

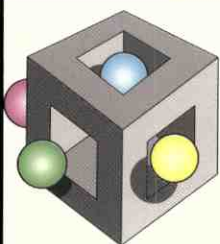
# INFORMAA

QUARTERLY

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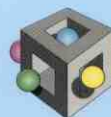
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Volume 16, Number 1, February 2000

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# Federal President's Message



## Think Nationally - Act Locally

**W**elcome to the year 2000. The fireworks have fizzled out. The Y2K bug has been squashed once and for all. I hope most people have survived and for those who had little or no problems, you are probably enjoying the latest computers and software. The party is over and it's now time to face the day-to-day realities of the new millennium. What does the year 2000 and beyond hold for the RMAA?

## The Web

Have you checked out our web page <[www.rmaa.com.au](http://www.rmaa.com.au)>? The web is set to revolutionise the Association and indeed, significantly alter the entire communication process: from standardising the email address, to the inclusion of the online 'Product Directory'. The marketing team is working hard at keeping members up-to-date on events, meetings, conventions and reports. Eventually, all contact details will be available on the web.

## The GST

July 1, 2000 sees the introduction of the GST. With the abolition of the Wholesale Sales Tax and the abolition of other embedded indirect taxes (FID, debits tax and certain State taxes), there is an expectation that this will lead to cost savings. As the Association is a company that provides educational services to its members, the National Finance Committee is reviewing the concept of centralised accounting procedures and cost centre budgeting for State branches. If adopted, this will decrease accounting and auditing costs and assist in the reporting requirements of the GST.

## Certified Records Managers (CRM)

Based on the American model, I am working on a proposal to introduce the concept of Certified Records Managers, which would eventually replace the present professional status (e.g. Associate, Member and Fellow). Attaining the CRM designation is based on educational background, work experience and passing of a six-part examination. All CRMs would have their name placed on a list on the RMAA web page. To maintain certification, 100 'contact' hours of approved educational activity would be required each five-year period.

## Alliances with and/or amalgamation of RMAA and ASA

After the successful joint Archives and Records Management Week in Victoria last year and with much discussion with various people from both camps, I am preparing a discussion paper that will see further joint RMAA and ASA events this year. The long-term objective of this paper is to have one Association by the financial year 2001/2002. This paper will be presented to both the RMAA Board of Directors and the ASA Council for consideration in February 2000.

## The National Convention

Because of some sporting event, which will be held in Sydney in September, I would like to remind all members that the 2000 National Convention will be held from 3-6 December at Darling Harbour, Sydney. The theme is 'Bridging the Gap'. The program looks great, the venue is great, and the Convention dinner will be great. Plan to be there and book early to take advantage of the discounts.

**Chris Fripp MRMA, MAICD**

# Questions to the President

The Federal President is committed to addressing and resolving member enquiries and complaints, improving member service, and increasing member satisfaction. There may be occasions when problems do arise and you may not get the service you expect. If you have any reason to be unhappy with the Association, we want to know so that we can try to put things right.

This new section in the *INFORMAA Quarterly* is designed to open up communication between the members and the RMAA Board of Directors, and in particular, the Federal President. New members and often, existing members are not sure how and why some things are done. You may have a question but you are not sure who or when to ask? If you want your question to be answered in the *INFORMAA Quarterly* or directly back to you, please forward questions to the Association's email address [rmaasec@rmaa.com.au](mailto:rmaasec@rmaa.com.au).

## Can anyone be a Federal Director?

No. You must be a professional member (Associate, Member, Fellow), who is financial and is currently serving on a local Branch Council.

## How are Federal Directors appointed?

Each Branch Council, during their Annual General Meeting, nominate and appoint two Councillors to represent their branch on the Federal Board. In doing so, the elected Councillors become Company Directors under

the Corporations Law. During the first meeting, after the Association's AGM, the election of executive positions (President, Vice President, Executive Secretary, Treasurer and Company Secretary), plus various coordinators takes place.

## Why are travelling and meeting expenses so high?

This question is asked at most Association Annual General Meetings. The Federal Directors meet twice a year in accordance with the Association's By-Laws and in accordance with the Corporations Law. The September meeting is held prior to the National Convention, which rotates from State to State. The February meeting used to be held in the city of the next National Convention, but is now held in the cheapest location. This year it will be in Adelaide.

The Directors have made an enormous effort in reducing these costs as much as possible. With 16 Directors, airfares are the biggest cost. The process of booking cheap airfares has been streamlined and will result in further savings. Since 1994, when this issue was first raised, there has been a gradual reduction in Directors' travelling expenses. Other reasons for high costs include the location (more expensive in WA, NT). During 1997 and 1998, a lot of travel was funded by the RMAA for the National Records & Archives Competency Standards and Education Committee meetings. A lot of these meetings are now conducted over the Internet.

**Chris Fripp MRMA, MAICD**



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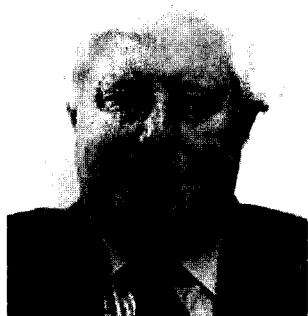
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# Editorial



The three months which traversed the calendars from the 20th to the 21st Century, have been full of significant outcomes, activities and challenges for the Records and Information Management community. The most significant outcome has been the acceptance of the first public draft of the new International Standard: Records Management, ISO 15489, and its promulgation for comment. As the Introduction indicates, this Standard reflects 'consensus among participating ISO member countries to standardise international best practice in records management using the Australian Standards AS 4390 Records Management as its starting point' (ISO15489, p. iv). As the author of the relevant RMAA Note recorded in this issue of the *INFORMAA Quarterly* is designed, 'It's a big step for recordkeeping, an even bigger one for records-mankind'.

The most significant activity has been, without fear of contradiction, the exceptionally successful Archives and Records Management Week, organised and conducted by the Victorian Branch of the RMAA in conjunction with the Australian Society of Archivists Inc., and the Public Record Office, Victoria. Taking advantage of the presence in Melbourne of a number of both national and international delegates for the ISO Sub-Committee TC46/SC11, the organisers were able to draw on influential speakers to reflect on developing transnational perceptions of records management and archives administration.

We do not lack for challenges - and I would hesitate to nominate any particular one as having precedence over the other. However, the driving rush into e-business and e-commerce by both government and business, nationally and internationally, without sufficient recognition of the fundamental need for the evidential accountability that is provided by effective recordkeeping, must rate very highly indeed. Accountability extends beyond the legal aspects of evidential mores; it extends to the application of ethical

values and codes of conduct and behaviour. These are well described by Colin Hicks in his paper in which he identifies differences between personal and professional ethics, and the engendering of trust and confidence in business relationships, an essential factor in e-business.

The very recent promulgation of the Public Record Office, Victoria Standard Exposure Draft on Management of Electronic Records, and the related System Requirements, VERS metadata Scheme and Standard Electronic Record format demonstrate the dynamics of activity in the field of electronic records management. The CSIRO team of Andrew Waugh and Dr Ross Wilkinson has provided us with yet another paper which promotes understanding of the issues in general, and the Victorian Electronic Records Strategy for longer term storage of records in particular.

In keeping with our editorial policy of attempting to include some overseas perspectives that have been prepared specifically for the *INFORMAA Quarterly*, we have also included in this issue a fascinating discourse on the records and archives administrative complexities experienced in Germany by the transitional administrations after unification.

The Branch Reports foreshadow a busy and dynamic year, with a number of very interesting and topical seminars and workshops. Please do give a thought to your Association's journal and its readership, and forward any paper presented at one of these events if considered appropriate for that wider dissemination, to me.

**Anthony Eccleston**  
National Editor

*Note: Due to space limitations, the promised review of the Darwin Convention will now be published in the May issue. Ed.*

# Letters to the Editor

## Dear Editor

It was with interest that I read both the article by Sharon Keay in the *INFORMAA Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 3, August 1999, and Clive Finter's letter to the Editor in vol. 15, no. 4, November 1999. Apart from having a theoretical grounding in classification from my library studies, I had the good fortune to learn about the methods and issues associated with classifying records from both Eddis Linton and Tom Lovett in the early 1970s. Since then, in thirty-five government and private organisations, both as an employee and consultant, I have designed and implemented records classification systems; most of them thesaurus-based.

While agreeing with Clive in respect to the KIS principle, the degree of complexity of a thesaurus frequently is a result of the needs of the organisation and the resources which it is able to commit to its maintenance. Regardless of the degree of complexity, the important thing, in my opinion, is that the classification of the records reflects both the context and subject content of the records. In paper filing systems, this usually results in the Keyword and first two levels of descriptors indicating the context and the lower descriptors, which are frequently free text, or dedicated to the capture of specific elements of information (such as a date) reflecting the topic of the record. In an electronic records system, the context or function and activity, or function and subject (depending upon which school of thinking you come from) is captured in the so-called subject classification facilities of the system, and the topic is captured within the free text description of the document.

Either way, some form of classification is required together with some form of thesaurus which captures the terms to be used as well as their meaning and application, within the specific organisation, and their synonyms. The weaknesses of thesauruses are that the untrained user cannot readily see the classification pattern that the thesaurus is supporting. For this reason, a number of years ago I commenced building classification frameworks, drawing on each keyword and its descriptors, to reflect to users the classification system to be used. Also, in the process of developing the thesaurus, I developed alternative proposed model frameworks to facilitate eliciting input from users as to their preferred option. When the thesaurus was finally constructed, I usually included the scope notes for the terms at keyword and first descriptor levels within the frameworks to ensure the meaning of the top level hierarchical terms was clearly understood. The foreword to the framework and the introduction to the thesaurus both clearly warned of the danger of using the framework alone, without referring to the thesaurus for confirmation, if in any doubt as to the classification level chosen. It appears that Ms Keay also took similar approaches in the work she did with the Ministry of Premier and Cabinet, WA.

Having had such success with the frameworks over the years, I was very pleased to see that a similar, although less developed approach, had been adopted in the Keyword AAA Thesaurus when it was first released. My experience has been that most users prefer to use the framework when classifying records, only turning to the thesaurus when unable to find a

classification category within the frameworks, or when searching for information and seeking alternative terms upon which to search when undertaking information searches.

In addition to the thesaurus and classification framework, in the case of paper file systems, I have also insisted that regular reports of file titles sorted in strict alphabetical order within each hierarchical level of their file titles are extracted from the computer system. These reports clearly show the classification pattern emerging in reality as files are titled. Anomalies can be identified easily and corrected. Linton placed considerable emphasis on this approach in his Keyword system when first developed and were initially produced by typing the file titles on strips and subsequently filing them in strict alphabetical order on visible index plates. Unfortunately, this aspect was emphasised insufficiently, in my opinion, when the NSW Government first adopted the keyword file titling approach. Many of the criticisms leveled at the application of the early GADM Thesaurus are attributable to the failure to produce these reports and monitor them.

I have had a high percentage of repeat business in the course of my years of consulting. On re-visiting clients of previous years, I have found that general user acceptance (as opposed to record user acceptance) has been high and continuing in respect to the records classification system when employees are inducted to the principles of the organisation's records classification system at the outset of their employment. In addition, staff have had the respective roles of the three classification tools (thesaurus,



framework and alphabetical file title report) explained to them. Access to the thesaurus online, the framework as an intranet document, and hard copies of the alphabetical file title report at file stations has also played a vital role.

Let us keep it simple, but let us avoid over-simplification which could be even more disastrous in an electronic environment where the serendipity of browsing can be easily swamped in the deluge of items recalled. On a day-by-day basis, users may only want subject or topic level information. But in a society which expects more accountability, where compliance is demonstrated through records, and there is increasing litigation, it is essential that records are also broadly classified by their context or function and activity or topic as well, to ensure high recall and relevancy.

**Marita Keenan**  
B.App.Sci (ILS), MRMA, AALIA  
Perth, Western Australia

### Dear Editor

**T**he KISS letter to the Editor vol. 15, no. 4, November 1999, was a disappointing response to the Business Classification article. The whole point of having the reference string concept at the desktop for EDMS was so users do not have to drill at all, they simply select a string and press a button and the item is captured and filed: pretty simple. The complexities of the tools lie with the professional Records Manager who maintains and grows the scheme in line with business environment requirements.

Hearing that a consultant is delivering tools that are not dynamic enough to be grown or to last beyond six months, is extremely disheartening and begs the question of the economic effectiveness of implementing such limited tools at all.

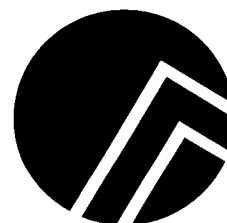
A debate? As professionals we can no longer ignore the impact of e-environments. To keep our profession alive, we must embrace new horizons and keep abreast of developments, as so many are already doing. Those who choose to stay in the back of the filing room can do so, but I ask them not butcherise our profession by calling themselves Records Managers. No debate.

No wonder so many information professionals are disassociating themselves from recordkeeping when there is so little support and constant attack from within. Whatever happened to constructive criticism?

**Sharon Keay**  
National Information Co-ordinator,  
Arthur Andersen  
BA, GDIM ArchivAdmin, MA

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# Virtues in Records Management

## AUTHOR

**Colin Hicks**

Senior Advisor (Ethics)  
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New Zealand

## ABSTRACT

Applying ethical values that demonstrate honesty and integrity, and showing respect for others, is an essential ingredient of trust both in a personal and professional sense. Codes of conduct 'impose' ethical behaviour, and conformity with those codes is increasingly being demanded through legislation and regulation. However, Records Managers are well placed to identify and promote competent and ethical conduct of business in their organisations, the outcomes of which could be reflected in the wider public interest.

## Ethics

What do we mean by ethics? Something good for business? A county in Southern England? Put simply, it is what *ought* to be rather than what is, or what can be done.

