

## **PACIFIC MANUSCRIPTS BUREAU**

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### **PACIFIC HISTORY ASSOCIATION CONFERENCE, SUVA, 7-11 December 2008**

#### **Australian Impact on Archives Administration in the Pacific Region**

Archives provide for any society a vision of its past, which constitutes one of the most important components of its culture. Recognising and protecting indigenous Pacific Islands cultures, embodied in textual and audio-visual archives, strengthens Pacific Islands nation building. Proper archives administration also provides accountability and, consequently, contributes to stability of government. Continuing Australia's role in supporting Pacific archives administration is vital for strengthening the future capacity of Pacific Islands' cultures and civil administrations.

Australian archivists have made a major contribution to the establishment of systems of archives administration in the Pacific Islands. During four decades, 1950s-1980s, Australian professional archivists established and, for much of that time administered, the first government archives in the Pacific Islands. They arranged the archives of the Western Pacific High Commission, the Colony of Fiji, the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, the New Hebrides British Service, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony, and the British Consul in Tonga. They established the Western Pacific Archives, the National Archives of Papua New Guinea, the National Archives of Fiji, and the National Archives of the Solomon Islands. They instigated the establishment of the National Archives of Vanuatu, Kiribati and Tuvalu. They helped form and operate the region's archives peak council, the Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA) and the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau (PMB).

In the period after independence Pacific Islands government archives administered their inherited colonial archives well enough, but in some cases they struggled to find the skills, resources and administrative clout necessary to re-orientate their practices towards collecting the archives of their new national governments. In their own societies they became somewhat marginalised repositories of the archives of the old colonial administrations. At the same time Australian interest in and support for archives in the Islands dwindled to the extent that PARBICA, and individuals associated with it, and the PMB were their only points of contact in Australia.

After two decades of declining interest in the 1980s and 1990s, there is now a re-assertion of Australian involvement in Pacific archives administration. In particular, the National Archives of Australia (NAA) has allied with Archives NZ in PARBICA to help strengthen Pacific archives organisations. In 2006-07 AusAID supported an NAA advisor in the Solomon Islands who helped to strengthen government record keeping capacity after a long period of inactivity during the crisis in the Solomons. Again with AusAID support, PARBICA and the NAA produced a Record Keeping Toolkit in 2007 which has been well received in the Islands. In addition the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC) was established in 2003 for the preservation and dissemination of at-risk research recordings of Pacific Island languages, and a Pacific Research Archives was established at the ANU in 2007 to collect and make accessible Pacific research records accumulated in Australia.

The consistent operation of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau since 1968, its continual presence in the Islands and its advocacy for archives in the Islands, has been a key factor in the current resurgence of Australian interest in Pacific archives. The Bureau continues to be very active on all fronts,

particularly in its Island-based archives preservation projects. For example, in 2007, the 40<sup>th</sup> year of its operation, the Bureau carried out the following fieldwork projects:

- Tarawa, Kiribati, 3-17 January, to arrange and describe archives of the Catholic Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru.
- Honolulu, 14-23 March 2007, to participate in a conference, *Hidden Treasures: Accessing the Riches in Pacific Collections*, organised by the Center for Pacific Islands Studies at the University of Hawaii, and to microfilm English translations of Hawaiian language documents in the Micronesian Collection, 1852-1923, at the Hawaiian Mission Children's Society Library.
- PNG, 16 May-3 June, to microfilm archives of the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory, to survey records of the PNG National Lands Commission and Land Titles Commission in Port Moresby, and investigate possible microfilming projects at the Rorongo Theological College Library and the Lowlands Agricultural Experiment Station near Keravat, East New Britain.
- Melbourne and Shepparton, 17-25 June, to select Unevangelized Fields Mission archives from the Library of the Bible College of Victoria for microfilming, to microfilm Sr Rhoda Ransom's diary and photographs from the Duke of York Islands, PNG, 1912-1913, and to collect research papers of the late Robert Kent Wilson on industrialisation in PNG.
- Honiara, Solomon Islands, 1-6 July, to address a meeting of Bishops of the Church of Melanesia and to microfilm some of the Church's records held at the National Archives of the Solomon Islands.
- New Caledonia and Funafuti, Tuvalu, 25 Sep-26 Oct 2007, to participate in the PARBICA 12 conference in Noumea, microfilm *La Dépêche Kanak* and other Kanak newspapers at the Territorial Archives of New Caledonia and elsewhere, and undertake the final stage of the Endangered Archives Programme Tuvalu National Archives Major Project.
- Tarawa, Kiribati, 29 Nov-14 Dec 2007, to microfilm the archives of the Catholic Diocese of Tarawa and Nauru.

