Preserving Ministerial Papers at National Archives

Kim Lasenby

Under the Archives Act 1957, National Archives is responsible for ensuring preservation of, and access to, the permanently valuable records of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the central government of New Zealand. In addition, National Archives operates a ministerial papers transfer programme, co-ordinated at Wellington Head Office, which encourages the archiving of records relating to those individuals who play or who have played an important role in the running of central government.

Since 1981 National Archives has received over 300 transfers of records from a wide range of New Zealand politicians, some of whom deposit archives upon a semi-regular basis. Such records offer a unique view into the decision-making processes of Parliament, and can contribute to a better understanding of government. Their value lies in the many different insights they provide: into the career of the individual politician, the political era of which they are a part, and the complementary perspective they provide on the records of government agencies related to a particular ministerial portfolio.

National Archives preserves records compiled or received by the Prime Minister, Ministers of the Crown, leaders and deputy-leaders of political parties, and Speakers and Deputy Speakers of the House during the course of their parliamentary careers. Records of other Members of Parliament are not normally offered for deposit in National Archives, although the Chief Archivist has the discretion to permit such transfers if the records are considered to be significant. Collections are held from prominent but now retired politicians such as the Rt. Hon. Sir William Birch and ex-Prime Ministers Rt. Hon. David Lange, Rt. Hon. Mike Moore, and Rt. Hon. Jim Bolger. Current Members of Parliament who deposit their records on a semi-regular basis include the Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. Helen Clark, Deputy Leader of the Opposition, Rt. Hon. Wyatt Creech, Rt. Hon. Simon Upton and Hon. Peter Dunne. Records are also held from the office of the Rt. Hon. Jenny Shipley, Leader of the Opposition.

The ministerial papers transfer programme is co-ordinated by the Parliamentary Liaison Officer, an archivist at National Archives Wellington Head Office, who must deal with a number of issues which differentiate the transfer of political papers from that of records deposited by government agencies. The position of a Parliamentary Liaison Officer is necessitated by the demand-driven nature of the work and the need to have a regular point of contact. A steady stream of enquiries from political offices is generally received throughout each year, increasing considerably at the time of a general election, or when ministers retire from office.

The diverse nature of politicians' record systems, varying from office to office and even within a single office over a period of time, means that it is difficult to develop a general records disposal schedule which can be consistently applied, as may be the case for a government department. Instead, each potential transfer must be individually appraised to determine those records which are suitable for long-term preservation. Records may include a wide variety of formats, ranging from paper-based files to video and audio cassettes and even computer disks, which must be checked to determine accessibility. They may include non-official papers of a personal nature, which must be considered for inclusion in the interests of maintaining one unified collection, and to provide a more comprehensive record of a particular individual.

Finally, the issues of restrictions and storage arrangements must also be addressed. Restriction agreements are drawn up to conform with Cabinet Office Manual guidelines, but must also take into account the wishes of the individual politician and the interests of the researcher. The Cabinet Office Manual states that, in general, official papers of 25 years and over are open to public access. However, with regard to ministerial papers deposited with National Archives, section 6.78 of the Manual notes that:

"... The Chief Archivist will discuss with Ministers issues such as security, access and control, helping to draw up and implement a formal agreement. The question of whether access to papers is granted is a matter for the Minister to decide.

In the matter of storage, National Archives encourages the archiving of only those records which are no longer in current administrative use. If records offered for appraisal are less than three years old, that is, less than one parliamentary term, temporary storage is arranged in conjunction with Parliamentary and Ministerial Services to ensure ministers have more immediate access to their records should they require them. At the conclusion of the three-year term, the records are then transferred permanently to National Archives."
Archives in Court

Rosemary Collier

The Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ) has lost both court actions in which it was involved, on appeal. One case was appealed by ARANZ, the other by the Department of Internal Affairs. The euphoria of ARANZ’s win in the latter case in the High Court (that of the alleged misappropriation of funds intended for National Archives but diverted into restructuring) has dissipated in light of the Appeal Court finding (see News Items in New Zealand Archivist, December 1999).

The new elements in the whole debate are the surprise positioning of National Archives under the Minister for Culture and Heritage, late last year, and the outcome of the General Election. Since the election, however, the new government has removed National Archives from the Ministry for Culture and Heritage and has appointed the Hon. Marian Hobbs as the Minister directly responsible for National Archives. The new government includes as one of its most senior ministers a former lecturer in history, Dr Michael Cullen, whose remarks on the restructuring issue at the 1998 ARANZ Conference have been published in Archifacts (April 1999, pp. 53-58).

It is indeed ironic that final judgements should come out just after the election; an election which brought to power a coalition there is good reason to consider will be more sympathetic to and interested in National Archives.