The notion of ethics, of course, derives from Greek society. The ancient Greeks were concerned with personal character of the citizen, and the integrity of the entire community. It was a time when citizenship meant a lot more than merely being a customer. Indeed, someone who focused his or her attention on selfish private needs instead of public affairs was deemed an 'idiot'.

Today, there is no universal definition of what ethics means, but in general *ethics* is concerned with what is right, good, and just. In other words, with 'what ought to be', and not with what *is* the case, or what is most acceptable or most expedient. Ethics allow us (and others) to judge the morality of a situation.

### *A word about values:*

*'Values' are commonly held beliefs.  
'Principles' are the bases for reasoning.  
'Conventions' are common agreements  
or consents - formal or informal.*

The values of an organisation provide a 'moral centre of gravity' (or, a definitive guiding force) for those who work in it, and for those who have expectations of it. The values are likely to be a mix of institutional arrangements (for instance, *accountability*), instrumental values (for example, *efficiency*), and fundamental values (for example, *integrity, fairness, etc.*).

A useful starting point is the recognition that there are some important and fundamental differences between public service organisations and private sector organisations, notwithstanding that many of the techniques of management are transferable. (I should add that there are more similarities than differences between the two sectors.) These differences arise from the nature of our constitutional and political arrangements, and from the very nature of democratic government. The differences are concerned with the public trust that is reposed in every public official that they will use, manage, and safeguard public resources for the purposes intended.

## Personal and professional ethics

Personal ethics are about believing in yourself; being honest and displaying integrity; and earning and showing respect. Personal ethics originate in face-to-face relations among individuals. They are a response to the social need for values and principles to guide actions towards other individuals across a whole range of personal relations.

Professional ethics originate in commonly held values and principles among people with specialised knowledge or skills. Likewise, public service ethics originate in institutional circumstances. These forms of ethics, unlike personal ethics, arise from the need to set standards for impersonal relations among people who may never meet and who must judge each other from a distance.

The function of personal ethics is to allow people to get on together, to trust each other, and to make the relations among people morally tolerable. Professional and public service ethics serve to guide individuals in their roles, as practitioners or professionals. Both professional and public service ethics use personal ethics as a means to the end of professional or institutional integrity.

In their most general form, the contents of the ethical principles of public and private life have a common foundation. Certainly, one wishes both friends and professionals (or public employees) to:

- respect the rights of others;
- fulfil their obligations to their communities;
- act fairly; and
- speak truthfully.

## Being professional

Professions are often characterised by a unique body of knowledge, restricted entry, internal disciplines and self-regulation, and codes of practice or ethics. A more important distinguishing factor than technical skills, perhaps, is that professionals invariably 'profess' to work in the *public interest* or for the common good, rather than merely for self-interest.

Becoming professional means adhering to common standards. It also means meeting the expectations of others. This is what sets professions apart. We should be able to rely on the judgement, knowledge and skill of those in the profession.

There is a story, probably apocryphal, about a Labour politician who was keen to find out the opinion of his taxi driver about his voting intentions at the forthcoming elections. The cabby explained that in the past he had always voted conservative, just as his father had done before him, and his father before him. But, said the cabby, 'This time I am going to set aside my principles, and do what is right'.

Clearly, the cabby was confused about what are principles, although he seemed to know instinctively what he ought to do! It's a bit like that with ethics. It's knowing what we ought to do, rather than what we can do.

A word about virtues:

*'Virtues' - the pre-dispositions, or inclinations which move a 'professional' to act 'upon principle', even in the face of threat or punishment; that is, doing the right thing.*

Most professions have codes that set out the standards of conduct and service that clients and others may expect from members of the profession, and by which their conduct can be judged. Usually, these codes are codes of ethical values and standards.

## Codes of Conduct, and Codes of Ethics

Codes of conduct are about *minimum standards* of expected behaviour - codes of ethics are about *aspirations*, and expectations that those subject to codes of ethics will strive for the highest standards of ethical conduct, and integrity.

Codes of conduct are usually imposed; codes of ethics are voluntary.

How can a manager of a publicly-owned organisation maintain the responsible conduct of the business by employees faced with an array of possible conflicts and different expectations? That is a crucial question that will not be answered satisfactorily by the establishment of a set of rules in the form of a code of conduct. But it can be *assisted* by a code.

A code is an essential way of communicating what constitutes minimum standards of behaviour for those who work in particular institutions of government. By codifying the most important 'do's and don'ts', codes can establish some general principles from core values which can assist decision making and guide conduct in most, if not all, circumstances.

However, to be effective codes need to be developed as an integral part of a broader strategy for maintaining responsible conduct. They need to reflect the values of the profession (that is, arise from the professional's experience and practice), and there needs to be an accompanying dialogue within the profession to maintain the code as living and pertinent. The language of ethics needs to be spoken, and the ethic of role needs to be understood.

Codes can be inspirational and alert professionals to the moral aspects of their work. Codes offer the possibility of advice in the face of moral perplexity, and alert prospective clients and others

to what they may expect by way of service. While codes may provide a means to enhance the image of a profession; to protect a monopoly; and serve as a status symbol, these must be considered as secondary objectives.

Of course, codes can have mischievous side effects. Codes may introduce a sense of complacency (we have a code, therefore we are ethical), and they may foster self-congratulation (look at us, we are a profession!). Codes can also divert attention from the macro-ethical problems of a profession, or an organisation, to its micro-ethical problems at the level of the individual, or serve to discourage the dissenter and reinforce 'group think'. But, it seems to me that their positive points far outweigh any negative aspects.

## Ethical dilemmas

Paradoxically, the kind of ethical problems that attract the most attention are perhaps of the least importance. Headline incidents of flagrant, petty, ridiculous abuses and outright criminality are relatively easy to detect and remedy. Such abuses are clearly illegal, relatively uncommon, and they often trivialise ethics. In a 'sound bite' culture, ethics is often reduced to simply staying out of trouble - a genuine problem if we are to encourage high standards in the 'fishbowl' environment of public service.

This phenomenon actually distracts attention from more frequent, genuine ethical concerns; that is, those choices that involve morally ambiguous situations. Thus, while most of us will not be 'in the news' as part of a major scandal, we will confront dilemmas where a simple right and wrong answer is not obvious, or where a choice between two 'rights' needs to be made.

These days, we are only too well aware of some of the more obvious ethical dilemmas that confront us in our lives. Those issues range across the full

panoply of human experience, and are illustrated most dramatically in matters of life and death. A common basis for making ethical judgements and decisions seems to elude us. When put to the test, we often seem poorly equipped to deal with such dilemmas.

For instance, take the question of kidney dialysis technology - whether to treat or not to treat; a matter of life or death. A big shift in ethical understanding for health administrators and professionals is between 'quality of life principles' and 'sanctity of life principles'. The balance has shifted toward consideration of 'quality of life', and away from the 'sanctity of life'. Whether this is a sustainable shift is anybody's guess. The costs of health services, and particular treatments, have helped to expose the different principles, to shape attitudes, and engender predicament. It's not so much a matter of no values, or diminished values, but changing or different values. There is not a common basis to make a judgement. Technology, and cost, have challenged traditional values.

In matters of importance such as issues of information, and the rights and freedoms of citizens, the outcomes may not be life-threatening, but they are significant, nevertheless. Disempowerment, alienation, disaffection from the body politic, are real issues that affect us as citizens.

### **Official information:**

The *Official Information Act 1982* is one of the most important pieces of legislation enacted in the past 30 years. It may be viewed as a radical and significant element of New Zealand's constitution. It is radical because it has 'significantly altered the balance between the State and the individual' (McMullin, J). It is significant because it has radically changed the way public servants have to think about the status of official information, the rights of individuals, and public servants' place

in the constitutional scheme of things. One of its main purposes (consistent with parliamentary democracy) is to '*increase progressively the availability of official information to the people of New Zealand in order (i) to enable their more effective participation in the making and administration of laws and policies; and (ii) to promote the accountability of ministers of the Crown and officials.*'

Yet, in the past 15 years or so, we could not say (with hand on heart) that we have given full vent to the spirit and intent of the *Official Information Act 1982*, or indeed of its companion piece, the *Privacy Act 1993*. Paradoxically (as in the case of kidney dialysis), we may have the means to be more open but we may still not decide to do so.

The revelation recently of trading in personal information by employees of a government department or departments serves to illustrate the need for more attention to be paid not only to the security of personal information held by agencies, but also to the ethical awareness of those who have official access to such information. No system is foolproof. No guarantees against wrongdoing can be provided. Ultimately, the likelihood of abuse will be minimised not by externally imposed controls, but by the internalisation of values at an individual level. *It boils down to a sense of professional responsibility.*

### **Whistleblowing**

At present, awaiting its 3rd reading in the House, is a Protected Disclosures Bill, or whistleblowers protection proposal. If enacted, the proposed law will place a positive onus on all public employees to report their suspicions, or provide evidence, of serious wrongdoing in or by their organisations. In return, the law will protect such informants against recrimination or victimisation by their employer, or colleagues, provided certain internal procedures are followed.

If there is any doubt now about the onus of employees with respect to serious wrongdoing within their organisations, and what constitutes responsible conduct as a public employee, then this legislation, when passed, will go a long way to clarifying the situation. The whistleblower protection scheme is designed to encourage and promote the expectation that employees will judge their own conduct, as well as the conduct of others within their organisation, by public interest standards and values.

### **Engendering trust**

The noticeable development in developed countries in recent times, in what might be termed the 'ethics industry', has been motivated largely by the need (of our political system) to engender trust and confidence in institutions of government, and in individuals who make decisions on behalf of citizens. Ethics are instrumental; a means to an end, not an end in themselves.

In the US, following the revelations of Watergate, a series of measures were introduced to codify expectations of officials, both elected and appointed. (The US Office of Government Ethics was established, for instance, to provide 'overall direction and leadership' in matters of governmental ethics.) Public disillusionment with politicians and political processes was at an all-time low.

Similar developments can be traced in Australia, particularly at State government level.

In 1995, the State Services Commission published the *Principles, Conventions and Practice Guidance Series*. This initiative recognised that working in the Public Service required an understanding and awareness of the special attributes of holding a position of public trust. Being a public official required a knowledge of 'statecraft', as John Martin has said, that needed to be

learned. No longer could it be assumed that public employees would be 'acculturated' as a matter of course. The process needed to be explicit, and planned.

### *Actions; not words*

Codes, and standards of practice provide signs for others to judge the actions of practitioners and professionals; that is, those in whom we place our trust and faith. But, of course, it is deeds, not words that count.

*We know the principles of every man (sic) will, and ought to, be judged not by his (sic) professions and declarations, but by his (sic) conduct (James Madison 1788).*

We know, for instance, human nature being as it is, that one misdeed in an organisation can have devastating effects on morale, image, and reputation quite out of proportion with the seriousness of the misdeed. No amount of explanation, or words, will necessarily repair the damage.

### **A challenge**

The potential for good and evil within government administration is great. But, never before have we been faced with the enormity of the potential that is now offered through modern information systems, and the management of information. Nor has the impact of technology been so pervasive or far-reaching. There is no knowing where all this will lead. Electronic government? Direct democracy? A new class of technologic mandarins?

Whatever lies before us, we can be certain that it will involve change to our institutions and the way they work; the relationships between the State and the individual - the very nature of democracy itself. One thing that is certain is that information - how it is managed, who has access to it, how it is used to inform decision making - will

play an increasingly important role in shaping the future. The chances are that the changes are also likely to increase the relative power of public officials to influence and shape decisions affecting people. If this is so, then it is incumbent on us all to know how best, in the public interest, to use that discretion, and to do so in responsible and transparent ways.

As public employees, and as professionals, we have an obligation to work in the broader *public interest* rather than for self-interest. Because we have choices in how we collect and use information, and how we manage information, we all have a responsibility to make those decisions according to *public interest* standards. Indeed, whether we recognise it or not, we are in the business of applying ethical tests, and making ethical decisions - not just from time to time, but in everything we do.

Acting competently, responsibly (that is, in the *public interest*), fairly and honestly in public office is the hallmark of public service, and public trust. It should also be in the private sector. To build a reputation for integrity requires those in any organisation to be acting competently, responsibly, fairly and honestly with consistency, and reliability. For that to happen there must be a sense of collegiality among those in public office, and the maintenance of common understandings about ethical values and standards and their application. ARMA is the proper body to develop the dialogue among its members - the unsung recordkeepers that are such a vital part of organisations, and key to open government.

Some little time ago, I issued a challenge to some participants at GOVIS 3 - the *Official Information Act 1982* and the *Privacy Act 1993* provide good starting points for the development of a code of practice for information professionals, generally,

but I suspect that a similar message can be made here. My challenge is for those working in the field of recordkeeping and records management to refine the implied standards into more explicit ones. Such a move should be encouraged positively by your employers.

Bearing in mind the proposition that our capacity to generate information has outstripped our capacity to control it, manage it, and decide what to do with it, I leave you with these questions:

- do you share professional values?
- if so, how can you express them as a practical and effective code?

### **Selling one's soul**

I want to conclude my remarks by craving your indulgence. For a considerable time, I have had a clipping under my blotter, as it were. It's about selling one's soul. It seems to me that it sums things up nicely. If you recognise the conversation as one that might have taken place in your workplace, then please forgive the eavesdropping.

It's about being professional - about being true to oneself - about being principled.

**Q.** (One character asks another) ... 'what profit a man if he gain the whole world but lose his soul?'

**A.** 'Well, we've done a few figures on that and you might be pleasantly surprised because it seems that there is quite a profit. Quite a nice profit, in fact.'

**Q.** ... 'and what would the profit be like if you lost, say, half your soul and gained only half the world?'

**A.** 'Still very nice! It's a huge audience - a huge market and I'd like you to consider the following: I know a man who has only one sixteenth of his soul left and he's perfectly happy - perfectly happy!!'



