

THE AUSTRALIAN ARCHIVAL SYSTEM, 1971-2008: A VALEDICTORY APPRAISAL

Michael Piggott

University of Melbourne

Abstract

In 1971 the presenter was a "LIT", or librarian-in-training, with the National Library, studying an elective in archives and manuscripts under Bob Sharman and shortly thereafter joining the Manuscripts Section. That same year the RMAA was two years old; the ASA and university professional education programs did not exist; and national archives legislation was still years thirteen years away. Challenges such as electronic records and public programs were still to be identified. Using the idea of a national archival system as the backdrop and some of the presenter's interests and involvements as pretext, the paper will attempt to steer between gratuitous advice and un-grumpy optimism by reflecting on some of the major archival ideas and developments of the past generation.

Introduction

I need to begin with a waiver: what follows are my personal opinions only. There are also three warnings.

Firstly, although this Endnote address is the last session, it is not one of those masterly end-of-conference summaries we've come to expect of, say, Anne Marie Schwirtlich, Tom Nesmith or Michael McKernan. I'm not even planning to try. The second warning is best related as a story. In 1998, when the National Archives prepared to leave its old location, Mining Industry House, Telstra was asked to decommission its phones. Shortly thereafter, all the lines went dead at the National Film and Sound Archive. I mention this because, like so much about archives, what you think is obvious, isn't. Hopefully you realise that what follows are end-of-career-reflections, not, as some thought, a talk about appraisal or the series system. The third warning is for me. The irritable ageing professional syndrome is getting worse, and although it feels strangely liberating, I'm conscious too of that famous line from Roy and HG: "too old, too slow, too stupid - last year's model".

"The good old days"

About that period from the 1970s into the new century, allow me the first of several recollections.

At the National Library when I joined as a trainee in 1971, there were tea ladies and typing pools; salary was paid in cash; smoking was permitted, but flexitime wasn't. Phones had rotary dials, and interstate calls were pre-booked. Senior

management were addressed formally. A Registry managed a proper filing system and an internal courier delivered correspondence from the mail room. Memoranda and minutes were taken seriously, but they were certainly not despatched using something called a mouse! ¹ Computers were just starting to be used to support the national union catalogue. There was no digitization, or even digitalization; microfilming was still an important technology. ²

In 1971, the ASA didn't exist; the Records Management Association of Australia (as it was then) was three years old; professional education comprised, at best, an elective subject in librarianship or three subjects in a system run by the Library Association of Australia; at worst some internal training by your employer. What should have been the nation's pre-eminent archives, the Commonwealth Archives Office (CAO), wasn't, and *seven decades into the federation*, its foundation legislation was still a decade away! Clear professional differences were seen to exist between records management and archives administration, and between public records and manuscript librarianship. Few talked of "record keepers". ³ The need to address electronic records and public programs had barely been identified, and the first mobiles were only just appearing. ⁴

There is nothing so patronising as some old fart bemoaning change and waxing sentimental about "in my day". Comparison is not analysis. Some "baby boomers" seem particularly bad at this so-called "decrepit lit", rightly criticised by writers such as Mark Davis and Ryan Heath for being forever stuck in the seventies. ⁵ Nevertheless, we all know the impact of ICT has been profound - on recordkeeping and archiving and everything else! Recently Jeff Gomez, in a printed book titled *Print is Dead*, said "The biggest change in the past fifty years, in terms of life on Earth, has been the introduction of the Internet and the abundance of gadgets that have arrived along with it". ⁶

Digital everything challenges society's ability to preserve its memory, and some research is suggesting the same for human memory. ⁷ You know that its future direction and nature are hard to predict. Question is - do we have a national system to help take us there? I mean an inclusive system which pursues funding and a research agenda, develops strategies, coordinates societal documentation, represents *all* stakeholders and communicates a vision. I proposed this topic over the more obvious distinctive ideas from our past generation (the records continuum, the series system, the AS and ISO standards work, and so on) because we so rarely take a synoptic view of our domain - its boundaries, effectiveness, and purpose. For decades there has been talk of a unified system of higher education, and now we have summits on integrated national approaches to ports, health, transport, and the Murray Darling river system. Why not one for records and archives? ⁸

Dr Lamb

The idea of an Australian archival system coincided with the visit of the former Canadian Dominion Archivist, Dr W Kaye Lamb in August-October 1973. The election of the Whitlam Labor government in 1972 had replaced twenty-three years of conservative rule in Canberra, and briefly a hundred archival flowers

bloomed.⁹ The system was mentioned in the government's commissioning letter, in Lamb's published report, and in a CAO discussion paper for the visit.¹⁰

Lamb's focus was mainly on a new archives institution, but in section ten, headed 'A National System of Archives', he talked about national registers of archives and of research in progress. He also suggested the new Archives might produce published guides and a bulletin, and establish a strong conservation presence able to assist smaller institutions.