There are many further opportunities involving exchange of skills and resources which would help build reciprocal relations between archives in Australia and in the Islands. For example: identifying and repatriating digital copies of Pacific photograph collections held in Australia; and locating, cataloguing and digitising PNG Patrol Reports, especially now that it is known that the microfiche copies in Australia are deteriorating. Preserving the series Patrol Reports, which began in British New Guinea under Sir Peter Scratchley in 1885 and continued through to Independence in 1975, is especially important to the cultural heritage of both PNG and Australia.

If the connections between public record-keepers in Australia, New Zealand and the Islands continue to be developed on the basis of mutual respect it is likely that Island governments will be persuaded to recognise the value of their own record-keeping institutions and fund them accordingly. In the meantime Australians are now beginning once again to contribute to the support and maintenance of Pacific archives organisations.

## **Historical context of Australian archival interests in the Pacific Islands**

*Australia ... collectively houses, probably, the richest collections of resources about the Pacific anywhere in the world (Nancy Lutton).<sup>1</sup>*

Nancy Lutton is referring to the combined strength of the Pacific archive in Australia, built up in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries by the private collectors, David Scott Mitchell, Sir John Ferguson, Edward Petherick and Rex Nan Kivell. These collections form the nuclei of the Australiana collections of the Mitchell Library and the National Library of Australia. They were further developed after WWII by specialist Pacific librarians, such as Phyllis Mander-Jones and Ida Leeson.

The strength of the Pacific collections in Australian libraries derives from our history of involvement in the Islands: Australia's colonial interests in PNG; commercial interests in the Pacific based in Australia (traders, planters, miners, bankers, shippers, such as Burns Philp, WR Carpenter, Lever & Kitchen, CSR, the Bank of NSW, the British Phosphate Commissioners, the Australasian Petroleum Co); headquarters of key Christian missions also housed in Australia (Methodists, Congregationalists, Presbyterians, Marists, Sacred Heart Missionaries, Anglicans, Lutherans, *et al.*).

Arriving in Australia in 1942, General MacArthur discovered that there was a scarcity of strategically useful knowledge about the Pacific Islands. An extension of the South West Pacific Area (SWPA) Command, the Allied Geographical Section, was formed to produce a comprehensive intelligence record of the area in which Allied troops were engaged in military operations. The Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University (ANU) was established after the War in part to maintain that research effort and to meet Australian foreign policy needs.

## **Australian involvement in the establishment of Pacific Islands Archives 1950-1990**

The first Professor of Pacific History in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University, Jim Davidson, gave serious consideration to Pacific archival matters in his inaugural lecture, *The Study of Pacific History*, given in November 1954.

Generally speaking, the records in the metropolitan countries are in a state in which they can be used for research. In the islands, on the other hand, under conditions of poor accommodation, inadequate staffing, and a tropical climate, records have got lost and mislaid or have physically deteriorated to the point at which, very often, they cannot be used even when they are located. This problem, fortunately, is now beginning to worry governments as well as historians; and the time seems propitious for a combined attempt by all who are interested, from the point of view either of administration or research, to put records in the islands into proper order before further losses occur. (p.23)

Scholars in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the Australian National University helped locate Pacific archives in Britain and Europe, transferred Samoan colonial archives to New Zealand, and began to organise the Western Pacific Archives.

### Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission

In 1953 Professor Davidson negotiated the appointment of an ANU researcher, Dorothy Crozier, as the first government archivist in Fiji, jointly funded by the ANU and the Western Pacific High Commission. Ms Crozier moved the archives into stable accommodation and calendared some key series. Dorothy Crozier also surveyed archives in Tonga, collecting a large proportion of the papers of Rev. Shirley Baker, the first Premier of Tonga, which she retained in her private possession for the rest of her life.

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<sup>1</sup> Lutton, N. 1985. 'Pacific Collections in Australia', in LAA/NZLA Joint Conference, *Libraries after 1984: proceedings of the LAA/NZLA Conference, Brisbane 1984*. Sydney, Library Association of Australia.

In the period 1939-1988 Federal and State government Archives in Australia broke away from the Commonwealth and State Libraries and were established, under separate archives legislation, as autonomous organisations. Over roughly the same period public record-keeping in the South Pacific was developed, in most instances with crucial Australian involvement.

The major work establishing and operating the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission was carried out by Dorothy Crozier's successors, Ian Diamond and Bruce Burne, both expatriate Australian professional archivists who had commenced their careers in the Archives Division of the Commonwealth National Library (later the Commonwealth Archives, now the National Archives of Australia).

