

Institutionalising the archival document: A republishing

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Prescript

This article follows up on an editorial suggestion to republish an article first presented in 1993 as 'Institutionalizing the Archival Document - Some Theoretical Perspectives on Terry Eastwood's Challenge' in Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward, *Archival Documents: Providing Accountability through Recordkeeping*, Ancora Press, Melbourne, 1993, p.41-54. I was surprised by the suggestion, but it was sent out to reviewers who supported republishing because of the way the item critiques the records life cycle concept.

The book in which this item appeared was built out of the work of staff, students and visitors during a course run at Monash University. That course addressed the call by Canadian archivist Terry Eastwood at the Australian Society of Archivists Conference a few years earlier for archivists to 'spirit an understanding of democratic accountability

and continuity' into our organisations and communities.¹ Eastwood in making that call was building out from the traditional role of archives as bastions of legal, administrative and historical records whereas my response is one of a cluster of articles in the early to mid 1990's which can be labelled as post-custodial, questioning the fortress view of archival purpose in its purely physical form and calling for logical means of re-expressing that purpose.

The article itself can also be read as part of the development in Australia of records continuum theory, although it does not mention the term and was written before I or anyone else had made any attempt to explore continuum concepts in anything other than an elementary pre-theoretical form. That pre-theoretical form was described by Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott in the book *The Records Continuum* (1994) as an 'engagement with records through the continuum of creation and use, particularly in the management of government records.'² From that engagement a number of writers including myself have begun to write theory, but the item that follows is only a pre-cursor. It *engages* with the continuum of creation and use of particular objects in lifespan fashion, whereas more theoretical strands engage with relationships between recordkeeping and archiving processes as a way of viewing archival formative actions and subsequent formations. They also consciously deal with any form

¹¹ A reprint of one of Terry Eastwood's two papers at the conference, preceded mine in the book and my paper makes several cross references to it. (Eastwood, Terence M. 'Reflections on the Development of Archives in Canada and Australia', in McKemmish, Sue and Upward, Frank, *Archival Documents: Providing Accountability through Recordkeeping*, Melbourne, Ancora Press, 1993, pp. 27-40, ISSN 1036-2037.)

² McKemmish, Sue and Piggott, Michael, *The Records Continuum*, Ian Maclean and Australian Archives first fifty years, Melbourne, Ancora Press in association with Australian Archives, 1994, introduction, p. x, ISBN 0-868682-019-X.

of recorded information.

The point that the following re-print does not contain anything that could be considered as authentic continuum theorising is worth making because there is a tendency to see continuum theory in terms of a debate with the life cycle concept. The latter concept can in fact be challenged simply by switching from a cyclical to a lifespan metaphor, as I do in what follows using a few of the many useful topologies present in the writing of English sociologist, Anthony Giddens. [Topologies are constant views of phenomenon that can be used for analyses of different times and/or places either in stand-alone or in comparative fashion.] Giddens was one of the first sociologists to resolutely replace life cycle conceptualizations in his discipline with a less metaphorically slanted lifespan view. He could still discuss in generalising fashion social formations where life choices are restricted and recursive through generations, but would not have to resort to countless exception statements when dealing with the much more complex choices and events associated with the life of individuals in late industrial and post-industrial societies.³

The need to move from life cycle to life span topologies in the archival profession was, I would contend, just as great as it was in

³ This does not mean that there is still not a topographical use for the concept. There are past places and times where it was part of the discourse, and part of the management process and sometimes even today it is used as term that really only means 'project management'. There are, however, many better project management techniques available than delusional 'cyclical' ones that can more effectively cater for the different trajectories in space or time that follow decisions that are made within the lifespan of an object.

sociology. In modern environments the lifespan options for information objects are diverse, but rather than readily accepting this and adopting appropriate means of management for the many different complex cases that exist we clung to a metaphor from a period of historical positivism when things were often seen in cyclical terms. The life cycle concept had lost its constancy in the face of the many different life choices (including neglect of the choices) that can affect the management of archival documents, and my original argument on this is presented in what follows.