The government and Lamb's idea of a national system were pretty woolly. He admitted there was no agreed meaning, but talked about a *national archival system*, then a *national system of archives*, and at the very end of his report, used a third variant, where he "respectfully submitted" that

If the Government is so minded, a new day for *the Archives of Australia* could begin to dawn tomorrow.¹¹

Confusion followed. While Lamb talked of a National Archives operating under a National Archives Act, within a year the government established an institution called Australian Archives. The resulting initialism "Ay Ay" sounded strangely appropriate (especially at the end of a sentence in parts of Queensland and Canada), but began two decades of puzzlement in the ICA.

As you know, many of Lamb's ideas bore fruit. The CAO was replaced by Australian Archives with a new position of Director-General, and in time there were improved buildings, expanded staffing and eventually the *Archives Act, 1983*. The two national registers survived more or less intact. The ASA and university based professional education programs, both canvassed by Lamb also subsequently materialised. In some states, regional archives networks developed. Under the banner of a national archival system, Federal-State archives cooperation began too. Thus during the 1970s Australian Archives and the Public Record Office Victoria discussed joint repositories, public access facilities and a common approach to documentation.¹²

So gradually a bits-and-pieces system has evolved. Today, the basic building blocks of the proto national system comprise usual suspect institutions and societies, and a framework of legislative, educative and related policies and standards.

What evolved was nothing like a comprehensive national system for archives let alone records. What does it lack? What are its weaknesses?

The National Archives as system leader

Firstly, there is no self awareness among the components that they share a common interest. Occasionally b--lateral arrangements are forged to deal with specific issues or projects, and occasionally, the so-called cognate organisations have met and talked. All very transitory, because of course, there was – and is – no leader; no centre; no "single mind".

The obvious candidate is the National Archives. Kaye Lamb was in no doubt, stressing in his report that “The heart and centre of any system must be a strong National Archives....¹³ Following an extensive review of the *Archives Act* in 1998, the Australian Law Reform Commission reported similarly: new legislation “should make specific reference to the NAA's role in providing leadership and support to the Australian archival community”.¹⁴

Yes Virginia, there is a *National Archives*. It has special status at the ICA, and clauses five and six of its legislation allow a kind of wider role. It supports PARBICA, the ASA, and other government archives; it joins research projects, offers awards, maintains gateways, and provides advice to the public. Its size alone means it can help where others can't, and at times it has been very very generous.

Really though, has the National Archives ever wanted to take a serious sustained lead? One senses a clear tentativeness over the years. Behind its choices for Ian Maclean awards for instance, there are hints that it has been scanning the system of current arrangements, identifying issues needing attention, and steering solutions. On the other hand, it seems not to fully grasp that mature leadership means one does not always have to compete or control. Its one enduring extramural interest is its natural constituency CAARA, the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities. No minister has ever insisted it adopt a large leadership role, and inevitably, budget priorities point to its own backyard. Personally, I wouldn't bother with NAA as leader in any new national system. As a tax payer, I want it to perform its core functions to the utmost of its capacity and courage, and spend every available dollar doing so. I'd redraft the functions and powers clauses of its Act, and specifically commission an entity quite separate from government.

Who speaks for us, and to whom?

A related issue with our present system is how its collective voice is discerned and represented to government. *Who speaks for us?*

Australian archivists have been struggling with this for a generation.¹⁵ In 1979 the ASA established a National Consultative Machinery Committee, bearing fruit in 1984 when the National Archival Forum was established to represent institutions. This quickly became the Australian Council of Archives. The strongest special interest within ACA was the State and Territory Archives Group, later renamed the Council of Federal State and Territory Archives. After the ACA folded seven years ago, COFSTA flourished, expanding in 2004 to include Archives New Zealand and become CAARA.¹⁶ Who speaks for us? *De facto* CAARA does.

De jure, it speaks only for its members, and has done some very important things on their behalf. Having abandoned and thus crippled the ACA seven years ago, however, it now talks confidently in submissions and position papers about the needs of what it calls the “Archives Domain”¹⁷. But CAARA no more

represents the diversity of experiences and concerns of all archival communities in Australia and New Zealand than does “CONGAA”, the Council of Non Government Australasian Archives; no more than the “Group of Eight” Vice Chancellors represent our thirty-eight universities; or the CEOs of Australia’s top 100 companies represent the private sector. As head of a large collecting archives within a large university, I have never felt a strong affinity and I’d be surprised if, say, school or business or church archives do either. The same probably goes for the so-called *archive* archives, for instance covering folklore and sound and a/v records. In 2005 the head of CAARA was not speaking gibberish when he admitted as much at the ASA’s 30th anniversary seminar.¹⁸ Nor can CAARA adequately represent the archives managed by galleries, libraries, museums, keeping places and historical societies. Nor does it represent *all* users, subjects and victims of archival records. The ASA accepts it as a fact of life; what the RMAA thinks of its assumed role is not known.

