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## Using history: historical research and publication by Australian librarians and archivists

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I want to talk today about the production of what in Australia is often described inclusively as ‘library history’: that is to say, the history of both libraries and archives. In doing so I will consider not only what has been produced but those who have produced it, the professional agendas they sought to advance, and possible explanations for why librarians appear to have been more prolific producers than archivists.

I need to emphasise at the outset that my paper offers an *historical* argument, drawing on evidence from content analysis of published research into ‘library history’ in the sense I have already defined it – the bulk of this evidence being from the period 1984-1996. Time-bound like any other historical study, it is not intended as a commentary on the state of archival history in Australia in 2005. Nor is it intended as the basis for predictions about developments in the research and writing of archival history in years to come. Rather it seeks to extend Maxine Rochester’s 1995 and 1997 findings on research production in library and information studies (LIS).<sup>1</sup> In applying Rochester’s methodology I am using her definition of research as ‘an inquiry, where the goal is to elicit, through a systematic method, some new facts, concepts or ideas’.<sup>2</sup> In my context, ‘systematic method’ involves the critical scrutiny and analysis of original sources, whether manuscript or printed.

This qualification is of some importance because the present paper distinguishes between publications deriving from historical research and those that derive from anecdotes or what I describe here as reminiscence and reflection. If anyone doubts the force of this distinction, they would do well to consider the monograph published by the Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre to celebrate its 50th anniversary. Of the 19 essays, only two would qualify as historical research publications using my criteria.<sup>3</sup> In saying this, however, I want to make it clear that it is no part of my purpose in this paper to argue about the ‘quality’ of Australian ‘library history’ production (defined inclusively) or to impugn the good work which already has been done.

Like Rochester, I am concerned with *published* research and have assumed that research dealing with Australian archive and library history is more likely to be published in Australia than overseas, and to be in the three core journals, *Australian Library Journal* (ALJ), *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* (AARL) or *Archives and Manuscripts* (A&M).<sup>4</sup> I

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<sup>1</sup> M.K. Rochester, ‘Library and Information Science Research in Australia 1985-1994: A Content Analysis of Research Articles in *The Australian Library Journal* and *Australian Academic & Research Libraries*’, *AARL*, 26 (3) 1995, pp. 163-170 and M.K. Rochester, ‘Who are the Authors?’, *AARL*, 28 (3) 1997, pp. 217-228.

<sup>2</sup> Rochester, ‘Library and Information Science Research in Australia 1985-1994’, p. 165.

<sup>3</sup> B. Howarth and E. Maidment (eds), *Light from the Tunnel: Collecting the Archives of Australian Business and Labour at the Australian National University, 1953-2003*, Friends of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, Canberra, 2004. The two essays are by Selwyn Cornish and Suzanne Fairbanks (the latter drawing on research undertaken for a Monash University research high degree thesis). Ann Turner actually titles her one page essay ‘Anecdote’.

<sup>4</sup> While this appears to be a reasonable assumption for the period studied in this paper, it may not be sustainable in more recent decades. Since 2003 two important articles have been published in mainstream journals: J. Sassoon, ‘Phantoms of Remembrance: Libraries and Archives as “the

have excluded research reports, dealt selectively with the comparatively few monographs that have been produced to date, and have included research deriving from theses and dissertations only if it has been published in the three core journals or in proceedings of the Australian Library History Forums (ALHF).

I will begin with the circumstances in which inclusive use of the term 'library history' developed, and examine opinions about its status. Thereafter, I will profile fields of interest and the demographics of producers of library and archives history in the specific senses, using articles published in the three core journals and papers presented at the seven ALHFs convened between 1984 and 1996. Intended to raise awareness of, and interest in, library history (defined inclusively), the forums offered practitioners – and library educators in particular – the opportunity to deliver what in effect were manifestos about the place of historical research in professional training. Archives and records educators and practitioners, though much less numerous, were among the most prolific presenters at the forums, but were more ambivalent than their library counterparts about historical research and the archivist as historian, as we shall see shortly.

Returning to the inclusive use of the term 'library history', we need to grasp at the outset that there was a comparatively lengthy period of library control of archives in Australia, and consequential delay in the emergence of a separate archives profession. The Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia (LAA) was established in 1951 and remained in existence (despite a steadily declining membership) until the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) got up and running in 1975. Two years earlier, the School of Librarianship at the University of New South Wales (UNSW) introduced this country's first graduate diploma course in archives and records administration, drawing core subjects from its existing graduate diploma course in librarianship. The academic librarians who dominated the UNSW library school justified this arrangement on the grounds that librarianship and archival administration were 'but two subspecies of a larger discipline called information management',<sup>5</sup> and maintained this position down to the mid-1990s. Then, as now, there was also professional intermingling in the acquisition and management by libraries and collecting archives of private records (manuscripts). In these circumstances the history of archives and libraries and the professions that maintain them are as intermingled in research and writing as in practice.