Introduction: the quest for re-signification

In Terry Eastwood's paper coherence is given to his argument by a narrowing of his focus to the conflict between ideas and reality, deliberately avoiding one of the realities he identifies, which is that "the ideas held at any given time about archives are surely but a reflection of wider currents in intellectual history". Eastwood's paper was delivered in 1989 before the trickle of non-custodial archival literature in North America started to become a deluge, backed up by an embryonic set of new methodologies.⁴ Will these developments help us in meeting the challenge Eastwood sets at the end of his paper? Are they in tune with ideas outside the profession?

As Eastwood notes, an approach based on intellectual trends runs the risk of being general and vapid. Not to run that risk, however, is to remain boxed up within professional thought, relying on reason to achieve one's task of spiriting an understanding of the role of archival documents, and professional reason may not be enough to hold back

⁴ See, for example, *Archivaria* 33 and 34, and *American Archivist* under the editorship of Richard Cox, and note 5 below.

the worst aspects of the 'post-literate' culture that is taking shape around us and dominating resource allocation.

At the risk of being vapid, this paper will pick up on the interest in the structuration theory of the sociologist, Anthony Giddens, expressed by a Canadian archivist, Richard Brown.⁵ The publication in 1984 of Anthony Giddens' book, *The Constitution of Society*, was a high-point in the codification of European structuration theory. While Giddens until recently has been as difficult for an outsider to read as other structuralists, the codification of his thought in short tables and charts makes his writing more accessible for the 'double hermeneutic' of re-interpreting the meaning of what he says in a different context.⁶

Giddens describes structuration as 'an unlovely term' concerned with 'conditions governing the continuity of transmutation of structures and therefore the reproduction of social systems'. If one is seeking a one word synonym for the concern of structuration theory it would probably be empowerment, which could itself be considered to be

⁵ Terry Cook acknowledges Brown's interest and points to some of the theory of Anthony Giddens in 'Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal' in Barbara L. Craig (ed.), *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, Association of Canadian Archivists, Ottawa, 1992, endnote 29.

⁶ Anthony Giddens, *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration*, Cambridge, 1984. The reference to the 'double hermeneutic' is an acknowledgment that in this paper Giddens' carefully developed concepts are used for my purposes, and with different meanings placed on to them. This is a process Giddens understands. It is readily incorporated within his theory of structuration. Writers like Giddens dislike labels, but others who might be called 'structurationists' include Michel Foucault, Roland Barthes, and Jacques Lacan. Other inter-connected writers include Jean Francois Lyotard, and Jacques Derrida, although this is moving a long way from Giddens' theory.

about having credibility and effect within the processes of transmutation and the reproduction of social systems. Consider, for example, the three structural properties Giddens identifies when discussing the structural dimensions of social systems.⁷

<u>Structure(s)</u>	<u>Theoretical Domain</u>	<u>Institutional Order</u>
Signification	Theory of Coding	Symbolic Orders/Modes of Discourse
Domination	Theory of Resource Authorization	Political Institutions
	Theory of Resource Allocation	Economic Institutions
Legitimation	Theory of Normative Regulation	Legal Institutions

Reproduced from The Constitution of Society, p.31.

These properties, signification, domination and legitimation, have many similarities with the three phases of Terry Eastwood's historical framework for his analysis of archival development. The first phase, the rescue of historical materials, requires both signification and domination -the establishment of a discourse and the authorisation of resourced institutions to receive the material. The establishment of a legal authority is Eastwood's second stage and is Giddens' third structural property. Terry Eastwood's third phase, managing, maintaining and perfecting that authority, however, is not a structural property in Giddens' theory. Rather this phase equates with the process of transmutation itself and its 'recursive grounding in the communication of meaning'.⁸

⁷ Ibid, p. xvi, p. 31.

⁸ Ibid, p. 31.

Eastwood ends his reflections with the hope that we are moving into a fourth stage, establishing archives as arsenals of democratic accountability and continuity, but in a sense established by Giddens' table he is entreating us to focus on all three structural properties to re-establish our significance as part of the recursive grounding of our meaning. In Giddens' terms, the sudden outpouring of new ideas in the archival profession could be seen as a quest for re-signification, the establishment of a new mode of discourse in order to regain legitimation and domination within the ever-present process of structural transmutation.