NZSA supported legal action against the restructuring of National Archives, but we took no stance on the action over alleged diversion of National Archives funds. Was the whole exercise a waste of time, energy and ARANZ members’ money? There are those (including ARANZ members) who think it was. However, it did raise the profile of archives generally and National Archives in particular, for a time.

There will be many archivists disappointed at one or both outcomes. After such an expenditure of effort and resources over a period of several years, it is disappointing that the points at issue have not been accepted by the highest court in the land. It does appear, when an earlier attempt at restructuring is taken into account as well, that Internal Affairs was determined to `clip the wings’ of National Archives, or to use it as a bolster for more precarious units which the department wished to hold onto. That earlier attempt, if successful, would have seen the Chief Archivist permanently delegating most of his/her professional powers. This would have been in violation of the intentions of the Archives Act.

The focus must now be on passing a new (?!?) Archives Act, and ensuring that the new government recognises the true role of National Archives. Thus its constitutional and professional concerns should be strengthened, its budget increased, and its transformation into an independent institution come closer.

1 New Zealand Archivist, vol. VI no.3, Spring/September 1995 ‘National Archives in the Spotlight’

ATTENTION!

Are you looking for an archivist? Helen Quaggin is looking for an archives position in the Wellington area. She has a BA Hons. in History and French (Birmingham), and a Higher Diploma in Archival Studies from University College Dublin. She is currently working on a collection of 20,000 photographs held at University College Dublin, including appraisal, arrangement, listing, preservation, design of a database, and supervision of staff. She will be moving to Wellington in September.

For full CV, ask Rosemary Collier, 43 Gordon Road, Plimmerton, Porirua 6006, ph. 04-233-8155; fax 04-233-2031

New Zealand Archivist Autumn 2000
Theatre Archives in New Zealand

Ellen Ellis and Rosemary Collier

The New Zealand Theatre Archive Puranga Whakaari o Aotearoa is not really an Archive at all! That is, it is not a physical institution which collects archives. Rather than being a repository of archives, it is a repository of knowledge about archives in its area of interest. It is a mini-National Register of Archives, concerned solely with archives of the theatre: theatre companies, amateur theatre and drama organisations, individuals formerly or presently involved in theatre. It aims not only to list theatre archives but to advise on their preservation and possible deposit in libraries, archives or museums, if the records are at risk in their present locations. The Theatre Archive was established as a trust in 1997 by a group of theatre people who had concerns about the survival of theatre and drama archives.

The Trust's long-term aims are:

- Co-ordination of a national approach to theatre archiving based on regional libraries, theatres, museums and other institutions.
- Assistance to professional and amateur theatres to develop, implement and maintain constructive archival policies and practices.
- Development of a national database, finding-lists and other methods to make information available about sources, holdings and accessibility of theatre archives.
- Promotion of community interest in the preservation of New Zealand's theatre heritage.
- Encouragement of the highest professional standards of archive practice.
- Assistance with educational programmes which further the aims of the Trust such as research, exhibitions, displays, publications, visits and assistance from experts in all relevant fields.
- Publication and dissemination of information about the Trust.

History

Years earlier, in 1984, a conference on theatre archives had been organised at Victoria University of Wellington by a number of the people who now feature on the Trust Board, and attended by over 40 people. Papers were presented on Appraisal (Rosemary Collier), and The Royal Court Theatre Archives (Elric Hooper). Other speakers were Mary Ronnie (then Auckland City Librarian), and Jonathan Dennis (then Director of the NZ Film Archive). Most of the organisation had been done by John Thomson of Victoria University’s English Department.

Rosemary Collier's paper covered the desirability of keeping the records as close to their source as possible, the need for appraisal and regular disposal of what is not of continuing value, the need to keep records of 'flops' as well as of successes, and the need to ensure that institutions in which theatre organisations may wish to deposit their records have an appropriate building, a secure future, and sufficient funds to provide proper conditions for the records. Accurate documentation of transfers was emphasised, and the need to ascertain the policy of the library, museum or Archives on access, and lending back items.

She also suggested that one way of proceeding would be for a group to establish a register of theatre archives (and to negotiate deposits in appropriate regional institutions), after first identifying the archives, through circulating a questionnaire, for which a grant of money would be needed. She stressed that the people involved must be enthusiastic about the task, or else it ran the risk of collapse, and that it was necessary not to make the scope too wide, or the amount of work would put people off. She thought that the work could be done in three stages: theatre archives held in institutions, then the records of professional theatres, and finally other theatre records, and that the theatre people could both contribute to the National Register of Archives and Manuscripts (NRAM), and use it as a means of locating theatre archives.