All this helps explain the clunky, limited arrangements we currently have. It is high time the mis-representation stopped. A new system should take a fresh look at representation. Let’s say by Brisbane 2012.

The audience for past representation has been parliamentary and other inquiries, and of course the government-of-the-day. For at least a decade, the avenue to “Government” has been the Cultural Ministers Council. Before 2004, archivists had no direct line to it, although in the mid 1990s there was briefly a creature of government archivists and arts officials called the Archives Working Group.¹⁹ In 2004 the Collections Council of Australia was formed under the umbrella of the Cultural Ministers. The Collections Council Board comprises individuals with appropriate experience, and representatives of industry councils for libraries, museums, art museums and archives (i.e. CAARA).

Now the Collections Council has achieved many important things in the past four and a half years. Even so, like CAARA, it too has its problems representing and corralling diversity, including the question of New Zealand, scientific collections,²⁰ research data, spatial information and digital content on the web. On the latter, Margy Burn recently observed, “To my ears, the cyber universe of folksonomies contrasts sharply with the voice of curatorial authority”.²¹

The Collections Council focuses on *collections*, the most significant thing archives museums libraries and art museums are seen to have in common. This “hanging-together” strategy²² might fit some overseas models, interest CITRA and keep it simple for politicians and industry classifiers, but unavoidably, the Council’s core interests do not include a crucial one of ours: records & recordkeeping.

Nothing better highlights the complications this difference causes than current administrative arrangements in Canberra. In December last year, the new Rudd government moved the National Archives from its former government portfolio, which had grouped it with the national collecting institutions, into the Department of Finance & Deregulation. In May this year, the rupture was repeated when the Archives moved again to Prime Minister and Cabinet, beside

the likes of the Ombudsman, Audit Office and Privacy Commissioner. This didn't stop Collections Council chair Sue Nattrass praising the new government because now "built and moveable cultural heritage are brought together ... in the Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts." (Well, yes, all except archives.) Her media release stated that "Australia's collections are central to Australia's understanding of itself, ... [they] help us to shape our place in a changing world ... [and contribute]to the strengthening of our communities...". Elsewhere Sue has stated: "Collections are the heart and soul of a nation".²³

Similar claims can be made for recordkeeping systems which capture and manage full and accurate records in government, business firms, hospitals, churches, schools, police forces and the like. Records keep planes in the air and hospitals running! Note the ASA's version of the *Archivist's Mission*. Which peak body will advocate this ideal, and to which one of the thirty plus ministerial councils? It's all of them of course – our accursed challenge.

Manuscript librarians

Let's look again at the current archival system. In addition to decades of commitment by ASA members and office holders, there has been, and is, a large large reserve of archival social capital. There are, and have been, signs of great vibrancy and energy. We may not have, say, a National Security Archive or a wikileaks-dot-com. But consider the often very personal initiatives behind *Tabularium*, *Practical Archivist*, Archive Associates, and the science archive project. Think too of the collaboration behind various community archives, Friends of archives groups, religious archives groups, the Public Records Support Group, and portals to business, trade union and women's archives. All, in their own way, small miracles. So too are critical friends like Chris Hurley, big hearted volunteers like Del Cuddihy, inspirational pioneers like the late Loris Williams and bloggers like Anne-Marie Conde. One thing the system has lacked, however, has been strong professional engagement by librarians, especially manuscript librarians.

This may seem unfair and ignorant. In this country, the core state and federal libraries were the foster parents of public records organisations, and while they let go reluctantly, we should acknowledge that for a century or more, they and many smaller libraries also collected, preserved for use, and publicised, what today represents a vast wealth of archival records documenting the non government sectors of Australian society.

This helix-like legacy explains a lot. Our flagship journal, begun in the early 1950s as the *Bulletin for Australian Archivists*, was changed by librarians in 1955 to *Archives and Manuscripts*, testifying so succinctly to our origins, if perhaps not where we should now be going.²⁴

Time for one more recollection. Most of my seven years at the National Library were spent in its Manuscripts Section, where I tried to follow in-house practice and to apply the lessons previously learnt from Bob Sharman while doing an

elective archives unit in a graduate librarianship diploma. The messy complexities of personal and organisational archives were experienced first hand, guided by supervisors including Cathy Santamaria and Graeme Powell. It was also a time of awakening, and quite challenging for librarians, especially manuscript librarians. Library control of archives was ending. Kaye Lamb had asked, to the great consternation of the National Library, why shouldn't a new National Archives start collecting political papers. The first graduate program for archivists was established in 1973 separate from librarianship. And in Canberra in 1975, the ASA was formed by seventy-four archivists, mostly from public archives but including two manuscript librarians. Two!

