

International News Notes

Edited by Evelyn Wareham

All reports were prepared for the 12th general conference of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA), Nouméa, 1-6 October 2007.

Report on the Federated States of Micronesia's Archives and Historic Preservation Unit

Correspondent: Betty C. Williams

Introduction

The Federated States of Micronesia (FSM) is comprised of four island states, namely, Kosrae, Pohnpei, Chuuk, and Yap in the Central Caroline Islands. Pohnpei State presently serves as the capital of the nation. It has three levels of government: national, state and municipal. There are four state governments (Yap, Chuuk, Pohnpei, and Kosrae) and several municipal governments. Each government has its own constitution but the FSM Constitution is supreme over all other constitutions in the FSM. There are six indigenous languages spoken in the FSM namely, the Yapese, Chuukese, Pohnpeian, Nukuoro, Kapingamarangi, and Kosraean languages.

The FSM has a government-to-government agreement with the United States that is referred to as the Compact of the Free Association. The Compact is the main source of revenue for both government operation and infrastructure projects. The Joint Economic Management Committee (JEMCO), an entity with two members from the FSM and three from the US, oversees the budget and expenditure of the Compact Sector funds to ensure that all Compact funds are used to fulfil the FSM Strategic Development Plan.

The FSM National Archives is located in Pohnpei State. There are presently no archival services or operations in the Pohnpei, Chuuk and Kosrae state governments. Yap State Government has an Office of Archives and Records Management, which operates independently of the National Archives. The remaining archives service in the FSM is located at the College of Micronesia, also in Pohnpei State. The National Archives and the College of Micronesia archives collaborate and coordinate our archiving efforts. We also establish and maintain a National Archives for the FSM at the College of Micronesia, as the depository for documents and other articles of historic or cultural significance and to make them available to scholars and others interested in researching the history and cultures of the FSM. The focus of this report is on the FSM National Archives.

This report outlines the status of archival services in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM). It includes some information on available archival resources and on progress in archival development in the FSM. This report additionally addresses archival problems in the Federated States of Micronesia. Along with other members of the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA), the Federated States of Micronesia hopes that PARBICA can develop measures and projects through which regional archival services can be improved.

Background and basis of archival operation

The history and basis of operation of the present Federated States of Micronesia National Archives go back to the work done by the archives and records management staff of the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands (TTPI). In 1981-88, this group gathered materials and microfilmed government documents of the TTPI and others. Through this work, 2200 rolls of microfilm (16 mm and 35 mm), nearly 20 000 print photographs, audio and video tapes, slides and movies were assembled and indexed by the archival project staff. This collection has come to be known as the Trust Territory Archives Collection (TT Collection).

Two sets of microfilm of this collection exist, one in the Hamilton Library's Pacific Collection at the University of Hawaii and one at the US National Archives in Washington DC. The Hamilton Library provided a complete set of the TT microfilm collection to the newly formed FSM national

government. This collection is presently housed in the office of the Archives and Historic Preservation Unit.

The Trust Territory archives collection is the foundation of the present FSM National Archives. The basis of or impetus for operation of the National Archives is integrally linked to the archival work and collections of the former Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands. In 1979, Public Law 1-48, which became Title 26 of the FSM Codes (Historical Sites and Antiquities), was enacted by the FSM Congress. Section 204 (7) of Title 26 stipulates that an FSM National Archives is to be established and maintained. The same law also mandates the establishment of an Institute of Micronesian History and Culture, which would oversee the operation of the National Archives.

The Institute has yet to be formally established and operational. At present the relatively small office of Archives and Historic Preservation minimally assumes some functions of the Institute.

In 1986, the FSM National Archives became operational. It was a small operation in the national government's Public Information Office. In 1988, the archives and historic preservation programs were combined. As a combined office, it became a Division under the Administrative Services agency of the national government. During the early 1990s, the Division of Archives and Historic Preservation was downgraded to a unit within the largest department of the national government, the Department of Health, Education, and Social Affairs (HESA). This Department presently has three Divisions, namely, the Divisions of Health, Education, and Social Affairs. The Archives and Historic Preservation Unit is under the Division of Social Affairs.