Overseas developments

Overseas, the preservation of both archives and objects from the theatre is a growing concern; the Museum of the Theatre in Covent Garden, London, (long title - National Museum of the Performing Arts, a branch of the Victoria and Albert Museum) is a very popular and interesting place for both tourists and locals to visit. It includes a shop, a box-office for West End shows, an archive and study room (which includes a library) open to the public, an education department, wonderful displays, live performances and live make-up sessions. A former curator of this magnificent museum spoke at the 1984 seminar.

The Trust’s activities

The Trust aims to reach all theatre groups in New Zealand, and to encourage all those involved with theatre to contribute to the register. The Trust has had to cope with institutional changes, and has had to find ways of working with the changing landscape of the performing arts in New Zealand.
Zealand holding records, as well as archives repositories with holdings of theatre archives. A preliminary review found that historical records held by some theatre people and groups were deteriorating, and that urgent intervention was needed for them to be preserved for the future.

Following a brief survey in the greater Wellington area by consultant archivist Ellen Ellis, it was decided to undertake a New Zealand-wide survey. The Trust received grants from the New Zealand Lottery Grants Board to enable it to start its work. In addition, the Trust has received donations, support from Victoria University of Wellington (the database is now housed with the Department of English, Theatre and Film), a grant from the Wellington Community Trust, and major funding from the National Library Trustees.

Survey forms were issued to all groups and theatre people identified by co-operation with theatre administration organisations such as New Zealand Theatre Federation, Music Theatre Federation, and Playmarket. The aim of the survey was to look particularly for records at risk, to identify types and formats of records, and gather information for developing preservation programmes. It was intended to find out what historical records survive, who is saving them and where they are held.

Benefits to theatre people and organisations were described as the identification of their historical records, and also receiving the help that might be needed to preserve their archives. The survey leaflet describes theatre archives as historical records by and about theatre organisations, venues; amateur, community and professional groups, and theatre people. All types of documents such as scripts, set drawings, lighting plans, posters, programmes, scrapbooks, reviews and memorabilia are included, and all formats, from architectural plans to tickets, photographs and videos, but not including costumes and props.

Data from the returned survey forms has now been entered onto a computer database, DB Textworks, recording basic profile information on the theatre group or personality, including the location of the archives, collection information about the archive holdings, and background about the condition of the archives and their storage. Survey forms have also been distributed to repositories – archives, museums, libraries and historical societies. There are now over 1000 name entries for groups, theatre people and repositories, and archive collection entries for over 350. As well as survey data, many groups and people have forwarded biographical/historical information and details of past productions.

The database is compatible with National Register of Archives and Manuscripts (NRAM) and some entries have already been downloaded ready for transfer to the NRAM web-site. The Trust plans to eventually make the database available via an Internet site. In the meantime, anyone can contact the NZTA for information, and print or e-mail copies of entries will be forwarded. There are still many survey forms not returned and archive collections not reported, and the NZTA welcomes further information about holdings of theatre archives in private hands and public collections.

The second stage of the project involves promotion and education. The draft of a manual Caring for Theatre Archives is now being circulated for comment, and will be published when further funding is available. It contains information to assist those wanting to deposit their archives with repositories, and instructions about managing archive collections for those who want to retain their archives. The NZTA encourages queries from anyone who has an immediate need for information on depositing or managing their collection. Sections of the manual can be sent out, with copies of additional resources, such as Fact Sheets from the National Library and National Preservation Office.

Further efforts are being made to ensure funding for the long-term maintenance of the NZ Theatre Archive, and to expand access to information about archives collections and the preservation of theatre archives. Archive training workshops for theatre groups are planned as part of further stages of the theatre archives preservation project.

Contact for NZTA – PO Box 6065, Wellington, phone 04-463-6829, Fax 04-463-5148, e-mail: nzta@vuw.ac.nz
Here & There
compiled by Rosemary Collier

The Annual Report of the Department of Internal Affairs 1998-99 provides some information about National Archives. One searches hard for information in the narrative of the report: one paragraph under the heading ‘Heritage’ in the ‘Chief Executive’s Year in Review’ reports the first stage of ‘urgent work to upgrade the National Archives, in Wellington’, by which it means roofing and strengthening work on the building. Cabinet approval for $2.9 million for more long-term accommodation is noted.

Under the section ‘Statements of Service Performance’ there are measures of performance under ‘Archival Services’ and Financial Information under ‘National Archival Services’. National Archives met or exceeded performance targets for Reference Services, Physical Preservation and Storage, Archives Education, Provision of Operational Policy and Standard Setting, and Provision of Archival Advice, but not for Quality and Timeliness of selection and description, or processing of appraisals.

