

Promoting a professional identity

Katherine Dan, Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated

What organisation provides a network for over 800 people throughout Australia working with government records, local history collections, manuscripts, or as records management consultants? The Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated. The Society was formed in 1975 with a core of members from the Archives Section of the (then) Library Association of Australia. It continues to provide a forum for the archival profession but includes members who cross some of the boundaries within the information sector, drawing from the records management and library fields as well as archivists. Members work in a variety of settings including business, government, the academic sector, museums, schools, religious organisations and non-profit societies or organisations.

The Australian Society of Archivists is a national organisation with branches or groups which meet in all States and Territories. Branches also run work-

shops for members and those outside the Society who may wish to know more about the management of archives or issues of concern to archivists.

Special interest groups provide another opportunity for members to network in areas of particular concern. These groups often focus on the needs of those working in a particular setting whether it be in schools or universities and colleges. Interested members also discuss through newsletters the difficulties and strategies in dealing with preservation of electronic records or the issues for collecting archives in acquisition of personal papers or business records. The archives of science, medicine and technology are the focus for some members. A group has recently been formed to consider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander issues and archives.

Binding the various groups together is the concern to preserve evidence.

Last year the Society's national council endorsed an 'archivist's mission statement' which was widely circulated and discussed within the profession. The statement is designed to convey to those outside the profession an idea of what all archivists hold in common. Archivists ensure that records which have value as authentic evidence of administrative, corporate, cultural and intellectual activity are made, kept and used. The work of archivists is vital for ensuring organisational efficiency and accountability and for understanding of Australian life through the management and retention of its personal, corporate and social memory.

Members keep in touch through the *Bulletin* published six times a year and the Society's journal *Archives and Manuscripts* published twice yearly. The Society has also had an active publishing program. *Keeping archives* (now in its second edition) has become a *de facto* textbook for many archives courses and a bible for archival practitioners. It has been well received internationally and is in use in several overseas educational programs. More specialised publications have covered issues of the moment such as *Privacy versus Access* and *Ethics, Lies and Archives*. *The directory of archives in Australia*, a directory of archives and manuscript repositories published by the Society in 1992 is now also a venture in electronic publishing and can be found at <http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/asa/directory/>. Currently in production is an introductory text on the issues for archivists in dealing with electronic records, an area of significant contemporary debate.

To find out more about the Australian Society of Archivists, you can visit their Web site which gives general information about the Society at http://www.aa.gov.au/AA_WWW/ProAssn/ASA/ASA.html or get in touch with the membership services officer, Mark Stevens, on (02) 9700 9233 or fax (02) 9700 9047. ■

New web publication

Katherine Dan, Australian Society of Archivists

In 1992 the Australian Society of Archivists published the *Directory of archives in Australia*, a useful guide to the location and holdings of archival repositories in Australia. The president of the Society is pleased to announce that the World Wide Web edition of the directory is now ready to explore!

The *Directory of archives in Australia* is available on the Web at <http://www.asap.unimelb.edu.au/asa/directory/>

You will find over four-hundred-and-fifty entries listing contact de-

tails, access conditions, facilities, acquisition focus, major holdings and more, or repositories around the country — three-hundred entries have been updated from the 1992 edition. You can browse the directory either alphabetically or by location, or you can search by concept/keyword, or limit your search to 'repository name', 'acquisition focus', and 'major holdings'. There is also a totally new section providing quick access to Australian archival resources on the world wide web and a list of all repositories with world wide web pages. ■