

Preservation microfilming

Jan Lyall and Katy Bellingham, of NLA's National Preservation Office are convinced it has a future

Preservation microfilming: does it have a future? was the title of the National Preservation Office's first national conference and associated workshops held a few weeks ago at the State Library of South Australia. The delegates replied to this question with a resounding 'yes!' Preservation microfilming will be vital, especially in a climate where imaging technology is changing so rapidly.

The conference brought together about ninety representatives of the library, archives and records management communities, from the commercial sector and from community groups. Most were from Australia, but some came from New Zealand, Indonesia and Singapore.

Two high-profile international speakers gave keynote papers: Ralph Manning of the National Library of Canada described the Canadian Cooperative Preservation Microfilming Project, and Anne Kenney of Cornell University anticipated a digital future with her paper entitled *From analog to digital: preservation reformatting in a changing world*.

Speakers compared national and international developments, looked at different approaches to microfilm production among collecting institutions and organisations, and examined case studies such as the mammoth war diaries project at the Australian War Memorial. They also looked at new technologies and other key issues and perspectives. There was consensus that it is still essential to create eye-readable material to ensure the long-term survival of significant documentary materials.

A number of panel discussions led to conference resolutions to encourage cooperation and to disseminate information about microfilming practices, projects and standards. Among these were agreements to produce national guidelines for preservation microfilming, to develop training packages, to identify appropriate sites for the storage of preservation masters, and to exchange information on the COLLIBS network (an

electronic network of collection development librarians in Australia), copyright issues, an infrastructure to support a national preservation strategy, and bibliographic control.

Pre- and post-conference workshops examined, respectively, basic considerations in filming for local history and deciding best practice for producing microfilm.

The National Preservation Office is now busy compiling the conference proceedings, to be published later this year. Contact Katy if you would like to buy these proceedings.

The conference should stimulate interest in cooperative microfilming projects with the NLA which has a cooperative micro-

filming policy and funds earmarked for such projects. For information contact Lawrie Salter, at NLA on (06) 262 1570.

The National Preservation Office's next annual conference will be in November 1995 on *Preservation of electronic media & electronic media for preservation*—a critical issue in many sectors.

For information about these conferences contact Katy Bellingham, National Preservation Office, NLA, Canberra ACT 2600; fax (06) 273 4493, email kbelling@nla.gov.au. To subscribe to the network send an e-mail message to listserv@is.su.edu.au in the form of subscribe collibs your name (eg, subscribe collibs jan lyall). ■

The NLA policy on preservation microfilming

There are many benefits from taking a cooperative approach: it is better than having different institutions filming the same material twice, it allows for development of national priorities and copying from the most complete and legible sets available, and encourages use of national standards and consistent procedures. It also offers access to wider competition between contractors and better marketing of saleable products such as microform or CDs.

The NLA has recently developed guidelines for its involvement in cooperative preservation microfilming projects, aiming to:

- make clear the Library's commitment to taking action with others to preserve the distributed national collection;
- invite proposals for joint action; and
- help build common expectations of how cooperative projects should be managed.

Under the National Plan for Australian Newspapers (NPLAN) a high priority is currently given to filming newspapers in cooperation with State Libraries. Emphasis in the National Library's policy is given to newspapers which are at least 30 years old, as this material is expected to be most at risk. Priorities are based on the importance of the material and the urgency of the threats to which it is exposed. These threats can include rarity, as well as the level and kind of use, the physical and chemical condition of the paper and the way it is stored. These criteria do not apply only to newspapers, as the policy is intended to be used for cooperative action for a wide range of documentary materials.

Although the principal focus of the policy is Australian material of national significance, material from the region (East and SE Asia and the Pacific) which is unique and at risk may also be considered.

Contributions to a project can include funding, technical expertise, and labour in preparing and checking material. Any revenue generated from sale of copies is shared on a pre-arranged basis reflecting the level of contributions.

For further information about the policy or program, contact Colin Webb or Lawrie Salter at the National Preservation Office, NLA. ■