The International Records Management Trust, based in London U.K., has posted on a number of Internet listservs a notice about a Management of Public Sector Records Study Programme. The following is a summary of the information: The Trust has distributed free material about the Programme to nearly 60 national archives and universities, principally in developing Commonwealth countries, but also to a small number of other countries. The distribution was funded by the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA) International, and the Commonwealth Secretariat. The International Council on Archives (ICA) is a partner in the project. The modules have already been translated into Spanish, and a French version is planned.

The material consists of eighteen self-study modules on records and archives issues, on core, advanced and specialist topics. There are seven training manuals, 34 case studies, a glossary of terms, a guide to additional sources of information and an educator’s resource kit. The modules are organised to allow review and self-assessment by students. They can also be used within a formal accredited distance education programme, and adapted for face-to-face instruction or workshops.

The modules will be available for sale from March 2000. Profits will be used to revise and develop the programme. A CD-ROM is planned, and ultimately on-line ordering. Enquiries to International Records Management Trust, 12 John Street, London WC1N 2EB United Kingdom; fax +44 020 7831 7404, or e-mail to Elizabeth Box at ebox@irmt.btinternet.com

Lucy Marsden, formerly in the University Library, has been appointed Archivist at Massey University in Palmerston North. This position is not to be confused with that of the archivist responsible for the Dairy Archives held in the library. That position is held by Norah Mosen.

Welcome to a number of new members recently joined, and the return of several who had allowed their subscriptions to lapse.

The Bulletin of the International Council on Archives (1999-1, but undated, and only received recently) notes the retirement of long-serving Secretary-General Dr Charles Kecskemeti, after over 40 years’ service to the organisation, which has just celebrated its 50th year. Noted also are the deaths of several eminent archivists: Mr Peter Walne of the United Kingdom, who served ICA as Secretary-General from 1984 to 1988, and was co-author of the first dictionary on archival terminology; Dr Wilfred Smith, long-term Dominion Archivist of Canada and office-bearer of ICA (Secretary-General 1982-84).

Dr Smith was well known in this country for his visit in 1976, and his Archives in New Zealand: a report published by ARANZ in 1978. While his report did not result in dramatic changes, nevertheless over the years, many of his recommendations have been carried out, and his influence has been felt in a number of ways. The report continues to be quoted, and those who had the privilege of meeting him, entertaining him, and discussing matters with him remember a gracious, softly-spoken man who put his best efforts into considering the future of archives in this country.

Dr Smith’s predecessor at the (then) Public Archives of Canada, Dr W. Kaye Lamb, performed a similar function earlier for Australia, writing a report giving recommendations for future development; Dr Lamb also died last year. He was Dominion Archivist of Canada from 1948 to 1968.

Insecurity in the US Archives

The Washington Post reported in January that an estimated 43,000 internal e-mails had been lost at the National Archives in Washington, and there was no back-up. The newspaper made the most of quoting those sceptical about the Archives’ e-mail policies, as they criticised the institution for this major error: “For them to be managing other people’s records when their own records are such a disaster is ludicrous’’ said one. Apparently the Archivist of the United States has all his ‘record’ e-mails printed out, but this was not agency-wide practice. Agency spokeswoman Susan Cooper said “we don’t think many ‘record’ messages were lost.”

NZSA Council News

An Internet web-site is currently being developed. Now that the new clause in our Constitution has been passed as required by Inland Revenue, we can have the Constitution retyped, and it will be loaded on the web-site.
MERGERS AND SYNERGIES:
New Integrated Archives/Records Curriculum for the University of New South Wales

In early June 1999, the global trend for convergence between information and technology saw the creation of a new School at the University of New South Wales. Combining and reflecting the specialisations of two former schools - Information, Library and Archive Studies and Information Systems, the new entity is the School of Information Systems, Technology and Management or SISTM. For some time now, the information industry disciplines have been seeking to maximise the connections and synergies that can be obtained by integrating teaching and research programs. With a staff of 40 academics, the merged School brings together the two most important components in information today: quality information and efficient systems to manage it and offers prospective students greater diversity of choice in their programs of study.

Opportunities to integrate and consolidate new themes in recordkeeping education

Professional education for archives/records managers in Australia and New Zealand has quietly undergone a metamorphosis in recent years. In less than ten years, the number of universities hosting formal courses of study for entry-level professionals has expanded from two to seven, of which several offer levels of study from undergraduate through to post doctoral. In addition, there is a greater emphasis on flexibility to accommodate working and remote learners, including components which may be taken part-time, intensively or externally, and recognition/credit for subjects satisfactorily completed at other institutions. Several institutions offer their programs externally via traditional and/or electronically enhanced distance learning. Cordial and well-established relationships among the university programs themselves and with the extended recordkeeping communities add great richness and synergy to the learning environment, with the leading repositories, the national, state and local archives/records authorities, and the professional associations, actively involved in teaching, partnering and advisory capacities.