The codification has nothing to do with notions of progress which may be behind Eastwood's idea that having achieved legitimation one can concentrate on developing and maintaining one's position. Indeed the need to justify ourselves anew identified in recent archival literature is arguably a result of our becoming too attached to the symbolic order of the custodial archive, anchoring our hopes for domination on a waning mode of discourse. Giddens' structuration theory points to the dangers of such an attachment, and to the need to constantly renew our discourse. There is no fourth stage, only a constant need to transmute within all three structural dimensions.

Postcustodality or the post-custodial age?

It is possible, and historically valid, to defy Giddens and read the dramatic development of archival thought over the last four years as a major paradigm shift stimulated by a return to stage one of Terry Eastwood's developmental model. Archivists for some years have perceived a need to mount rescuing and saving operations in relation

to electronic records, and at last that concern is being transferred into positive actions and changed ways of thinking. In that context we are entering into our own 'post-custodial age', which can be discussed without reference to any thought outside of the developing paradigm itself.

A paradigm, according to Thomas Kuhn, is the shared view of a research community to which all members are loyal, and within which new data is eagerly fitted.⁹ A shift in the paradigm represents a major rupture with past thought. The notion that we are entering a post-custodial age reflects a dissatisfaction with aspects of our custodial thinking in the past, and the beginnings of a major intellectual shift stimulated by electronic recordkeeping issues. The developments in provenance theory and appraisal theory contained in *Archivaria* 33 and 34 and other recent Canadian publications, for example, are genuinely exciting and seem revolutionary. Yet they are embryonic if one is looking for quick implementation of new approaches or trying to unwrap an ordered set of interventions ready for use within electronic recordkeeping. We are moving towards new concepts of archiving (information storage), new approaches to documentation, description and appraisal, and new links between information resource management and cultural history, but we have certainly not yet moved into something which is identifiable as a new age. Within Giddens' model, the rules and resources are not yet in place for sustained institutional action let alone the standards and regulations that will legitimate the new developments. When they are we will be better placed to assess how much continuity these approaches have with our past.

⁹ Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, Chicago Press, Chicago, 1963.

In the meantime the concept of an electronic recordkeeping post-custodial age could introduce yet another fracture within our already dislocated perceptions of the archival profession. It is a feature of paradigm theory that new and old paradigms are mutually incommensurate. If taken this way, the notion of a paradigm shift might deny us the chance of developing a strong common voice. It could separate custodial recordkeepers, looking after paper records, from those conducting their own discourse about electronic records.

Accordingly it may be better to see ourselves as entering a period of postcustodality, where the word is used as a bookmark within the process of transmutation rather than an indicator of a rupture with old thought, a proposition that can be supported in at least two ways.

First, if custodality refers to the typical North American model outlined in 1956 by Theodore Schellenberg, the 'custodial age' is in fact a relatively limited concept temporally and spatially, confined largely to parts of North America and Australia and lasting less than fifty years. If one extended this discussion to European archives then the custodial model is different and is a source of much of the theory behind postcustodality. It was not until the 1940s that the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) codified the narrow acquisition, maintenance and use concepts underpinning North American institutions. The alternative paradigm of that era -the continuing European one of archives as a twin arsenal of law (encompassing administration) and history , serving the creator of the records and a select band of researchers- was not killed off by American

developments.¹⁰ Now, as the USA begins to emerge from its isolationist modernity and is beginning to look back to Europe, more Americans are coming to agree with some of their own prophets who have been arguing that the strategy of the 'modern archives' with its particular forms of custodianship, has ossified and needs rejuvenating.¹¹