Diamond and Burne constructed one of the finest and most accessible colonial archives in the world. Diamond wrote that the establishment of the Central Archives of Fiji on 30 December 1953, the first institution of its kind in Oceania, was "something of a prodigy". The Archives was set up, he observed, "not primarily for its practical value as an aid to efficient administration, though of course this was a consideration, but because of a recognition on the part of both [Fijian and Western Pacific] governments of an obligation to conserve their early records."<sup>2</sup>

When Ian Diamond arrived in Suva in July 1958 he was faced with deteriorating records of all kinds and the task of establishing a workable institution. The task involved identification, sorting and establishing control systems over archives of the Colony of Fiji, the Western Pacific High Commission (WPHC)<sup>3</sup>, and the South Pacific Office (formerly Pitcairn and Tonga Office). As well as establishing control over the archives, Diamond supervised the development of conservation and microfilming work in the Archives.

Diamond also negotiated the allocation of the former Government Printing Office in Carnarvon Street, Suva, for the Archives (although it was not occupied until 1979). He encouraged the adoption of a Public Records Ordinance in Fiji, aimed at protecting the archives, and had oversight of its transition to an Act to Provide for the Better Preservation of the Public Records of Fiji, 1970, under which the National Archives of Fiji was formally established in July 1971.

Bruce Burne succeeded Diamond in 1972 as Western Pacific Archivist. Part of their role was to travel from time to time to the Solomon Islands, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands, the New Hebrides and Tonga, to review the non-current records and select certain of them for transfer to the Central Archives in Fiji for permanent preservation. As a result a large proportion of the Western Pacific Archives, now mostly held at the University of Auckland Library, were selected, arranged and catalogued by Diamond, Burne and their staff.

From the 1960s, under the direction of Diamond and Burne, the Central Archives in Suva undertook a systematic program of microfilming records of the Fiji colonial administration and the Western Pacific High Commission. The latter with a view to providing copies of WPHC documents to each of the successor Pacific Islands nations. (The main financial support for the microfilming project came from purchases of the microfilm by Australian public and university libraries.)

With the dissolution of the WPHC in 1978, Bruce Burne oversaw the establishment of national archival institutions in the Solomon Islands, Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu, including construction of the repository in Honiara which was intended to accommodate the archives of the WPHC Secretariat. Key indigenous staff, for example Benjamin Piri in the Solomons and Kunei Etekira in Kiribati, had

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<sup>2</sup> A.I. Diamond, 'The Establishment of the Central Archives of Fiji and the Western Pacific High Commission', *Archives and Manuscripts*, 1:8, May 1965; p.4.

<sup>3</sup> Including the archives of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate, the New Hebrides British Service, the Gilbert and Ellice Islands Colony and the British Consulate in Tonga.

been trained by Diamond and Burne in Suva. Burne also arranged the return of local colonial administration archives to all those repositories, except Vanuatu where the archives of the New Hebrides British Service were re-directed to London by British colonial officials, along with the WPHC Secretariat archives, much to the chagrin of Burne and others.

### Papua New Guinea

In Papua New Guinea another Australian archivist, Jim Gibbney, who was a colleague of Ian Diamond in the Archives Division of the National Library of Australia, surveyed the administration records which survived WWII producing a report which resulted in the establishment of an Archives Office in the Territory of PNG in 1957.

Many of the records of the Australian administrations in Papua and the Mandated Territory of New Guinea were destroyed during the War. In 1955 Jim Gibbney, who was a colleague of Ian Diamond in the Archives Division of the National Library of Australia, surveyed the surviving archives, producing a report which resulted in the establishment of an Archives Office in the Territory of PNG in 1957, now operating as the PNG National Archives and Public Records Service, with a repository in Waigani built by the Australian government in 1975 as an independence gift. The last Australian expat Chief Archivist in the PNG National Archives was Nancy Lutton, 1989-1992. It was during her time that the National Archives of Australia organised the records of the German imperial administration in New Guinea, captured in Rabaul in 1914, microfilmed them and repatriated the originals to the National Archives of PNG.

Previously, as New Guinea Collection Librarian at the University of PNG, 1973-1980, Nancy Lutton had gathered a key collection of PNG publications and an extensive private archives, including church and business papers, photographs, maps, oral history tapes and films. The New Guinea Collection continues its operations to date, though under difficult circumstances, including staff training problems and inadequate repository facilities.