Australian practitioners of library history (in the inclusive sense) generally insist it is a minority interest. They lament the passing of the compulsory LAA registration certificate paper on the 'history and purposes of libraries and librarianship', point to 'the need to catch up' with the United States where the 'writing of library history is well established', but suggest that interest continues to decline owing to 'the virtual obliteration' of historical studies 'from current professional curricula'.<sup>6</sup> Yet, as Maxine Rochester demonstrated in 1995, 'library history' comprised the largest single category of research articles (n=13 or 23%) published during the period 1985-1994 in *ALJ*, and empirical historical methodologies constituted the second most common research strategy utilised by investigators reporting their findings in *ALJ* and *AARL*.<sup>7</sup>

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Collective Memory", *Public History Review*, 10, 2003, pp. 40-60 and A-M Conde, 'Capturing the Records of War: Collecting at the Mitchell Library and the Australian War Memorial', *Australian Historical Studies*, 37 (125) 2005, pp. 134-152.

<sup>5</sup> M. Piggott, 'Educating for Recordkeeping and Information Management', *A&M*, 23 (1) 1995, p. 91.

<sup>6</sup> J.P. Whyte, 'Making History' in E. Morrison and M. Talbot (eds), *Books, Libraries and Readers in Colonial Australia*, Graduate School of Librarianship, Monash University, Clayton, 1985, pp. 135-136, 138; P. Biskup, *Libraries in Australia*, Centre for Information Studies, Wagga Wagga, 1995, p. vii.

<sup>7</sup> Rochester, 'Library and Information Science Research in Australia 1985-1994', pp. 163-170.

In making her calculations, Rochester defined library history inclusively: four of the 18 'library history' articles appearing in *ALJ* and *AARL* during her selected period dealt with 'archival' issues; two on manuscript collecting by a librarian, but not a manuscript librarian, and two on library control of archives by an archivist. According to Rochester, *ALJ* and *AARL* published 126 research articles during the period 1985-1994, so of this total the fourteen 'library' articles comprised 11.1% and the four 'archival' articles comprised 3.2%. If we apply Rochester's methodology to ASA's own journal, *A&M* – again expressing the results as a percentage of all research articles to allow for archivists being less numerous than librarians and for *A&M* appearing twice a year – we find that archival history articles have appeared sporadically in the journal since its inception in 1955, and continued to do so during the decade ending in 2004 when they comprised 5.8% (n=4) of all research articles (n=69). But, during the decade studied by Rochester, *A&M* published no research articles on archival history.

There thus seem to be reasonable grounds for concluding that archival history has attracted significantly less attention from archivists than library history has from librarians. However, we need to consider whether the decade (1984-1995) chosen by Rochester was in any respects atypical and whether this may have affected the validity of her findings. For a start there were several important anniversaries, which those who have reflected about library history (inclusively speaking) see as important drivers of research and publication – even if fraught with the traps of celebration and progressivism.<sup>8</sup> And then there were the seven ALHFs, convened between 1984 and 1996, and overlapping the decade chosen by Rochester.

Taking the anniversaries first, it is apparent that, to date, anniversaries have prompted generous quantities of reminiscence and reflection but comparatively little published research in the three core journals.<sup>9</sup> 1987 was the 50th anniversary of the LAA. This was celebrated with a special issue of *ALJ* containing 17 sets of reminiscences and reflections but just two substantial research articles. A double archival anniversary in 1985 – the 30th anniversary of *A&M* and the 10th anniversary of the ASA – elicited nine sets of reminiscences and reflections, the majority relating to *A&M*, and no research articles.<sup>10</sup> Somewhat exceptionally, the 50th anniversary of the National Archives of Australia (NAA), then known as Australian Archives (AA), was celebrated in 1994 with the publication of a monograph, *The Records Continuum*. Of its 13 essays, four can unequivocally be categorised as archival history, but this does not invalidate the conclusion I already have reached about archival history's minority status in Australia.