# The New Functional General Disposal Authorities: A Business Perspective

## AUTHOR

### Grant Williams

Grant Williams has a Bachelor of Arts degree and has had 10 years' experience in the Records and Information Management field. He has worked in the Department of Defence, ACT Health, National Archives, and Australian Customs Service. He has developed policies and managed records at both national and small agency level, and also conducted records creation training and provided systems support and advice.

## ABSTRACT

The promulgation for comment of the Functional General Disposal Authorities to Commonwealth agencies by the National Archives of Australia has generated some concerns. These include the timing and time frames for comment, the variations to traditional processes and interpretation of 'best practice', and the perceived increase in agency and user workloads that appear to be inherent in their adoption.

## Introduction

The Australian Law Reform Commission (ALRC) Report No 85 *Australia's Federal Record: A Review of Archives Act 1983* recommended that the National Archives of Australia (NAA) have the power to issue mandatory standards for the management of Commonwealth records. These standards are then to be implemented within the agencies by the Chief Executive Officers. The ALRC Report also stated that the

NAA would need to draw on the expertise of the professional groups involved in the various aspects of records management and approach recordkeeping as a unified continuum. The NAA, through the development process of the Functional GDA, has consulted widely with up to 44 agencies, and now have the last three Functional GDAs disseminated for comment.

In disseminating the Functional GDA for comment, some limitations have been placed on agencies that permit responses on only part of the process. The NAA has changed the appraisal criteria and strategy for records (in consultation with some agencies), but has not provided these details with the disseminated Functional GDAs. Existing GDAs are supported by descriptions of purpose, scope and direction. However, the introductory guidance to these new Functional GDAs has yet to be issued to assist with interpretation of classes. As a consequence, there is an imposed difficulty in providing meaningful comments.

The 17 Functional GDAs comprise some 302 pages and 1002 records disposal classes. This substantial work requires a significant amount of time to examine and provide comment. In the current climate, where implementation of new systems or ensuring that old systems are year 2000 compliant are demanding priority, many agencies are limited in being able to allocate resources and time to comment on the Authorities.

## Document level description

The proposed new Functional GDA provides descriptions for record classes at the document level. The NAA is proposing this as being 'best practice' to manage records. This topic requires some detailed examination and debate.

The Functional GDA, according to the NAA, is aiming to influence recordkeeping by addressing the document level, and splitting working papers from final documents. This is projected as a best practice approach which will facilitate destruction of records when they are no longer required, and improve record retrieval. The NAA will be relying on records management staff within agencies to move towards adopting this practice. The department can retain the records longer if they wish, as these are minimum retention periods. The Functional GDA is designed so that departments can scale retention periods up or down to suit their specific business requirements.

This approach does not appear to be in line with departmental business processes. Records are not always kept as individual documents; they are kept in context of activity. If these authorities address the document level, drafts and working papers kept separate from the master document, appropriate administrative context is more difficult to place and can diminish the record's value as evidence. Many record description classes in the new Functional GDA have a final document with longer retention periods than the working papers which support that

final document. However, the working papers can provide evidence of the decisions that were made to achieve the final result. With the destruction of these working papers prior to the final document itself, there is little or no supporting evidence of the decision process. This could be used to cover up negotiations or changes throughout the development of the documentation.

### Variable retention periods

The NAA position is that if business needs dictate that the retention periods in the Functional GDA are too short, agencies may extend those periods. The retention periods have been developed in consultation with several departments and satisfy the minimum requirements including those required by relevant legislation. The NAA expects that each agency will tailor the Functional GDA retention periods to their specific requirements based on the amount of risk that the agency is willing to accept. Also, agencies may sentence at document, file/folder, or function level and, if the business need for the record is longer than the class in the GDA, the records may be retained for a longer period.

This approach is of concern as it places a large responsibility with the agency and, with that responsibility, an increased workload. This is especially so for records where final documents are destroyed after five years, and working documents are destroyed after two years. These records may never reach the NAA, and may probably never become public documents; it would be more cost effective and efficient to manage these documents as one record. There is also potential that the current implemented systems may not be set up to manage records in this manner as they have been developed to satisfy each agency's specific recordkeeping requirements.

The GDA concept exists to cover records that are common to many

Commonwealth agencies, and to avoid each agency having to prepare essentially similar Disposal Authorities. The current approach seems to defeat the purpose of the GDA, especially if the retention periods or structure do not satisfy the business requirements of many agencies. Principally, records are created for business reasons and kept as evidence of business transactions; they are used for accountability and proof of the decision process or activity. The GDA should be able to be applied simply, without any form of translation for the document or file level.

### Problems of implementation

The current Functional GDA approach will not be easy to implement or automate, and a significant increase in workload will be required. The following are some of the problems that will be the agency's responsibility:

- Destroy when reference ceases - agencies will have to determine when this occurs: 5 years after last access? Or, last searched? Or, when last opened?
- Destroy when policy superseded - audit trails of existing policies will have to be kept, or review periods will need to be established.
- Destroy when new standard developed - responsible areas will have to know when this takes place in order to allocate a trigger to destroy the old standard.
- Differentiation between working documents and final documents will be required by the people creating the records.

These problems will affect both electronic and paper environments. To automate the processes in the electronic environment, there may need to be significantly more quality checks and,

in the paper environment, there will be more files. This new Functional GDA approach does not facilitate the process, or make it simpler. The allocation of sentencing may be linked to the Functional classification scheme (thesaurus), but the action officer will be required to select what sort of document it is, "final", "working", or "other supporting documents", thus adding to the process.

### Retention periods

The number of different retention periods in the Functional GDA tends to complicate rather than simplify the sentencing process. The Functional GDA has destruction periods from 'Destroy 1 year after last action' right through to 'Destroy 7 years after last action'; that is, eight different destruction periods. There is the potential with the new Functional GDA and the linked thesaurus to simplify the sentencing process, to reduce the number of disposal actions and, perhaps, the number of classes. For example, the new Functional GDA has many classes where the working documents are designated 'Destroy 2 years after last action' with the final document designation being 'Destroy 5 years after last action'. It would follow accepted business practices to keep these records together, and at the same time, increase efficiency by having the staff classify the records, at creation, to be retained under the one class for five years.

### Conclusion


Under current guidance from the NAA, many of the records now created by agencies will never be transferred to the Archives and, in some cases, permanent records will be retained in the agencies in electronic format. With the introduction of the new Recordkeeping Metadata Standard for Commonwealth Agencies and Functional Keyword Thesauri based on Keyword AAA,

retrieval of these records will be using more sophisticated searching mechanisms. However, to impose a dual method of retention management at the document level undermines the value of the created records by removing the background information or justification that describe and provide evidence of action taken, or the business decision process. This is the main reason that records are created in the first place.

The method proposed by the NAA may be leading the field for managing electronic records and developing best practice for retention or disposal of records. However, it may not be the most effective, efficient or user friendly procedure for the action officers or records manager currently conducting work. This is particularly so where systems are in place that do not support electronic records management and control at the document level. The NAA's direction for the Functional GDA does not appear to be a broad best practice that can be applied easily to the current environment or satisfy differing business requirements. It seems more to be a best practice to satisfy the NAA's specific archival business requirements.

**Note:**

*The views expressed in this article are those of the author and not necessarily the views of his current or previous employers.*




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# Preserving System Independent Electronic Records: Theory and Practice

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## ABSTRACT

The fragility of computer systems, hardware and programs, complicate the long-term retention of electronic records. There are three aspects to the preservation of electronic records: physical, organisational, or functional. Functional preservation is dependent on one or all of three techniques: emulation, migration or encapsulation. The Victorian Electronic Records Strategy approach is based on encapsulation, the technique that provides a high probability of being able to access information in the future.

## Background

In theory, electronic objects are the perfect preservation medium. Unlike conventional paper or microfilm, each copy is a perfect replica of the original and so the 'original' can live forever. Practice, however, shows that the preservation of electronic objects is fraught with problems and difficulties. So much so, in fact, that the late twentieth century and early twenty-first century risks becoming an historical dark age where future historians do not know what happened or why. The problems of 'electronic

records' have been the subject of much discussion and debate within the archival community.<sup>1, 2, 3</sup>

The root cause of this difficulty is that an electronic object does not stand on its own. A paper record consists of markings on paper which humans can directly see and interpret. An electronic record, on the other hand, consists of a sequence of markings which are not directly visible to humans and which need machines to make visible. Worse, even when the sequence is made visible by these machines, it consists of a sequence of bits (binary digits) which has no inherent meaning. A computer program is needed to interpret the bits to extract meaning. So, an electronic record depends on the machines that read the media on which the record is stored, and the programs that interpret the stored message to make them visible.

Unfortunately, both the machines and the programs are very fragile. The storage media itself may deteriorate, but even if it does not, the machines to read the media are unlikely to survive any length of time. The rapid evolution of computing hardware means that new types of storage media (and the machines that read them) are introduced frequently, while economics means that obsolete equipment cannot be repaired or replaced.

Programs are even more fragile than hardware. Programs are tied intimately to the computing environment in which they run. Change this environment, often in only small ways, and the program often fails.

In practice, there are three aspects to the preservation of electronic records:

- **Physical preservation.** This is the physical preservation of the bit stream that forms the record in the face of media deterioration and hardware obsolescence.
- **Functional preservation.** This is the preservation of the ability to extract meaning from the preserved bit stream. Essentially, functional preservation requires the ability to preserve some or all of the functions of the original software that originally produced and manipulated the preserved data. Normally, functional preservation requires, at least, the ability to be able to view the record.
- **Organisational preservation.** This is the preservation of the ability of an individual or organisation to actually use the preserved information. For example, an organisation cannot use the preserved information if it cannot be located, if the record's context has been lost, or if it is not acceptable as evidence.

## Preservation

All three of these preservation aspects need to be addressed if the problem of the preservation of electronic records is to be solved. A total solution is likely to use different techniques to address the three aspects.

## Physical preservation

Essentially, there is only one practical solution to physical preservation. This is to periodically refresh (copy) the data from the obsolete media to replacement media. This is exactly the same solution adopted for deteriorating paper records when they are microfilmed.

Refreshing electronic records has both advantages and disadvantages over refreshing paper records. Compared with paper, electronic records have the disadvantage that the rapid technological change and short media lifespan means that electronic records need to be refreshed much more frequently than paper records.

There are, however, corresponding advantages to refreshing electronic records. The first is that the copy of an electronic record is a perfect copy, there is no degradation as can be found in conventional analogue copying. The

second advantage is that electronic copies can be performed completely automatically, which drastically reduces the refresh cost. Indeed, modern storage systems keep track of the age and usage of a piece of media and will automatically refresh the media when it reaches the end of its life. The final advantage of electronic refresh is that the new storage technology always has a higher density than the technology that it replaces. This means that more records can be stored in a given space. The cost of refreshing the records may be partially covered by the reduced cost of storage required.

## Organisational preservation

The ability to *use* a record depends on the preservation of information *about* the record. Such information typically includes descriptive information (title, author, subject, creation date), links to related records, and reliability information (e.g. audit logs, digital signatures). Most of this information forms the 'context' of the record.

Preserving information about a record requires capturing and storing metadata. The necessary metadata has been extensively canvassed in the archival community.<sup>4, 5, 6, 7</sup>

The VERS metadata, for example, is based on the National Archives of Australia's (NAA's) Recordkeeping Metadata Standard with minor extensions to also cover the Pittsburgh metadata.

Capturing the necessary metadata is a significant challenge for any preservation system. In a traditional paper recordkeeping system, part of this metadata was often implicit in the actual records themselves (e.g. the signature at the bottom of the record). However, much of the metadata was added when the record was filed. Often, one of the problems with electronic records is that organisations no longer expend as much effort in organising and running their recordkeeping systems. One of the

goals of the VERS pilot system was to investigate the extent to which the system itself could automatically capture this metadata when records were created. It was determined that much of this metadata could be automatically captured, but the extent to which this occurred depended on the application and how much customisation of the software occurs.

## Functional preservation

At a minimum, functional preservation means preserving the ability to view the record just as the original creator saw it. With electronic records, it is also desirable to preserve the ability to 'cut' text and images from the record and to 'paste' them into new documents.

Functional preservation depends on one (or a combination of) the three following techniques:

- **Emulation.** Emulation allows the original application software to be used without requiring the original system to be maintained.<sup>8,9</sup> Although emulation is in widespread use within the computing industry to prolong the life of legacy applications, there are significant practical challenges in using emulation to preserve digital information over a long period. The Y2K problem shows that the application itself may contain bugs that may cause the total loss of information. Emulation depends on preserving a lot of information: a hardware emulation solution, for example, assumes the preservation of the emulator, the operating system, the application and the data. Not only is it difficult to identify exactly what must be preserved (particularly with modern software written in a modular fashion), but the loss of any of these components means the loss of the information. Finally, will future users actually want to use the original application? The users are

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unlikely to be familiar with the application, nor will assistance or manuals be available. They will almost certainly prefer to use current generation software to access the data.

One advantage of emulation, however, is that it is possible to preserve records without any knowledge of the data format used to express the record.

- **Migration.** If the original application cannot be preserved economically, an alternative is to replace the application with a new application. This normally involves migrating (changing) the data to suit the new system. Migration is widely used within the computer industry to transfer data from one application to its replacement. Migration has been recommended by archivists and others.<sup>10, 11, 12, 13</sup> Migration has the benefit of eliminating the need to retain the original application.

The key to a successful migration is knowledge of the original data format, and a close match in functionality with the replacement format. One challenge with migration is ensuring that an organisation has sufficient knowledge to allow migration, as migration will fail if knowledge of the original data format has been lost. This is a significant challenge with commodity applications purchased from external vendors (e.g. word processing software, spreadsheets).

A second challenge is to identify when digital information needs to be migrated and ensuring that all information actually is migrated. The last is particularly difficult if the information is not managed and is scattered throughout the organisation. Migration will degrade the preserved records if the new format cannot support aspects of the original record, and

successive migrations may cause the data to be so degraded that it is effectively lost. A final point is that demonstrating that the migrated copy of the record is a true and accurate copy of the original may cause problems.

