

# Editorial

Advances in technology and new developments in software continue to present a range of challenges and opportunities to recordkeepers. Just as we start to think we might be ready to meet the new challenges of the Web 2.0 world, people have already started talking about the bright and shiny future that is already arriving in the form of Web 3.0!

The cycle of ever-accelerating change and modification familiar to anybody dealing with information and communication technology can induce concerns and anxieties that contemporary recordkeeping work practices and concepts are just not going to cope. 'Information overload', as Mark Brogan reminds us, is a concept that emerged in the 1990s that has now become the focus of a significant body of research literature. Brogan's article 'Clipping Mercury's Wings: The Challenge of Email Archiving' addresses the information overload that has been caused by vast volumes of email accumulating on PCs and cluttering-up servers in working environments all over the world.

Though only one dimension of the information overload phenomenon, the management of email as a record presents everyone who utilises this modern office tool with a formidable strategic and logistical challenge. The introduction of email has brought us a form of written communication and information sharing that is so easy and instantaneous in its execution that it constantly threatens to overwhelm us through its sheer abundance. Email and all the other new forms of electronic communications that have emerged (and continue to emerge) in its wake have created an electronic environment that seems inimicable to mastery and good order. How do you manage the evidence and information these new electronic formats carry so that they can be preserved and made available for future access?

Can we continue to pin our hopes on approaches to this problem based on the premise of creating an ideal form of human being that aspires to good records management practices? Brogan argues that the reality of the conditions we face suggest it may be time to abandon cherished notions about email archiving that rely on the will of the common office worker to keep good records. Instead, he proposes that we begin from the evidence of actual behaviour, of real people working with emails and

how they manage this resource. To do otherwise, Brogan argues, may be sealing the fate of those already faltering from information overload. Recordkeepers may be failing them by not offering a way out of their predicament that accommodates what they are willing and able to do, rather than trying to convert them to the virtues of good records management.

Metadata has become an indispensable part of the modern world of information management. In their article 'Making Metadata Matter: Outcomes from the Clever Recordkeeping Metadata Project', Joanne Evans, Sue McKemmish and Barbara Reed argue for the reconceptualisation of electronic recordkeeping processes, tools and practices around metadata that can be re-used and re-purposed many times across different system environments. The authors present this as yet another step that needs to be taken in completing the liberation of recordkeeping concepts and practice from the legacy of paper-based systems. The primacy of interoperable metadata and service-oriented electronic architectures in the design of recordkeeping systems are the keys to further evolution beyond the paper paradigm and a full engagement with the potentials inherent in electronic technologies for the creation and maintenance of metadata.

Stephen Yorke's elegiac reflection on how shorthand systems shaped the practices of diary keeping, 'A Pepys into the Future', is ostensibly about the remarkable diary of Samuel Pepys, which he wrote in a personal version of Shelton's shorthand system. Through Yorke's reflection on the process through which the contents of this diary were once again made available to readers, we are provoked to imagine a future scenario: the prospect of future archivists encountering artefacts locked away in some long-forgotten or nearly-forgotten electronic code. Will there be anyone who will bother, have the time or the resources to reconstitute such records; and will it be worth their while to resurrect a data fragment from a Facebook status update written with only a fraction of the thought and consequence Pepys invested in the writing of his diary?

The impact of television on modern Australian culture is considerable, and with this in mind Robert Pymm sets out to assess the holdings of TV programs in the nation's major publicly-funded archives. In determining the nature and extent of these holdings, Pymm has employed the

categories of Australia's TV Week Logie Awards as a guide to his survey. Although the Logie Awards tend to unashamedly reward populist and commercial product, the values the awards embody are also a major feature of Australian television culture, and the national identity that it mirrors and represents. Pymm's survey finds that the nation's major archives hold representative and comprehensive collections across most genres, while identifying significant gaps in ever-popular sports programs and long-running series.

In this issue of *Archives and Manuscripts* we see the introduction of a new case study section with an article by Ann McCarthy reporting on her archival work at the eScholarship Research Centre at the University of Melbourne. The case study focuses on the records of the anthropologist and historian Diane Elizabeth Barwick (1938–1986). As the title of her article suggests, 'Step by Step' is an excursion through the process of arrangement and description on this body of records and the creation of an online finding aid to Barwick's records.

Two review articles feature in this issue. The first is Veronica Bullock's 'Characterising Archives', in which she reviews the recent publication *Archives Survey 2007*, analysing the survey's approach, assessing the main points of interest for people working with archives, and recommending ways forward for future survey work to develop. In 'Crowded Out', Stephen Clarke examines Steve Bailey's *Managing the crowd*, a book-length study of the impact and likely consequences of the Web 2.0 phenomenon on many of the orthodoxies of the recordkeeping profession. Clarke sets out to test the claims made in Bailey's book about the imminent irrelevance of the recordkeeping profession rendered by its inability to cope with an ever-burgeoning information technology. Clarke keeps an open mind as to whether *Managing the crowd* does have some lessons for recordkeepers in regard to the way they have faced the challenges of technological change and innovation. Clarke urges us to consider whether 'folksonomies' and social tagging offer opportunities for the spontaneous creation of recordkeeping metadata that can augment the work of recordkeeping professionals, if not entirely replace it in the way prophesied in Bailey's book.

Due to the delay in publication of the November 2008 issue of the journal, we decided to publish all reviews and news notes received for that issue in the current issue. Among the many interesting books reviewed in this

issue is one written by lawyer and legal historian Cornelia Vismann. Originally appearing in German in 2000, *Files: Law and media technology* has been published in English translation by Stanford University Press, and is reviewed here by Adrian Cunningham. As someone who came to archives via a circuitous route taking in politics and philosophy, discussions that seek to orient archives and recordkeeping within a broader intellectual context and history of ideas tend to prick my interest. An unfamiliar perspective on 'files' such as this may not present much in the way of practical advice to the many challenges we face in relation to digital recordkeeping in the 'post-file epoch', but it may, as Adrian Cunningham suggests, teach us something about how we got here.

In concluding my first editorial for *Archives and Manuscripts*, I would like to thank Shauna Hicks for her stewardship of the journal as managing editor, and for the orderly transition that she has facilitated. My thanks also go to the members of the editorial board for their assistance and support while I got myself acquainted in this new role.

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