Against this background, in 1976 Graeme Powell published in *Archives and Manuscripts* 'Archival principles and the treatment of personal papers'. It had been preceded by some sniping in the literature about librarians' "pernicious practices" in managing archives, and Graeme's opening paragraph announced he would defend them.²⁵ Having "led with his chin", he provoked a strong riposte by librarian turned archivist Chris Hurley with the clever title 'Personal papers and the treatment of archival principles'. In the same issue of *A&M*, Graeme took a second hit. Michael Sadlier, foundation President of the ASA and author of the "pernicious practices" charge, used a review of some National Library guides to manuscript collections to also attack the offending article.²⁶

Looking at the articles again, it's clear they were over-hyped. They were anthologised, included in lists of seminal articles and mentioned in citations.²⁷ Yet they prompted no rejoinders, and were rarely even referenced, Adrian Cunningham and Margaret Southcott being the conspicuous exceptions.²⁸ The tone and subsequent image of the original debate, as well as a subsequent gem from Chris called 'Beating the French', I believe had the unintended result of silencing manuscript librarians. They have hardly published anything of serious professional weight since, at least in the journal re-named for them. Graeme himself after 1976 continued to speak and write prolifically, but never again on theory and principles.

Institutionally too, an enduring awkwardness is discernable. In some state libraries still today, an individual's records of continuing value are "manuscripts", while those of organisations are "archives", and, with historical photographs, ephemera etc are collectively "heritage materials". To some libraries still today, the archival records of a significant other, Manoly Lascaris for example, are just another series of the provenancial main man.²⁹

I sincerely hope manuscript librarians haven't been discouraged. There are reports an informal network of the heads of manuscripts in the national and state libraries has been developed. Good, because curating exhibitions of treasures about Matthew Flinders is important, but there is much challenging intellectual work to be done too. Why not *indeed* try to develop a set of functional requirements for personal recordkeeping, or emulate the British Library's Digital Lives project or meet the challenge of writers' e-manuscripts and share the findings? Perhaps even engage with Dr Frank G Burke's

wonderful text *Research and the Manuscript Tradition*.³⁰ A re-invigorated system needs strong contributions from its manuscript librarians.

Health and business recordkeeping

Earlier I asked *who* speaks for us? So *who is* us? In trying to locate any sense of a system in the past thirty-plus years, it is clear to me there were crucial gaps and weaknesses. A comprehensive picture of our domain would have to include recordkeeping communities in specific sectors. I'll quickly mention two, one we don't seem to know much about, and the other we want to but are in denial about. Both, sadly, show little concern for our broader goals.

Perhaps the most organised is in the health sector, represented by the Health Information Management Association of Australia.³¹ HIMAA is well established, pre-dates the ASA and RMAA by several decades, and is highly organised; it got its education and training act together long ago, with qualifications tied to recruitment policies; and it has a good fit with health informatics, health legislation and privacy. There are also clear lines to government via the Australian Health Ministers Conference.

Despite the absolute centrality of recordkeeping in the health sector and of health to the economy and national well being, we rarely think of HIMAA, or even provide links to it from our websites. Apart from archivists based in hospitals and academics like Sue McKemmish and Livia Iacovino at Monash University, few seem aware of it.³² Whether or not it sees a common interest with us, it is undoubtedly part of the Australian records and archives scene.

Second, the business sector. To its credit, the ASA has been interested in business archives from the beginning. There has been the odd article in *Archives and Manuscripts*, conference papers, inquiry submissions, and a seminar once a decade.³³ Occasionally an issue has galvanised us, usually involving corporate malfeasance, or a threat to the very existence of a business archives. Bruce Smith built his *Guide to Australian Business Records* and now there is a National Task Force from which good ideas seem to be emerging.³⁴ We should also note the work of Melbourne University's and the Australian National University's collecting archives – the only two institutions which have shown a sustained interest in the macro challenges of preserving the archives of the private sector, and the strength behind the Task Force.

So a lot has happened. Well, maybe. It is nearly ten years since a National Scholarly Communications Forum called for a coalition of organisations to develop national strategies for promoting to Australian businesses the importance of good recordkeeping the usual thing.³⁵

To state the obvious, Australian archival arrangements are deeply biased in favour of government recordkeeping and archiving to the neglect of business. If you ever doubted a fresh approach to a national records and archives system is needed, think honestly about the scale and nature of business activity and its consequences.

To offer a quick illustration: 95% of businesses in Australia are “small businesses”.³⁶ Individually these 1.8 million entities employ a few people, but combined, represent half the private sector workforce and a capitalised worth of \$4.3 trillion! Important enough for there to be a Federal Minister for Small Business, so no doubt policy financial and de-regulation records are covered by an NAA disposal authority. On past trends, two thirds of today’s small businesses won’t be around in ten years, so what are the records and archives implications? It’s said they create few records and their archives aren’t worth worrying about. The first point is irrelevant, and as for the second, are they adequately represented in the “archival resources relating to Australia”, to quote the federal Archives Act? Until nation-wide macro appraisal ranking has been done, who can say? Perhaps our domain representative, CAARA has already arranged for the mapping research? There *is* cash around: the Australia Business Arts Foundation reports that in the past financial year arts companies attracted \$171m in sponsorships and donations.³⁷

When it comes to business records and archives, we are all guilty bystanders, Cultural Ministers and businesses included. *We* especially are mentally and professionally challenged just as we were when, in 1994, Terry Cook exposed our “paper minds” struggling with electronic records. Using our “socialist minds” we’re getting better at analysing the problem of “capitalist records,” but we are still a long way from workable solutions. Whatever they will be, they have to include high level engagement from the private sector.