Australian librarians also established a special collection of non-government archives, manuscripts and printed material in the Matheson Library at the University of Technology in Lae. Australian scientists and other researchers helped construct elaborate collections of research materials at the Institute of PNG Studies, the PNG Public Museum and Art Gallery, the National Research Institute, the Institute of Medical Research, the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory, the National Fisheries Authority, various agricultural research stations, and elsewhere in PNG.

### The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau

Harry Maude, a Pacific bibliophile, came to the Department of Pacific History at the ANU in 1958 from the South Pacific Commission. In the period 1951-1957 as Director of the SPC's Social Development Section, based in Sydney, where he worked with Ida Leeson, Maude had organised the *Project for the Preservation of Manuscripts on Island Languages*, a series of 80 microfilms of rare Pacific language grammars, dictionaries and vocabularies, which were eventually taken over by the National Library of Australia.

The new technology of microfilming was deployed as a standard tool for mass reformatting of archives in order to facilitate access and preservation. The Australian Joint Copying Project (AJCP), established in 1948 by the Commonwealth National Library to microfilm archives and manuscripts in the UK relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific Islands, produced four thousand rolls of microfilm before the Project wound up in 1993. Phyllis Mander-Jones was commissioned in 1964, by the National Library of Australia and the ANU Library, to catalogue South Pacific and Australasian archives in the UK feeding into the AJCP.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Mander-Jones, *Manuscripts in the British Isles Relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific*, 1972

Microfilming technology was instrumental to Harry Maude's proposal<sup>5</sup> which led to the establishment of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau in the Research School of Pacific Studies at the ANU in 1968. Maude's report was commissioned by Gordon Richardson, NSW State Librarian and Mitchell Librarian, who had been in negotiation with librarians in Hawaii, Floyd Cammack and Ralph Shaw, since the early 1960s on the possibility of forming an association that could "undertake the central organisation and control of a Joint Copying Project for research materials for the Pacific region".<sup>6</sup>

Harry Maude recommended cooperative measures for achieving completeness in library holdings of published works on the Pacific Islands and the provision of adequate bibliographies and indexes to these publications. The report also recommended the establishment of a clearing centre for the location, recording, copying and depositing (in either original or microfilm form) of significant unpublished material relating to the islands.

Modelled on the Australian Joint Copying Project, the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau was subsidised by a consortium of specialist Pacific research libraries, initially formed by the National Library of Australia, the Mitchell Library, the State Library of Victoria, the Alexander Turnbull Library and the University of Hawaii Library. (A few years later the State Library of Victoria dropped out of the consortium and the Library of the University of California at San Diego joined up.)

When Robert Langdon was Executive Officer the Bureau located and microfilmed personal papers, such as diaries and correspondence, linguistic materials and the records of non-government organisations, especially missions. Langdon made many fieldtrips using a portable Hiraoka microfilm camera to copy documents and the acronym, *Pambu*, became well known throughout the Islands. By the time Langdon retired in 1986 the Bureau had produced 2,100 rolls of 35mm microfilm and published a dozen indexes and guides to Pacific archives.

Langdon also administered three special projects funded by separate consortia. In 1970 and 1976 Dr John Cumpston carried out the "New England Microfilming Project" locating and microfilming many hundreds of Yankee-Pacific whaling logs in North American repositories, making 428 reels of microfilm. In the mid 1970s Kevin Green located and microfilmed Papua New Guinea patrol reports and diaries, personal papers, government minutes, reports and official publications. In the early 1980s Father Theo Koch SM travelled the Western Pacific islands arranging, listing and microfilming the records of the Oceania Marist Province, making 400 reels of microfilm.

#### Pacific Regional Branch of the International Council on Archives (PARBICA)

Another legacy of Burne's work in the Islands was to make initial contact with the International Council on Archives over establishing a Pacific Regional Branch. Burne's approach was taken up by others, in particular Lindsay Cleland at Australian Archives and Peter Orlovich at the University of NSW, resulting in the formation of the Branch in 1981 which carried out fact-finding missions in the 1980s, encouraged adoption of public archives legislation throughout the Pacific Islands nations, and held biennial conferences and training workshops.

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<sup>5</sup> Maude, H. E., 'The Documentary Basis for Pacific Studies: a report on progress and desiderata', unpublished report, March 1967. Copy held at NLA MS 4503.

<sup>6</sup> Langdon, R., 'The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau', *Australian UNESCO Seminar: Source Materials Related to Research in the Pacific Area, National Library of Australia, September 1971*, Canberra, AGPS, 1973; p.42.