In such a vibrant atmosphere, innovation and cooperation flourish, and it has been particularly rewarding to work with my new colleagues in SISTM to re-design the archives/records management curriculum for USNW [sic] to integrate and showcase many of the characteristics outlined above. Now, a few words of orientation before we look at the new course in detail.

Firstly, a major goal of the new curriculum is to explore the ideas and values that lie behind the principles and ethics that guide recordkeeping work. In this endeavour, the new course brings learners into contact with the global context of records/archives management by requiring wide reading of the professional literature and contact with the professional community. This "think globally, act locally" strategy is basic to our commitment to preparing students for the widest possible opportunities. Students are expected to master recordkeeping concepts and techniques and to understand the issues and problems surrounding their application. Thus the program strives to achieve a balance between theory and practice. It is, after all, the interplay between knowledge and judgement in formulating solutions for recordkeeping problems that makes the field a true profession.

An overview of the UNSW archives/records discipline programs

As you can see from Chart One, the new curriculum provides a comprehensive framework that articulates into and leads on from the basic Diploma qualification to a credential at the Masters level. This flexible structure enables students with a sound academic record who complete the basic Diploma requirements to extend their studies to acquire a Masters credential. This modular structure acknowledges the Masters degree as the emerging "best" qualification for practicing [sic] professionals in the English-speaking world. It also provides UNSW with an appealing product that offers students flexibility and variety through specialisation and innovative modes of study.

Chart One: postgraduate coursework degrees at UNSW
Course Code 5391 Graduate Diploma in Commerce
Program Number 1121 Archives/Records Management*
INFS5988 Business Information Systems
IMGT5110 Information Retrieval Systems
IMGT5120 Intellectual Organisation of Information and Records
IMGT5210 Archival and Recordkeeping System Fundamentals
IMGT5220 Electronic Recordkeeping Regimes
IMGT5230 Archives/Records Field Experience+
Course Code 8404 Master of Commerce(MCom)
Program Number 1131 Archives/Records Management*
ACCT5901 Accounting: A User Perspective
ECON5103 Business Economics
ECON5203 Statistics for Business
INF55988 Business Information System
IROB5700 Management, Work and Organisation or:
LEGT5511 Legal Foundations of Business
IMGT5110 Information Retrieval Systems
IMGT5120 Intellectual Organisation of Information and Records
IMGT5210 Archival and Recordkeeping System Fundamentals
IMGT5220 Electronic Recordkeeping Regimes
IMGT5230 Archives/Records Field Experience+
IMGT5560 Professional Issues and Attachment
1 Elective

* This is a fixed program of six prescribed subjects.
+ Prerequisite: 1 session of full-time or equivalent part-time study, including IMGT5210.

Course Code 8923 Master of Information Management
Program Number 1134 Archives/Records Management*
INF55988 Business Information Systems
IROB5700 Management, Work and Organisation or:
LEGT5511 Legal Foundations of Business
IMGT5110 Information Retrieval Systems
IMGT5120 Intellectual Organisation of Information and Records
IMT5210 Archival and Recordkeeping System Fundamentals
IMGT5220 Electronic Recordkeeping Regimes
IMGT5230 Archives/Records Field Experience+
IMGT5560 Professional Issues and Attachment
4 Electives

* This is a fixed program of eight prescribed subjects and four electives approved by the Head of the School of Information Systems, Technology and Management.
+ Prerequisite: 1 session of full-time or equivalent part-time study, including IMGT5210.

Diploma to Master Articulation: Those graduates completing the specialist Masters in Information Management(MIM) acquire the core competencies of diploma study which are enhanced by the high level research-based Professional Issues & Attachment and four electives, during which they may explore particular interests to a greater depth.

Entry Qualification: As with the previous curriculum, all three programs of study accept domestic and international students. The entry criterion for both programs is a first degree in any discipline. In special circumstances applicants with extensive senior archives or records experience, but without the prescribed formal academic qualifications, may be considered for admission under special regulation.

Program Mode & Workload: Coursework study at UNSW is residential. Enrolment for full-time study involves 3-4 courses per session. There are two 14-week academic sessions, March – mid-June and late July – early November [consult University Handbook for exact dates]. Courses are 42 hours, but may differ in their mode of delivery. Most meet 2-3 hours per week over the 14-week session. A few courses, such as IMGT5230 Field Experience and IMGT5560 Professional Issues and Attachment are usually taught in intensive mode during the Winter or Summer Breaks or involve 4-6 weeks full-time industrial training in the field. In general students should allow 10 hours per week per course as an estimate of workload.