We have affiliations with all of the agencies of the national government and the four FSM States Historic Preservation Offices and the libraries in each of the FSM states. We also have affiliations with UNESCO, PARBICA, the Pacific Islands Museums Association (PIMA), the Pacific Islands Association of Libraries and Archives (PIALA) and the Institute of Museums and Library Services (IMLS, a US federal program).

Accommodation and buildings

The FSM National Archives has numerous challenges. One of the most urgent of these is the lack of sufficient accommodation and space for archiving operations. At present our archiving operations are confined to one small room (c 6 metres x 6 metres) located on the second floor of the building known as the Central Facilities. This floor of the building was built for the FSM Congress library and we are fortunate to get one small room of this floor to use. The first floor of the building is used for conferences, the Immigration and Labor's Office, the Palikir Station Post Office, and the Historic Preservation Office. There is no building (or larger section of a building) built specifically for archival purposes.

The room is used for microfilm processing, an office and as a reading room. A computer and a scanner were funded by IMLS. A reader/printer is also located in the room. A number of metal filing cabinets for the storage of our microfilm rolls are located in the room in addition to our equipment. The documents (files) brought to us from the other national government agencies for microfilming are stored in regular cardboard boxes. We do not have archival boxes. These boxes of files are also stored in the room while we do our microfilming work on them. After this, the files are transferred to a warehouse where they are stored. The storage conditions in the warehouse are less than ideal. There is no air conditioning in the building and the documents are not systematically arranged while in storage.

We are continuing to ask our government leaders for a larger space for our archiving operations. Several requests to this effect have been submitted to our President's office during the course of 2007 and we are hopeful that our requests will be favourably considered.



Central Facilities, FSM National Government, Palikir, Pohnpei

Staffing and training needs

The FSM National Archives has one Microfilm Evaluator who additionally serves as an administrator and a technician. During the early years of the archiving operations, we had more staff including one evaluator and three microfilm operators. Due to a decrease in our local funding support over the years, we currently have one Microfilm Evaluator who is doing the archiving operations.

The last archives training course held in the Federated States of Micronesia was in 2001. We need to have the same training again. The last training covered a broad-spectrum of archival activity and was referred to as the FSM Archival Training Institute Workshop. It was conducted by Dr. Peter Orlovich and was extremely informative and useful.

The major portion of the archiving work done at the National Archives pertains to the microfilming of government documents. We also assist the public in the use of the information stored in the TT archives collection.

Thus, any training in the use of microfilming equipment and relevant computer hardware and software is needed. Training in the management of archival records is most needed now.



Trust Territory Collections

The National Archives has limited access to such professional literature as monographs, journals and serials. We also have limited Internet access, but we are starting to make use of the professional and relevant information we can get through the websites available to us.

Current records management

We would like to improve on our current records management system. We presently organize our records in accordance with a Files System Manual developed over ten years ago. The information in the manual was based on records management publications of other countries, especially on the information from the US National Archives and Record Administration. The records retention and disposal schedule for the Federated States of Micronesia is the subject of the FSM National Government Policy No. 10. In general, the Policy indicates that the greatest portion of our inactive files should eventually be disposed of or destroyed while a small segment of our records should be permanently kept. In

addition to the Policy, there are instructions on the filing, retention and disposition schedule in the Files System Manual referred to above.

In addition to other duties and responsibilities, the Microfilm Evaluator of the Archives and Historic Preservation Unit is responsible for the following: a) Analyzing, developing, coordinating and installing records management procedures; b) Preserving and microfilming the records documenting the Government's programs and functions.

The most needed action in this area is to revisit and revise FSM Policy No. 10 and the Files System Manual. This would need additional financial support and staff for our office.

Records held in custody

We have in our holdings documents, photographs and maps. There are no slide pictures or movies. The majority of our holdings are government documents. A very small portion is comprised of private documents. We normally do our estimate of the collection size by number of pages. It is, however, difficult now for us to give an approximate number of pages of the collection we have now.