Turning to the ALHFs, these had only a small impact on publication in the three core journals. Just two forum papers were reprinted in *ALJ* and *AARL* in 1985 and 1991 respectively, although all eight papers delivered at the 7th forum in 1996 were subsequently reprinted in a single issue of *ALJ* in 1998, having already appeared in conference proceedings. On the other hand, several presenters published related articles in *ALJ* and *AARL*. The most prolific was David J. Jones, a librarian from the State Library of New South Wales, who gave presentations to the 1st ALHF in 1984 (published in *ALJ* the following year) and the 5th ALHF in 1992. Between 1990 and 1995 he published six related articles dealing with library

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<sup>8</sup> Whyte, 'Making History', p. 137; W.B. Rayward, 'Library History in Context' in W.B. Rayward (ed.), *Library History in Context*, UNSW School of Librarianship, Sydney, 1988, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> To judge from the most recent issue of the *ASA Bulletin*, #4, August 2005, pp. 6-15, memoirs are still the preferred way of celebrating archival anniversaries.

<sup>10</sup> *ALJ*'s anniversary issue includes research articles by J.P. Whyte, "'To unite persons engaged in library work": the Australian Institute of Librarians', *ALJ*, 36 (4) 1987, pp. 193-207 and W.B. Rayward, 'Central and Other Mysteries in Librarianship: the Writings of John Wallace Metcalfe', *ALJ*, 36 (4) 1987, pp. 208-225. The nine articles celebrating the archival anniversaries are strictly classified as reminiscences, although one by Jim Gibbney and Allan Horton, 'Fools rush in ...', *A&M*, 13 (2) 1985, pp. 111-115, cites several letters from an (unspecified) MS. collection at the National Library of Australia.

and archival issues, five in *ALJ* and one in *AARL*. It needs to be emphasised that these articles were not spin offs from his forum presentations. Rather, they – in common with his forum presentations – derived from research for his PhD (awarded 1993) in the School of Librarianship at UNSW on ‘William Herbert Ifould and the Development of Library Services in New South Wales, 1912-1942’.

The ALHFs provide a convenient series of snapshots of library history production and producers (in the inclusive sense) across a 12-year span. Archives and records practitioners had presented from the outset, although it was not until the 7th forum in 1996 that convenors consciously set out ‘to expand the scope ... to include reflections on the history of archives as well as of libraries’.<sup>11</sup> But there is nothing to suggest that participants in the first six forums interpreted library history in anything other than the inclusive sense. While few in number (an observation which requires some emphasis), the archives and records presenters were decidedly prolific, with several of them giving papers at two or more forums. Analysis of presenters’ demographics nevertheless underscores the conclusions I have reached about library history having attracted proportionately greater attention from librarians and library educators than the history of archives has from archives and records professionals. It also suggests some possible explanations.

Taking the demographics first, the seven forums saw some 55 presenters deliver 79 papers that afterwards were published in conference proceedings.<sup>12</sup> Three quarters of the presenters were librarians or library educators. Of the 26 librarians, 11 (42%) were employed in ‘public’ (that is, national and state) libraries, eight (31%) were employed in academic libraries and at least 14 were undertaking, or had recently completed, LIS research higher degrees (RHD) at Monash University or UNSW. Of the 16 lecturers in librarianship, five had recently completed or were completing RHDs. There were six presenters from the archival community. They delivered a total of 11 papers, several of them on library topics. I will discuss this crossover in the major fields of interest in a moment, but it is pertinent to note in passing that the production of published research into archival history is the work of an even smaller number of archivists than would appear at first sight. Two of the three archivists and two of the three lecturers in archives and records were undertaking or had recently completed LIS RHDs either at Monash or UNSW, while one of the archives and records lecturers had also completed a UNSW PhD in history. The three archivists’ employment patterns were broadly consistent with those of the librarians in terms of institutional type and size: one was employed by the Australian War Memorial, then by AA and currently by the University of Melbourne Archives, another by the State Library of Victoria and the third by the University of Melbourne Archives.

From what we have heard already of the interconnections between libraries and archives it should come as no surprise to find that there was a certain amount of crossover among librarians, archivists and their educator colleagues in the major fields of interest. The two largest fields were the history of libraries as cultural institutions and the history of the library profession, library professionals and professional association among librarians. The third largest field of interest was the history of books, the book trade and reading. It also proved to be the field that attracted most interest from mainstream academic historians and faculty members in disciplines other than LIS.

A few examples will illustrate my point about the crossover in interests. For instance, a UNSW lecturer in archives and records who had completed a PhD in history presented at the 2nd forum on the decline of school of arts libraries and at the 3rd forum on the destruction of public records in the Garden Palace fire of 1882. The senior archivist from the University of

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<sup>11</sup> Introduction in B.J. McMullin (ed.), *Coming Together*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>12</sup> Several papers that were presented apparently were not made available for publication, but it is difficult to get an accurate count or details about all the presenters.