Assessment: The courses utilise a combination of examinations (minimum 50%) and continuous assessment for most subjects in the form of written assignments such as case studies and essays, as well as class presentations.

Fees: Archives/records management coursework programs at UNSW are full fee-paying. Tuition for 2000 is $10,800 per year.

For a more detailed discussion of program content and requirements, contact Ann Pederson, Senior Lecturer, School of Information Systems, Technology & Management(SISTM), The University of New South Wales, Sydney, NSW 2052 Australia Tel: 61-2-9385-3590; FAX: 61-2-9385-3430; E-mail: apederson@unsw.edu.au

Tertiary study has undergone huge rationalisation and realignment. Most of the archives/records discipline programs are administered within programs of Library & Information Science/Studies, set within schools or departments of Information Technology/Systems and Communications. In addition to coursework programs such as those described above, both Monash and UNSW offer Master and PhD degrees by research. Australian resident research students do not pay tuition.

The granting of credit and/or advanced standing for prior study is handled on a case-by-case basis and it requires those requesting it to supply authoritative documentation describing the content, assessment, date of completion and results achieved. Knowledge/skills attained in some subjects, particularly those involving information technology, may become obsolete. Thus, credit for study of particular automated information storage and retrieval systems and techniques may be refused if it was undertaken more than three years ago. 
Maori Land Court files to go on line

Priceless Maori Land Court files will no longer be in danger as a new computer system is under way to preserve the documents. The Maori Land Court went on line with the new national index in March this year. The next stage, imaging of the records, was launched on Friday before chief registrar John Grant from Wellington.

Rotorua Maori Land Court director Jeff Bennett said putting the court records on the computer will help preserve the old documents, some of which date back to 1869. “It not only helps us preserve the documents but it helps us access them. We will be able to call up any file in the country.”

Mr Bennett said in the past Te Arawa land information could only be found at the Rotorua Maori Land Court. Now those seeking information can go to any Maori Land Court and press a button on the computer to find records they want. “It is a much better and easier service for our customers,” he said.

Contractors have been employed to go to Maori Land Courts and copy files. They would then be taken back to Auckland where they will be put onto a computer. It is hoped the 4.8 million records in the seven Maori Land Court districts in New Zealand will be on line by December next year.

By Kelly Blanchard, Rotorua Post, 7 December 1999

Genealogy group may get free access to archives

A local history group may be given free access to the museum archives in return for their input of records into the museum’s computer system. The Waitakere District Council community services committee decided today to recommend to council that members of the North Otago Genealogy Group have free access to the archives in future. This is in return for filing about 100 items a week into the museum computer.

In a report to the committee, museum director Bruce McCulloch said last year members of the group made 125 inquiries, or 18 percent of the total of 677, and contributed $125 in archive fees. Since July that group had been inputting rate records into the computer system. The records, from the former Oamaru Borough Council, were in a “very delicate state” and access had been restricted for some time, he said.

Genealogy group members had since input and checked more than 1000 records, or just more than one year of rates. “This project represents considerable time input, in order of five to six man-hours a week and will make the records more accessible for researchers,” Mr McCulloch said in his report. “The group has done a tremendous job,” Mr McCulloch said today. “We are grateful for all the work they do,” councillor David Williamson added.

By Laurel Brent, Oamaru Mail, 15 February 2000

Archives for all to view

MANAWATU District Council archivist Anna Pitt is keen for district residents to tap into the “rich history” the council has in its archives.

She believes many people are unaware of the archives and the treasure trove of history and information stored in them.

“We have information going as far back as 1874 when the Manchester Block was opened and the Manchester Roads Board was the governing body of the day.

The people of the time kept very good records, and although some were destroyed in a fire before the turn of the century, we do have a wonderful resource that people can, and do draw on when writing their family histories.”

Besides council history, the archives also hold information on a range of organisations, including churches, schools, families and individuals. The archives are open from 9am to 4pm daily, with anyone seeking information advised to make an appointment.

Manawatu Evening Standard, 3 March 2000
National Archives in the News

The archives tangle

A change of government often brings unrealistic expectations, but indications last week that the mess surrounding the position of the country’s National Archives is about to be dealt with more sympathetically and more effectively by people with a clearer understanding of the issues involved seem both practical and promising.

Prime Minister and Minister for Arts, Culture and Heritage Helen Clark has previously expressed an interest in our valuable archives and support for their independence. She has handed immediate responsibility for sorting out the administrative wrangle to Marian Hobbs.