### University of NSW, Diploma in Archives Administration

Corresponding opportunities for Islanders to undertake formal education in archives administration were made available by Dr Peter Orlovich and other staff at the University of NSW for two decades from the mid 1970s until 1996 when the course collapsed. Among others, Jacob Hevelawa, the current Director-General of the PNG National Library and former PNG Chief Archivist, and Setareki Tale, the Government Archivist in Fiji, are graduates of the UNSW archives administration course.

### **Re-orientation of Australian support for Pacific Archives after Independence**

Although institutionalised public record-keeping in the Pacific Islands began with significant Australian involvement, after the Islands gained independence the relationship between public record-keepers in Australia and the Islands gradually became attenuated. By the 1990s, apart from the continuing operations of PAMBU and PARBICA, Australian interest in either collecting or helping to preserve Pacific archives had dwindled. The International Training Institute at Mosman, successor to the Australian School of Pacific Administration (ASOPA), was closed. Its library was dispersed and its special Pacific collection, the Hallstrom Collection, was mothballed. In 1987 the Australian Libraries and Information Council (ALIC) gave no support to Nancy Lutton's recommendations for reciprocal microfilming projects of archives in PNG and Australia.<sup>7</sup> The Mitchell Library ceased accessioning Pacific archival materials, unless they had a NSW connection. The Australian Joint Copying Project was wound up in 1993.

Overseas collecting efforts of Australian libraries focused on Asia, rather than the Pacific Islands. While the NLA established an agency in Jakarta, collecting of published Pacific Islands materials was out-sourced. The American agent, Pan Pacifica, became the key supplier of government and other Pacific Islands publications to both the NLA and the ANU Library. The University of Hawai'i Library, the Melanesian Studies Resource Center at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) and New Zealand university libraries took the lead in field acquisition of official documents, newspapers and other publications in the Pacific Islands nations.

It was left to the Melanesian Studies Resource Center to organise and arrange funding for the PNG National Archives to make microfiche copies of its enormous series of Australian administration patrol reports. Similarly the ANU Library did not pursue proposals for it to take on microfilming of PNG newspapers which the Matheson Library, Unitech, had been unable to sustain. Again, it was left to American institutions, the Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai'i and the Melanesian Studies Resource Center, to continue microfilming the PNG *Post-Courier*. Australian archives did not pursue the opportunity to house the Western Pacific Archives when they were being repatriated from the UK.

### Continuing activities of the PMB and PARBICA

However the libraries remained committed to the PMB. When the ANU ceased funding the position of PMB executive officer position following Bob Langdon's retirement in 1986, the NLA, Mitchell Library, ANU Library, Alexander Turnbull Library, University of Hawai'i Library and the UCSD Library took on complete funding responsibility. The libraries, particularly the NLA, again rescued the Bureau when it faced a managerial crisis in 1993, increasing their support in order to maintain the PMB operation.

With Professor Brij Lal as Chair, from 1993 up to date, the PMB extended its range to cover records of contemporary Islands organizations and reinvigorated its microfilming operations in the Islands, producing another 1,500 reels of microfilm of Pacific Islands mission, church, plantation, mining, trading, political, governmental, judicial, scientific and research records, and rare publications — a treasure trove for researchers.

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<sup>7</sup> Nancy Lutton, 'Australian, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea Copying Project. Report to the Australian Libraries and Information Council, on a feasibility study carried out from March to July, 1987'. Ts., 46pp., plus appendices.

The Bureau gave priority to archives considered to be at risk of loss or destruction. For example, it microfilmed archives in the offices of the Fiji Trades Union Congress which had been firebombed during the 1987 coup, and it microfilmed Levers Solomons Ltd archives in the Russell Islands which were subsequently burnt during the crisis in the Solomons. Four more specialist libraries joined the PMB: the University of Auckland Library, Yale University Library, University of Michigan Library and, most recently, the University of Canterbury Library (Christchurch). The PMB became the longest surviving current international joint copying project in the world.

At a time when some newly established Pacific Islands archives were struggling for recognition by their own governments, the PMB's fieldwork program in the Islands forged links, providing a steady point of contact and support, with Island government archives and other record keeping organisations in PNG, the Solomons, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Kiribati, Fiji, Tonga, the Cook Islands, the Marshall Islands and the Federated States of Micronesia.

Without access to aid funding, the Bureau regularly participated in PARBICA training sessions at the biennial workshops and on field work projects routinely worked with Islander archivists and librarians on many aspects of archives preservation projects.

PARBICA continued its operations on an even keel throughout the 1990s, publishing a Directory of Pacific Islands Archives and Libraries, compiled by Nancy Lutton, relying heavily on voluntary individual members to maintain its program of conferences and workshops, but unable to provide material assistance to Islands archives. PARBICA activists carried out archives surveys in Samoa and Nauru where no government archives had been established.