Melbourne Archives meanwhile presented at the 1st, 4th and 5th forums on her doctoral research into the history of the book trade, and a library educator from Canberra presented at the 1st forum on 'Documentary publication and institutional preservation of Australian historical records up to World War II: a proposed study'. Because this was not his advertised topic and because this particular forum had a theme – 'Books, libraries and readers in colonial Australia' – the convenors punished him by omitting his paper from the published proceedings!<sup>13</sup>

Turning to explanations about why library history has attracted proportionately greater attention from librarians and library educators than the history of archives has from archives and records professionals, it is possible to identify several shared characteristics and some differences among the producers of library and archives history who presented at the ALHFs.

First, there is employment in an institution that expects and/or facilitates engagement in research. Academics lecturing in librarianship or in archives and records fall into this category, though the levels of expectation and facilitation will vary from institution to institution as well as from individual to individual. Librarians and archivists working in universities might not be expected to engage in research as a condition of their employment, but generally speaking there will be an institutional or workplace research culture and access to the necessary research resources like journals. Some staff members in major public libraries also enjoy levels of facilitation similar to their counterparts in universities. According to Jean Whyte, staff members in major public libraries were the most numerous contributors of all categories of articles to *ALJ* until the 1970s when they were overtaken by growing numbers of academic librarians employed in the burgeoning tertiary education sector.<sup>14</sup> This is confirmed by Rochester's 1997 study of LIS authors which found that half the contributors of research articles in general to *AARL* during the period 1985-1994 worked in academic libraries.<sup>15</sup>

Secondly, there is employment in a sufficiently large, functionally segregated workplace with enough critical mass in individual organisational or administrative units to produce common interests and generate the intellectual vibrancy required to foster a culture that supports research and publication. Three quarters of the 26 librarian presenters and all of the working archivist presenters were employed in big public libraries and archives or in universities. The archivists who presented at the ALHFs are in this respect atypical because, as Bob Sharman has suggested, many archivists work by themselves, in pairs, or at most in groups of five or six: conditions which are not conducive to research and writing unless there are specific measures in place to promote these activities (as there generally are in universities).<sup>16</sup> This remains a very real issue. The ASA's 1996 membership survey disclosed that 60% of respondents worked in administrative units with less than seven employees, while the 2003 survey disclosed that 37% of (a total of 397) respondents were 'lone arrangers', some of them employed only part-time.<sup>17</sup>

Thirdly, there is issue of education and training. At least 45% of all forum presenters were undertaking or had undertaken RHDs, a significant number of these being post-professional library qualifications (like the Monash Master of Librarianship degree). This invites speculation about whether the belated development of the archival profession in Australia and

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<sup>13</sup> Editors' Preface in *Books, Libraries and Readers in Colonial Australia*, p. viii.

<sup>14</sup> J.P. Whyte, 'Issues in Australian Librarianship' in W.B. Rayward (ed.), *The Variety of Librarianship: Essays in Honour of John Wallace Metcalfe*, LAA, Sydney, 1976, p. 216.

<sup>15</sup> Rochester, 'Who are the Authors?', pp. 222-225.

<sup>16</sup> R.C. Sharman, 'Introduction' in *Debates and Discourses: Selected Australian Writings on Archival Theory 1951-1990*, ASA, Canberra, 1995, pp. 11-12.

<sup>17</sup> J. Davidson et al., 'The Australian Society of Archivists' 1996 Membership Survey', *A&M*, 25 (2) 1997, p.325 and R. Loo, 'ASA 2003 Membership Survey', *A&M*, 32 (2) 2004, pp. 22-23.

the comparatively recent introduction of professional education for archivists account for the modest numbers of archivists pursuing post-professional qualifications of the type that so evidently fuels the production of library history (in both the inclusive and the non-inclusive senses).<sup>18</sup> I am not aware of any research on this issue and the available evidence is inconclusive. Judging from successive ASA membership surveys, more than half of the respondents in 1993 had no tertiary qualifications at any level in archives and records, while a decade later this figure had dropped to around one third of respondents.<sup>19</sup> Close to half of the 66% of respondents reporting tertiary qualifications in 2003 identified a graduate diploma (which generally does not require completion of a research dissertation or thesis) as their highest award. On the other hand, the 1993 membership survey disclosed that almost 10% of respondents had masters' degrees and 3% doctorates in fields other than archives, records or librarianship.<sup>20</sup> Whether the masters were coursework or research degrees, whether many of them were in history (a not unlikely possibility), and whether their recipients continued to produce and publish historical research cannot be established.

