

Local Govt records

LAA NSW BRANCH JOINED WITH THE SYDNEY Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists to conduct a seminar on 16 October at History House on 'Local Government records in NSW: issues of control, management, preservation and use'.

Patricia Ward led the convening committee drawn from both organisations. At the seminar were about 50 people--librarians, archivists, historians and local government officers.

The keynote of the seminar was the problem of conserving the records of local government. Ordinance 1, made under the 1919 Act, provides for the permanent retention of only a limited range of documents. The Archives Act does not cover local government bodies; special action would be required to bring councils under the Act. The holdings of councils vary greatly--the common factor is that none, save Sydney City, employs an archivist.

Speaker after speaker stressed the importance of municipal and shire records for historical research. Academic historians are showing a growing concern for local history, as seen in the work of the Sydney History Group. District historical societies are proliferating at a great rate: council records are a major element in their research.

It was agreed, however, that local government records exist for the purposes of the record-making body. Councils have many good reasons to consult their files and ought, therefore, to keep them intact and in working order. Improved records management methods (and concomitant training) can be useful; even more so is the sensitivity of council officers to the value of their material and the need to look after it.

Local government is a public activity and the current legislation allows for public access to some records. A large degree of retention raises difficulties about confidentiality, limitations on availability, damage to reputation and even the use of Council files against the Council itself.

Being practical people, those at the seminar were alert to pragmatic issues. Librarians are de facto custodians of Council material in many regions and are likely to remain so. Collegiate institutions are becoming repositories for the records of municipalities and shires (some now defunct through amalgamation)--grouping into regional archives has management and economic advantages. The seminar understood this but wondered whether in situ retention might not be better.

Over all the discussions were the consciousness of growing community involvement. Local government was seen to be a focus of the community, making records for the community--and the community has many sides. Its schools contain scholars with an expanding involvement in local history who will not be satisfied simply with the artifacts in museums and books in the library. Its citizens are often conscious of conservation, as are some councils, and much information about the heritage is stored in local government records. These records tell of community action and are a part of the community.

There was nothing vague about the seminar. It got down to basics while being conscious of short-term problems. It called for a wider definition of records to be retained, the preservation of the integrity of collections and the employment of trained archivists. It did so in a spirit of brisk practicality and it set up machinery to further its objectives.

K.J. Cable, President,
Royal Australian Historical Society

John Jack, Associate Professor, Dept of History, Sydney University, is heading a committee of 12 who are following up the recommendations made at the seminar.

Selected papers from the seminar and the practical workshop which preceded it, will be published. Enquiries to Patricia Ward, Lyons Street, Dover Heights, NSW 2030. Telephone: (02) 30 6998 or 371 7394 (ah)

'Extraordinary priorities'

THE SPENDING OF \$3000 ON SPORTING equipment for federal MPs has been slammed as 'unjustifiable' at a time when the outlay on books for the Parliamentary Library has been slashed almost in half.

A senate committee investigating proposed parliamentary spending found \$3000 had been spent on 'tennis racquets, tennis balls, squash balls, sandshoes, volley ball equipment'.

At the same time, the Parliamentary Library had had its book vote cut by 46 percent--from \$74,948 to \$40,000.

The committee, chaired by Senator Peter Rae (Lib, Tas), urged the Senate to approve an inquiry into the operations of the Joint House Department, which provides basic 'housekeeping' services for Parliament.

In its report, the committee said it was puzzled by the 'extraordinary priorities' which led the Joint House Department to spend \$15,800 on new uniforms for security attendants, the 'unjustifiable' \$3000 on sporting equipment and \$116,400 on cleaning contracts for parliamentary annexe buildings.

This spending has to be seen in context. (From The Australian, 16 October 1981).

Hope for a new State Library?

DOUGLAS SAVIGE, Systems Librarian, State Library of Victoria, has left on an official study tour of library buildings and related topics in Europe and North America. The trip, approved by the Minister for the Arts and the Premier, will last for eight weeks. Its basic purpose is to gather ideas and information to be used in planning the new State Library building.

Arrangements have been made for Mr Savage to participate in the British Council's course on library planning and design. Arrangements have also been made for Douglas to have discussion sessions with world-famous library designers Keyes Metcalf, Philip McNiff (Boston) and Ellsworth Mason (Denver).

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HAPPENINGS

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New South Wales

November 11 LAA NSW Branch/New England Regional Group MEETING 'The LAA - its value for the country-based librarian' 8pm WESTERN COMMON ROOM, UNION BLDG, UNI OF NEW ENGLAND, ARMIDALE. Speaker: Susan Acutt (LAA Exec Director). Contact: Karl Schmude (067)72 2911 ext 2787.

December 1 LAA Cataloguers Section NSW Group ANNUAL DINNER 6 for 6.30pm 'Reminiscences of a cataloguer' RESTAURANT LEVEL 3, FLYING ANGEL HOUSE, 11 MACQUARIE PLACE. Cost: \$20 per head. Speaker: Jean Arnott, former Head Cataloguer, SLNSW. RSVP with cheque by 20 November to Miss M. Dowd, Cataloguing Dept, SLNSW, Macquarie St, Sydney. Enquiries to Dorothy Ramsay or M. Dowd (02)221 1388 ext 221.