One specific migration strategy is the 'post custodial' model in which historical records are no longer accessioned into an archive, but are maintained in operational systems. The goal of this strategy is to reduce the cost of preserving the historical records. First, it is not necessary to operate a separate archival system. Second, since an organisation must migrate the operational records when upgrading the operational system, the marginal cost of migrating the historical records at the same time using the same software is negligible. Two Australian archives have formally adopted this strategy.<sup>14, 15</sup>

In practice, these cost savings may not be achieved. Holding historical records in an operational system will increase the running costs of the operational system, particularly as the proportion of historical records rises. Requiring the software and systems developed for migrating the operational records to accurately migrate historical records is likely to increase the complexity (and cost) of the migration software and significantly increase testing costs. Providing public access to historical records held in operational systems is likely to require significant re-engineering of the operational system to provide the necessary security. Finally, the cost benefits disappear when all the records become historical and there is no operational need to migrate them to a new system.

- **Encapsulation.** Instead of preserving the software, encapsulation concentrates on preserving the meaning of the data. If a detailed knowledge of the data format can be preserved, then software to read and interpret the data format can be re-implemented if required.

This approach has a number of benefits. First, it focuses attention solely on the records, not on the supporting systems. Consequently, the long-term costs are associated with the records, again, not the systems. Because of the well-defined nature of the encapsulated object, the data format can always be identified, and the metadata can always be found. In particular, management of records is simplified because all of the information associated with the record is concentrated. This makes it less likely to lose bits of the record - the record could be lost



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just as surely by losing the metadata as losing the content. Encapsulation, by definition, supports the metadata required for organisational preservation, unlike emulation or migration. It does minimal harm to the record - in particular, it avoids the problem of multiple migrations.

There are challenges associated with the encapsulation approach. First, systems must be developed to allow generation and storage of encapsulated records. Next, any format that is chosen for storage has an undetermined lifetime, so judicious choice of standards is important.

Finally, it is worth noting that one does not have to select any one of these strategies in a pure form. For instance, it may be that organisations choose to migrate the content, but use encapsulation to simplify management. Alternatively, one might choose the encapsulation method, and migrate all content every ten years. Other hybrids are possible. The choice will depend on the constraints, priorities and policies currently applicable.

## Preservation and VERS

The preservation approach taken in VERS is based on encapsulation, but it has aspects of both migration and emulation. Essentially, the approach is to convert (migrate) the content into a suitable long-term preservation format, and to encapsulate the preserved content within metadata that supports functional and organisational preservation. The resulting preservation object is referred to as a VERS Encapsulated Object (VEO). Note that the VERS approach has elements of both emulation and migration. The first step is to migrate the content to be preserved to a suitable long-term preservation format (if it is not already in that format). The goal of encapsulation is to give the user sufficient knowledge to create software that emulates part of the original application that created the preserved data.

Any content in any data format can be preserved within a VEO. But some data formats are better for long-term preservation than others. In choosing a preservation format, the following principles are followed:

- The ideal format is simple enough that it can be completely described within the metadata contained within the VEO. A simple example is a scientific data set, which consists of a large number of repeating observations.
- However, many data objects are too complex to describe within the VEO itself. For such objects, it is best to choose a data format that has been formally published and can consequently be found in a legal deposit library. In this case, the description of the format in the VERS object merely has to refer to the published description. Good examples of such formats are HTML, XML, PDF, and TIFF.<sup>16</sup>
- Unfortunately, for many data objects there is no formally published standard. In this case, the best option is to choose the dominant data format with a large installed user base. A large installed user base means that products from other vendors are likely to be able to read that format. For example, Word is such a dominant word processing package with such a huge installed base, that any new word processing package for the foreseeable future will have to be capable of reading Word files. However, this is not an optimal solution as support for the format will be dropped sooner or later and long-term preservation will eventually require migration to another format. In addition, there is no guarantee that other software packages will be able to read the format perfectly.

- If there is no dominant data format, the best that can be done is to preserve the original native data format. At least, the VERS encapsulation will allow the data to be clearly labelled with the name of the creating software which gives a chance that future users will be able to find a description of the data format, or identify software that can read it.

The metadata that encapsulates the content has three functions:

- **Self-descriptive.**

A part of the metadata describes the structure and format of the VEO itself. A VEO is a data file itself, and has a data format. We cannot assume that the VERS software or documentation will survive and so it is necessary for the VEO to be self-describing.

- **Format descriptions.**

A part of the metadata describes the data formats used to encode the content.

- **Organisational preservation.**

This metadata contains information about the record and supports organisational preservation. As mentioned earlier, the VERS organisational preservation is based on NAA recordkeeping metadata.

Encapsulating all of the information necessary to preserve a record into one object is an important aspect of VERS. The alternative would be to separate this information. We believe that this increases the chance of losing the record as the more separate pieces of data to be managed, the greater the chance that some of them will be lost. Further, the loss of any part of the data may lead to the effective loss of the record. For example, if the description

of the record is lost, it will become impossible for a user to locate the desired record, even though the content may still be in the system.

The encapsulation, and all the metadata contained within it, is encoded in XML, a textual markup language. Any textual encoding would do; XML was chosen simply because it is a widely known standard. A textual encoding was chosen to allow a user to view a VERS object with the simplest possible tools and understand the structure and contents.

## Conclusion

No one knows the future. There is no strategy for the long-term preservation of digital information that can be guaranteed to work. However, we believe that the approach taken by VERS gives a high probability of allowing future generations access to information.

Most importantly, the encapsulation approach used within VERS is a forgiving approach. It fulfils the injunction 'do no harm'. The original content can be extracted and so, if, in the future, it proves that there is a better preservation approach, then nothing has been lost by following the VERS path. This is to be contrasted with a migration-based approach where the quality of the data may have been seriously compromised after several migrations.

In addition, the encapsulation approach simplifies management of preserved data. An archive has only one type of object to manage - a VERS object - and this object contains within it all the information necessary for preservation. An archive consequently is simpler and is less likely to irrecoverably lose parts of the record.

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# German Unification and Electronic Records: The Example of East Germany's "Kaderdatenspeicher"

## AUTHOR

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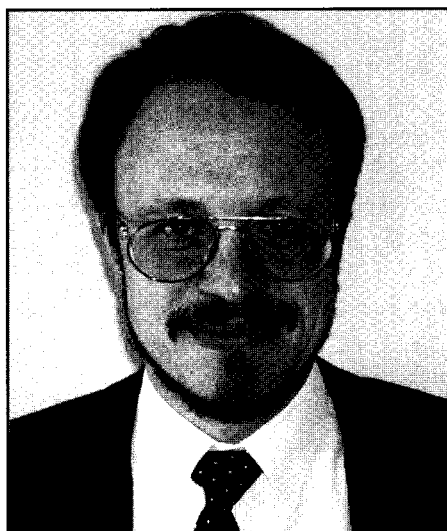
Michael Wettengel (born in 1957) is a trained historian. Since 1989, he has worked as an archivist at the Federal Archives (*Bundesarchiv*), Germany. In 1991, he became the head of the newly established machine-readable archives section of the Federal Archives, and since 1999, he has been responsible for government records and electronic records management. He also gives professional training courses for archivists on electronic records at the Federal Archives, and at the Archival Institute (*Archivschule*) in Marburg.

## ABSTRACT

After German unification, many former East German government agencies and institutions were closed down. Archivists had to secure not only their paper records, but also a considerable number of machine-readable data holdings. Very often, however, the documentation of these electronic records proved to be incomplete or even totally missing. In those cases, like the "Kaderdatenspeicher" or files database of party functionaries, different approaches were taken to identify and verify data file structures and to reconstruct missing documentation.

## Introduction

The process that led to German unification was rapid and spectacular. As nobody could foresee the dynamics of change and the sudden collapse of the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) which caused the



Dr Michael Wettengel

unification of the two German states, procedures to handle the various problems of this period of transition had to be improvised.

German archivists were confronted with a situation without precedent as well: after 45 years of separation and different institutional traditions, the former East German Central State Archives were merged with the West German Federal Archives in October 1990. At the same time as this reorganisation took place, archivists had to face considerable challenges. When suddenly former East German government agencies and institutions were closed down, not only their paper records, but also a considerable number of machine-readable data holdings had to be secured or rescued from possible destruction. Whereas paper records were treated with professional routine, concepts and procedures for the acquisition, appraisal, description, and management of machine-readable records were lacking.

The new situation helped to bring about a change in German archivists' attitudes towards electronic records. Whereas previously, little attention was paid to machine-readable material, the need to take care of large quantities of East German data files revealed the necessity of a stronger commitment in that field.

The Federal Archives decided to establish a section for machine-readable archives, which became responsible for electronic records from former East German central agencies and institutions as well as from federal government offices. Furthermore, this section was charged with advising these federal offices on information management issues. The section was set up in August 1991, but not provided with staff and basic technical equipment until summer 1993. By then, much precious time had already been lost.

The experiences with securing East German data files showed that the creating organisations were not the best custodians of machine-readable archives. Many data files were no longer legible and data documentation was at least incomplete or missing in most cases. Federal offices only cared for these electronic records in so far as they could use them for their purposes. However, these experiences also showed that in a world where state and society are in constant transition, it makes sense to have archivists engaged in electronic records management and taking records of permanent value into their custody.

## Conditions of acquisition

In the former GDR, machine-readable data holdings had been processed by

centralised mainframe systems in big data processing centres that belonged to the State and received their commissions from government agencies and party institutions. In most cases, they were even institutionally affiliated with one or another of these agencies. Data processing centres throughout the East German territory performed tasks and carried out orders from central government agencies.

Office automation systems had been unknown in the former GDR, and the first applications for PCs with relatively small hard disks were not introduced in East German government offices until the second half of the 1980s, shortly before the collapse of the East German state. Generally speaking, the GDR had yet to begin the introduction of decentralised desktop personal computers and local server networks.

With the coming of formal unification in October 1990, East German state agencies and institutions that were not taken over by federal offices or one of the newly established federal states ("Länder") were either privatised or dissolved. The same happened to many data processing centres throughout the territory of the former GDR. Therefore, archivists who tried to take over electronic records were confronted with varying situations, depending on what happened to the respective data centres after unification.

Archivists had the easiest time working with data processing centres still in operation and now operated by a federal government agency or a *Länder*. In such instances, sufficiently documented data holdings could be acquired, and it was easy to obtain information from operators and programmers.

Very often, however, data processing centres were in operation for only a short time before there were closed. In these cases, a process of decay in operation and organisation was already under way while the various centres

were still in existence. Specialists from these centres tried to find new jobs elsewhere and took with them both knowledge and the relevant manuals and data documentation, which they regarded as their personal property. Typically, only the data carriers were left to the archivists.

The situation was better in those cases where the data processing centre was closed down immediately and the doors were locked. Archivists had to enter sealed rooms where they were confronted by huge piles of paper records, printouts, manuals, card indices, floppy disks, tapes, hard disk plates, and punchcards. But as data processing centres in the former GDR were required to create and maintain sufficient documentation on every project in at least three different copies, chances were good to find enough context information along with the data files.

The situation was much worse in those data processing centres that had been privatised after unification. These newly established private companies considered data holdings, which had been processed for government agencies before 1990, to be part of their business capital. They did not refrain from selling former East German government data files. Even in cases whereby a company acknowledged that these data files were now federal property, they nevertheless charged a tremendous fee for the alleged preservation of the data.

As can be seen from these different examples, much depended on whether there was a federal or state agency that took care of East German data files. In the case of the statistical data holdings of the former GDR, these records have been secured by the Federal Office for Statistics (*Statistisches Bundesamt*). The former East German Central State Administration for Statistics (*Staatliche Zentralverwaltung für*

*Statistik*), who created these records, became a branch of the Federal Office for Statistics, whereas the former Data Processing Centre for Statistics (*Datenverarbeitungszentrum Statistik*) continued operation until the end of 1992 under the Common Office for Statistics of the New Länder (*Gemeinsames Statistisches Amt der neuen Bundesländer*). By the end of 1991, the Federal Archives and the Federal Office for Statistics agreed on a formal cooperation in order to secure East German statistical data files.

Even if conditions for acquisition were good, as in the example of the statistical records, this did not mean that archivists could easily take over the files. Thus, for instance, legal obstacles had to be overcome. The Commissioner charged with the oversight and implementation of German privacy legislation (*Bundesbeauftragter für den Datenschutz*) demanded that all personal identifiers in East German data files should be deleted. In addition, the Federal Office for Statistics claimed that statistical secrecy prevented the transfer of statistical data files with single items of data to the Federal Archives.

Despite these various problems, the Federal Archives have been successful in acquiring East German data holdings without alterations of the data in most cases. Machine-readable records in the fields of statistics, economy, agriculture, education, penal registration, and labour have been taken over. The Federal Archives Law, which was amended in 1990, provided the legal claim to take over East German records. With the help of staff of the former East German Central Archives in the newly established GDR-division of the Federal Archives, appraisals and acquisitions of these records began. The GDR archivists provided much necessary information for the description of the data files,



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information that proved to be very important if the original documentation was missing.

## Media, record structures and codes

Data processing systems in the territory of the former GDR proved to be not entirely different from those in the western world. East German computer centres possessed mainframe systems for the processing of large data compilations, as was common in western countries about twenty years earlier. East German data holdings usually had hierarchical file structures that were not very complicated. The hardware and software used by East German data processing centres were copies of and variations on western models, naturally with different names. For instance, the so-called ESER-mainframe systems in East Germany were copies of IBM-mainframes. These facts, of course, greatly facilitated the work of archivists.

