Editorial

This issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* consists of papers that were originally delivered by the respective authors as presentations at the annual conference of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) held in Perth on 6–9 August 2008, which explored the theme *Archives: Discovery and Exploration*. It does not include any reviews, news notes or international notes because the publication of the issue has been delayed.

When considering a theme for the ASA's 2008 conference, the organising committee drew on the metaphor of the discovery and exploration of Western Australia: a history that encompasses both accidental discovery and deliberate searching. Exploration and discovery constitute an endless cycle of searching for and building new knowledge. Intrepid explorers may succeed in their quest or even find something entirely unexpected. Once a discovery is made, the new territory awaits exploration in its turn. The papers in this issue all explore an aspect of archival science or practice. Some are research-based, some are descriptive case studies, all are reflective explorations of theoretical or practical challenges facing the recordkeeping profession. Themes that recur in the selected papers include: archives as a means of building new knowledge; the role archives play in building and confirming identity; provision of access to archives along with the necessity to promote the use of archives; and issues arising from the convergence of collections and institutions.

The first two papers in this issue were conference keynote addresses. Both draw on archival theory to explore the use of archives for knowledge creation and use. Eric Ketelaar's opening keynote paper 'Exploration of the archived world' begins with the first European record left in Australia. Using examples drawn from the Dutch East India Company experience of exploration and the management of their business records, Ketelaar demonstrates that archives are the means of finding new insights, knowledge and opportunities far beyond their face value as representations of reality. The knowledge drawn from the archives enabled and supported the company as pioneering business

managers working on a global scale. Tom Nesmith's 'Re-exploring the continuum, rediscovering archives' focuses on the use of archives, and the need to find new uses and new ways to attract new users to archives. In doing so, Nesmith draws on Jay Atherton's view that it is service to both creators and users that ties the continuum together. He urges the profession to venture further into the relatively uncharted territory of the pluralising fourth dimension in the records continuum, describing what might be called a knowledge creation continuum.

The next three papers in this issue consider the crucial role of archives in establishing and sustaining personal, historical or cultural identity. Andrew Flinn argues for greater effort by archives to capture and document the experience of the many people and groups caught up in the consequences of colonialism, the imperatives that encourage migration and the heritage of slavery. He argues that a better understanding of the movement of peoples and cultures would benefit society, while providing individuals and their communities with a better sense of place, as well as personal and cultural identity. Lekoko Kenosi looks at the way the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission broke new ground by recognising that preservation of its records, and the provision of appropriate access to them, would be central to building national identity and promoting reconciliation. Such an approach by truth and reconciliation commissions is rare, given that professional expertise, information and communication infrastructure and political will are often lacking in post-conflict societies. The decision to provide access to such records is not easy, requiring careful weighing of the prospects for engendering anger and distress against the relief provided by acknowledging the truth. Kenosi outlines the deliberate strategy for using these records as a means of nation building. Toby Burrows considers strategies for enhancing the documentation of personal identity to meet the needs of researchers in the humanities. Noting a lack of interoperable semantic content in current biographical services, he turns attention to using metadata for tracing personal networks and thus building biographical context by capturing relationships and connections between people. He explores possibilities in the use of ontologies, ISAAR (CPF), EAC and other metadata standards, as well as a range of projects attempting to enhance biographical context. He concludes that archives and libraries must participate in the new

e-services made possible by extracting, reformatting and combining data in order to provide adequate research resources for the future.

Roger Löfgren and Lars-Erik Hansen present a case study, describing the development of a strategy and system for digital long-term preservation of case records created by the Swedish Social Insurance Agency (SIA), one of the largest government agencies in Sweden. It is government policy in Sweden to promote the provision of e-services wherever possible, and the SIA's very high volume service interaction with citizens presented some interesting challenges in capture, management, preservation and transfer of digital records. Their system was developed and implemented over six years, strategically aiming for the greatest possible automation of archival description, flow and delivery. The project found the OAIS, ISAD (G), ISAAR (CPF), EAD and EAC standards to be usable if some flexibility was applied in their implementation. A successful test transfer to the National Archives of Sweden was conducted, during which process some further challenges came to light.

Convergence is a possibility being debated, or actually happening, in many ways and in many places around the world. When implemented, convergence blurs the borders between information professions, institutions and their collections, requiring re-engineering of the services and infrastructure associated with them and possibly also re-examining professional identity. Candace Loewen provides a case study describing the process of reconciling three differing approaches to access held by Library Archives Canada's (LAC) three predecessor institutions, while meeting the challenges laid down by its enabling legislation. A working group was convened to produce its *Access Policy Framework* which became the guiding document for implementing equitable and seamless access to all users, regardless of their background, the purpose of their enquiry or the collection resources used to serve their information needs. Loewen's study focuses on the issues arising within a converged organisation such as LAC. On the other hand, Margaret Birtley and Veronica Bullock provide a broad overview of the 'urge to converge' in Australia and its possible consequences. Exploring this trend from their vantage point at the Collections Council of Australia, they consider the differences between convergence, cooperation and

co-location and the drivers that may move institutions towards these options. Although a number of hazards are identified, they argue that loss of identity is not inevitable if due diligence is employed when embarking upon the process of converging facilities and services.

Marian Hoy's research follows a group of new recruits to major Australian collecting institutions. Interestingly, she found that these new archivists, curators and librarians shared many common experiences as they set out to find their own professional path and identity, despite being in separate organisations. She offers insights into what constitutes and fosters professional learning within institutions, as well as outlining obstacles that frustrated the participants in the study. Her findings will be useful to employers interested in nurturing the new professionals who join their staff and in capitalising on their investment in training and support for learning.

This issue, like the conference, closes with Michael Piggott's 'valedictory appraisal' of the archival system in Australia. Piggott's thoughts on his own professional journey, his experience in and critique of the Australian archival system have not been peer-reviewed, nor would it have been appropriate to attempt to impose in any way upon his wisdom and his views. He closes with some 'rules' for the future that will help to redress the shortcomings he identifies, signposting a way forward for the next generation. The road before us is long and there is always more to explore.

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