Until more comprehensive data are available, I can only suggest that those who point to a link between education and the production of library history (defined inclusively) are correct in doing so. However, existing evidence indicates that the driver is not the study of historical subjects in undergraduate or postgraduate diploma courses but the completion of a sustained piece of research for a post-professional higher degree. If we look at the forums' big producers – the 17 presenters who delivered two, three or four papers – we find that seven of them (41%) were academics who could be expected to undertake research in any case, but that 11 (65%) of the 17 (including two archivists and a lecturer in archives and records) had completed or were completing doctoral or masters' studies requiring the preparation of a research thesis on an historical topic. Now of these 11 RHD candidates or graduates, seven were from Monash and four were from UNSW.

The predominance of Monash RHD students – who comprised nine of the 16 presenters at the 1st ALHF – and the very much greater numbers of researchers working on library (as opposed to archival) topics, is more readily comprehended in data compiled by Carmel Maguire in 1998. They reveal that Monash had by then awarded 52% of all LIS RHDs in Australia, including 120 masters (first award in 1979) and nine doctorates (first award in 1985). Only one of these doctorates (awarded in 1996, for a study of client/service provider relations at NAA) and eight of the masters were in archives and records. After Monash, UNSW was the next largest producer (18.5%). It awarded fewer masters (22, commencing in 1967), but more PhDs (24, commencing in 1985). Maguire's data on archives and records research at UNSW are incomplete, but she notes that it awarded its first masters (in librarianship) for an archival history thesis in 1969, and its sole Master of Archives Administration degree in 1989.<sup>21</sup> By 1995 a two-year coursework degree articulated with the existing graduate diploma had replaced the UNSW research masters. It included an archive history subject but did not require the completion of a research thesis: a move which Piggott speculated was possibly intended to make it more attractive to mid-career archivists able only to undertake part-time study.<sup>22</sup> Unfortunately Maguire does not provide any detailed analysis of topic choice beyond identifying what she labels the four 'most populous clusters' for LIS RHDs in general: namely, information needs/user studies/information seeking; intellectual control of

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<sup>18</sup> An argument put in relation to the small output of research and writing about archival theory in Sharman, 'Introduction', pp. 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> The data are not directly comparable, however, because the poorly designed 2003 survey instrument aggregated qualifications in archives, records, information management and librarianship.

<sup>20</sup> J. Davidson, et al., 'The Australian Society of Archivists' 1993 Membership Survey', *A&M*, 23 (2) 1995, p. 311 and Loo, 'ASA 2003 Membership Survey', p. 26.

<sup>21</sup> C. Maguire, 'Research Degrees in Library and Information Studies in Australia: Facts, Figures and Possible Futures', *Education for Library and Information Services: Australia*, 15 (2) 1998, pp. 43, 45, 46.

<sup>22</sup> Piggott, 'Educating for Recordkeeping and Information Management', p. 92.

collections; history of libraries and archives and bibliographic studies; and academic and research library management.

Fourthly, there is the issue of attitudes to historical research, which for both archivists and librarians is tied up with its place in professional training and for archivists additionally encompasses continuing debates about professional identity that have their roots in the 1950s and 1960s.

While we should not attempt to generalise too boldly from the small sample of 'working' archivists who presented papers at the ALHFs, it is interesting to find that all of them then worked, or had previous experience of working, in collecting institutions like the Australian War Memorial and the manuscript sections of the National Library of Australia and the State Library of Victoria, or in combined function university archives like the University of Melbourne Archives that gave the collecting function priority over the in-house (or 'institutional') function. Because these institutions were oriented to researchers, for whom the records constituted historical source material, we might reasonably wonder whether the archivists who worked in them would be more favourably disposed towards historical research than staff in public archives like AA, which until the late 1980s gave priority to the administrative needs of government agencies. Somewhat surprisingly, the culturally oriented archivists and archives educators seemed less ready than the library educators to champion the benefits of historical research, while the archives and records educators who adopted the 'recordkeeping' viewpoint (with its emphasis on administrative use and public accountability) appeared more ambivalent towards historical research than their library counterparts. This clearly emerges in the statements they delivered at the forums.

