

Historical Society of Beaudesert (Qld) (Special) Library

I retired from the Queensland Dept of Primary Industries 'special' library in 2000 due to ill health, and in 2008 I commenced work as a volunteer librarian at the Historical Society of Beaudesert.

When I arrived at the Society the two main sources of information were contained in two alphabetically self-indexing filing cabinets, the first containing folders of family names and the second containing folders of subjects, which were referred to as the "Archives". These two archives files consisted mainly of newspaper clippings, ephemera, and pamphlets. The Society also has about a dozen organisational archives, in the traditional sense of the word.

Traditionally, the historical information service was based on the archives and the personal memories of volunteers who were long term residents. Some of the research assistants were also active in the Genealogical Society of Queensland Beaudesert Branch. While I had lived in the district as a teenager, my personal experiential knowledge was very scant. When I started work at the Society I had no idea of the big picture of the resource documents within the Museum, and it was only by fossicking that I gradually improved my knowledge of the collection. Also, until recently, there was no database software I could use to upload a catalogue into. It was only in the last six months that a kind commercial benefactor provided the funds to purchase MOSAIC software.

So in September 2008 I started cataloguing the books and pamphlets I could find into a Microsoft Word-based alphabetical format. As this approach would probably be seen as antediluvian by most librarians, my approach may be unique.

There are several types of historical books of use as local history resources: district histories, family histories, church

histories, school histories, and also occasionally, thematic histories. Nearly all of these have no index, and this is compounded by the fact that there are relatively few of them available. Consequentially my catalogue is that it incorporates a reasonable number of these histories, exhaustively indexed. Currently our catalogue contains about 25 000 subject and name access points.

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As we are an historical society, rather than a genealogical society, our emphasis is not on genealogical tables, but the stories of individuals and society, and at the very least, data which identifies individuals or families within our district. Harvesting of names is therefore important.

Beaudesert is the administrative centre of the local government Scenic Rim Region, and there are about eight museums within this region which supply similar kinds of

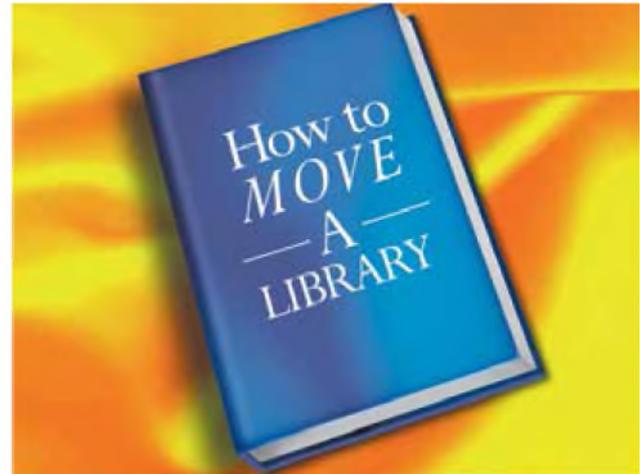
historical information about their respective districts. Library and information professionals have traditionally constructed union catalogues of their holdings to increase the available information to clients, and this is what I would like to see in the Scenic Rim Region, though this kind of cooperation is probably at arm's length from the separate societies which tend to compete for clients.

A depressing fact of work in this informational environment is that there are quite a number of amateur local historians who see the society as a source of information rather than a depository of research. However, a significantly rewarding aspect of our service is working with the Scenic Rim regional public library service, which houses an important local history collection.

Finally I would like to comment on the terms 'culture' and 'heritage' which are currently what might be called 'hurrah' words in a milieu which places little esteem on the word 'history' and its methodology. This creates a difficulty for those brought up to appreciate the humanities.

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