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## Australian Society of Archivists

### Electronic Records Special Interest Group Newsletter

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### Report from 2002 Conference

The ERSIG meeting at the 2002 ASA Conference was well supported with 49 participants. Full minutes of the AGM will be in the next newsletter, but below are summaries of speakers at the meeting. Michael Hoyle spoke on Archives New Zealand's electronic records strategies. Reports on electronic records initiatives were also taken from the floor.

Slides from Michael Hoyle's presentation can be viewed here:

<http://www.archivists.org.au/sem/misc/hoyle.pdf>

#### *Reports from the floor*

**Justine Heazlewood, Public Record Office Victoria**, spoke about what is happening at Public Record Office Victoria. The PROV's VERS initiative has received additional funding of \$8.2 million to progress the roll out of VERS across the Victorian government. 8 staff have been appointed to the newly established VERS Centre of Excellence with expertise in records management, IT, systems analysis and digital preservation. The forward program of the Centre will be to:

- Build a Digital Archive to store, manage and make accessible the permanent electronic records of the Victorian government.
- Establish a consultancy service to aid government agencies in developing strategies for implementing VERS.
- Establish a training program for staff in agencies on a range of issues associated with electronic records.

**Janet Prowse, Queensland State Archives**, spoke about developments in Queensland State Archives. QSA has received additional funding from its parent department to:

- purchase hybrid cameras for microfilming and scanning
- further develop Archives Online

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- establish a fee based digitisation on demand service
  - create new positions in electronic records management policy, distributed custody, web publishing and Archives Online.

New policies are being developed on email and websites and a training module is being developed to train agency staff in managing electronic records in government. Information papers have gone to the Queensland Cabinet on other electronic records initiatives to determine Queensland policy on electronic records preservation and management.

**Kathryn Dan, National Archives of Australia**, spoke about general developments at the NAA. The Preservation area of the Archives is currently examining principles and practices to do with taking electronic records into custody. This is a major research project using preservation funding. The team at NAA has prepared a Green Paper and done some experiments with taking electronic records into custody. The team will seek professional and technical comment on its work. [*more on this initiative is below*].

Other developments include the preparation of a General Disposal Authority for copied records (including scanned records) and the development of standards on:

- PKI, digital signatures and recordkeeping (forthcoming)
- the Implementation of DIRKS (forthcoming)
- Web pages (already released)

Internally, the Archives is putting more emphasis on internal records management. They are currently in the process of DIRKS step H (reviewing their electronic recordkeeping system). Issues that have arisen include migration, training and sustaining training, intellectual control, the development of policies procedures and their use, and the chosen project management approach.

**Marion Hoy, National Archives of Australia**, spoke about developments at the NAA in electronic records transfer procedures. Specifically the NAA are developing:

- a program for e-lodgement of transfer proposals (which will be embedded within the CRS system)
- a data format for exporting metadata from a recordkeeping system to standard formats for loading into the NAA system
- business rules and specifications to support e-transfer
- an online training program and explanatory information

The NAA will be seeking feedback from agencies on these new procedures.

**Cassie Findlay, State Records NSW**, spoke about developments within State Records NSW. State Records has published a new set of guidelines to ensure the accessibility of equipment and records for the future. These guidelines are available on the State Records website at

<http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/publicsector/rk/guidelines/techdependent/entry-screen1.jpg>. The guidelines are directed at agency practitioners and do not extend to long-term archival preservation.

*Thanks to Justine Heazlewood, Public Records Office Victoria for providing this summary.*



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## Digital Preservation

### *National Archives of Australia*

Just in case it has escaped everyone's notice, the National Archives is working on a viable approach to the problem of preserving digital records for the long-term. The project, dubbed the 'Archives to Researcher' (AtoR) project has been underway since late 2001. A 'green paper' describing NAA's proposed approach was released for internal discussion in June 2002. That paper has now been provided with an updated introduction and is available on the 'web at:

[http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/er/digital\\_preservation/summary.html](http://www.naa.gov.au/recordkeeping/er/digital_preservation/summary.html).