The most outspoken advocate of historical research among library educators presenting at the ALHFs was Jean Whyte, head of the Graduate School of Librarianship (after 1988, the Graduate Department of Librarianship, Archives and Records) at Monash University. Whyte had introduced Australia's first 'post-professional' research degree of Master of Librarianship in 1976 and a base-level Master of Arts requiring 2 years of study and the completion of a thesis. She gave particular emphasis to the research thesis, which she saw as the means by which more gifted students could be encouraged to think critically and to move the profession forward intellectually.<sup>23</sup> Her view of historical studies was utilitarian: she approvingly quoted Harrison Bryan's remark 'that the past does have lessons for us that we ignore at our peril', and, in terms reminiscent of E.H. Carr, told the 1st ALHF that history could be used to understand, interpret and influence the present.<sup>24</sup> Keen to connect with the historical mainstream, she encouraged contact between her students and Monash's cultural historians, though Maguire's data suggest that this rarely extended to formal, cross-faculty supervision.<sup>25</sup>

The head of the School of Librarianship at UNSW, Boyd Rayward, shared Whyte's enthusiasm for historical research, championing *l'histoire du livre* – the multidisciplinary movement which he believed had the capacity to transform the way library history (defined non-inclusively) was written. He envisaged libraries not merely as 'laboratories' for studying

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<sup>23</sup> Whyte in her paper, 'Tending the Sacred Flame: John Metcalfe's Contribution to Establishing Professional Librarianship in Australia' in W.B. Rayward (ed.), *Libraries and Life in a Changing World: the Metcalfe Years, 1920-1970*, School of Information, Library and Archive Studies, UNSW, Sydney, 1993, pp. 44-46, was critical of Metcalfe and the LAA's Board (of which she had been a member at that time) for not more robustly contesting the Martin Committee's conclusion that an undergraduate course in a college of advanced education, rather than a university, was a sufficient preparation for librarianship.

<sup>24</sup> J.P. Whyte, 'Harrison Bryan and the Making of Australian Library History' in J.P. Whyte and N.A. Radford (eds), *An Enthusiasm for Libraries: Essays in Honour of Harrison Bryan*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1988, p. 38; E.H. Carr, *What is History?*, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1965, pp. 62-73.

<sup>25</sup> Maguire, 'Research Degrees in Library and Information Studies in Australia', p. 47.

the history of readers and reading, but as entities which ‘were an integral part of that history as well’ because they filtered, shaped and reflected societal values.<sup>26</sup> But while Frank Upward, a Monash lecturer in archives and records, was to refer when introducing the 4th ALHF in 1989 to ‘an archival companion theme, which archivists might be persuaded to call *l’histoire du fonds*’,<sup>27</sup> neither he nor Peter Orlovich, the UNSW archives and records course coordinator and presenter at two forums, evinced any interest in elucidating its contours. Nor did either of them offer any public endorsement of the value of historical studies to archives and records professionals (as Whyte and Rayward had done for librarians), although Orlovich (who has a PhD in history) had elsewhere characterised the archivist’s role as primarily cultural and spoken of archivists and historians as ‘joint colleagues in a scholarly venture’.<sup>28</sup>

This cultural ethos was still firmly entrenched among the librarian-archivists who managed the Archives Office of New South (AONSW, which previously had been part of the State Library) as well as in the UNSW course in archives and records administration. Upward, by contrast, took care to distance himself from the historian-archivists, whether employed in libraries and archives or as educators in universities, insisting that his own ALHF paper on ‘association amongst archivists during the 1950s’ did ‘not profess to be genuinely historical’.<sup>29</sup> This was not a little disingenuous. Like his Monash colleague Sue McKemmish, Upward has an MA in history and a keen eye for historical context, even if he chooses not to address it in detail in his writings about archival ideas.<sup>30</sup> However, his own experience as a practitioner has not been in culturally oriented collecting archives, but rather in government (public) archives – beginning at AA, which during his period of service had seen its principal function as serving the administrative needs of agencies.

With McKemmish, Upward was engaged in developing a ‘conceptual framework for the integrated archives and records programs’ they planned to offer at Monash University. They coined the term ‘recordkeeping’ to describe the ‘continuum of processes involved in managing the record of a transaction so that it retains its evidentiary quality’ and hence its ability to ‘underpin the public accountability of government and non-government organisations, freedom of information and privacy legislation, protection of people’s rights and entitlements, and the quality of the archival heritage’.<sup>31</sup>

In his ALHF paper Upward used empirical historical methodology to identify key spokespersons for the disparate coalition of records management interests that had laid the foundation for what McKemmish and Piggott would subsequently hail as a ‘distinctively Australian’ recordkeeping tradition.<sup>32</sup> Writing in the introduction to *The Records Continuum*, they characterised his contribution to that volume as ‘the intellectual history of the [AA’s predecessor, the Commonwealth Archives Office or] CAO’. Upward’s own caveats notwithstanding, his essay very effectively fulfilled the editors’ expectations of establishing

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<sup>26</sup> Rayward, ‘Library History in Context’, pp. 3-4.