As storage media, primarily 9-track tapes were used. Many of them had only a density of 800 bpi. Owing to production problems, these tapes bearing the East German trade marks ORWO or PYRAL proved to be in very poor condition. Glue and abrasion had to be removed from the tapes before they could be read. Sometimes, layers of the tape separated after the first reading because of insufficient binder. In order to secure the data, the tapes had to be copied as soon as possible. Although blocks or even whole tapes could often no longer be read physically, there generally existed at least one backup copy. Therefore, data losses could be compensated for in many cases. Magnetic hard disk plates had also been used as a storage medium. As a result of their uneven surface, those plates sometimes damaged the reading heads. Programs and job files were usually stored on tapes, on punchcards, and on 5.25 or 8 inch floppy disks. The physical state of the data files depended

on when the information was stored on the tapes and on the storage conditions in the stack area. If these conditions were inappropriate, up to 40% of the tapes could no longer be physically read after five years.

The labelling of the tapes followed the IBM scheme, with hardly any variation. Similar to western IBM-mainframe applications, EBCDIC was used as code. The Russian code DKOI (in the former GDR also called "ESER Code"), which in translation means Binary Code for Information Interchange, could also be found in East German data files. DKOI is very similar to EBCDIC and is basically an enlargement of EBCDIC with a few variations and some extra symbols:

Hexadecimal	DKOI	EBCDIC
4 A	{	'
4 F	!	
5 A	]	!
5 B	O	\$
6 A		
A 1	-	
C 0	{	
D 0	}	
E 0	\	

Binary-coded numerical values, often used alternately with fields in EBCDIC representation, have been typical features of East German data files, too. The frequent use of data compression techniques provided a particular problem to archivists. The record length was generally variable - a characteristic common to many western IBM-mainframe applications, as well. However, the data fields in East German records were usually not separated by delimiters.

East German holdings had been collected and processed for very specific purposes in the fields of statistics, social and economic policy planning, personnel management, distribution of goods, labour employment, and workforce distribution. Large data collections of statistical files, goods and production files, and personnel files had been processed with the help of

Assembler or PL/1 programs, which are highly dependent on the mainframe environment of the data processing centres. Due to their sequential, hierarchical file structures, these machine-readable records were archived as 'flat files', that is to say, as mere sequential bit strings.

## Reconstructing documentation: The Kaderdatenspeicher

In order to understand the content of East German data files, it was of high importance to obtain complete documentation. Archivists were not only looking for program and data file documentation in a limited sense, but also for the relevant context information on the 'history' and the various purposes of the data file. As a minimum requirement, the Federal Archives ensured it could receive the data file structure, the number of data sets, the data values, complete code books, compression algorithms, and a list to identify the content of each tape. In spite of this general rule, it was decided in rare instances to take over data files because of their informational value, although not even this basic information could be obtained.

One of these data files, the so-called database of party functionaries or "*Kaderdatenspeicher*", may serve as an example. The *Kaderdatenspeicher* contains personal data on 331,980 staff members (in 1989) of all former East German government agencies, excluding those of the Ministry of State Security (*Ministerium für Staatssicherheit*), the Ministry for National Defense (*Ministerium für Nationale Verteidigung*), and the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerium des Innern*). These files not only provide insight into the political and professional career of officials, but also contain information on their parents. There were several copies of the *Kaderdatenspeicher*, of which the only one that still exists is the one acquired by the Federal Archives. At least in one case, there is sufficient evidence that one copy of the

*Kaderdatenspeicher* had been deliberately deleted shortly before the German unification in order to protect cadre members. The considerable value of this holding provided an incentive for the Federal Archives to invest quite heavily into the reconstruction of its documentation.

After first copying the tapes of the *Kaderdatenspeicher*, the volume labels, the headers, and the first blocks of data of each file were printed out. The volume labels and headers followed the IBM-scheme, so it was easy to comprehend. From these data, information on the content of each tape and an initial idea of the different generations and applications of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* could be obtained.

However, one typical problem already became apparent at this early stage: in the few lines of the volume label and headers, three different ways were used to express the date:

- 1: Day, month, year (ddmmyy) in EBCDIC (e.g. 180388 means March 18, 1988);
- 2: Number of year and number of the day in that year (yyddd), both in EBCDIC (e.g. 88168 means 168th day in 1988 = June 16, 1988);
- 3: Day, month, year (dmy) counted from 1 to 9 in numbers and from there on in alpha characters, thus: Number of day = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, then A to V, number of the month = 1 to 9, A, B, C, number of year in decade = 0, 1, ... 9. (e.g. V18 means 31st day in first month in eighth year of the 1980s = January 31, 1988).

Of course, there are many more possibilities for expressing dates, especially considering the different ways of 'packing' dates and numbers. There is, for instance, a very common method of storing in only two bytes any date from the 20th century: nine bits for the number of days in the year (0 to 511), and 7 bits

for the number of years (0 to 127), starting with 1900. This way of expressing the date again leaves two options, starting either with the days or years.

#### Example:

	<b>Byte 1</b>	<b>Byte 2</b>
either	yyyy yydd	dddd dddd
or	dddd dddd	dyyy yyyy

There is also the possibility of expressing a date by counting a bit for every day (or whatever) since a system-dependent fixed date. These so-called 'timer-tics' are extremely difficult to decipher if the fixed date is not known. In East German data files, many different possibilities were used to express dates or numbers.

The data sets of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* showed that only the full name, the Personal Identification Number (*Personenkennziffer* or *PKZ*), the address, and the agency were written in plain EBCDIC. The Personal Identification Number was a unique number given to every citizen of the former GDR at birth. By this number, every East German citizen could be identified. East Germans carried this number with them in all official records throughout different life situations, be it professional career or imprisonment. This Personal Identification Number was also the key to a flourishing exchange of personal data between different East German data processing centres, uninhibited by privacy legislation.

#### Structure of the Personal Identification Number:

##### ddmmyy s cccc x

**ddmmyy values:** Date of birth (day/month/year)

**s value:** Sex and century of birth  
 "2" = male born before 1900,  
 "3" = female born before 1900,  
 "4" = male born after 1900,  
 "5" = female born after 1900.

**cccc values:** Location code (for individuals born before 1970, place of residence. PKZ used for individuals born after 1970 birthplace)

**x value:** Control digit for plausibility checks

All the other data fields were coded by numerical values, represented as binary figures. The record length of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* is variable. Binary codes and packing methods had been quite common in East German data files, and the methods used often varied. Fortunately, no further compression algorithms had been used in the case of the *Kaderdatenspeicher*. The *Kaderdatenspeicher* had been processed by the help of Assembler programs.

It became clear that without a precise description of the data file structure, there was no way to understand the meaning of the data. Therefore, as much information on the *Kaderdatenspeicher* as possible was needed. The orders and commissions to create and process the *Kaderdatenspeicher* came from the Council of Ministers (*Ministerrat der DDR*). The vertical files of this office had been added to the collections of the Federal Archives in Potsdam after unification. After searching these holdings for references to the *Kaderdatenspeicher* project, a series of records that contains descriptions of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* and reports from the data processing centre with a lot of substantial information could be found.

These paper records provided information on the content, purpose, history, and development of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* project, in particular:

- who planned the *Kaderdatenspeicher* and who gave the orders,
- which agencies co-operated,
- what were the different aims and purposes of the *Kaderdatenspeicher*,
- what information was contained in the *Kaderdatenspeicher*,

- how information was collected,
- which versions and updates of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* existed and which computer centres processed and stored them,
- who had access to which portions of the information contained in the *Kaderdatenspeicher*, and
- how information was used.

The reports to the Council of Ministers also contained information on the data file structure and code books. The *Kaderdatenspeicher* consists of annual compilations, so-called "generations" of data files for the year 1980, and for each year from 1985 to 1989 as well as of extracts for various purposes. Almost all of these data files have at least a slightly different structure. Nevertheless, the data file structures of all generations of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* could be found. Much information could be inferred from so-called 'address tables' (*Adressentabellen*), which represent the record layout of a specific file.

In some instances, the content of data fields could also be concluded from the formulas for the collection of the data, of which specimens were found in the records. Of course, comparing the items in the formulas with the content of the data fields was only possible if the data items were not expressed in binary figures.

The data flow between East German data processing centres mentioned above proved to be another source of information in the effort to reconstruct lost documentation. This exchange of large quantities of coded data could only operate on the basis of shared codebooks. In fact, the codes used in the big East German personal-related data holdings have been relatively stable, and were often the same. Diagrams could be found in the records, where the codes of different data holdings were compared. What was meant to be a tool to facilitate data exchange is now a guide for

archivists to find out which codes of data fields in different data holdings are the same.

The data files of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* were closely linked with the so-called staff databases of ministries and separate government branches (*Arbeitskräftedatenspeicher*), the database containing personal data of staff members. All the data of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* were originally collected from these staff databases. The Federal Archives has been successful in acquiring a relatively comprehensive and complete documentation of the staff database of the Ministry of Public Education (*Ministerium für Volksbildung*). Therefore, additional information on the record layout and the data file structure of the *Kaderdatenspeicher* could be derived from the documentation of the staff database of this ministry.

However, many questions remained open. Even if the data file structure of a record, the address, length, and content of a specific field is known, it may still not be understood. To take the simple example from above, there are many ways to express a date, and the one used may not be known. In these cases, specific software is used to analyse sequential files.

In order to obtain background information, archivists have also made contacts with former employees of East German data processing centres who had created or worked with the data holdings which were acquired. In rare and difficult cases, for instance, when compression algorithms were used which could not be deciphered, programmers from former East German data processing centres were even hired as consultants.

### Access for researchers

As it has been pointed out, different approaches had to be taken in order to

identify and verify data file structures and to reconstruct documentation:

- analysis of labels and data,
- searching for documentation in the corresponding verticle files,
- studying the original data flow in order to identify shared code books and similar file structures,
- obtaining information from former employees, and, last but not least,
- using specific software.

In this way, much of the missing documentation of East German data holdings could be reconstructed. However, although a number of fairly well-documented data files can already be presented for research purposes, most East German data holdings still remain a problem because of the specific hardware-background in which they were created. Since the main goal of reconstructing documentation is to facilitate access to the data, additional efforts are necessary.

For the long-term preservation, East German data files are stored as flat files. Apart from this 'archival copy', the Federal Archives are planning to create 'research copies' with specific formats that are better suited for research purposes and easier to handle. These 'research copies' are not meant for archival preservation. The Federal Archives has made an agreement with the Centre for Historical Social Research (*Zentrum für Historische Sozialforschung*) and the Data Archives for Social Research (*Zentralarchiv für empirische Sozialforschung*) in order to use the expertise and the technical facilities of these institutions to create research files of East German machine-readable records. The aim of this cooperation is to promote historical social research on the former GDR.

Taking over East German data holdings has certainly been an extreme experience from which it is difficult to generalise. However, some of the attitudes and procedures in East



German computer centres are probably universal. For instance, it seems that people working with computers love to play around with programs and data but are not particularly fond of documenting what they are doing. A lot of what is important for future archivists and researchers of data holdings will always be in private notebooks or in the brains of system administrators and records creators. However, preserving these archival holdings means ensuring their accessibility in the future, and reconstructing documentation may be one of the keys to it.

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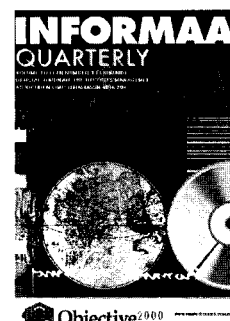


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# To Merge or Not to Merge: That was the Darwin Convention Question

## REVIEWER

**Mike Steemson**

Principal  
The Caldeson Consultancy

**T**o merge, or not to merge, that was the question speakers argued at the RMAA Convention in Darwin. But, almost at once, it has become clear that the 'ayes' already had it, and a closer relationship with the Australian Society of Archivists Inc., (ASA) was an established fact. Witness the planned joint Hobart Convention in 2001, the November 1999 International Seminar in Melbourne, and the September 1999 statement on Victorian Government record shredding allegations.

The debate in Darwin centred on the papers by Assistant Director-General of National Archives, Steve Stuckey, and the Manager of Corporate Information at Fisheries W.A., Ken Ridley. Steve told the Convention delegates: 'I think we have a greater future together.' Ken was all for collaboration, but declared: 'Vive la difference!' Delegates raised their hands, without demur, for union.

The strongest call for merger came from Steve Stuckey who was in at the foundation of the ASA and is a long-term member of RMAA. He challenged the Convention delegates to consider the similarities between them. He said saw dangers in continuing separation, saying: 'If there is not a more integrated co-operation between records managers and archivists in Australia, then we run the risk of being further marginalised than we are at present and, then, ultimately being

ignored. We exist in a time of mergers of corporations into national and transnational corporations, of smaller government co-operating with the private sector, of merged unions into fewer but more powerful associations'.

Steve added '... in other words we swim in a sea where all around us are getting bigger and more aggressive, often ignoring the smaller fish as they rampage through the oceans, oblivious of those who get in their way (or consuming them!), and taking notice only of those who either threaten them or assist them.'

Steve is an historian and archivist, and has done 'just about every job that the wildly multi-disciplinary National Archives of Australia encompasses', from advising government agencies on electronic recordkeeping to 'box chucker'. He comments, wryly: 'And I still keep coming back for more!'

He told the Convention of working in the Archives in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and being confronted with 12 kilometres of data in digital format that comprised the output of the petroleum industry's exploration for carbon-based fuels both within Australia and offshore.

He said: 'For a decade or more the Archives struggled to confront the issues of managing, controlling and making accessible these 'new' forms of records. We were the passive recipients of this material - deposit was required under legislation - and we only managed to get in control of it when we did a number of things. We had to understand the environment in which the records were created, we had to understand the technology that created

the records, and before the material even reached our doors, we had to think about how access would be provided to it.'

'We found ourselves talking to geophysicists, to software designers and to technologists who were trying to keep 1960s hardware operating (we even bought the last 1-inch analogue to digital tape machine in Australia), much the same as we now talk to business and systems analysts about electronic recordkeeping systems. We also talked to current and future users, and to regulators. At the same time we were trying to capture information about the material - we didn't call it metadata then - and think about how we were going to migrate the data to new formats and technologies.