Use of archives

During the last two years, the number of people using the archives, especially the TT microfilm collection, steadily increased. We expect that this will continue to be the trend in the years ahead. The FSM government employees and officials also use the archives when they seek information on land tenure or ownership, personnel and other topics. Most frequently the government agencies deposit their inactive files for us to microfilm and scan and dispose of or retain. Academic researchers from the US, Japan and some of the European countries have also visited and used our archival collections.

For the people who use the archives to obtain information, we simply allow them to study the information in the room or in the adjacent library and copy the information they need. A person is not allowed to take anything out of the room or the building. Copies of document can be made. These are some common sense practices we use, but have not put in writing. Access and custody policies have yet to be established. We are currently working on these.

Conservation requirements

The government of the Federated States of Micronesia recognises that modern methods of recordkeeping such as microfilming, computerising and viable filing system increase the efficiency and productivity of workers by reducing the time spent searching for and using records. It also recognises that recordkeeping is costly. Over ten years ago, the FSM National government strongly favoured disposal of all government documents that are not needed and not current (inactive files). This is to be done on continuous and regular basis. This continues to be position of the government. However, the records that are supposed to be retained on a permanent basis are stacking up now and we need to address how we can manage and conserve these non-renewable records. The FSM National Archives is aware of this challenge and has begun to initiate and coordinate activities to address it.

Presently all our equipment for reproduction of microfilm and larger documents, such as books or monographs, are not in operation. Even when they are in operation, the demand for reprographic services in the FSM is minimal. We, therefore, do not presently have regulations for reproduction work. We allow people to copy information from the microfilm with the use of our Reader/Printer. This is not often done.

Promotional activities

The Archives and Historic Preservation Unit is required to submit to our Department and on to the President's Office quarterly and semi-annual accomplishment reports. These reports inform the leaders and other national government agencies of what is being done and what goes on in the archives. These reports can also be submitted to other non-governmental agencies that inquire about archival activities. Through such reports we promote our archival activities in a limited way.

We currently do not have lectures, exhibitions, publications, and websites for our Unit and in particular our archival work and collections.

Internet

We have email and limited World Wide Web access. The staff of the archives operations can now use our office computers to send out and receive email. There is a computer used for archival purposes, but it does

not have Internet and email. We hope to be hooked up in several months depending on how much funding we have. Recently, we started using the Internet to find information and addresses of companies from which we can order such supplies and equipment as developer/fixers and reader/printers. Our archive does not yet have an official web page.

Project proposals

The FSM National Archives needs expert consultants to conduct one or more workshops in Pohnpei State on archives and records management. Such workshops could be planned to span a period of two to three weeks each.

Information request

We would like to seek assistance in finding more modern equipment and supplies for our microfilming operation. At present we need to replace the following equipment:

- Reader Printer - Canon PC Printer 80 - not working
- Camera - Canon Canofilmer100 - still working
- Processor - Canon Audo-Processor 167 - still working
- ALOS Simplex Recorder 16 - not working
- WANG Computer - not working
- Cannon Roll Duplicator 800 - not working



Reader Printer - Canon PC Printer 80 - not working



Cannon Roll Duplicator 800

The main problem I come across is when patrons call in for information from the TTPI archive. The index for the TTPI archives is in the Wang computer, which is down, and we need technical assistance on this matter.

We also urgently need information on how and where to obtain the following chemicals for developing our films. Our supplies of films are also low and we would appreciate assistance in finding information about these supplies.

- Fixers
- Developers
- Microfilm (16 mm x 30.5 m)
- Kodak Imagecapture AHU microfilm 1460 (16 mm x 30.5 m)

Report on Tonga Tradition Committee Archives

Correspondent: Hon. Tui'vanuaavou Albert Vaea

The Tonga Traditions Committee (TTC) was established in 1954 after the United Nations Universal Declaration of Peace in 1948. Her Majesty Queen Salote Tupou III and the Legislative Assembly established the 1954 TTC Act to promote good records management and Tongan culture. Today, the Traditions Committee is home to the majority of the archival collection.