<sup>27</sup> F. Upward, ‘Introduction’ in F. Upward and J.P. Whyte (eds), *Peopling a Profession*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1991, p. v.

<sup>28</sup> P. Orlovich, ‘Some Basic Assumptions Underlying the Education and Training of Archivists’, *A&M*, 6 (6) 1976, p. 222.

<sup>29</sup> F. Upward, ‘Association among Archivists during the 1950s’ in *Peopling a Profession*, p. 93.

<sup>30</sup> See, as an example, Upward’s ‘In Search of the Continuum: Ian Maclean’s “Australian Experience” Essays on Recordkeeping’ in S. McKemmish and M. Piggott (eds), *The Records Continuum*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 110-130 (and esp. p. 111).

<sup>31</sup> S. McKemmish and F. Upward (eds), *Archival Documents: Providing Accountability through Recordkeeping*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 1, 245.

<sup>32</sup> Introduction in *The Records Continuum*, pp. ix-xii. For comments on their efforts to accommodate their viewpoint within the Australian nationalist historiographical tradition see D. Boadle, ‘Reinventing the Archive in a Virtual Environment: Australians and the Non-Custodial Management of Electronic Records’, *AARL*, 35 (3) 2004, pp. 249-250.

‘connectivity between our history and the here and now’,<sup>33</sup> building on his forum paper to elaborate the positions key staff in the CAO had taken in what for the profession have proved to be on-going debates about the identity of archivists. His essay revealed how, in 1959, CAO’s Ian Maclean had predicted that the records manager was the archivist of the future, and had adopted an uncompromising stance against the American tradition of the ‘historical archivist’. According to Maclean, archivists who ‘visualised themselves as historians serving historians’ had ‘retreated to a defensive position’ from which they made ‘only occasional sorties into the domain of records management’ to undertake functions like the appraisal of records.<sup>34</sup>

Upward’s concern was with the roots of the recordkeeping tradition. He did not tease out further the archives and records communities’ attitudes to historical research or to their relationships with historians. A key figure in these 1950s and 1960s debates was the CAO’s Jim Gibbney, whom Upward identified as one of the most publicly outspoken advocates of the ‘record keeping’ position during that period. Gibbney maintained ‘that by the very nature of his work an archivist must be more than half historian. Indeed’, he told the LAA’s Archives Section, ‘I believe that the Commonwealth Archives Office, partly owing to a reaction against existing library attitudes has already gone a little too far in the other direction’ by conceptualising itself as the servant of administration.<sup>35</sup> Gibbney then approvingly quoted the German archivist, Adolf Brenneke, writing in 1953:

On the whole archival practice wears a Janus head even today, which is turned at the same time to administration and culture, and this double aspect can never be completely lost ... For all that we must oppose the one-sided conception of the Archives as a cultural institution. ... Fundamentally, the Archives is a service for state and people: cultural use is only the crown of the whole – a gift of recent date.<sup>36</sup>

‘Cultural use’ for Gibbney was historical research (whereas for McKemmish and Piggott the term embraces a wide variety of ‘public programs’, including exhibitions). This he linked with libraries and librarians, setting his sights firmly on Bob Sharman as the exemplar of the librarian-archivist-historian. Through association with libraries, Gibbney contended, ‘archives are finally and definitively labelled “history” and are considered to be something separate instead of being deemed a normal part of the administrative machine’. In the same way, association with the library profession had proved disadvantageous to archivists making it ‘extremely difficult at the moment to say what a professional archivist is’. Instead of leaving the determination of professional standards and the exercise of accreditation to senior librarians in the LAA, Gibbney proposed that archivists explore the constitution of an ‘Australian Institute of Record Keepers’. The ‘natural’ leaders of this organisation would be university trained archivists, but he believed it could also accommodate what Upward subsequently was to describe as the ‘non-librarian public servant as archivist’ – that is, ‘mature and experienced’ clerical officers without a university degree whom the CAO had found were ‘perfectly capable of carrying out satisfactorily a wide range of archival work’.<sup>37</sup>

This was anathema to Sharman who already had delivered a stinging riposte in the pages of *ALJ*:

It would be fatal if members of the archival profession accepted the leadership of an untrained and inexperienced set of promoted records clerks and self-styled

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<sup>33</sup> Introduction in *The Records Continuum*, p. x.

<sup>34</sup> Upward, ‘In Search of the Continuum’, p. 112.