In Australia we are more likely to see postcustodial thought in our literature as a re-discovery of the paradigm underpinning Jenkinson's European concept of moral and physical preservation of archives, a paradigm in which archives are defined by their nature rather than their age or the space they occupy (or will come to occupy) in an archival institution. Jenkinson's concept of custody is that of guardianship, not imprisonment, and can be readily extended out from the archival institution. As far back as the late 1950s Australian Archives, for example, started to play around with experiments that would give rise to the CRS system in the mid 1960s. The system can be read as a clear attempt to take the Jenkinsonian model outside the walls of the archives as a means of establishing a base for disposal, while also setting up an external base for later documentation needs. The attempt to establish a universal system of documentation for all Commonwealth of Australia records, without regard to location or the designation of permanency, has been only partly successful, but that it was attempted at all shows that not all archives prior to electronic

¹⁰ The development and expansion of the European model is discussed in A. Wagner, 'The Policy of Access to Archives: from Restriction to Liberalization', *UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries*, Vol. 24, 1974, a European 'classic' drawn specifically to my attention by Michael Piggott.

¹¹ Perhaps the first major break with 'modern archives' in the USA was the publication, in a Canadian journal, of David A. Bearman and Richard H. Lytle's 'The Power of the Principle of Provenance', *Archivaria* 21, Winter 1985-86.

recordkeeping can be subsumed within the North American custodial model.¹²

Second, a major breach in approaches centring on custodianship in North America probably started with the development of public history in the 1960s when historians started to move out of the safety of the archival repository. John Rickard, a professor of History at Monash University, discussing the slowness of commitment to public history approaches in Australia in comparison with its quick take up in North America has written:

But more generally many historians have been reluctant to move out of the conventional archive, in which the documents were preserved dutifully awaiting interpretation. Even paintings and photographs respectable enough in many contexts were used largely as illustrations rather than evidence in themselves. The recognition of a whole new range of sources from film and video to sites and artefacts might initially have been stimulating but the addiction to documents is not easy to break. For one thing, the old archive is familiar territory, safe and accessible, while many of the new sources had to be pursued and found, and their interpretation often required skills which had to be learnt.¹³

¹² The CRS system has been a successful base for documentation of external disposal arrangements for the paper records of clients, but has never had total spread and will need development to cater as well for electronic records. Its prime developer, Peter Scott, always saw it as a first model in need of further development.

¹³ John Rickard, 'Introduction', in *Packaging the Past*, edited by John Rickard and Peter Spearritt, Melbourne University Press, 1991.

Not even the unitary notion of 'total archives' which developed in Canada can encompass the variety of sources historians now consult. Most of the archival documentation is interconnected with the other sources, however, and as David Bearman has discussed, even most of the archival documentation exists outside the safety of the old archive.¹⁴

Structure and new provenance theory

How can we analyze the transmutation of archival principles and practice? Giddens gives us three structural concepts to play around with in the task of re-establishing our discourse:

- (1) structural principles: principles of organization of societal totalities
- (2) structures: rule-resource sets, involved in the institutional articulation of social systems
- (3) structural properties: institutionalized features of social systems, stretching across time and space.¹⁵

Structural properties were discussed above in terms of signification, domination and legitimation, and the institutional order these give rise to. Used loosely they can be equated with structure, and for most of the twentieth century we have used structure in this loose sense when discussing provenance by which we have meant the structural properties of records creators, the institutional features.

¹⁴ David Bearman, *Archival Methods*, Archival and Museum Informatics Technical Report, No. 1, Spring 1989 (republished in 1991 as Technical Report No. 9).

¹⁵ Anthony Giddens, *op. cit.*, p. 185.

Recently the archival profession has begun to eliminate this loose understanding of provenance. We have moved into broader examinations relating to the rule-resource sets by which provenance, as a structural principle, is articulated. The set most consistently identified within newer concepts of provenance comprises: Function: Activity: Transaction. This relatively simple set has taken time to establish and has tended to be addressed in philosophical depth as befits a transmutation. We tend, however, to discuss them in hierarchical terms and as something additional to structure, indicating that they have not yet been comfortably subsumed within our theory, although they are most definitely starting to influence our practice.¹⁶

Functions, activities and transactions are simply a Giddensian trilogy of concepts arranged in their order of abstraction, with the most abstract on top of the list. The so-called top (function) is no more than a set of abstractions which can influence the effectiveness of an activity by enabling us to prioritize our appraisal, cope with changes in institutional features, or retrieve information. The so-called bottom (transaction) is simply the fenland in which records are created where dredging and channelling methodologies have to be applied before the build up of silt defeats appraisal and documentation tasks.

