records of the early twentieth century were recorded using essentially

identical technologies. Contrast that with computer technologies and systems that are changing on an almost yearly basis. However, what does not change is the need to retain descriptions that can be interpreted both now and in the future. It is in this area that *Regimes of Descriptions* gives us insights into what are the essential human elements that may transcend intellectual fashions (and technologies).

The contributors to this volume, listed below, are drawn from what appears a fairly select group of scholars from Germany and the United States of America. Which begs the question, why scholars from other cultures and continents were not engaged in this discourse? The themes appear to be of universal interest but much of the investigation is into European activities in the age of enlightenment and it would appear that much key work was done in German or by Germans. Does the language of enquiry, in particular German, itself permit the analysis attempted by these scholars? Does it offer clarity of thought and a mode of expression conducive to understanding modernism and the postmodern phenomena? These questions themselves form the foundations of the scholarly framework in which they work and it is this reflexivity that makes this work at once so engaging and so challenging.

The contributors are:

- John Bender and Michael Marrinan, 'Introduction'.
- Lorraine Daston, 'Description by Omission: Nature Enlightened and Obscured'.
- Londa Shiebinger, 'Nature's Unruly Body: The Limits of Scientific Description'.
- Jürgen Trabant, 'Mithridates in Paradise: Describing Languages in a Universalistic World'.
- Mary Poovey, 'Between Political Arithmetic and Political Economy'.
- Wolfgang Klein, 'Problems of Description in Art: Realism'.
- Elaine Scarry, 'Imagining Flowers: Perceptual Mimesis (Particularly Delphinium)'.
- Wolfgang Ernst, 'Not Seeing the *Laocoön*: Lessing in the Archive of the Eighteenth Century'.

- Alex Potts, 'Disparities between Part and Whole in the Description of Works of Art'.
- Peter Hanns Reill, 'Between Mechanism and Romantic *Naturphilosophie*: Vitalizing Nature and Naturalizing Historical Discourse in the Late Enlightenment'.
- Anthony Vidler, 'Transparency and Utopia: Constructing the Void from Pascal to Foucault'.
- David E Wellbery, 'Aesthetic Media: The Structure of Aesthetic Theory before Kant'.

Gavan McCarthy

Australian Science and Technology Heritage Centre
University of Melbourne

Endnote

¹Review by G Matthew Adkins, 'A New Archaeology of the Enlightenment', Miami University. H-France Review. vol. 5, no. 99, September 2005. ISSN 1553 9172. Online at <<http://www.h-france.net/vol5reviews/adkins.html>>.