<sup>35</sup> H.J. Gibbney, ‘Reflections on Australian Archives’ in LAA, *13<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference Papers*, vol. 1, LAA, Sydney, 1965, p251.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 247.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 249, 252, 254, 257-258; Upward, ‘Association among Archivists during the 1950s’, p. 97.

archivists, merely because they cannot see adequate recognition being granted them in the near future in the professional association [that is, LAA] with which they have most in common.<sup>38</sup>

Yet, as LAA's president in 1971-72, Sharman was obliged to address declining professional archivist numbers in the Archives Section and a shortage of articles for its journal *A&M* of which he was editor. He accordingly proposed a formal, institutional association between archivists and historians (themselves no better organised professionally than archivists at this time).<sup>39</sup> It is not without irony that, while an excellent history of the Archives Section was published in 1972,<sup>40</sup> there has been no further published research to date into the history of professional association among archives and records professionals. As a result we do not know whether the Sharman and Gibbney proposals ever progressed beyond the printed page and, if they did, the precise reasons why neither of them found favour.

We do know, however, that the professional identities of archives and records practitioners continue to be debated, even if much of the contemporary discourse engendered by professional educators focuses on 'recordkeeping issues, often equated with what traditionally has been called records management in government institutions and business corporations'. At best it is ambivalent towards historians, historian-archivists and historical research; at worst, contemptuous of what a Canadian archivist, Terry Cook, has described as 'the *traditional* discourse of archivists ... centred on history, heritage, culture, research, social memory and the curatorial custody of archives' created by individuals.<sup>41</sup>

A key figure who has attempted to bridge this divide is the University of Melbourne's archivist, Michael Piggott. In a paper delivered at the 7th ALHF in 1996 he set out to 'repurpose' history for recordkeeping professionals. After reminding attendees that 'recordkeeping ... has a past', he proposed it be captured through 'the development of an historical sociology of Australian recordkeeping'. Although he did not sketch out a methodology, he described it as 'a hybrid' that would 'learn from and incorporate the methodologies and theories of the social sciences' including those already invoked by practitioners of *histoire du livre*.<sup>42</sup> Since then he has delivered a paper (yet to be published), 'Towards a History of the Australian Diary', to the first International Conference on the History of Records and Archives (I-CHORA) held in Toronto in 2003.

To conclude, it is perhaps worth reiterating that I have not aimed to offer a commentary on the current state of archival history research and writing in Australia, or to make predictions about its future directions. Instead I have aimed simply to adduce some explanations for why archival history has been a minority interest among the Australian archives and records community at large. Given the nature of the publication samples used, and the fragmentary and tantalisingly incomplete accounts of past debates over professional identity, these explanations need to be treated as indicative rather than definitive.

There are, nevertheless, reasonable grounds for pointing to the disparity between the circumstances in which LIS professionals on the one hand and archives and records professionals on the other have gone about their work: in particular the impacts of

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<sup>38</sup> R.C. Sharman, 'Library Control of Archives', *ALJ*, 9 (3) 1960, p. 128.

<sup>39</sup> R.C. Sharman, 'The Archivist and the Historian', *A&M*, 4 (6) 1972, p. 8.

<sup>40</sup> G.L. Fischer, 'The Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia, 1951-1971', LAA, *Proceedings of the 16<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference*, LAA, Sydney, 1972, pp. 210-226.

<sup>41</sup> T. Cook, 'Beyond the Screen: The Records Continuum and Archival Cultural Heritage', in *Beyond the Screen: Capturing Corporate and Social Memory*, ASA, Melbourne, [2000?], p. 9.

<sup>42</sup> Piggott, 'The History of Australian Recordkeeping: A Framework for Research' in B.J. McMullin (ed.), *Coming Together*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1997, pp. 44-45 (paper reprinted under the same title in *ALJ*, 47 (4) 1998, pp. 343-354).

institutional type, size and functional stratification as well as consequential expectations about, and readiness to facilitate staff engagement in, research. While more comprehensive data are required to confirm the hypothesis, it also seems reasonable to point to the importance of the completion of a sustained piece of research for a RHD and to suggest that RHDs have been much more significant drivers of library history production (in its inclusive sense) than undergraduate studies or the celebration of anniversaries. Anniversaries, as my paper demonstrates, have given rise mainly to reminiscence and reflection. On the issue of attitudes to historical research and its place in professional training, there is unequivocal evidence of ambivalence in past as well as more recent debates about the identity of archives and records professionals. To judge from the unease, if not actual hostility, which is generated whenever the issue is broached, it certainly is something that warrants fuller and more detailed investigation by future researchers.