Ms Hobbs has quite a large ministerial workload and it is unclear what priority will be given to the National Archives, but she is fortunate to have Cabinet colleagues who have a broad knowledge of the problems involved. Dunedin North MP Pete Hodgson and Finance Minister Michael Cullen, the latter particularly during his time as Dunedin South MP, have taken a strong interest in the archives tangle, some of which has been before the courts, one case just being settled by the Court of Appeal last week.

Previous administrations rarely dealt with the National Archives satisfactorily, the last government preferring almost to ignore it until it became a political embarrassment. The National Archives is charged with maintaining an impartial record of government documents and transactions. In effect, it is the ultimate repository of the evidence of government accountability.

In recent years, a central issue taken up through the courts by the Archives and Records Association and the Society of Genealogists has been the body’s statutory independence. That principle, the groups have argued, came under pressure from the previous government, when Internal Affairs secretary Roger Blakely, after restructuring, took the archives under his department’s umbrella. The groups maintained that the independence and impartiality of the records should not be jeopardised by placing their practical administration under political control, either by a politician or senior government servant.

Archivists, quite rightly in our view, maintain that decisions about which records are to be retained in the national interest should be made by a professional expert, transparently free from political pressures. Countries throughout the world are almost unanimous in their support of this principle. A classic example of its value was demonstrated during the Watergate scandal with the safeguarding of the Nixon tapes. At such times, if archives were under political control, it would he too easy for important but potentially embarrassing records to be destroyed.

In the past two decades, with advances in technology and electronic communication, the whole business of government records has become much more fragile. Some important records are not committed to paper and can easily be lost. For too long this country’s politicians have procrastinated over updating legislation dealing with the National Archives and such new issues. A good start now would be a study of the Australian Law Reform Commission’s 1998 review of that country’s archives and the commission’s reaffirmation of the need for archives to have a statutory independence.

Throughout, however, thought must be given to ensuring that public access to our national records is user-friendly and not prohibitively expensive. This may well require a funding boost, particularly if we are to keep pace with new communications and archives technology. Our political leaders must also be sure to differentiate between the prime role of the National Archives — that is, as an impartial record of government — and an important by-product of that role, the preservation of our national heritage. In the past, those roles have been confused.

Just how the Government addresses the problems remains to be seen. One option is for the National Archives to be established as an independent Crown entity. This would certainly establish its statutory independence as well as making largely irrelevant the long-running action before the courts.

Editorial, Otago Daily Times, 21 December 1999

'Threat' to ministerial papers programme identified

Wellington: Cabinet ministers may stop depositing their papers with the National Archives if the ombudsman’s office wins access to Mikhail Lermontov papers lodged by Act New Zealand leader and former Labour minister Richard Prebble.

A National Archives briefing report to Minister of Internal Affairs Mark Burton says the case involving Mr Prebble’s papers poses a threat to the ministerial papers programme. The papers, dating back to when Mr Prebble was transport minister, deal with the sinking of the Russian cruise ship Mikhail Lermontov in the Marlborough Sounds in February 1986.

Under section 11 of the Archives Act, the Prebble papers are embargoed, but the ombudsman’s office has sought access to them to determine an appeal under the Official Information Act, the report says. “If
We invest time and effort in preserving these papers so that, sooner or later, they can be used. This is what Guerin as saying that papers he is seeking to access papers deposited at National Archives quotes Michael Guerin, author of "The Mikhail Lermontov Enigma" noted that the Marlborough Harbour Board pilot Don Jamison, who admitted that he made the fatal directional decision that led to the crash, was never prosecuted. Twelve years after the 20,000 tonne liner, carrying 738 passengers, mostly Australians, struck a rock at Cape Jackson, a book on the sinking says that there was no public inquiry into the tragedy. Mr Prebble is in the Solomon Islands, but a spokeswoman said on Friday: “The ship sank, end of story. There was no plot.”

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Mr Guerin said he had discovered by official information requests that six files were still held secretly in archives. A covering letter said: “An access restriction applies to all of this material. Before any of it can be made available to you to view, we would need to receive a letter from the Hon Richard Prebble.” Under the OIA, the only reasons for secrecy are for personal privacy, business confidentiality or for national security.

The papers in question are from a former Cabinet minister’s office. They are not departmental files. Some ministers’ papers are subject to Official Information while they are still in office. Afterwards, they are free to deposit their papers here or elsewhere under access provisions of their own choice.

The situation as outlined in the Internal Affairs briefing paper has moved on. The issue was not about removing from people an access right they otherwise would have had. It was about ensuring that intending depositors did not, as a result of depositing with us, become liable for an access obligation they would not otherwise have incurred.