## Separateness abandoned

'And we were the Archives. We weren't geophysicists or petroleum engineers. We didn't even think of ourselves as records managers then. We had the designation of Archivist Grade 1, Archivist Grade 2, or Senior Archivist. But dealing with a current problem made us abandon any thought of professional separateness and come up with workable solutions.'

'From that time on I have not thought of myself as an archivist or as a records manager. I see myself as a modern information professional. Were I to think too much about whether I was more one than the other, then I would merely add to what some may say is already some form of professional schizophrenia.'

Steve said that throughout almost all its history, the ASA had been mesmerised

by electronic records' challenges to traditional archiving. For about the same time, records managers had lamented at seeing themselves reduced in numbers, marginalised and ignored in favour of the IT specialists. Both the ASA and RMAA were addressing the problems and were holding mature debates about their roles and their futures. He found himself asking: 'What are the differences between us now?'

He quoted his boss (never a bad thing to do!), George Nichols, the Director-General of the National Archives of Australia, who, talking about the role of records managers and archivists at the RMAA ACT Branch seminar on Intranets earlier this year, had said:

If there is one thing that the dealing with technology has taught us is that we cannot survive without each other. And the circle is widened to include the other information and technology professionals. It is a truism these days that the archivist, in safeguarding the nation's corporate memory, must be part of the front-end team involved in systems design - or at least the archival requirements must be included at that point. In Terry Cook's words ... 'the modern archivist is no longer the passive receiver of the surviving records but rather must be an assertive player at the front end of the record process alongside the recordkeeper. Both need to be intimately involved in specifying the requirements of recordkeeping systems'<sup>2</sup>.

Steve Stuckey commented: 'Just to prove that the management of the National Archives is not always undivided, and why there are sometimes some vigorous debates within the executive of the Archives, let me comment that I am slightly at odds with both George Nichols and Terry Cook. Or, perhaps I would put their points in different words. My contention is that, in this bit of the continuum, or at that point in the life cycle, I see no difference between the archivist and the recordkeeper. They are one and the same person and

should - indeed must - be talking with a full understanding about current, immediate future and long term future requirements of the records.'

Steve said that at the same seminar, U.S. Electronic Records Management consultant Rick Barry had linked the two groups in the acronym ARM, 'archives and records managers'<sup>3</sup>. Another recent visitor, Bjorn Lindh, a director at the National Archives of Sweden, told a NAA seminar of his organisation's efforts towards convergence of archives, library and museum organisations, especially in relation to training and sharing international experiences.

Steve commented: 'We are hearing messages from a range of people who are almost assuming that there is at least a convergence of approaches to the issues confronting records managers and archivists. I am saying that let's have this discussion, but let us look at the differences, and decide if they outnumber the similarities. If they do not, then perhaps convergence should become merging so that we can more easily converge with other professions.'

The convergence was obvious in the establishment of the Australian Standard for Records Management, AS4390, which had been achieved through 'archivists, records managers, users, consultants, academics, educators, company secretaries and others co-operating to produce what is such a good and useable product'.

### Significant coalitions

The National Records and Archives Competency Standards, too, had involved a significant coalition of people who produced a document that is of telling relevance to employing institutions and the professional associations.

'The RMAA was there, as was the ASA and the Australian Council of Archives.

## Congrats to all for a great 2000

*Here at Microsystems it's been a yo-yo end to 1999 - and a real smooth move into Y2K*

How'd things go for you? Seems like the most exciting event here in Sydney to mark the new millennium was the fireworks display. Thanks be, not a Y2K bug in sight.

### Sharing the news at San Diego

Early Nov, in line with Msys' policy of keeping up with the world's best, we were over in sunny San Diego for the AIIM Executive Forum. It was a great chance to swap notes with top USA bureaus. (There was one other attendee from Oz - the Imaging Centre, ie Rod Hastie.)

### Rediscovering Microfilm -1

Hot on the topic list in the USA was something we've been talking about at Msys for years - hybrid solutions. Seems like the Yanks have finally cottoned on to the "best of both" **microfilm scanners** that scan-on-demand from film into digital.

*Good news re this - Canon Aust have now released their A3 version, the MS 800. It's a beauty and fills a much-needed capability gap.*

### Rediscovering Microfilm - 2

Stateside, there was lots more on the new **microfilm archivers**, that is, back-converting from the scanned images back to microfilm. Saves gigabytes they say. Interesting.

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There were also representatives of the Health Information Management Association, the Association of Information and Image Management, the Australian Services Union, the Community and Public Sector Union, the Financial Services Union, and the Finance & Administration Industry Training Advisory Board.'

Steve Stuckey thought the Standards themselves supported the call for union when it said:

It should be clearly understood that the streams [in the Standard] are a convenient way of reading the National Records and Archives Competency Standards and are not career paths or specialisations. Recordkeepers will undertake all of the competencies, perhaps specialising in some depending on the requirements of their organisation at the time.<sup>4</sup>

He pointed out that the Standard saw no separateness in records and archives management, but had them intermingled and complementary to each other, each being required to ensure the career development of the professionals they covered. The Standard had, in 1997, identified 40 post-secondary courses in records and archives management in Australia', 'an incredible number in comparison to other countries'.

He had not researched the situation in 1999, but believed the numbers were not significantly different. He said: 'These 40 courses were made up of 14 certificate courses, 10 degree courses and 16 post-graduate courses. Most make no differentiation between what one does with records as opposed to archives, and make no differentiation between what one needs to know to deal with records as opposed to archives, especially in the electronic environment. If a record is to be reliable, comprehensible, authentic, accessible and durable it can be so for a minute or a century, it just means that there are different levels of work to be

done the longer the record is to be in existence.'

Steve outlined details of a joint Australia-Canada-US-English national archives enterprise to develop international core competencies. A discussion document prepared in the recent weeks showed four competency groups:

- identifying record keeping requirements,
- creating and capturing records,
- preserving records, and
- assessing and retrieving records.

He commented: 'It is a formidable list, backed up as it is in the draft document by long lists of knowledge and skill requirements. Getting staff to the various levels of competency that is appropriate to their level, as well as giving them the skills and knowledge to develop and be promoted, will be a major task and is worthy of a whole conference on its own.

'But, as I reflect on what I as an employer with the National Archives expect of the staff that are working with modern records, I find myself asking that question, again. Where are the differences in what a records manager (in inverted commas), and an archivist (in inverted commas), would be expected to do working for me?

'The RMAA and the ASA could well move down a pointless path if they imposed upon themselves the task of identifying which bit of these competencies fall within their particular area of expertise or influence. The question is moot - all of the requirements are so intermingled as to be incapable of unravelling.'

Steve likened the RMAA and ASA to the oil and vinegar in a salad vinaigrette dressing. He amused the Convention, saying: 'Take your pick as to which is which!'

He developed the analogy, thus: 'Separately the societies fulfil their purpose, but when shaken up and joined together they provide just what we are looking for - that is, something that livens up and certainly adds to the relative boredom of the salad that recordkeeping can be. When we are used to be shaken up and joined together we perhaps would be further enhanced by adding a dash of the herbs and garlic that may be represented by other disciplines or professions'.

'Perhaps the success of the joint Convention in Hobart will mean that the agenda that I am proposing today may move a little faster; I can only hope so. The future of the RMAA and the ASA is now; we can have a future separately, but I think we have a greater future together.'

### Ridley: Union open to conjecture

Ken Ridley, the former *INFORMAA Quarterly* editor, was retiring from three years as President of RMAA's Western Australia branch. He has worked in Western Australian State Government agencies for over 25 years and has specialised in records management since 1986. He opened the Darwin Convention amalgamation debate saying: 'Over the last 25 years Australian records managers and archivists have worked in specialist areas. Records managers have been the creators and managers of active records but, although large in number as an industry group, have found themselves disenfranchised on a number of fronts. Archivists have traditionally been the keepers of inactive records, and as a group, is small in number but powerful and influential.'

Contemporary advances in technology were impacting on established disciplines and professions, he said, and the prospect of the electronic office environment has stimulated archivists in particular, and records managers to a

lesser extent, to reinvent themselves. He commented: 'Whether it will lead to the disappearance or amalgamation of the records manager or the archivist *per se* is, in my view, open to conjecture.'

Records managers worked closely with information systems professionals and librarians. Some employers had chosen to amalgamate records centres and libraries under one manager while others located the records manager in information systems, particularly since the advent of computerised records management systems and document management systems.

Ken noted a comprehensive change in the Australian Society of Archivists' definition of 'archivist', formalised at their 1998 Fremantle Conference and published on the Society's World Wide Web site<sup>6</sup>. He said: 'Archivists are now claiming that they will develop and implement systems which facilitate the capture of records, a specialist activity that in my view, is clearly the responsibility of a records manager.'

He quoted University of New South Wales archivist Anne Pederson who had described the different responsibilities between records managers and archivists as a 'great schism'. He told the Darwin Convention delegates that: 'In a frank discussion about the development of records management as a discipline (not yet a profession) in Australia, Pederson explained that the increasing volume and complexity of records, and the emergence of technology in the office environment saw the formation of a class of clerks who learned their skills 'on the job'<sup>7</sup>. They were not academically qualified and, because they dealt with menial tasks (records), they were never accorded the status of a profession.

Traditionally records administrators have been the most knowledgeable about and involved with the creation, use and maintenance activities within their context

of origin and primary use of records to support ongoing work. They have been foremost in disposal actions, implementing decisions and managing low cost centres for storing and servicing records before destruction or re-cycling.<sup>8</sup>

Ken commented: 'it could thus be said that records managers served the business needs of the organisations in which they worked very well. In the 1980's and early 90's, the establishment of computerised records management systems finally raised the status of records managers from mere back room paper-shufflers, to systems administrators, functional and subject analysts, and managers with large budgets and human resource management responsibilities. It was at this time, in my opinion that the archival profession realised that it would have to re-invent itself if it was to survive the coming technological revolution'.

Ken warned that records managers would have to 'claim their turf' before it was too late. He said: 'Records managers as individuals and as an industry group have been far too complacent and apathetic with respect to issues that affect them, and if they do not enter the debate and be prepared to challenge matters that affect their working environment, they may end up being compromised.'

### Archives too dominant

'I am concerned that the archival influence on our standards, our classification schemes, our competency standards, and our legislation has been too dominant. After all, less than 10% of the records created in any format will become archives. Records are not created and managed **primarily** for historical, social and research purposes.'

'As a practising records manager I am responsible to my superiors for business issues such as efficiency and accountability, and fast and accurate

retrieval of information, not primarily for the archival heritage. I am mindful of historical considerations, but these are not the most dominant consideration. I have no corporate responsibility or interest or time to manage old archival material. That should continue to be left to the archivist as clearly enunciated in the life cycle concept.'

'Records managers need to stake their claim and their 'turf' before it is too late. Records managers are now graduating with tertiary qualifications and can no longer be relegated as second class players in information administration. They are working at the front end of the records life cycle, implementing systems and managing electronic records, controlling large budgets and confronting the normal management issues such as strategic planning, systems analysis and safety and health at work.'

'Now I expect that some commentators will roll out the spectre of electronic records and claim that the life cycle is inadequate, and we can only deal with electronic records by using a continuum based approach. I am unable comment here in any depth as once again this topic would require a separate paper in it's own right.'

Ken quoted **Tom Adami**, formerly a research officer from the National Archives of Australia, who, in *INFORMAA Quarterly*, had found it self-defeating to see archives and records management as two separate fields<sup>9</sup>. Adami had explored the electronic records management theories of North American academics **David Bearman** and **Luciana Duranti**. Ken commented: 'Once again, I simply say we need more debate,' and went on: 'Adami does agree however that records managers need to be consulted.'

Ken continued: 'Archivists have now established themselves in a very powerful position by being the active

players - drafting laws, and setting standards and policies. One solution to the problem is a more collaborative approach with records managers. Another is for records managers to be more "professional", articulate, assertive and outward looking.'

'Turf Wars internal to the records and archives community can be destructive, but at the same time there should always be an opportunity for debate, and a search for policies and standards that will work in practice; not just as theory.'

Ken concluded by saying that: 'For the immediate future, my view is that records managers must preserve their professional integrity whilst they work collaboratively with archival and information systems professionals. Vive la difference!'

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Michael Steemson, The Caldeson Consultancy, Email: steemson@xtra.co.nz <<http://www.caldeson.com>>

<sup>2</sup> G. Nichols 1999, 'Technology and the national memory', in *Intranets: Problems or Opportunities for Recordkeeping, Proceedings of a Seminar Conducted by the ACT Branch of the Records Management Association of Australia at Parliament House, Canberra 10-11 March 1999*, ed. A. Eccleston, RMAA ACT Branch, Canberra.

<sup>3</sup> R. Barry 1999, 'Factoring web technologies into the knowledge management equation . . . for the record', in *Intranets: Problems or Opportunities for Recordkeeping, Proceedings of a Seminar Conducted by the ACT Branch of the Records Management Association of Australia at Parliament House, Canberra 10-11 March 1999*, ed. A. Eccleston, RMAA ACT Branch, Canberra.

<sup>4</sup> National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body Ltd. 1997, *Records and Archives Competency Standards*, Australian National Training Authority, Melbourne, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> National Finance Industry Training Advisory Body Ltd. 1997, *Records and Archives Competency Standards*, Australian National Training Authority, Melbourne, Appendix G.

<sup>6</sup> Australian Society of Archivists Inc., <<http://www.archivists.org.au/aboutasa.html>> (accessed 30 July 1999).

<sup>7</sup> A. Pederson 1997, 'Understanding and managing records', in *Introduction to Information Management*, ed. Michael Brittain, Centre for Information Studies, Wagga Wagga.

<sup>8</sup> A. Pederson 1997.

<sup>9</sup> T. Adami 1998, 'The 1990's archival War of the Roses', *INFORMAA Quarterly*, vol. 15, no. 2, pp.18-25.