The archives have had a transient life. When the Palace Office was established during the reign of HM King George Tupou I, the archives were cared for and housed at the Palace Office which was located inside the Royal Palace. They later moved to an on-site building within the palace grounds. A new building was built just outside the palace grounds for the Palace Office and the archives once again moved location. In 1954, with a room at the front of the Palace Office building, the TTC took over the maintenance and development of the archives. However, the relegation of the archives and traditions became a reality in the late 1960s and 1970s when the office took a back seat.

Accommodation and building

In 1995, I attended the New Caledonia PARBICA conference hosted by Bruno Corre and the archives of New Caledonia. I was impressed with the French archival building and the system of reporting and collection by government agencies persuaded me to start a building that would encourage good records management. I decided to look for funding that could assist our old wooden building that housed the Tonga Traditions Committee archive.



Archives in Tonga Traditions Committee Office © TTC

After many years of searching and negotiations I was very fortunate that the French Embassy in Suva, Fiji was willing to support the archive building project. To have gone through the government would have been very discouraging, as new buildings are not part of the development programmes.

New archival building

In 1998, not only did the French Government assist with building of a brick and mortar square building worth Tongan Pa'anga \$100 000, but they also divided the building into three rooms. The brick and mortar building is 20 metres by 7 metres, divided into three rooms. There are only windows at the far end corner and the rest of the building is completely walled off. The walled building is an advantage with the sea immediately in front of the building at about 300 metres north. Thus, wind picks up sea froth and sea spray and brings it to the building 24 hours and 7 days a week. The windows face downwind.

The reading room is where the main entrance is into the archive, the second room holds archival shelves and materials and the third room is for photography. All the rooms are air-conditioned, painted white and lit very well.

The old wooden building was unbearable to sit inside during the hot tropical humid weather, when a mangrove tree was a suitable location to sit under outside. The roof was low and it trapped the stifling tropical heat inside the building.

Currently, we have three computers that communicate links to partners outside Tonga and locally. We sustain communication related to the Tonga Tradition's Committee, archives, heritage, lakalaka traditional dances, social issues and we have a website to be continually checked and responded to.

Archives, especially those pertaining to the Royal family, are housed at three other locations on Tongatapu:

1. The Royal Palace in Fua'amotu;
2. The Royal Residence (Tufumahina) contains a collection of books and photographs
3. The Royal Palace in Nuku'alofa has a small collection of books and the original of the 1875 Tongan Constitution

Royal Palace

The Nuku'alofa Royal Palace is a heritage site for Tonga. It is one of the most popular sites visited by tourists. Built in 1865-67 and made of Kauri timber, the palace remains of great interest to Tongans and non Tongans. Currently, the palace is being renovated for the coronation in August 2008.

Records held in custody

The collection at the Tonga Traditions Committee is a varied one. Currently, the archive collection consists mainly of:

- Correspondence between Ministerial offices
- The Western Pacific Archive registers

- The Chronicle newspaper (dating back to the early 1940s - Tongan and English)
- The Government Gazette
- Oral histories from member of the royal family
- Royal family genealogies
- A collection of photos of the royal family and royal events (the most recent being the funeral of His Late Majesty King Taufa'ahau Tupou IV)
- Portraits
- Background information on:
 - Nobility
 - Language distinctions between royal family and commoners.
 - Information on Tongan cultural traditions such as cooking, folding of ngatu, kava ceremonies etc.
 - Matapule (talking chiefs) and Ha'a Tufunga (royal undertakers)
 - Three dynastic lines (Tu'i Tonga, Tu'i Ha'atakalaua, Tu'i Kanokupolu)
 - Information on royal estates
 - Island groups (Vava'u, Ha'apai, Tongatapu)
 - Cultural sites on Tongatapu

A small library with books, brochures and information sheets on the Pacific is also housed with the Archives.

Use of archives

Over five hundred visitors visit our reading room and request information. Students and people interesting in the royal family and traditional Tongan customs come to the office requesting information. The archives are a valuable source of information for these people and the TTC staff provides required information from the archives to visitors.