That the emphasis on function is not simply an addition to our ideas about provenance but a transmutation can be indicated by comparing the structural principles behind the North American custodial paradigm with the older European paradigm. The structural principle within 'modern archives' can be seen at work in the following passage

¹⁶ Sue McKemish's Introduction to Section II discusses the hierarchical ordering in relation to appraisal, and suggests that it is unnecessary.

from T.R. Schellenberg's now ironically titled 1956 text, *Modern Archives*:

Agency officials keep records for their current use -administrative, legal, and fiscal- and are therefore prone to judge their value only in relation to such use. This is quite proper. They must preserve records until their value to the government has been exhausted or nearly exhausted. And when that value has been exhausted, they must dispose of the records lest they get under foot and hamper the conduct of current business. If an archival institution is available, agency officials should not keep records for secondary uses within their agency unless they are specifically charged, under law, with this responsibility.¹⁷

The deepest structural principle within this passage, articulating institutional development across time and space, is the life-cycle concept of records. At the time this concept seemed a logical extension of the nineteenth century theories about the organic nature of recordkeeping espoused, for example, by Muller, Feith and Fruin. Records themselves became organic, being born, dying off, or having a second coming within archives. Within American theory, provenance at NARS had ceased to be a structural principle and had become part of the rule-resource set by which the life-cycle principle was articulated. It was not even part of the prime set which was Appraisal: Acquisition: Description: Maintenance: Use. Provenance had become a professional code-word, buried within archival functions. Within Northern European archival theory, theories about the organic nature of recordkeeping provided a structural principle for the capture and maintenance of context in and through space-time.

¹⁷ T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1956, p. 28-29.

Regional differences in the application of this principle are starting to be identified within archival literature, but one conclusion that is emerging from comparative study is that provenance is a structural principle across the 'deepest reaches of space-time', a principle which can be articulated by consideration of the functions, actions, and transactions that give rise to the records, as an addition to more conventional notions of source relating to the institutional features of the records creators.¹⁸ New rule-resource sets are accordingly beginning to emerge.

In effectively removing the renewed recognition of provenance theory as a structural principle from professional thought and into the wider world of theory in which it belongs, it will be necessary to develop theories about information storage and the management of recorded information as a resource. David Bearman's paper, later in this volume, is a model for this process. Giddens has some helpful thoughts in this area as well, and these are set out in the next section.

Information storage, resource management, and the archival document -authoritative and allocative resources

When discussing structure Giddens constantly returns to the notion of rule-resource sets and refers in an inter-connected way to their

¹⁸ For example, David Bearman, 'Diplomatics, Weberian Bureaucracy, and the Management of Electronic Records in Europe and America', *American Archivist*, Vol. 55, Winter 1992.

allocative or authoritative nature. He has codified these in the following fashion.¹⁹

Power, I have described in the opening chapter, is generated in and through the reproduction of structures of domination. The resources which constitute structures of domination are of two sorts –allocative and authoritative. Any co-ordination of social systems across time and space necessarily involves a direct combination of these two types of resource, which can be classified as below:

<u>Allocative Resources</u>	<u>Authoritative Resources</u>
1. Material features of the environment (raw materials, material power sources)	1. Organisation of social time-space. (temporal and spatial constitution of paths and regions)
2. Means of material production/reproduction, instruments of production	2. Production/reproduction of the body (organisation and relation of human beings in mutual association) .
3. Produced goods (artifacts created by the interaction of 1 and 2)	3. Organisation of life chances (constitution of chances of self-development and self-expression)

Reproduced from *The Constitution of Society*, p.258.

Giddens then spends the next four pages developing a special plea for the parallel significance of authoritative resources. He justifies this emphasis because it is conventional to emphasize the allocative resource whereas the authoritative resource is so often ignored.

¹⁹ Anthony Giddens, op. cit., p. 258.

