

# 30 years on – Australian Society of Archivists

The Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) celebrated its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary in April. Prior to the ASA's formation in 1975, archivists participated in the Archives Section of the Library Association of Australia. However, the Archives Section had never enjoyed the membership of most archivists, nor had it been truly accepted as the professional body for archivists.

Robert Sharman, editor of the journal *Archives and Manuscripts*, has been credited with the impetus to establish a professional association for archivists. In 1973, he warned subscribers and readers of the demise of *Archives and Manuscripts*, unless an organisation was established to take responsibility for and manage the journal (Michael Saclier, 'The first five years', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol 8, No 1, June 1980, p 4).

A steering committee was established in 1973 to investigate the feasibility of forming an association of archivists and to work towards its formation. Reading the newsletters thirty years later provides a fascinating insight into the foundation of the Society, the debates and discussion on the finer points of the draft constitution, and the level of consultation within the profession at the time.

Turning thirty has provided an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the ASA to date. It is no small achievement that the association has survived and prospered for thirty years in order to represent the interests of our 800 members. The ASA is a small association compared with many professional associations, but we ensure that the interests and concerns of archivists are represented in many forums.

Another major achievement is the sense of community and professionalism that the ASA has fostered. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the ASA is part of and fosters an active archival and recordkeeping community, with a network of branches around the country and a range of special

interest groups. These groups provide opportunities for members to meet, share their knowledge and experiences, and to network. The Society has also fostered professionalism through its publishing program, regular conferences, seminars and workshops. A significant event this year is our first joint conference with ARANZ (Archives and Records Association of New Zealand) in October.

But 2005 is not just the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASA, it is also the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the journal *Archives and Manuscripts*. From its first issue in November 1955 until 1975, *Archives and Manuscripts* was published by the Library Association of Australia, before being handed over to the newly formed ASA. The ASA would like to record its thanks to ALIA for its support of the journal and of the Archives Section.

In reflecting on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ASA, I also take the opportunity to look to the future. The ASA conducted a membership survey in late 2003, which has provided much-needed data for informing the Society's future directions and the needs of members. While it is unlikely that the ASA will be taking up radically new directions over the next thirty years, there are a number of key strategies we will be pursuing, including education and advocacy.

Like ALIA, the ASA has focused recent attention on professional education and development and on furthering educational opportunities. Collaboration with ALIA on education issues has already commenced. ALIA and ASA members are able to participate in and attend professional development workshops and events held by both associations. Another area of potential collaboration is advocacy to advance the professions that comprise the information sector. The next 30 years will hold many challenges but the outlook is positive.

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