**National Archives**

YOUR ARTICLE (ODT, 24.1.00) about ministerial papers deposited at National Archives quotes Michael Guerin as saying that papers he is seeking to access have been marked “never to be seen again”. This is simply not so. National Archives would never accept any deposit on such conditions, nor would anyone else. We invest time and effort in preserving these papers so that, sooner or later, they can be used.
money could be spent under authority of the Imprest Supply Act for purposes other than that specified in the Appropriation Act (there being two powers available, either may be used).

*The Capital Letter* 1 February 2000

**Archives & Heritage News**

**A New Government**
The coming of a new Government obviously disrupted the series of reviews of the Culture and Heritage sector planned by the previous administration; and it has taken some time before the direction the new Government wishes to take has become clear. Hence the break in this series of newsletters. However our likely futures are now becoming rather more apparent, and I will endeavour to share as much as I can.

**Minister for National Archives**
The appointment of Marian Hobbs as Minister responsible for the National Archives clearly signalled the Government’s intention of giving a new status to The National Archives. The Minister has made obvious that she wishes the National Archives to move to a new independent status as soon as is practicable. The issues yet to be determined are: what institutional form will this new independence take; when will it happen; and will the transition to a new status be in one step or two. Hopefully decisions on these matters will not be too far off.

The Minister has clearly indicated the priority she gives to the National Archives and this was expressed in her desire to visit the Archives so early in her term as Minister. She did so for two hours on Monday, and by all accounts it proved to be a most successful occasion.

**New Protocols**
In recognition of the Minister’s desire to give an independent status to the National Archives, a set of working protocols has been drawn up governing the relationship between the Secretary for Internal Affairs (or his delegate the Acting General Manager of the Heritage Group) and the Acting Chief Archivist. Under these protocols there is a guarantee of the right of the Acting Chief Archivist to provide independent advice to the Minister and other Government agencies.

In addition I have delegated to the Acting Chief Archivist responsibility for all financial negotiations with the Department of Internal Affairs with respect to the terms of the probable disengagement from the department.

**National Archives Costings**
The background work in preparing for these negotiations has been proceeding. Lindsay Ferguson has led an exercise to determine the costs of providing for the functions at present supplied by the corporate parts of DIA. Computerland have been developing a plan of the Information Technology needs which would have to be provided. In addition both Lindsay Ferguson and the department have been working out capital intentions for the next five years in order to establish a fair balance sheet for an independent National Archives.

**History and Heritage**
Although no Cabinet decision has yet been made, it also appears likely that the new Government will support the move of the History and Heritage units to the Ministry for Culture and Heritage. After a series of meetings involving the ministry, Treasury, SSC, and the Department of Internal Affairs, agreement has been reached on the financial implications of the move. It is proposed that funding for the Fellowship in Maori History will be restored and a new position as Webmaster for the units will be added. Otherwise the personnel costs and operating expenditure of the units will remain unchanged from their present establishment (with the obvious exception of the DNZB). A Cabinet paper is now being prepared embodying this agreement. Once approval is obtained, work will begin on the logistical consequences of the move such as accommodation and IT.

**Future of the Heritage Group**
Amid all the uncertainty, one consequence of all these changes is clear. The Heritage Group will cease to exist on June 30 this year; and Lindsay Ferguson’s business services team will revert to providing support for National Archives alone. For the remaining few months in my time as Acting General Manager I will do everything possible to ensure that the changes ahead are smooth and pass with the least disruption to our normal high standard of business.

Jock Phillips, Acting General Manager, Heritage Group, Department of Internal Affairs. Excerpts from *Heritage* newsletter, 8 March 1999 [sic; i.e. 2000]
The Society’s Training Kit has attracted interest from a number of individuals and groups. However, it is necessary to point out that it is not for sale at this stage. It is available for group training courses, taught by an approved tutor. As a society of professional archivists, NZSA wants to be sure that courses are taught by qualified people, to ensure that concepts are fully explained and understood.

Fees will depend on the duration of the course, the tutor’s costs and the number of participants. Those interested in archives training by this means are encouraged to nominate suitable tutors, or ask NZSA Council to provide one. There is a basic charge of $100 for use of the kit.

The kit has been prepared by Ellen Ellis, an experienced archives tutor, to provide introductory archives training for people who do not have access to formal training, but who work with archives in:

- Schools
- Libraries
- Clubs
- Local Archives
- Museums
- Businesses
- Voluntary Organisations
- Churches

Courses can be of half-day, one day or two days’ duration.

Topics covered in the EduKit include:

- Archives Policy
- Acquisition and Accessioning
- Appraisal
- Arrangement and Description
- Access and Reference
- Conservation
- Repository Management
- Microfilming

If you wish to organise or be part of an EduKit course, or to receive further information, write to NZSA, PO Box 27-057, Marion Square, Wellington.