December 3-4 Kuring-gai CAE School of Library and Information Studies/I.P. Sharp & Assoc Pty Ltd TWO-DAY PROGRAM 'Accessing Australian economic data'. Fee: \$140. Contact: Ann Enderby, Kuring-gai CAE (02)467 9261. See ad elsewhere in this issue.

December 5 Centre for Library Systems, Kuring-gai CAE ONE-DAY COURSE 'Microcomputer systems and libraries' See elsewhere in this issue for more information.

South Australia

November 10 LAA Public Libraries Section SA Group DINNER 'Public libraries and multiculturalism in Australia' 7 for 7.30pm GERMAN 'CLUB', 223 FLINDERS ST. Guest speaker: Al Grassby. Cost: \$14 per head. Contact: Brian Brandenburg (08)255 2744 or Margaret Sandstrom (08)332 8266.

November 11 LAA Cataloguers Section SA Group AGM & DINNER 'The Federal Executive: past activities and future prospects' 7.30pm NORTH-SOUTH DINING ROOM, UNION COMPLEX, ADELAIDE UNI. Speaker: Bob Langker (retiring Federal President of Cataloguers Section). Contact: Peter Howarth (08)275 2083 or Sandy Gray (08)260 2055 ext 2119.

November 15 LAA Public Libraries Section SA Group AGM 1pm RYMILL PARK. Bring your own meat, drinks, children, dogs, kites, friends and have a good time. Everyone welcome. Contact: Helen Nosworthy (08)258 0818.

November 16 LAA SA Branch AGM 6pm PUBLIC LIBRARIES DIVISION, 121 THE PARADE, NORWOOD. Wine and cheese. Contact: Phillipa Middleton (08)227 4299.

November 26 LAA School Libraries Section SA Group/RCTA/SMART JOINT MEETING.

November 27 LAA UCLS SA Group 6.30pm TOUR OF FLINDERS UNI LIBRARY. 7.30pm AGM. STAFF CLUB. 8pm DINNER. Cost: \$15. Cheques by 20 November to Stephen Beaumont, Barr Smith Library, Adelaide University.

Tasmania

November 16 LAA Tas Branch MEETING 8pm ARTS EXTENSION TEA ROOM, UNI OF TAS 'The role of State Libraries in the Australian library network with particular reference to the proposed Australian Libraries Information Council' Speaker: Laurie Brown (State Librarian). Contact: Twila Herr (002)20 2093.

December 1 LAA Special Libraries Section Tas Group FIRST MEETING to elect executive and representatives to be on Tas Branch Council. 7.30pm TRAINING OFFICE, STATE LIBRARY OF TAS. Wine and cheese after meeting. All welcome. Contact: Mark Bennett (002)30 4012.

December 7-8 Government Publications SEMINAR 8pm AUDITORIUM, STATE LIBRARY OF TAS. Seminar leader: Mike Harrington. Contact: Sue Craig (002)30 2404.

December 8 LAA Tas Branch AGM 5.30pm STAFF CENTRE, STATE LIBRARY OF TAS. Contact: Twila Herr (002)20 2093.

December 12 LAA Tas Branch CHRISTMAS BARBECUE 12noon TOLOSA ST. RESERVOR RESERVE, GLENORCHY. Self catering. Contact: Bert Elson (002)30 3477.

Victoria

November 9 AVOCADO (Vic AUSINET Users Group) GENERAL MEETING 6 for 6.30pm BASEMENT SEMINAR ROOM, BAILLIEU LIBRARY, MELB UNI. Enquiries: Cathy Wherry (03)699 1022.

December 8 LAA UCLS Vic Group/FLASH Reference Interest Group (Vic) JOINT MEETING 'User education: future trends' 6pm MONASH UNIVERSITY, ROTUNDA LECTURE THEATRE 3. Speaker: Nancy Fjallibrant (Chalmers University, Sweden). Followed by CHRISTMAS PARTY in MAIN LIBRARY. RSVP to Vivien Nash (03)541 2685 or (03)541 2669 by 27 November.

December 11 Vic Assoc of Technical College Librarians (VATCL) ONE-DAY SEMINAR 'TAFE - finding information in the 80s' 8.45am-4pm STATE COLLEGE OF VICTORIA AT HAWTHORN, NEW LECTURE THEATRE (GREEN) E218. Registration fee: \$5. Open to ALL TAFE college library staff. Cheques to Secretary, VATCL, c/o William Angliss College, 555 La Trobe St, Melbourne. Applications close 30 November. Enquiries: Don Ruddick (03)67 7321.

November 17 Australian Society of Indexers AGM 8pm CSIRO, 314 ALBERT ST, E MELB, 3rd FLOOR CONF ROOM. Stephen Lansdown (specialist historical publisher and indexer) will give a talk entitled 'It's on the cards' (a discussion on computer-assisted indexing using personal microcomputer). Contact: Jennifer Challis (03) 669 9836. All welcome.

Plans underway for NT University

RON DAVIS, Director of Northern Territory Library Service has also been appointed to the position of Planning Librarian for the University of the Northern Territory.

Although the Tertiary Education Commission has refused to fund the proposed University of the Northern Territory during the next triennium the Northern Territory Government has resolved to continue the planning of a university for the Northern Territory.

It has been decided that the NT State Reference Library and the University Library will be combined. This will be a unique example of a joint-use library in Australia.