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In conjunction with the launch of Hummingbird's first integrated product, Litwin also unveiled the company's new corporate

image. 'The launch of our new corporate image signifies new technologies, new additions to our corporate family, and a stronger Hummingbird than ever before,' added Litwin.

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**OBJECTIVE CORPORATION (FORMERLY COMPUTECHNICS)****NEW INFORMATION SYSTEM CONTRACT SIGNED****Defence Public Affairs Organisation****Thursday 16 December, 1999**

**A** contract for a new Document and Records Management System (DRMS) for the Defence organisation has been signed.

The contract, worth over \$15 million over 5 years, was signed by Mr Peter Sharp, head of Defence Corporate Support on behalf of Defence and Mr Gary Fisher, Director of Objective Corporation on behalf of the company.

The new system, based on the Objective software package, will provide Defence staff with a valuable tool to manage documents and includes integrated workflow and powerful search and retrieval facilities.

Mr Sharp states:

'The core of the system is a shift from paper to electronic records which will enable staff to undertake their own filing and recording.'

'In addition, significant economies will derive from this shift over time, both in a reduction in the storage of Defence records which currently stand at tens of shelf kilometres and in complying with the legislative framework put in place to ensure that the Commonwealth's records are managed responsibly.'

'I am proud to say that a wholly Australian-owned Small-to-Medium Enterprise (SME) was the successful tenderer. This is a very good sign for the continued expansion of Australia's hi-tech sector.'

The DRMS will be progressively rolled out to Defence users in establishments across Australia. The first DRMS users, as part of Y2K remediation and a pilot of the full rollout, went live on 6 December 1999.

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# RMAA Notes

## FIRST DRAFT: FIRST LIGHT FOR EAGERLY AWAITED ISO15489

It's out and in distribution to member organisations: the first public draft of the international standard for records management, ISO15489. It's a big step for recordkeeping, an even bigger one for records-mankind.

The 7,000-word, 20-plus page draft was completed at last November's Melbourne meeting of the ISO authoring sub-committee TC46/SC11 safely within the International Standards Organisation's 18-month time limit for completion of the so-called 'committee draft'.

The little piece of history was a 3.25-inch diskette containing the draft text handed over by SC11 editorial group leader **Barbara Reed** to the ISO Secretariat project manager **Simon Johnson** at the end of an intensive three days of final arguments, re-writes, and terminology debate. Sub-committee chairman, **David Moldrich**, congratulated delegates from the dozen or so national member bodies from Europe, North America and Australia on producing the highly prized draft and delivering it on time.

Distribution of the draft to national member bodies began in December from the Homebush, NSW, offices of Standards Australia that holds the ISO Secretariat for the RM code. Each country may ask interested organisations for comments and recommendations for improvements and must return proposals by mid-March. The editorial group will then prepare a Draft International Standard (DIS) that should be circulated to all ISO members for acceptance votes after the next SC11 meeting in Berlin in May. If member countries finally approve, the document could achieve full ISO Standard status by mid-2001. The sub-committee hopes that the process can be shortened further. As French



Left to right: **Simon Johnson, David Moldrich & Barbara Reed**

delegation head, **Philippe Barbat**, later told the RMAA-ASA seminar in Melbourne, 'the Standard will certainly make the work of French records managers and archivists easier'.

Completion of the draft in Melbourne was fitting. The proposed standard was developed from the Australian Records Management Standard AS4390, though it takes a widely differing approach. The new work comprises only the high-level principles of records management and contains little or no guidance on compliance procedures. This is quite deliberate. While the principles of records management practice are observed internationally, processes for achieving them vary widely around the globe. These application

variances, which neither can, nor need be standardised, are being identified by the SC11 sub-committee. This work is expected to be published in a Technical Report concurrent with and as a companion to ISO15489.

The proposed Standard has ten sections from its scope and terms and definitions, through requirements, policy, strategies and auditing to training. The largest section is 'Records Management Operations' which sets out principles for capture, registration, classification, retention, storage, tracking and disposition of records. One clue to the many hard-fought debates over terminology can be found in the sub-section on retention periods. The committee could not find a universally acceptable English word to describe retention, disposal or disposition so the sub-clause is entitled 'Determining how long records are required to be kept', thereby avoiding any of the words that mean different actions in different countries.

In fact, the greatest time spent debating terminology in the Standard was taken up with English usage. For example, the Standard is called simply "Records Management" and contains no reference to 'recordkeeping' because the committee found that while the two terms are interchangeable, they are not synonymous. In some English-speaking countries, 'records management' means the over-arching process and 'recordkeeping' merely the manual tasks to achieve this, while in other nations, the two terms are used in exactly the opposite senses.

Terminology for other languages - the Standard will be translated into at least French and German once it is approved - does not present such problems. As German delegate **Nils Brübach** explained later, one word or phrase will usually cover an English term and in any case, 'translation is always something of a modification, anyway'.

The draft leaves no doubt about the value of records management or whatever it is called. In the Standard's 'Requirements' section, it sets out a list of a dozen benefits and comments:

Records contain information, which is a valuable resource and an important business deliverable. Therefore, a systematic approach to the management of records is essential for organizations and society to protect and preserve records as fixed evidence of actions and as a source of information about their activities to ensure accountability to present and future stakeholders.

The drive to create the international standard began in Australia just two years after publication of AS4390. The Australian Standards authority put AS4390 up to the ISO to be fast-tracked into place as a world code. The proposal just reached the necessary 75% approval, but Australia wisely decided to create a new sub-committee under the control of the Organisation's IT Technical Committee, TC46, to study

the project. It was a decision that has benefited the global community.

The first two meetings of Sub-committee 11 were extensively taken up with fierce argument and disagreement over compliance processes. The Australian applications of records management principles, the "how do's", did not fit every nation's procedures. In some countries, the equivalent of 'record management' has not evolved. Archivists are the records managers. Some countries did not understand or like the Australian records continuum principle, preferring to stick with the familiar and practised life-cycle theorem.

The break-through came at the Paris meeting of SC11 last year when the sub-committee agreed to a German suggestion to split the work into two parts, a high-level standard of records management principles and the Technical Report.

Work on the Technical Report is lead by German delegation leader **Dr Michael Wettengel**, head of records and records management at the *Bundesarchiv*, the Federal German Archives. He heads an ad hoc group of members including two Australian delegates, **Jill Caldwell**, Assistant Director for Government Services at the National Archives of Australia, and **Mike Steemson**, chair of the New Zealand-based Standards Australia sub-committee IT/21/6. The Technical Report group is circulating interested bodies to identify further contemporary recordkeeping procedures for possible inclusion in the report.

ISO 15489 will largely supersede AS4390 outside Australia. SC11 committee chairman **David Moldrich** believes that's not something to be sad about. It has done the job it was made to do. Now Australian standards makers are beginning work on a new version of the code possibly as a much stronger directive, making more prescriptive the processes and principles set out for Australia.

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Tele: (08) 9370 6299 Fax: (08) 9370 6100  
Email: [info.scis@ecu.edu.au](mailto:info.scis@ecu.edu.au)



## FELLOW STATUS AWARDS

**A**t the National Convention in September 1999, the Records Management Association of Australia was proud to award 'Fellow' status to two outstanding members. The Fellow status is the highest professional membership level in the Association. It should be noted that only two other people have attained this status.

Applicants must have extensive industry experience in a management position, as well as showing leadership in the profession by advanced contributions to records management through lectures, articles and the submission of original research work.

### Julie Apps FRMA

Julie's experiences and contributions are as set out below in brief.

- 26 years of experience in records management
- Member status attained 1995
- RMAA Federal Director 1995 - present
- Victorian Branch Treasurer 1997 - present
- Member of RMAA Education Committee 1995 - present
- Company Secretary 1996 - 1998
- Member of records management course advisory committee, Swinburne University 1995 - 1998
- Lecturer Swinburne University 1995 - 1998
- Joint writer of modules for Classification, Indexing and Abstracting information, Swinburne University
- RMAA Victoria Representative, National Competency Standards Focus Group 1995 - 1997
- Member of Institute of Company Directors 1996 - 1998



**Julie Apps**

- Author of Training Workshop Manual version 2 (ten, one-day workshops covering all related areas of Records and Document Management) 1997 - 1998

**Congratulations Julie, well done!**

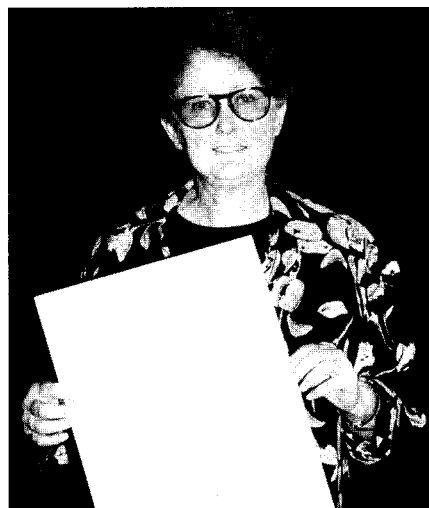
### Margaret Pember FRMA

Margaret's experiences and contributions are as set out below in brief.

- 1964 - 1983** Secondary teacher WA
- 1983 - 1989** Reference Genealogy Librarian
- 1990** Member of reference and information services team, Royal County of Berkshire UK
- 1991 - 1992** Assistant Records Manager, Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government & other matters, Perth WA
- 1992 - 1994** Records Manager, City of Perth
- 1994 - Present** University Lecturer in records management and archives, Curtin University. This also included the development of all course material
- Jan. - April 1999** Visiting lecturer in records management Temasek Polytechnic, Singapore

- Margaret has written and presented numerous papers and journal articles 1993 - 1999
- Education Subcommittee WA 1992 - 1997
- RMAA WA Branch Executive 1993 - present
- Federal Director 1998 - present
- Vice President WA Branch 1998 - present

**Congratulations Margaret, well done!**



**Margaret Pember**

# Branch Reports

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Branch breakfast meetings continue to draw excellent attendances with 90 attendees at the Matilda Bay restaurant on 17 November, to hear The Hon. Sheila McHale MLA, the new Shadow Minister for Health, give the Opposition's view on the State Records Bill 1998. Sheila was the Shadow Minister previously responsible for the State Records Bill 1998 in her role as the Shadow Minister for the Arts. Congratulations go to Mark Robert and Gail Murphy for their efforts.

The speech presented by Sheila created a high level of interest in the membership with some government departments registering full tables of 10 for the breakfast. Sheila provided us with the Opposition's view of the legislation, which was tempered by the fact that, at the time of the speech, the legislation was 'in limbo' as it had been withdrawn for revision, and no one had an indication of the changes. Sheila addressed the Bill as it stood prior to its withdrawal. The main point indicated in the speech was the Opposition's strong feelings with regard to one section of the legislation; namely, the three exempt bodies, the Water Corporation, Alinta Gas, and Western Power. The Opposition was concerned about the exemption of these three organisations from the scrutiny of the proposed Commission, and intended to draw attention to this matter when the Bill was returned to Parliament.

The Western Australian State Records Bill 1999 [note, now 1999] has had its second reading in the Legislative Assembly. The Records Management Association of Australia was mentioned in the speech, in the following context:

The Records Management Association of Australia has been anxious to ensure that membership of the State Records Commission will be at a level commensurate with the high degree of accountability and transparency that are hallmarks of the legislation, and changes have been introduced to that end.

This is seen as a plus for the Association in its interaction with the Minister for the Arts, the Hon. P G Foss, QC, B.A., LL.B, MLC. The Branch Council has yet to dissect the legislation word for word, but on a thorough reading, many, if not all of the amendments for which we have lobbied, have been addressed. On closer inspection, we may find some areas which need further attention, but to date it is felt the new legislation is to our liking.

The Western Australian Listserv is becoming more active and worthy of increased attention by all WA Branch members.

The Mentoring Group held another successful meeting at the Department of Minerals & Energy Theatre on Tuesday evening 23 November (many thanks to the DME and Jim Bonzas for the use of the venue). Rosemarie Allen of Edith Cowan University provided a presentation on Ethics, or the lack of it. The evening was well attended with group discussions about job applications, CVs, and interview techniques following the presentation.

Congratulations are also appropriate for our two new Associates, Lesley Ferguson and Josette Mathers with their status upgrade to Associate. Congratulations to both of you from the Branch Council.

An evening meeting is planned for 16 February 2000 at the DME Theatre with Barry MacKinnon of Barmac Consulting providing a presentation on the success, or otherwise, of the Branch's lobbying effort in respect to the State Records Bill 1999. Barry was previously the Leader of the Liberal Party prior to the election of Richard Court as leader and our current Premier. Barry is well credentialled as a lobbyist and I recommend your attendance at the meeting. I am certain you will not be disappointed. We have asked Jenny Edgecombe of the ASA to give a third party evaluation on the lobbying process. We are yet to have confirmation of Jenny's availability.

Thought for the Month: Taxonomy: The new buzzword in EIP (Enterprise Information Portals) promotional literature. The Encyclopedia Britannica describes the word in short as being 'in a broad sense, the science of classification.' The IT and IS side of the equation is starting to realise what the RM side of the equation has always been practising.

**Laurie Varendorff ARMA**

## **TASMANIA**

**T**he series of three free seminars on Managing Teams were all well attended, and members expressed their appreciation to the organisers.

The Branch held a successful Christmas function for the north of the State following the Local Government Chapter meeting. Tina Howard was invited to address the meeting on the National Competency Standards. Members were particularly interested in learning about the next stage of the development involving Training Packages. The Christmas function in the south was held in at the Hotel Grand Chancellor. Members enjoyed the relaxed atmosphere, and the chance to catch up with colleagues.

A joint member meeting is planned for the New Year between the ASA (Australian Society of Archivists Inc.) and the RMAA, to discuss ideas for the program for the joint National Conference to be held in Hobart in September 2001.

We have, unfortunately, lost our Treasurer, Ron Hall, who has retired. The Functions and Seminars Committee will also feel the loss of his support. Our thanks to Ron for his involvement over the years.