Last things

In summary, how do things stand in 2008? The Australian Archival System is not so much a still born idea as an awkward teenager who experienced two growth spurts. The first was a narrow idea emerging in 1973 now residing as a little used reserve power within the *Archives Act 1983*, which re-emerged in 2004 as part of the collections agenda. It is time for the teenager to grow up. Given the time available today, these last few thoughts can be little more than points thrown upon the wind. Taking my cue from Peter Pouncey’s wonderful novel *Rules for Old Men Waiting*,³⁸ here for those certain it is their turn now, here for “Generation Download” and *its* inevitable successors are a few rules for the *next* thirty-seven years.

Rule One. There has to be a richer understanding of the teenager’s extended family that is the theoretical national records and archives system, one which is sensitive to the prevailing cultural and changing political landscape. We need a system which is inclusive of all those individuals and entities which make and manage records and archives, whether from self interest and for public purposes. And, echoing Sarah Tyacke’s words “everyone keeps records or can be found in one”, we need a system which champions those who depend on and are entangled in their accessibility and use.³⁹

This broad sense of system embraces many affiliates; not only libraries and museums (because they create records and manage archives) and the data and

information bodies for their relationship to records; but also advocacy bodies such as the Australian Privacy Foundation, the Right to Know Coalition and the whistleblower service STOPLine.

Rule Two. There has to be a records and archives commission. It should be inclusive of and trusted by all interests, including particularly those of the first Australians. It would have some features like the US National Historical Publications and Records Commission. Apart from doing all the things a peak body does, (keeping statistics, making representations and submissions and so on), it should work unceasingly to improve recordkeeping and archiving practices and behaviours and arrangements.

Rule three. There has to be the grid-computing-equivalent for a documentation plan for Australian society.

As with the business recordkeeping challenge, the documentation idea comes and goes. Hardly a new proposal; but so far, too difficult. The aforementioned 1999 national scholarly communications forum was the first ever assessment of the health and future prospects for archival research infrastructure in Australia. Its conclusions were confirmed in 2001 when Professor Sue McKemmish wrote that there was 'no coherent, collaborative, nationally coordinated, encompassing fourth dimension collection policy framework for the whole of Australian society'.⁴⁰

Rule Four. To end, another un-original idea: we need to agree on our story (I think "Archives *and* records matter!" sums it up), and we need more effective strategies and champions to convey it to government, researchers and the public generally.

As an observer and occasional participant in developing and selling the message, it has been sobering for me to reflect on the past 30-40 years' limited successes.⁴¹ Remember the logo wars? Ten years ago the ASA settled on the thumbprint, because of its "obvious evidential associations, but also because, ... it implies human origin, intervention and continuing involvement".⁴² More generally, our concepts have included societal glue, arsenals, enablers, risk, accountability, compliance, evidence, rule of law, identity, memory, memory banks, story-telling, information, heritage, content, treasures, cold cases, collections, and that charming technical term "stuff". Our target audiences and publics call us "ar-ki-vists" and associate us with "stuff" too; old stuff. And with paper-shuffling (as Eric Ketelaar reminded us yesterday), bureaucracy, bumph, big brother, secrets, smoking guns, vaults, dust, white gloves, red tape, time capsules, and history. History. A timely word. That's you're bloomin' lot.

Over to you, and thanks.

¹ Even if a kind of email had been developed at MIT ten years previously. See <http://www.multicians.org/thvv/mail-history.html> [7 June 2008].

² Some of the atmosphere of the 1970s can be discerned in Peter Cochrane, ed., *Remarkable Occurrences; The National Library of Australia's First 100 Years 1901 – 2001*. National Library of Australia, Canberra, 2001, especially pp. 263-5.

³ Ian Maclean and Margaret Medcalf were early exceptions, both influenced by travel overseas to experience alternative ideas to a strict divide between archivists and records managers. See his 'Australian Experience in Record and Archives Management', *American Archivist*, vol. 22, no. 4, October 1969, pp. 387-418, and her 'Archivist or records keeper?', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 2, no. 5, June 1963, pp. 6-8.

⁴ The first Australian awareness of a potential challenge in electronic records was P. D. Wilson, 'Computers and archives – some random thoughts', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 4, no. 8, August 1972, pp. 11-18. As for mobiles, they were the "size of half a baguette" and weighing almost a kilogram. See Joel Garreau, 'More mobile, but less free', *The Age*, 29 March 2008, 'Insight' supplement, p.7.