### **The Current Situation**

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has adopted an archives advocacy role in the Pacific Islands. Bob Langdon had been a key member of the management committee of the Australian government's Pacific Cultures Fund throughout the period of its operation. In more recent years, the Bureau argued for the recognition by Pacific rim scholars of Pacific Island archives as legitimate repositories for irreplaceable documents. The Bureau's requests to reformat parts of the Western Pacific Archives were a trigger for the return of the Archives to the Pacific region in 2002. The Bureau continues to advocate the right of the Vanuatu people to have access to the records of the New Hebrides British Service, now held at Auckland University Library with the Western Pacific Archives. The Bureau has attempted to draw attention to archives repositories at risk of destruction in the Islands, such as the audio-visual holdings of the Institute of PNG Studies in Boroko and the audio recordings held by Nauru Television. The Bureau has also tried to emphasise the strengths of the Pacific Islands archives institutions, for example in a key note address given by the Executive Officer, "An Overview of the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau and Pacific Islands Archival Infrastructure", at University of Hawaii, Centre for Pacific Islands Studies, Conference, *Hidden Treasures: Accessing the Riches in Pacific Collections*", Honolulu, March 2007.

The Bureau has encouraged the National Archives of Australia to build a supportive relationship with the National Archives of the Solomon Islands by working with Ian Scales and others to provide reports on the situation in the Solomons Archives during and after the crisis. The Bureau also advocates greater material and intellectual support from fraternal archives institutions on the Pacific rim for struggling national archives in Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Niue. Working with the Genealogical Society of Utah in 2007-2008, the Bureau has helped to provide microfilm readers to 16 archival institutions in the Islands.

Working with a colleague in New Zealand, Richard Overy (formerly Kiribati National Librarian and Archivist) funded by the British Library's Endangered Archives Program, the Bureau is undertaking a major archives preservation project in Tuvalu, especially land records and other records documenting Tuvaluan customs and traditions. The project includes training and equipping the staff of the Tuvalu

National Library and Archives to undertake large scale reformatting of the nation's key archives in advance of possible cyclone damage or flooding associated with rising sea levels.

Working with the Dr R.W. Johnson, the RVO-Geoscience Australia Twinning Project, and the PNG National Archives and Records Service, in 2007 the Bureau microfilmed archives of the Rabaul Volcanological Observatory in Rabaul and the R.G.S. Cooke Collection of Reported Observations of Volcanic Activity in PNG before 1944. (The latter held in Canberra.) Key documents on PNG volcanic "hot spots" are being identified and converted to digital format. This data will be uploaded into an RVO information management system to be used in emergency situations.

Although the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau concentrates its main efforts outward to the Islands, it has also looked inward, within the ANU. In January 2006 the PMB Executive Officer gave a key note address at the first conference of the Australian Association for the Advancement of Pacific Studies (AAAPS) summarising Australian Pacific collecting efforts.<sup>8</sup> In response the AAAPS conference passed a resolution identifying the urgent need to establish a national information resource centre for research and teaching in Pacific studies in Australia.

In recent years, with the retirement and death of many Pacific studies scholars, the Bureau recognised that some Pacific research papers in Canberra and elsewhere in Australia are as much at risk of loss and destruction as archives and manuscripts in the Pacific Islands. The AAAPS resolution together with ICEAPS funding and the support of the Pacific Centre initiated the establishment of a Pacific Research Archives in the ANU Archives Program to accommodate such papers, including the appointment of a Pacific Archivist, Ms Karina Taylor, who has been successfully collecting materials for 18 months. A concomitant has been the appointment of a Pacific Librarian, Mr Deveni Temu, in the ANU Library – the first time this position has been filled by a specialist since Maureen Kattau left that in November 1997.

Since 2007 the National Library of Australia has also re-invigorated its Pacific programs. It has recommenced regular field acquisition trips to the Islands. In 2007-08 it successfully trialled acquisition of PNG materials through untraditional means, such as web searches and peer information sharing, rather than field trips and has also discovered new suppliers in PNG. The Library has undertaken to archive Pacific websites and also recently created an online gateway to digitised documentary materials relating to the history, culture and people of the Pacific region. In 2008 the NLA provided short term training secondments for two Melanesian librarians, June Norman, of the National Library of Vanuatu, and Josepha Kapa, New Guinea Collection Librarian at the University of PNG. (The latter instigated by the PMB.) On 26 June the first NLA-ANU Pacific Resources meeting was held, attended by Jan Fullerton the NLA Director General and other professional staff from both institutions to exchange information on collecting activities, research and teaching trends, training, exchange, and support programs, and conference organisation. This will be an on-going series of meetings – the next to be held in November 2008.