Promotional activities

The Palace Office website currently distributes information for local and international viewers, either via its website or through published circulars, for example:

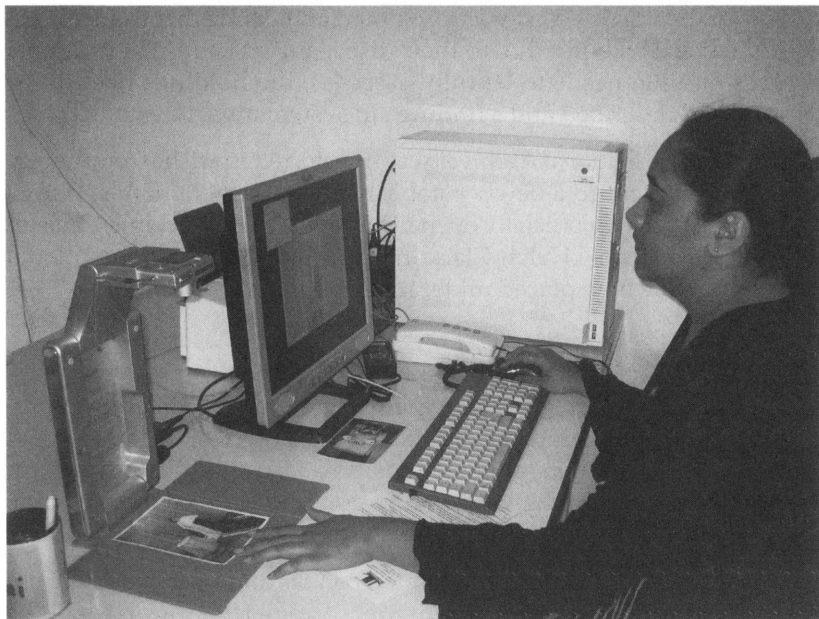
- Royal public engagements
- Lakalaka as a UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanities
- Meetings with lakalaka performers and singers
- Education for sustainable development and better public understanding and awareness
- End of Year Tourism Week 2007
- Tonga National Youth Congress 2007
- Ceremonies

Projects

The staff members at the Tonga Traditions Committee are the main custodians of the Archival collection held by the Palace. In 2005, a Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) volunteer worked with the Tonga Traditions Committee to develop a database that would hold digital archives. JICA provided the TTC office with a computer, printer and digital scanner and the JICA volunteer taught TTC staff how to digitise the archive collection.

The Archives are constantly growing and evolving. Recent research into lakalaka (traditional Tongan dance) has meant that the collection is now starting to turn digital. Photographs are now being stored on the computer and digital (both visual and oral) recordings are being taken of the lakalaka and practitioners. These records will be held in the archives.

The digitisation of the collection that was established by the JICA volunteer is continuing, and we hope to have all archives digitised in the coming years. Most recently, the archives are being used to collate information to put on the Palace Office website. The website is a new avenue for the Palace Office to utilise to disseminate historical information concerning the Tongan Royal family and tradition.



TTC staff member digitising the collection © TTC

Report on Niue National Archives

Correspondent: Joan Tahafa

Niue's National Archives was established in the early 1970s, with records held at Archives dating back to the 1900s. The majority of these records are government records from the departments of public works, immigration, health, finance and personnel records of Europeans and Niueans. Most records held by the National Archives of Niue are kept in a room at the Community Affairs Department.

Since the early 1970s, most records held at the Niue National Archives have had no listing or indexed filing systems. Most files are stored on the floor, due to inadequate space for storage.

In 2003, when Sandra Lee Vercoe was the New Zealand High Commissioner to Niue, she approached the Niuean Community Affairs Department about the historical records held at Niue's National Archives. She also approached Archives New Zealand to assist Niue with the

problem of their archives. It was also noted at the time that the archives had limited accessibility due to their disorganised state. The National Archives of Niue needs to be fully assessed, the holdings need to be arranged and described and a finding aid system must be established.

In April 2006, the National Archives was transferred from the Community Affairs Department to a newly established Department named Taoga Niue. Taoga Niue was officially opened by New Zealand's Prime Minister the Right Honourable Helen Clark in October 2004, with the National Archives of Niue now placed under its jurisdiction.