⁵ See Mark Davis, *Gangland; cultural elites and the new generationalism*. Second edition. Allen & Unwin, 1999, and Ryan Heath, *Please Just F* Off, It's Our Turn Now*. Pluto Press, 2006. For the decrepit lit reference, see a review of David Lodge's new novel *Deaf Sentence* in Lorna Scott Fox, 'Decrepit Lit', *London Review of Books*, 8 May 2008, pp. 29-30. I am not aware of anything so direct in our own literature, although see Gabrielle Wolski, 'The Introduction of Youth to the Archival Profession', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 32, no. 2, November 2004, pp. 162-177.

⁶ Jeff Gomez, *Print is dead. Books in our digital age*. Macmillan, 2007. The associated blog is at <http://printisdeadblog.com/> [accessed 21 July 2008].

⁷ See Peter Wilson, 'Society hard-wired for a fall', *The Australian*, 14-15 June 2008 (Inquirer section), p. 19, reporting the research by Baroness Greenfield and her new book *i.d. The Quest for Identity in the 21st Century*. Sceptre, London, 2008.

⁸ The need for an integrated "big picture" perspective has interested me since the 1990s when the 1992 edition of the ASA's *Directory of Archives in Australia* appeared, triggering an attempt to think out from it to what lay behind the nearly 500 archives organisations it detailed. A number of other Australian archivists have supported such systems-wide thinking, e.g. Adrian Cunningham in relation to national documentation strategies.

⁹ Don Willesee, the Whitlam government minister who had invited Lamb, also looked to reorganise the National Library, announcing changes so that "in the context of a broad and evolving information policy, [it] will become the centre of a nation-wide library and information system ..." See Gough Whitlam, *The Whitlam Government 1972-1975*. Viking, 1985, p. 570.

¹⁰ 'A national archives system' was a discussion document presented at a seminar attended by Dr Lamb in September 1973, later published in *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 5, no. 5, November 1973, pp. 104-109. See also W. Kaye Lamb. *Development of the National Archives; Report* September, 1973. AGPS, Canberra, 1974. The most sustained commentaries at the time, apart from some brief mentions in Parliament, are Michael Saclier, 'The Lamb report and its Environment', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 5, no. 8, August 1974, pp. 200-214 and Bob Sharman, 'Australian Archives in Lamb's clothing', *Archivaria*, vol. 1, no. 2, Summer 1976, pp. 20-32.

¹¹ Lamb report, p 35. Emphasis added.

¹² The best developed state "network" if not archives system occurred in NSW. See James Logan, 'Do regions matter? Conceptualising regions within the State Records NSW regional repositories network', paper presented to the annual conference of the ASA, Alice Springs, 2006 at http://www.archivists.org.au/files/Conference_Papers/2006/Logan_ASAConference2006.pdf [accessed 29 July 2008]. As for a federal-state systems cooperation, the head of the Public Record Office Victoria, Harry

Nunn, referred to concrete plans for such a system being ratified in an exchange of letters by the Premier of Victoria and the Australian Prime Minister. See Harry Nunn, 'Legislation in Records Management', *ARMA Records Management Quarterly*, vol. 13, no.3, July 1979, pp. 24-28. See also Bill Russell, 'Uncovering the history of the archive', Symposium on the History of the State Archives in Victoria, 31 July 2003, at http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/publications/krpsymposium/krp_erussell.asp [accessed 16 July 2008].

¹³ Lamb report, p. 30.

¹⁴ *Australia's Federal Record. A Review of the Archives Act 1983*. ALRC, no 85 1998. <http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/other/alrc/publications/reports/85/ch26.html#Heading1> [7 June 2008].

¹⁵ I won't trawl back over the vexed history of representative machinery for archives and archivists, but it links back as far as the Lamb report in 1974 when the Australian Advisory Council on Bibliographical Services was quite prepared to speak to government for libraries *and archives*.

¹⁶ See National Archival Forum', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 13, no. 2, November 1985, pp. 155,158-161; Baiba Berzins, 'The Australian Council of Archives', *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 20, no. 1, May 1992, pp. ,,,, (tbc); and the CAARA website <http://www.caara.org.au/>.

¹⁷ A case in point is *Digital archiving in the 21st century. Archives Domain discussion paper*, September 2006. According to the title page, the paper was "Researched and written by National Archives of Australia in cooperation with and *on behalf of* the Council of Australasian Archives and Records Authorities". (Emphasis added). Despite this disarming admission, the background section (p. 7) states that the paper "represents the views of the Archives Domain in Australia" and later summarises the kinds of archival institutions (including my own, the University of Melbourne Archives), it believes the Archives domain encompasses (p. 36). See <http://www.caara.org.au/Publications/DigitalArchiving21C.pdf>. The quality and commendable work of the discussion paper itself are of course separate matters; I hope it is obvious that my point concerns representation.