Indeed allocative resource management drives most of the rule-resource sets of the late-modern versions of information management. Unfortunately for the archivists, with their understanding of the archival document as an authoritative resource, the conventional concern with allocative resource management has been unconventional within archival thought. During the 1980s much of the archival literature pointed to the profession's weaknesses in this respect and better approaches to the use of the archival product, to public programming, and to related outreach needs were developed. On the other hand, the understanding amongst archivists of recorded information as an authoritative resource has tended to place many of the best practitioners at odds with the information society. Terry Cook summed up a legitimate archival reaction to the growing supremacy of allocative resource management styles in the following terms:

...I am not supporting cultural elitism, nor am I prescribing user-unfriendly archives. Rather I am urging archivists to step back from being superficial McDonald's of Information or flashy Disney-Worlds of Heritage entertainment.²⁰

The present situation is that while most groups in society understand McDonald's or Disneyland, fewer groups in society understand the more complex notions of the concepts in Giddens' authoritative resource management column. Authoritative resources have a transformative capacity and generate control.

²⁰ Terry Cook, 'Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming', *Archivaria* 31, Winter 1990-91 p. 131.

The first item, the organisation of social time, space, for archivists, is another demonstration of the truth of Luciana Duranti's axiom that:

the first and fundamental need of any organised society is the regulation of its network of relationships by means of objective, consistent, meaningful and usable documentation.²¹

Probably only archivists familiar with registry systems will quickly comprehend the recordkeeping implications of Giddens' second item. In registry systems the pre-action method of filing can be used to bring together in association people in an organization who are actioning documents.

The third item, the organization of life chances, can be found in archival literature in our interest in Weberian thought, for it was Weber who introduced the term into sociology when discussing how bureaucratic structures shape behaviour. Within records management literature the concept is subsumed within the term 'vital records'. Later in this book, David Bearman discusses 'risk management' which can also be considered under this heading.

There are many complexities for archivists tucked away in the deceptively simple notion of recorded information as both an allocative and authoritative resource. For example, on the allocative side, archivists are starting to appreciate that they are an instrument of production in relation to the archival record through the appraisal process or by standards setting. On the other side, the archival document is at its most identifiably authoritative as a resource while

²¹ Luciana Duranti, 'The Odyssey of Records Managers', *ARMA Quarterly*, October 1989, p. 4

it is still governing time and space, before it is received in a repository within the Schellenbergian strategy outlined above. Once the Schellenbergian 'current use' period has run out, it will only really start to be recognisable to the community as an authoritative resource when, in Bearman's wording, 'sources from all cultural repositories focus like a laser on the needs of today, falling into place like a puzzle, harnessing the energy of their differences on a point'.²²

Giddens expressed a similar notion, less energetically, when he commented that: "The storage of authoritative and allocative resources may be understood as involving the retention and control of information or knowledge, whereby social relations are perpetuated across time-space 'involving, on the authoritative side of the duality, 'the knowledgeable management of a projected future and recall of an elapsed past'".²³

The task, which has commenced within postcustodial thought, is to institutionalize the archival document as an authoritative resource, to have it incorporated into the rule-resource sets of others. The 'institutionalization' of the archival document has been around since communities first began to formalize trading arrangements. That societies of our type have lost that formalization is demonstrated clearly in the pages of this book. The post-literate society will have to reformatize its methods of governing time and space authoritatively, or its life chances are doubtful.

²² David Bearman, *Archival Methods*, op. cit., p. 67.

²³ Anthony Giddens, op. cit., p. 261.

In order to improve perceptions of the authoritative resource within society our institutional ordering will probably have to take new directions. First, within the cultural domain we will have to try and achieve the inter-disciplinary styles of information storage referred to by Giddens and Bearman above. Second we will have to beef up our participation in the period when the archival document is more easily identifiable as an authoritative resource, its period of direct governance of time-space, which takes us into Eastwood's idea of law, administration and history rolled up within democratic accountability and continuity.