Accommodation and building

Most of our records are housed in the storage room at the Community Affairs Department, which is approximately 8 metres by 2 metres and has five wooden pallets on the floor. We also have two shipping containers placed near the Taoga Niue building. One container holds approximately 200 boxes of archival records.

The records are stored on top of wooden pallets, and the majority of the records are Niuean government personnel files, and resident Commissioner and Justice files. They are now on an electronic list and have been transferred into new boxes provided by Archives New Zealand.

With the approval of the New Zealand Government for funding of the Taoga Niue complex, it is still unsure at this stage when our new building is going to be built.

Staff and training needs

We have two staff working at the National Archives of Niue. No training has been set for these staff, so it would be valuable for Niue to send both workers for short term attachments to other archival institutions to upgrade their skills and further their knowledge in working in archives.

In 2007, three archivists came from Archives New Zealand and one conservator from the New Zealand National Preservation Office. They were in Niue for two weeks and were able to train Niue Archives staff in listing and boxing. They recommended that the two staff go to Wellington for more comprehensive training in archival practice.



The Taoga Niue and Archives New Zealand team 2007.

Back from left: Lavea Puheke, Moira Enetama, Norma Palana, Joan Tahafa, Amanda Heke, Tharron Bloomfield and Aaron Braden. Front from left: Robin Hekau, Trish McCormack, Margaret Vakaafi, Adrienne O'Mara.

© Archives New Zealand

Current records management

With many records still held in government departments, some of those records have been destroyed due to limited space for records storage. In future, the National Archives of Niue is looking forward to have a building so it can store government records.

Records held in custody

Most of our records are in paper format. All the records that could be salvaged after cyclone Heta struck Niue in 2004 have been moved to moved to Taoga Niue. We have a large amount of government records stored at the archives which date back to 1900s. Private records are also held at the National Archives of Niue.

Use of archives

Since we have moved to Taoga Niue, we have experienced more people coming to do research on both government and private records.

Conservation requirements

Some of the files we hold are still damp due to not enough exposure to the sun since they were damaged by cyclone Heta in 2004. Approximately half of the files required restoration work. This repairing will continue at some cost into the future.

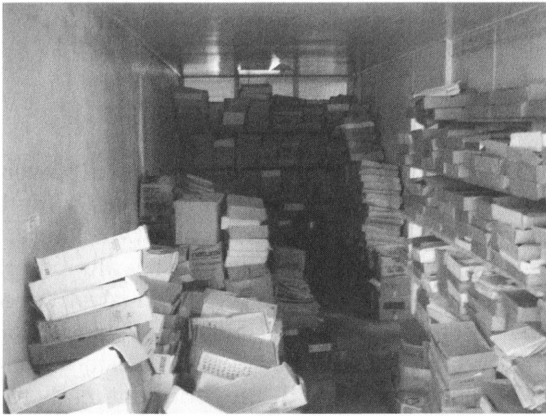
Recommendations

The team who came up from Wellington, New Zealand for two weeks in 2007 recommended that:

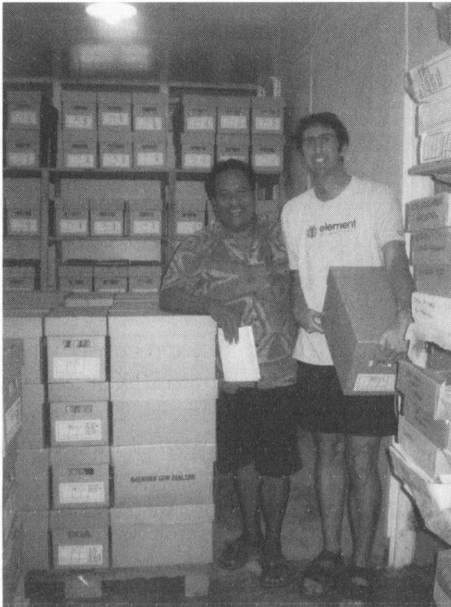
- National Archives staff members require further assistance with file reconstruction, and listing and boxing of archives held in the two shipping containers.
- In addition to technical work, there is a clear need for any government agencies in Niue to be given recordkeeping advice and assistance.