The National Archives' approach involves the migration of original source records into equivalent XML data formats which capture the 'essence' of the original source record and which allow the recreation of a version of the original 'performance' of the record (these concepts are explained in the Green Paper). To assist this process the Archives is developing a software application, currently named Xanadu, which will perform the migration and allow XML data objects to be viewed. NAA hopes to release a 'beta' version of Xanadu in July 2003. Underlying the NAA approach is a decision to adopt non-proprietary and open source standards wherever possible.

For more information about the project please contact Andrew Wilson on +61 2 6212 3694, or by email at [andreww@naa.gov.au](mailto:andreww@naa.gov.au).

*Thanks to Andrew Wilson, National Archives of Australia for providing this summary.*

### *International Initiatives*

A number of archival institutions around the world are advancing with digital preservation initiatives. The following provides a quick snapshot of projects and useful links in this area.

#### **Public Record Office, UK**

The PRO have taken a number of steps towards meeting the challenge of digital preservation. They have established a database of file formats, PRONOM, to assist migration planning and are currently developing functional specifications for a digital archive. Test accessions are expected to commence in April 2003. For more information: <http://www.pro.gov.uk/about/preservation/digital/default.htm>.

#### **National Records and Archives Administration, USA**

NARA, in collaboration with the San Diego Supercomputer Centre, is working on an approach called 'persistent object preservation' which appears capable of stripping the display characteristics of any electronic document — whether text, spreadsheet, photo or map — and storing it in a format that will allow it to be called up by whatever software is being used in the future. XML will be used to support this. NARA is currently gathering information from vendors. For more information:

[http://www.archives.gov/electronic\\_records\\_archives/index.html](http://www.archives.gov/electronic_records_archives/index.html).

#### **National Archives, The Netherlands**

The Digital Preservation Testbed is a collaborative initiative of the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the National Archives of the Netherlands. They are testing three approaches to preservation: migration, emulation and the XML approach. Their website is a rich source of informative research papers and

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presentations, from the Testbed and elsewhere. For more information:  
<http://www.digitaleduurzaamheid.nl/index.cfm?paginakeuze=181&categorie=2>.

### **ERPANET - Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network**

ERPANET, funded by the European Commission, is a project to make visible information about electronic resource preservation. In order to fulfil this goal, they run seminars and training courses, and of particular importance for those of us who don't regularly travel to Europe for training, they manage a web site that provides commentaries and overviews of a range of digital preservation initiatives. This part of the site requires a login, but registration is free. For more information: <http://www.erpanet.org/>.



### **ERSIG Committee**

A new committee was elected at the AGM during the 2002 ASA conference. The committee is:

Cassie Findlay Convenor	<a href="mailto:cassf@records.nsw.gov.au">cassf@records.nsw.gov.au</a>	(02) 8276 5629
Justine Heazlewood Secretary	<a href="mailto:justine.heazlewood@dpc.vic.gov.au">justine.heazlewood@dpc.vic.gov.au</a>	(03) 9285 7938
Rowena Loo Newsletter Editor	<a href="mailto:rowenal@records.nsw.gov.au">rowenal@records.nsw.gov.au</a>	(02) 8276 5633
Andrew Wilson	<a href="mailto:andreww@naa.gov.au">andreww@naa.gov.au</a>	(02) 6212 3694
Tony Leviston	<a href="mailto:tonyl@records.nsw.gov.au">tonyl@records.nsw.gov.au</a>	(02) 8276 5636
John Roberts	<a href="mailto:john.roberts@archives.govt.nz">john.roberts@archives.govt.nz</a>	(64) (4) 938 7367
Guy Tranter (co-opted after AGM)	<a href="mailto:tranter.guy@abc.net.au">tranter.guy@abc.net.au</a>	(02) 9950 3204



### **Next Issue**

The next issue of the Newsletter will be published in August 2003. If you would like to contribute to the next issue or if you have a suggestion regarding items to be included in the ERSIG newsletter, please contact the Newsletter Editor.