**Jill Saunders ARMA**

## **AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

**T**he ACT Branch Christmas Seminar was held at the Canberra Club on Thursday, 2 December 1999. Tower Software was our sponsor for the Christmas presentation. The Seminar topic was 'Discovery on Legal and Electronic Documents'. Approximately 50 members attended. David Paull of the Records Management Unit, National Library of Australia, and Brand Hoff, Managing Director, Tower Software gave presentations on the acceptability of electronic documents as evidence. It was good to catch up with those members we had not seen for a while. Thank you to those Branch members who organised the seminar: a great time was had by all.

With the commencement of the Year 2000, our efforts are now being channeled towards organising our major Seminar in March. The dates are 21-22 March 2000 and the topic is 'Electronic Business Transactions: Providing Accountability through Effective Recordkeeping'. You can find out more on the ACT website.

I would like to thank our business partners for their continued sponsorship during 1999. Our special thanks to IBM and business partners, Pickfords Records Management and Tower Software. We look forward to their continued support during the coming years.

**Stephanie M Ciempka ARMA**

## **SOUTH AUSTRALIA**

**T**he SA Branch held a demonstration morning on 25 November 1999 in conjunction with Solution6 (CVSI), who demonstrated their products DOCS RM and DOCS Open. The 20-plus people who attended found the demonstration to be extremely interesting and most worthwhile.

The traditional SA Branch Christmas Lunch was held on 8 December 1999 at a popular city venue, Dowie's Brasserie. It was a fun event designed purely for networking, and the feedback from the members who attended was generally positive. The free main course went down well, and the winners of the door prizes left happy.

The State Government Chapter is busy, gearing up for a full day seminar on 23 February 2000 entitled 'Corporate Memory: Here Today, Gone Tomorrow'. The guest speaker is John Kunar from the Delphi Group (Canada). He will present two papers 'Managing Knowledge Within the Enterprise', and 'Electronic Records Management: Conversion from Traditional to Knowledge Management'.

The only bad news for the Chapter is that Bernadette Bean resigned her post as Chapter President due to other commitments. She was a driving force and will be missed by all on the SA State Government Chapter.

**Kristen Green ARMA**



## QUEENSLAND

### Public Records Bill 1999 (Qld)

**T**he Queensland Government presented new public records legislation to the Queensland Parliament in October 1999. The new legislation was welcomed by the RMAA which had campaigned for several years for new legislation to replace the 1988 Archives Act. The new legislation contains many new provisions that will facilitate the better management of public records in the State. Key features include: linking of the management of current and non-current records within a recordkeeping framework; empowering the State Archivist to set policy; issuing standards and guidelines for managing records; requiring organisations to maintain electronic records and continue to make them available; and establishing a State Archives Board with a broadly based membership to advise the Minister. Debate on the Bill has been adjourned.

The Queensland Branch Council concluded 1999 with a successful Christmas function with 50 members and guests attending a social gathering. The Branch recently conferred Associate status on the following members: Terry Gurr,

Glynis Irwin, John Carty, Dimitra Barr, Sharyn Finlayson, Mary Brehaut, and Heather Mitchell. The Branch congratulates everyone on achieving professional membership status.

The Seminar Series continues to attract a large number of attendees. Recent seminars have covered management of current records and tools for file management. The first two seminars for 2000 will address issues relating to records management software products, and security and access.

The Branch has recently revamped its Informaa newsletter with a new layout and expanded contents.

Both the Local Government and State Government Chapters held successful meetings last year, and are gearing up for a full program of activities for 2000. The State Government Chapter was actively involved in advancing understanding of electronic records management issues, and has formed a working party to investigate the issue.

**Philip Taylor MRMA**

## NORTHERN TERRITORY

Hosting the National Convention has had a bit of a knock-on effect for records management in the Territory. Since September, three members have upgraded their status to Associate, and three more are in the pipeline - not bad when we only have nine ARMAs at the moment. A number of people have joined the Association and there have been enquiries from others. This is very encouraging for the Branch up here as this level of activity and interest is almost unprecedented.

The big question now will be 'how can membership of the RMAA benefit me or my organisation?'. I believe one of the most important points made on at least two occasions at the Darwin Convention - one that is fairly obvious but is worth repeating and which can answer this question to a large degree - is the benefit of networking.

As we all know, many people involved in records management have had the mantle thrust upon them with little or no training provided. Individuals are expected to sink or swim, and the Association can, in this analogy, act as a sort of lifeboat, ensuring that novice records managers don't drown. We can do this by providing up-to-date information on developments, provide training - either ad hoc or by assisting with gaining formal qualifications from institutions providing RM-related courses. And informal guidance can always be sought from the local Branch which comprises individuals who collectively have a wealth of experience (perhaps the only wealth records managers will ever have!) which is able to be drawn upon by those seeking to further their knowledge in an ever-challenging profession.

**Barry Garside ARMA**

## **NEW SOUTH WALES**

It's the year 2000. By the time you read this journal the Y2K bug will be behind us (except for a possible glitch on 29 February) and in NSW we are looking forward to a very busy year. Our aim is to continue the busy program we have developed as well as put on the National Convention.

We are continuing our planning for the 2000 Convention (3 - 6 December at Darling Harbour). Work on drafting a program is at a very advanced stage, and we are focusing on securing our sponsors. It is shaping up to be a very stimulating and worthwhile conference as we look at the recordkeeping profession moving into the 21st Century, with the usual chances to relax as well.

Our first members' meeting in 2000 is on Auditing (7 February), with the March meeting (14 March) on Professional Development. The April meeting (11 April) is to be on Tender Preparation and Evaluation, and on 9 May we have our annual Technology Seminar. To keep up to date, check our pages on the RMAA Web page <[www.rmaa.com.au](http://www.rmaa.com.au)>.

Our November Industry Showcase proved very popular and very successful for both exhibitors and attendees. Our Branch Christmas Party on the South Steyne, a former Sydney Harbour ferry now docked at Darling Harbour, was excellent. A lot of fun and a good time of relaxing and getting to know each other. The NSW Branch of IIM joined with us this year to celebrate. My thanks to Sue Frost and her Events Team for all their hard work.

The Branch's involvement with TAFE in NSW with the State Records Office in developing new courses in records management was very successful. The courses should have

been approved by the time you read this article. The courses were built around AS4390 and the Archives and Records Competency Standards. Thanks to Stephen Smith and his work on Education.

Eddis Linton's lifetime achievement award was presented to him at the October meeting. It was an honour to present him with the award for his efforts over so many years.

My reports on Technology Issues will, from the start of 2000, no longer appear in the Branch Newsletter as that moves to be more a newsletter. The reports will continue to be available via email and on the RMAA Web page. If current readers do not have access to such facilities, can they please let me know as soon as possible so alternatives can be considered? My thanks to Janet Knight who checks the reports before they are sent out, and to Kay Williams who checks the newsletters before they go off to be printed.

The Local Government Chapter continues to flourish under Chris Fripp and other very dedicated people. As a Branch we have been considering opening, or to be more accurate re-opening, a Chapter in the Hunter area. More about this in due course.

My thanks to my fellow Councillors who help make the work easier, and to the membership and other interested people who by their involvement continue to encourage and enthuse us. This New Year is shaping as a very busy one with our regular activities and as we accelerate towards the Convention. We trust it will be a worthwhile one for the members to whom we are responsible.

**Geoff Smith ARMA**

## **VICTORIA**

In the second half of the year, Anne Cornish and her Committee of representatives from the Victoria Branch, the Australian Society of Archivists Inc., and the Public Record Office, Victoria worked diligently to organise the Archives and Records Management Week.

The inaugural event took place in Melbourne between 8-12 November 1999. I am pleased to report that the proceedings were such a success that a similar event is likely to take place in 2000. A formal overview of the weeklong activities (including Hamer Awards, Seminar and Career Day, Local Government Chapter) will be circulated to members of the RMAA and ASA early in the New Year.

Volunteers who give up their precious time to be an active member of the Branch are hard to come by. Therefore, it is with regret that Victoria loses the valuable contribution given by Peter Clarke, especially in the lead-up to the ARM Week. Peter has accepted a new position in another industry, and we wish him well.

On that note, I would like to thank all Branch Councillors for their time and input, and members for their support.

**Sandra Pickett ARMA**

# Coordinator Reports

## MEMBERSHIP AND STATUS REPORT

**O**ur membership office has been working full time now for five months. The hours are 8.30 am to 12.30 pm and 1.30 pm to 5.00 pm (EST) Monday to Friday. If you have a question regarding membership, change of details, a change of employment, please call Cathy or Sharon on our free call number 1800 242 611, or e-mail to [rmaasec@rmaa.com.au](mailto:rmaasec@rmaa.com.au). The membership database can only be kept up-to-date if you let us know of any changes.

The membership office is presently updating addresses, phone numbers and e-mail addresses. To assist in this process, could you please e-mail any changes or updates before the end of March. As part of the review and updates, Cathy and Sharon have been contacting corporate members and updating the nominees. As a result, membership numbers have grown from new nominees as well as new members through various membership drives.

New members since 1 July 1999

158

Total Membership as at 31 December 1999

3528

Individual Branch Membership Numbers

as at 31 December 1999

1000  
900  
800  
700  
600  
500  
400  
300  
200  
100  
0

ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	INT.NAT.
328	882	670	550	293	474	161	114	44

Total Professional Members as at 31 December 1999  
298

Individual Branch Professional Member Numbers  
as at 31 December 1999

100  
90  
80  
70  
60  
50  
40  
30  
20  
10  
0

ACT	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	INT.NAT.
20	66	46	61	26	27	33	18	1

This quarter, the Membership and Status Committee has received one application for upgrade to Member status. This is under consideration at the moment. Whilst procedures for upgrading members to the Associate status have been reviewed and updated, there are some changes that need to be amended for the upgrade to Fellow status. The Membership and Status Committee is working on this in addition to looking at the long term objective of setting up Certified Records Manager (CRM) certification procedures.

The CRM program also fits very well into the direction of competency standards and various training packages. The committee believes that attaining certification status will result in enhanced professionalism and personal growth. The records and information management knowledge gained through the certification process and the improved attitude of self-esteem and confidence will result in CRMs obtaining increased job responsibility with commensurate salary benefits.

**Chris Fripp MRMA, MAICD**

## EDUCATION REPORT

The main education activity in recent months has been the project undertaken by Business Services Training (BST) in consultation with the RMAA, ASA and industry representatives. This project is to review and enhance the 1997 endorsed Records Management & Archives Competency Standards for inclusion in the Business Services Training Package.

BST, the National Industry Training Advisory Body for Business Services, has been funded by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to develop the first stage of the Business Services Training Package. The package should be ready for endorsement by 30 September 2000.

The Records Management & Archives Competency Standards were endorsed in 1997, and have been widely used by industry since that time. In order for them to be included in the Business Services Training Package, they must be:

- reviewed and enhanced to meet ANTA's Process for Training Package development;
- packaged and aligned to the Australian Qualifications Framework, including the identification of appropriate qualifications at various levels, and development of customisation guidelines; and

- analysed to identify appropriate common units to be included in the Business Services Training Package.

Following an analysis of the feedback received from the survey recently conducted by BST, the Standards will be redrafted in line with the BST format. Focus groups will meet in all States and Territories in April 2000 to provide comment on the redrafted units, identify core competencies, and to review and comment on sample unit packaging for customised application.

If you would like to take part in a focus group contact Business Services Training Australia, to register your interest and obtain more details. BST's contact details are as follows:

BST, Suite11C, Como Centre, 299 Toorak Rd,  
South Yarra, Victoria 3142  
E-mail: [admin@bsitab.org](mailto:admin@bsitab.org)

Visit the RMAA website <[www.rmaa.com.au](http://www.rmaa.com.au)> for more details about the Records and Archives Competency Standards.

**Tina Howard ARMA**

## PRODUCT guide

**Yes, I would like to know more about the products offered by the following companies appearing in *INFORMAA Quarterly* - Volume 16, Number 1. (Please Tick)**

- ☐ Inside Front - Objective Corporation (formerly CompuTechnics)
- ☐ Page 4 - TAB Datafile
- ☐ Page 7 - Formfile
- ☐ Page 14 - Qualified Records People
- ☐ Page 16 - Sydney Institute of Technology
- ☐ Page 17 - Curtin University
- ☐ Page 19 - Triad Data Magic
- ☐ Centre - Ebco
- ☐ Page 28 - Pickfords
- ☐ Page 30 - Microsystems
- ☐ Page 33 - Gold Coast City Council
- ☐ Page 34 - Hummingbird (formerly PC Docs)
- ☐ Page 37 - Edith Cowan University
- ☐ Inside Back - Tower Software
- ☐ Back Cover - GMB Research & Development

**Name**

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**Company**

**Type of Business**

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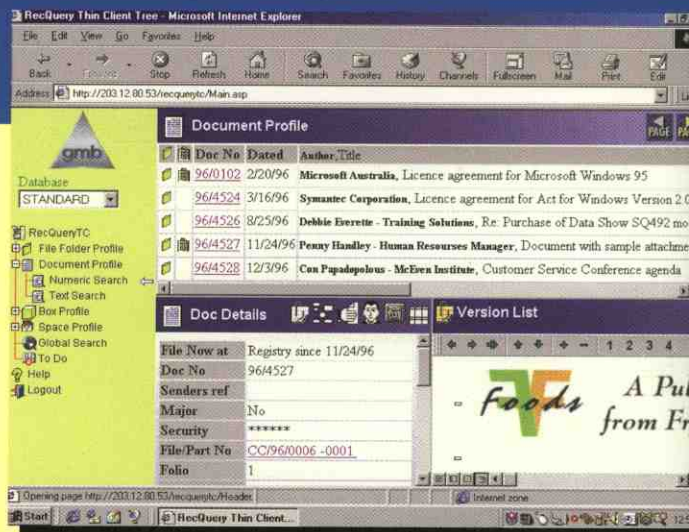
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