The desire for further assistance to be given has been expressed by Taoga Niue Manager Moira Enetama and other government staff.

The fact that records and archives have been identified in Niue as a key need will help make it a priority. Good recordkeeping in agencies, including the use of appropriate disposal authorities, would prevent the uncoordinated dumping of records, irrespective of whether or not they have any value in the National Archives of Niue.



The Community Affairs archives room before the New Zealand team's mission to Niue, May 2007.
© Archives New Zealand



Robin Hekau and Aaron Braden with newly boxed archives
on the last day of the New Zealand visit, June 2007.
© Archives New Zealand

Report on Tuvalu National Archives and Library

Correspondent: Mila Tulimanu

Background and basis of archival operations

After Tuvalu's separation from its former colonial power the United Kingdom in 1976, planning and negotiation was initiated between Tuvalu Government and Bruce Burne an archivist working at the Western Pacific Archives in Fiji for the transfer of all Tuvalu materials into the country. These archives are the surviving administrative records of the Ellice Islands District of the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, which had been accommodated and preserved at the Western Pacific Archives in Fiji. Work was expedited to get the government ready to find proper facilities to house the high volume of incoming crates of archives boxes. The building identified was formerly a Red Cross Office, which was then improved to house these archives and library materials. As a result, in September 1978 the Library and Archives officially opened for public use.

Under the *Public Records Act (No.10 of 1979)*, the Tuvalu National Library and Archives has responsibility for the custody and preservation of the public records of Tuvalu. However, this never occurred because the public and people working with records in government have little awareness of this Act. Likewise, the inadequacy of the storage area and the lack of a records management system led to the malfunctioning of the institution. People are gradually coming to see the importance of archives, particularly the government which now sees how fortunate they are with their surviving records kept thanks to the Western Pacific Archives in Fiji

The major changes that have taken place recently have been firstly the endangered archives project that began in 2005 and is nearly completed, and secondly changes in human resources. The project funded by the endangered archives programme (see: www.bl.uk/endangeredarchives) has involved making microfilm and digital back-up copies of vital government documents, prompting the Archives to consider the importance of backing-up all documents, as well as the preservation work of key archival institutions in Europe and Oceania. Regarding human resources, two of our long experienced staff have resigned, one to

take up a new post at the Centre of the University of the South Pacific (USP) in Tuvalu and one to migrate to New Zealand. Looking at the staffing situation and future development of the institution, two trainees have been recruited to complement and fill these vacant positions.

Accommodation and buildings

Renovation work carried out in 1995 improved the external and internal appearance of the present library and archives. Maintenance work is still taken on from time to time for some upgrading as required. Presently, there is no purpose-built building incorporating all the essential facilities, such as proper storage and processing areas, nor any conservation and reading room in-house. In fact, over the last decades, development plans have been initiated and drawn up for a new building incorporating the archives, library and a museum, but these have never eventuated.

Future plans for a project proposal for the development of a National Library and Archives have been formulated and submitted to our minister and departmental secretary for perusal and approval. The future plans will collectively integrate all aspects of a variety of fields both for the archives and the library. The plan is in phases, prioritising staff training at the initial stage and a working consultant to advise and assist the Archivist in formulating plans for the building, writing policies and analysing the Tuvalu constitution, relating to the Public Records Act.

Staffing and training needs

Training is a priority for all staff within the department. The department is manned by working personnel with no proper qualifications and with only some on-the-job training. This year, a drop out student from USP undertaking a diploma in Information Studies is working here temporarily, assisting the archivist with archival duties. Training in specific areas of archives, such as records management, conservation and preservation is crucially important to ensure that the department has qualified staff ready to man its new purpose built building expected in the next five years.