ANU and NLA consolidation of effort to collect, preserve and make accessible Pacific materials has been paralleled in Canberra by the appointment of a Pacific curator at the National Gallery of Australia and allocation of a higher profile to Pacific materials in the National Museum of Australia. The National Archives of Australia (NAA) has also allocated more resources to Pacific archives matters. At recent PARBICA conferences the NAA and Archives New Zealand have encouraged recognition of the importance of public record-keeping to governance and accountability in the Pacific Island nations. This has led to greater cooperation between the NAA and Archives NZ and, with the

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<sup>8</sup> Maidment, E. "Who is collecting Pacific Island archives in Australia now?", in S Cochrane and M Quanchi (eds), *Hunting the Collectors: Pacific Collections in Australian Museums, Art Galleries and Archives*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle UK, 2007; 307-325.

support of their corresponding national aid organisations, greater support for the Pacific regional archives infrastructure.

An NAA officer, Dani Wickman, was seconded to the National Archives of the Solomon Islands for one year (2006-07) in order to help rebuild its government record-keeping capacity after a long period of inactivity during the crisis in the Solomons. Appointment of a further advisor to help re-develop the National Archives of the Solomon Islands is planned for 2008, depending on AusAID funding. Similarly, the National Library of NZ sent two conservators to Niue after Cyclone Heta devastated the Island in January 2004 to help recover damaged records. Archives NZ and the National Library of NZ despatched a team of officers in 2007 to help rebuild the National Archives of Niue and sent another team in June 2008.

Elsewhere in Australia, the Fryer Library at the University of Queensland now uses the services of a volunteer, Dr Peter Cahill, who works in association with the PNG Association of Australia, to develop a collection of personal papers, photographs and ephemera documenting the involvement of Australians in the colonial history of PNG. It is expected that Jim Sinclair renowned enormous personal collection of PNG archival materials will be transferred to the Fryer Library in due course. This is the fastest growing archive in the Fryer Library's Special Collections. The University of Wollongong Archives is re-newing its Pacific interests having just negotiated the acquisition of the Blatchford Collection on PNG Education.

In Fiji archival infrastructure is also being consolidated. Since independence the National Archives of Fiji has continued to operate to high standards with professional and dedicated staff. In 2005, with a staffing establishment approaching 20, the National Archives of Fiji managed government record-keeping so successfully that it was allocated F\$4m by the Fiji government for construction of a new archives repository. In the same year the Archives received micrographic and digitisation equipment valued at F\$0.5m from the Japanese International Cooperation Agency.

Elsewhere in the Islands archival infrastructure is more problematic. For example, the PNG National Archives and Public Records Services is professionally administered by indigenous staff of high order. Despite reduced staff numbers and resources (the Archives is located, with the National Library, in the under-funded Department of Education), the Archives not only manages transfers of records from some government agencies, but also runs records management workshops for government employees, and has carried out records rescue operations in Morobe, East Sepik and Milne Bay Provinces. Jacob Hevelawa, now Director-General of the PNG National Library, has listed the main problems facing the Archives as minimal opportunities for professional training, problems with maintenance of storage facilities, inadequate computing equipment and database software.<sup>9</sup>

The National Archives of Vanuatu, established in 1981, holds only administration records produced immediately before and after independence. Even so the archives in custody completely fill the cells of the former Haus Kranki (insane asylum) which acts as the repository. In the mid 1990s the staffing level of the National Archives of Vanuatu was reduced to one archivist and a cleaner. It lacked staff numbers, skills and space to maintain efficient record-keeping practices.

On the other hand the Vanuatu Cultural Centre (VKS), a semi-government agency, established in 1956, has had a stable history of growth and development, including collection of substantial audio and photographic archives aimed at reinforcing the validity of continuing customary social and economic practices. The VKS receives consistent support from Darrell Tryon, Lissant Bolton and other Australian academics, who helped set up its very successful field workers program and participated in annual fieldworkers' workshops. Other Australians have contributed to the development of its digital audio archives.

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<sup>9</sup> E. Maidment, "Report on PMB trip to PNG, 16 May-3 June 2007", 30 Jun 2007.