¹⁸ See Ross Gibbs, 'Made, Kept and Used: Celebrating 30 Years of the Australian Society of Archivists,' *Made Kept & Used*, ASA, Canberra, 2007, p. 3.

¹⁹ Very much the creature of government archivists, the Archives Working Group operated between 1995 and 1998. It commissioned two reports and guides to archival resources (on indigenous Australians and immigrants) and made recommendations based on market researcher on use and non-use of archival resources. See News Notes item 'Archives Working Group' by Susannah Zweep, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 24, no. 2, November 1996, p. 421 and http://archive.dcita.gov.au/2007/12/cultural_ministers_council/cultural_ministers_council_standing_committee_and_working_groups/archives_working_group [accessed 9 July 2008].

²⁰ One obvious weakness is its coverage of science collections. If the CCA allows seats on its Board for the Councils purporting to represent the four main cultural heritage sectors, as a minimum it should presumably also include a representative from one or more of the following: the Council of Heads of Australasian Herbaria, the Council of Heads of Australian Fauna Collections, the Council of Heads of Australian Botanic Gardens and the Australasian Regional Association of Zoological Parks and Aquaria.

²¹ As Margy Burn put it recently, "To my ears, the cyber universe of folksonomies contrasts sharply with the voice of curatorial authority." See her 'Significance and libraries', paper presented to the Collections Council of Australia Significance 2.0 workshop, 30 April 2008 at <http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/articles.aspx?articleType=ArticleView&articleId=80> [accessed 7 July 2008].

²² See <http://hangingtogether.org/> [accessed 28 July 2008].

²³ ‘Australia’s collections sector welcomes the new Labor government’. Collections Council of Australia. Media Release 29 January 2008. <http://www.collectionscouncil.com.au/media+room.aspx> [accessed 28 June 2008]. For the second quote, see the Collections Council of Australia leaflet *CollectionsCare*. May 2007.

²⁴ On the tensions these two titles represent, see Frank Upward, ‘Association amongst archivists during the 1950s’, in Frank Upward and Jean P. Whyte, eds., *Peopling A Profession. Papers from the Fourth Forum on Australian Library History. Monash University 25 and 26 September 1989*. Ancora Press, 1991, pp.92-106; H. J. Gibbney and R C Sharman, ‘HAPPY BIRTHDAY. Notes on the 20th Anniversary of *Archives and Manuscripts*’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, no. 5, November 1975, pp. 192-196; and Colin Smith, ‘A Hitch-hiker’s Guide to Australian Archival History’ in Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward, eds., *Archival Documents; Providing Accountability Through Recordkeeping*. Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 197-210.

²⁵ Graeme Powell, ‘Archival principles and the treatment of personal papers’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, no.7, August 1976, pp. 259-268 at p. 259.

²⁶ Chris Hurley, ‘Personal papers and the treatment of archival principles’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 6, no.8, pp. 351-365; and Michael Saclier, ‘Thoughts prompted by a series of finding aids’, *ibid.*, pp. 370-375.

²⁷ The articles were reproduced in Peter Biskup et al, eds., *Debates and discourses: selected Australian writings on archival theory, 1951-1990*. ASA, Canberra, 1995 and highly rated for example in Eric Ketelaar’s, ‘Transaustralian *Archives and Manuscripts*’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 33, no 2, November 2005, pp. 14-17. For references in Graeme’s Distinguished Achievement Award citation, see *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 29, no 2, November 2001, pp. 6-8. On Graeme more generally, see ‘Graeme Powell-Distinguished Achiever’, *Gateways*, no. 53, October 2001 at <http://www.nla.gov.au/pub/gateways/archive/53/p19a01.html> [accessed 19 June 2008].

²⁸ Adrian specifically addresses some of the points of difference between the protagonists Powell-Hurley protagonists in ‘The Gallimaufry of Colonel Ferdinand Henry Wright: the Powell /Hurley debate, slight return’, *Limited Addition. Newsletter of the ASA Collecting Archives Special Interest Group*, no. 1 January 1992, pp. 7-9. For other references, see Sue McKemmish, ‘Are users needs compatible with archival theory? (I)’, *Limited Addition*, no. 2 August 1992, pp.4-6; and Margaret Southcott, Roger Andre and Neil Thomas, ‘Theory Practice and Pragmatism: Arrangement and description of personal papers in the Mortlock Library of South Australiana’. *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 24, no. 1, May 1996, pp. 102-115. An intriguing subplot to the silence has been the debate’s treatment in the ASA’s flagship text *Keeping Archives*. As Adrian Cunningham noted (*Limited Addition*, above p.8) the Further Reading section of the chapter on arrangement and description for both 1978 and 1993 editions mentions Chris’s rejoinder, but not its inseparable target article by Graeme. In both editions, the chapter was co-authored by Paul Brunton, the head of manuscripts at the Mitchell Library, State Library of New South Wales.