Approaches to cultural heritage

In drawing attention to comparisons between Canada and Australia, and in providing an initial framework for comparison, Terry Eastwood has met a need that a number of Australian and Canadian archivists have identified. Our similarities as 'new societies' formed entirely within the era of modern western thought, with our equally interesting differences and contacts with older societies, have produced a host of different responses to similar problems. In the archival domain the lack of an obvious cultural face to the profession in Australia is one of those differences.

Australian history was generally shunned before the 1930s but libraries had been given a special role in the nineteenth century within the drive to 'civilize' a convict colony. The two features are probably not unrelated. Thus, when historians began to recognize the significance of our own history and talk began to be fostered about the preservation of the historical record, a strong public library tradition with consequent institutional ordering was in existence.

Before the 1950s the only coherent attempt to salvage the historical record, viewed very much in unitary terms as all materials of documentation, was in South Australia.²⁴

When archival institutional development began to occur in the 1940s, and during the rush of developments in the 1950s, two dualisms structured what took place. The first was a division between archives and manuscripts. In this process we followed the sophistry of American librarians who had managed to make connections between personal papers and the manuscript tradition of the pre-modern era. It is a sophistry which Australian archivists still have to contend with although the connection between personal archives and the institutional texts of a monastery is tenuous to say the least. The second and more conventional duality was the division between government and non-government archives. This gave us a reasonably satisfying structure as business archives were established and as manuscript libraries broadened their collecting policies to include business records. As Terry Eastwood notes, in the retention of business records, at least, Australia did reasonably well. The former duality that of archives and manuscripts complicated the issues, and still does, although its superficiality has been of little continuing concern to Australian archivists. What has been of concern, and has caused 'flinty' relations, has been the retention of a unitary notion of the historical record within some libraries which gave rise to structures where the institutional arm looking after government records has been subordinated to library control. In Canada, free

²⁴ Frank Upward, 'Association Amongst Archivists in the 1950s', in *Peopling a Profession*, edited by F. Upward and J.P. Whyte, Ancora Press, Monash, 1991.

from library subordination, that same notion of historical materials gave rise to the unitary notion of 'total archives'.

In fact, Australia has done better in the cultural heritage area than many archivists or librarians realize and much of its success has been in spite of our unitary or dualistic notions rather than because of them. Consider, for example, the way folklore has been institutionalized. Stuart MacIntyre, in reviewing *The Oxford Companion to Australian Folklore*, has written:

From the Australian Plaiters and Whipmakers society to the Western (Australian Folklore Archive, the volume describes a dense institutional fabric. You can read here of the growing popularity of bush music and bush dancing, the premium status of vernacular architecture and patchwork quilts, the vast public subsidy that built the Stockman's Hall of Fame.²⁵

This may seem to be allocative resource management yet tucked away in that recorded information is the authoritative resource as well -the way Australians have adapted to the fundamental temporal and spatial challenges posed to Europeans from huddled societies as they have battled to define their life chances in the vast Australian environment. For the most part our bodies have continued to huddle, establishing one of the most urban of cultures, but our dreams used to be of the bush.

A postcustodial view has the potential to be less restricted in its structural properties spatially, readily encompassing new

²⁵ Stuart MacIntyre, 'Book Review', *The Age*, Saturday Extra, Melbourne, 3 April 1993, p. 9.

understandings within history about the plurality of the record (see the citation of John Rickards earlier), and the 'dense institutional fabric' within our folklore. Our only model in Australia so far is the Australian Science Archives Project, which started as a non-custodial processing point for archival material, distributing the results of its work to appropriate repositories, but increasingly is becoming a documentation centre, tracing out the institutional fabric within the science archives domain. Whether even more expansive models are developed will turn on whether we can break from unitary or dualistic notions of the archival document, and establish the legitimacy of a more pluralistic postcustodial model, in which the archivist's interest in transactional information is brought to bear in a wide variety of contexts.

That we are heading in this direction is indicated by our growing interest in 'inter-disciplinarity' and networking. The notion of 'authoritative resource management' may stimulate further development, even if we do need to keep in mind that records have their allocative qualities as well which should not be neglected. The distribution of the archivist's knowledge and skills, as David Bearman has been pointing out for some years now, depends upon our effectiveness in using provenance as a structural principle for our development - provenance in its fullest sense of source/context, not simply the institutional features in which records are created. In Australia, this means working with others who understand the nature of information as an authoritative resource to link into the existing institutional fabric, and to foster its further development.