Current records management

The Archives, specifically the Archivist, has authority under Tuvalu law to dispose of government records. However, no national records have

been destroyed and there is no procedure currently in place for the scheduling of their retention and disposal. Financial records from some of the outer island governments are disposed of at the end of five to seven years by the Department of Finance, in collaboration with the Archivist, using a shredding machine and the remains burnt.

Due to under-staffing, the Archivist has not had time to formally develop records programs and policies. It is hoped that donors will contribute to the funding of a qualified additional staff member to assist in this matter.

Records held in custody

Records held in custody consist mostly of paper records in files, maps and photographs. Records archived recently consist mainly of closed government documents from 1975 to 1987. These include records of administrative and legal value, records of historic interest and financial accountability records. We also hold the aforementioned archives from the Western Pacific Archives in Fiji and some private documentation, including the Nanumea community genealogy and the Fakaua family genealogy also from Nanumea.

Use of archives

Our users and correspondents seeking the archive's information come from all walks of life: the public, overseas students, individual landowners, government officials and professionals, both Tuvaluans and non Tuvaluans. Archives use by the local public is frequent. Public research focused specifically on family land inheritance and ownership, often with the aim to solve family disputes outside of court and lands court sittings. Issues that are of vital concern for some Tuvaluans include family genealogy, and evidence of birth, marriage and death for travelling purposes and to support applications for permanent residence for New Zealand. The government refers to archives for information regarding government administration and financial records for reporting and administrative tasks.

Finding aids

The finding aids available at hand are as follows:

- Indexes (prepared from the Western Pacific Archives in Fiji)
- Card catalogues
- Lists of closed files from all government departments

Access policy

There is no access policy yet. However, staff follow and adhere to the public records law of Tuvalu relating to 'access to public records in the archives office.' The law states that for access to public records, permission must be sought from the Archivist.

Conservation requirements

Human resources and capacity building to develop this field is a necessity. The current situation of conservation is quite unmanageable. Basic preservation methods are regularly undertaken to preserve the archives. Microfilming and copying recently has been undertaken and is still on going. Future plans will incorporate the project for the development of a purpose built building.

Promotional activities

There are constraints confronting the office in conducting promotional activities. The lack of equipment and human resources contributed to these problems. Staff usually conducted five minute presentations over the Tuvalu media on the importance of archives and the work they are doing. Visits paid to the archives by schools provide wide general publicity to the audience from the capital.

Internet

The office is not yet connected to the internet because of financial constraints, although some email access is available. A proposal has been included for next year's budget and approval is yet to be confirmed.

Project Proposals

Current projects

Endangered Archives Project

The successful pilot project carried out in 2005 led to a further grant for a major project to be carried out by the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau and staff of the Tuvalu National Library and Archives in the period 2006-2008. This involved microfilming, visits to outer islands to appraise and assess closed volumes and other public records, and digitisation of records.

Planned projects

Development project for a new building, staff training and consultants for the National Library and Archives is with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

Project proposal for office equipment and maintenance work for Library and Archives upgrading has been included in 2008 Budget for outside funding.

Problems and recommendations

Problems

In summary, the main problem's facing Tuvalu's archives are as follows:

- 1) Poor record keeping system in place.
- 2) Archives profession and the importance of archiving are not publicly recognised. Services offered by the library and archives are not widely known.
- 3) Lack of infrastructure, particularly communications technologies, hindering regional and international cooperation and collaboration.
- 4) Lack of government investment in the library and archives, as well as international assistance.
- 5) Human capacity in terms of skills and knowledge is low.

Recommendations

I recommend that we focus on the following areas as priorities:

- 1) Encourage the general public to record information. Keeping records is the responsibility of everyone. Develop records management policies/manual.
- 2) Promotional activities are required to maintain and widely publicise the library and archives in order to raise the profile of both the profession and the institution.
- 3) Improve communications technologies. Cooperation with the archives of other countries and networking is vitally important.
- 4) Greater investment in the library and archives from the Tuvaluan government and from overseas. Funding assistance is the key role to promote small institution development.
- 5) Conduct basic training workshops and develop the skills and knowledge of personnel in the profession, especially for small Pacific islands countries with the assistance of organisations such as PARBICA.