In 2004, the Vanuatu National Library was separated from the Public Library in downtown Port Vila and re-established at the Cultural Centre. The two professional staff at the National Library have ambitiously built-up its Vanuatu and Pacific Collections aiming “to collect and preserve ... all literature pertaining to and published about Vanuatu; such literature to cover all aspects of Vanuatu’s customs and culture, its social, economic and religious life, the land and natural environment; its people, communities, institutions and history.” (Naupa, 2005) In late 2007 responsibility for the maintenance of the Vanuatu National Archives have been transferred to the custody of the Cultural Centre. Funding for archives staff and the construction of a repository is not yet resolved.

In Kiribati, Kunei Etekira was elected to Parliament in 2007 and retired from his position as Kiribati National Archivist. His deputy, Tarawa Nataua, is also due to retire this year. There has been no succession planning and no attempt to fill the vacant National Archivist position. The first generation of Islander archivists, trained at the Western Pacific Archives or, more recently, at the University of NSW, is moving on without trained replacements on hand and without any established formal program for training archivists and records managers either at the USP or universities in PNG.

### **Conclusion on PMB impact in the region**

Celebrating the PMB’s 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary on 17 June, statements recognising the value of the Bureau’s activities were made by the Parliamentary Secretary for Pacific Islands Affairs and by several other commentators.

Mr Kerr said, “Since its establishment in 1968, the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau – PAMBU – has delivered on the vision of its founders – that is, to increase and enrich knowledge of the Pacific islands region....Since its beginnings, PAMBU has produced nearly 3,800 rolls of microfilm material relating to the Pacific. This means essential historical and cultural records have been preserved for the benefit of future generations of Pacific Islanders. In addition, PAMBU’s work has protected and enriched the resources available to scholars both in the region and throughout the world.”

Mr Kerr went on to expound the government’s “Pacific Partnerships” policy and noted that, “one particular area where I’m hoping the Pacific Partnerships for Development will make a real difference is in **education**. As a former Dean of the Law School at the University of Papua New Guinea, I take a close interest in higher education issues in the region, particularly teaching standards and research. I know that Pambu also takes a close interest in this area and is facilitating closer relations between Australian archives, libraries and universities and those institutions in the Pacific Islands.”<sup>10</sup>

On the same occasion Professor Ian Chubb said, “We at the Australian National University are deservedly proud of the role we have played in the advancement of Pacific scholarship. It is units like the Pacific Manuscripts Bureau that have put us at the forefront of international learning in the field of Pacific studies....The University’s contribution to the running of the multi-library consortium has been strong and outstanding , and it will continue.”

Professor Chubb went on to comment on the range of archival material which the PMB helps to preserve and pointed out that in recent years “the Bureau has taken a keen interest in helping and training our island neighbours to preserve their own records, working in partnership with archival repositories in the islands.”

He added that “the Bureau runs on a shoe-string budget. The members of its management committee, chaired since 1993 by Professor Brij Lal, offer their expert advice and assistance free of charge. It speaks volumes for the dedication and commitment of our staff.”

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<sup>10</sup> The text of Mr Kerr’s speech is on his website at <http://www.foreignminister.gov.au/parlsec/>

Professor Chubb thanked “all those who have been associated with the Bureau over its 40 years to date.” He said, “We recognize and respect all that you have done to advance the cause of Pacific scholarship and we join you in celebrating this milestone achievement.”

Mr Paul Brunton, representing the Mitchell Library, confirmed the on-going support of the Library for PMB and praised the Bureau’s archives preservation projects in the Pacific Islands.

Dr Peter Orlovich, formerly Lecturer in Archives Administration at the University of NSW, now Visiting Research Fellow with the School of History and Philosophy at the University of NSW, could not attend the celebration, but wrote to the PMB:

The establishment of the PMB was one of the most important initiatives ever taken in Australia to promote the preservation of the archival heritage of Oceania by directing its labours towards the location, identification and microreproduction of the archival resources of Pacific Island nations, states and territories, well before the administrations of those islands were able to adequately implement their own measures for ensuring the preservation of their own national, state and territorial archives. I am very pleased, therefore, to congratulate you and your committee, and especially your predecessors, on the very important contribution which PMB has made in the past forty years to ensure that the archival heritage of the Pacific Islands has been preserved in microform for posterity. The work of the PMB has also raised the profile of the archival heritage of the Oceanic states and nations.

The Pacific Manuscripts Bureau has an on-going role in the development of archives administration in the Pacific Islands, not only in vigorously continuing to pursue preservation reformatting projects, but also in acting as a conduit for information, support and assistance between the Islands and the Pacific rim. To this end the Bureau is attempting to consolidate its staffing situation by moving from one professional full-time position to one and a half, commencing in November 2008.

**Ewan Maidment**  
**Executive Officer**  
**Pacific Manuscripts Bureau, RSPAS**

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