²⁹ E.g. see Queensland State Library’s John Oxley Library, ‘Manuscripts and archives’ <http://www.slq.qld.gov.au/Services/coll/jol/manuscripts> [accessed 9 June 2008]. On Manoly Lascaris, see the National Library of Australia’s online finding aid to the Patrick White Collection <http://www.nla.gov.au/apps/cdview?pi=nla.ms-ms9982> [accessed 19 June 2008].

³⁰ Scarecrow Press and the Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 1997. Burke argues there are strong differences for personal papers, a key issues in the Powell-Hurley debate.

³¹ For an overview, see <http://www.himaa.org.au/> [accessed 4 July 2008].

³² Dr Livia Iacovino was a Chief Investigator with the ARC funded project during 2002-2005 titled ‘Electronic Health Records: Achieving an Effective and Ethical Legal and Recordkeeping Framework’. See ‘Beyond the Tomb: Privacy, confidentiality, and long-term preservation of and access to electronic

health records in national systems – a case study of Australia’s HealthConnect project’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 34, no. 2, November 2006, pp. 10-39.

³³ One of the earliest indicators of interest was Doreen Wheeler, ‘Business records and the sole archivist creating an archives’, *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 7, no. 3, August 1978, pp. 101-109. It remains in my opinion a classic articulation of the challenges of an in-house business archivist. See also Colleen Pritchard, ed., *Managing Business Archives; Papers from a Seminar held on 24 July 1986*. ASA, Canberra, 1987. Updated and reissued in 1992.

³⁴ For my own attempts at analysis and suggestions, see ‘The Australian business archives scene: comments and comparisons’, *Business Archives Principles and Practice* [UK], No 87 May 2004, pp 1-15 (co-authored with Dr Sigrid McCausland), and ‘Towards a national strategy for business recordkeeping’, *Business and Labour Archives*, No 1 December 2000, pp. 6-8. See http://www.archivists.org.au/files/Branch_and_SIG_pubs/BLCSIG/Business_and_Labour_Archives/200012_Business_and_Labour_Archives.pdf [accessed 11 July 2008].

³⁵ As quoted in Piggott, ‘Towards a national strategy...’, p. 6.

³⁶ For basic details about small business in Australia, see the Council of Small Business of Australia <http://www.cosboa.org/webs/cosboa/cosboaweb.nsf> [accessed 31 July 2008].

³⁷ See ‘Business hands out a cool \$171m in gifts’, *The Australian*, 15 May 2008, p. 14.

³⁸ Peter Pouncey, *Rules for old men waiting*. Chatto & Windus, 2005.

³⁹ Sarah Tyacke, ‘Archives in a Wider World: The Culture and Politics of Archives’ in Wallace Kirsop, ed., *The Commonwealth of Books: Essays and Studies in Honour of Ian Willison*. Centre for the Book, Monash University, 2007, pp. 209-226 at p. 214.

⁴⁰ See ‘Placing records continuum theory and practice’ *Archival Science*, no. 1, 2001, pp. 333-59 at p. 351. This lack has been noted many times in Australia, but as with the challenge of business archives, we have been better at analysing the problem than implementing solutions. One could also see the Conference of Commonwealth and State Archives in 1949, the Schellenberg seminars in 1954, the Conference on Source Materials for Australian Studies in 1961, the Australian Libraries Summit in 1988 and the Archives in the National Research Infrastructure Round Table No 10 in 1999 as attempts in part to examine common approaches to appraisal and collecting. On the issue generally, see Adrian Cunningham ‘From here to eternity: collecting archives and the need for a national documentation strategy’ *LASIE*, vol. 29, no. 1, March 1998 at <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/lasie/prepdf.htm> [26 February 2005]; the mini theme issue of *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 29, no. 2, November 2001; and Michael Piggott, ‘A national approach to archival appraisal and collecting,’ paper presented to the Archives in the National Research Infrastructure Round Table No 10; see http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/nscf/roundtables/r10/r10_piggott.html [18 February 2005].

⁴¹ For a sample of the discussion of the challenges in communicating why archives and records are important, see Hilary Golder, *Changes and Choices, 1994-2004*. National Archives of Australia, Canberra, 2004, p. 4. and *Market research into the use and non-use of archives in Australia by key user groups. Prepared for the Archives Working Group of the Cultural Ministers Council*. Environmetrics Pty Limited, Sydney, 1996. As for the popular image of archivists, the literature is extensive. For two local starting point, see Gabrielle Wolski (note 5) and John Lenarcic, ‘“Building the Perfect Beast”: The Archivist in Popular Culture’, paper presented to the Australian Society of Archivists, 2004 annual conference at http://www.archivists.org.au/files/Conference_Papers/2004_ASA/Building_the_Perfect_Beast.pdf [accessed 29 July 2008]

⁴² Adrian Cunningham, ‘Report on the logo polling’, *ASA Bulletin*, no. 132 April 1997, p. 60.