The 'current use' domain

I have concentrated on the cultural heritage domain within this paper because, for the most part, the rest of this volume deals with current recordkeeping issues. The type of strategy which emerges from its pages is also one where provenance is the structural principle, where the aim is to transfer an understanding of contextuality and transactionality into the rule-resource sets of others, where the theory and practice of authoritative resource management is explored, and the goals of strengthening and expanding our institutional features is probed. Proposals are put forward for a Records Commission operating within a framework which also features strengthened public records authorities (McKemmish), for a Documentation Commission (Smith) for a National Documentation Centre (the introduction to Section III), and for a reconsideration of the archives/records management nexus at organisational level (Section IV) .

As Terry Eastwood notes, no-one should underestimate the difficulty of the task. There are at least three massive obstacles in our way in Australia. First, the product based approach is clearly a threat to the fostering of a public recordkeeping tradition. In this area the Australian problem is with the technologically attuned information age librarian. The allocative approach is debilitating if placed at the centre of any archival endeavour because it diminishes the capacity to explain the significance of the authoritative side of recorded information. Giddens' duality becomes disconnected. In the cultural domain there are many people who understand this, even if not in those terms. On the information age side of the equation concepts of information management have been built up which are exclusively

allocative, a point picked up and expanded in the last paper of this book. Even librarians who understand the authoritative side of information resource management have been on the back foot during the 1980s, a situation typified in Australia by the notion of the librarian in a cardigan being in opposition to the librarian in the blue suit.

The trend in Australia of appointing technologically literate and allocative librarians to head archival institutions with responsibility for public recordkeeping is built on information age sand. They will have to find their cardigans or become part of the problem rather than part of the solution. Within modern recordkeeping the need is for the promotion and development of the authoritative side of its management as a resource. Everyone has a rudimentary understanding of information as an allocative resource, but the absence of other forms of understanding will become more and more apparent as the information age ends and the network age sets in.

Second, authoritative approaches to recordkeeping can not take place within the old government/non government dualism. Terry Eastwood in his reflections dismisses the difference between public and private archives quickly, and I will do the same. Those who want an explanation of why governance, and therefore democratic accountability and continuity, relates to more than government records will find a discussion of this in Livia Iacovino's paper.

Third, the disciplinary spread is total. The three traditional arsenals identified by Terry Eastwood, law, administration and history, are in fact something of a restatement of the ancient philosophical trilogy of

law, form and event. Electronic recordkeeping changes the system base of all three and in an interconnected fashion. Legal ramifications are uncertain because forms are embryonic, and the capacity to capture events is questionable. Forms are embryonic because the legal requirements are not there and the nature of electronic transactionality is not properly understood. Events are not suitably captured because new forms of recordkeeping have not stabilized and regulation is imprecise or absent. This is not simply a problem for archivists. Indeed if we were to be the only group to pick up the challenge, we might as well give up now. The need for authoritative resource management is beginning to be re-identified by other groups as well. Those are the groups we need to seek out, and some are identified in the pages of this book including the communication technologists, auditors and other watchdog agencies, and those organisations with the highest need for reliable documentation of transactions.

Conclusion

Eastwood's article is useful in conveying to archivists the origins of the Canadian emphasis on cultural history with its allegiance to a tradition of a 'polyglot historical office' housing a wide variety of materials and containing within it the notion of a Public Record Office. The model is inevitably attractive to many in Australia who hanker for a unitary model. Such an approach in Australia is not a structural option and would deny the diversity of our reality, but transmutation of it within postcustodial approaches is a viable option for us to pursue.

In Australia we need visions in which archival expertise in contextuality and transactionality permeates all aspects of information storage. The archival document will be institutionalized within the fabric of society when its management as an authoritative resource is widely seen as enriching our heritage, and providing us with greater personal security about the processes of current recordkeeping.