RECORDS TERRITORY

NORTHERN TERRITORY ARCHIVES SERVICE NEWSLETTER

WELCOME

Welcome to Issue 19 of *Records Territory.* In this issue we have some catching up to do.

The Northern Territory Archives Service (NTAS) has emerged from a period where resources of the human kind were scarce, so much so that we were fresh out of editors to do this newsletter. Things are now back on track as we have recruited a good team of new staff to help provide all the services expected of us.

A revitalised focus on, and promotion of, our community information services and the progress of whole-of-government records management services are among the big challenges to be tackled by the team in the approaching months.

MIRACLE

NT Archives role in a miracle at Kununurra

In August 1997, Linda Bell (Archivist Record Services) spent some time in Kununurra looking at potential archives material that was relevant to the Northern Territory. Whilst in the area Linda also ran a workshop for the Kununurra Historical Society on the management and preservation of archive materials.

On 19 June 1999 the building housing the Society's Archives was gutted by fire but, thanks to the proper housing of material that followed Linda's workshop, the stunned Society members found the majority of the material was intact – they referred to it as 'the miracle on Coolibah Drive'. The Secretary of the Society was interviewed a few weeks later on ABC regional radio where he expressed the Society's deep appreciation to Linda and the NTAS, stating that if it hadn't been for Linda's preservation training, they would have lost all their material. Well done Linda!

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ADMINSTRATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

A branch of DCIS

In the last issue of *Records Territory* we advised that the NTAS had been administratively relocated to the newly created Department of Corporate and Information Services (DCIS). The NTAS sits alongside the NT Library and Information Service (NTLIS) and Information Technology Management Services (ITMS) within the Information Management Division of DCIS.

dcis

DEPARTMENT OF CORPORATE
AND INFORMATION SERVICES

NEW STAFF

Jill Parker has recently brought her smiling face and charming demeanour to the position of administration officer at the NTAS.

Cathy Flint is the new Archivist Information Services. Cathy is responsible for overseeing and promoting the information services which the NTAS provides to the community. Issue of this overdue newsletter has been one of Cathy's first tasks since coming on duty!

Craig Lush is our new Lending Officer who will be responsible for returning and issuing records to government agencies and researchers.

Two new positions

We are very pleased to have finally filled two new positions which were established by Cabinet in 1998 to improve the co-ordination of records management across the Government.

Barry Garside has taken on the position of Records Standards Co-ordinator. Barry's task is to co-ordinate records retention and disposal standards and procedures. This will involve advising on records disposal scheduling across the government and supervising the records retention and disposal contracts.

Beth Moloney is the new Records Policy Coordinator. Beth will be responsible for the coordination and implementation of records policies and guidelines across the Government and for overseeing the whole-of-government records management system contract.

Farewell

We say farewell and thanks to long time Records Lending Officer, Chris Spicer, who has moved on to greener pastures. For someone who wasn't too rapt in doing paperwork and working indoors, Chris managed to stick around for several years and always put an interesting perspective on things.

We also extend our best wishes to former administration officer, Glen Mitchell, who has returned to work with the Department of Mines and Energy. Glen advises that he did love us, but Mines and Energy pay him better.

*R*ESEARCH IN *P*ROGRESS

Research projects that have recently utilised the resources available in the NTAS Search Room include:

- Patagonian migration to the Northern Territory in the early twentieth century/*Dr Michele Langfield* (Deakin University)

- Deaths in Borroloola and the Gulf Country/*Jill Adams* (Genealogical Society of the NT)

- People in the North, 1901-1945/*Dr Michele Langfield* (Deakin University)

- TV documentary on the 'stolen generations'/*Monica Leuthen* (ABC)

- Selection of newspaper items on Cyclone Tracy for inclusion in National Archives display at NT Expo/ *Katherine Goodwin* (NAA)

- Master's Thesis on the influence of missions on traditional Yolgnu practices, particularly mortuary practices/*Susan Jenkins* (National Gallery of Australia)

- Research on WR Easton, Surveyor-General/*Bill Easton*

- In-depth study of the history of the NT 1860-1890/*Prof Jack Cross* (University of South Australia)

- Development of website on Yanyuwa culture and history for educational and archival purposes/*Dr Frances Devlin-Glass and Adrienne Campbell* (Deakin University)

- Documents relating to the founding of the Northern Territory/*Prof Alan Powell* (for the Founding Documents website - see below.)

*F*OUNDING DOCUMENTS WEBSITE - A NATIONAL PROJECT

The NTAS is participating in this collaborative project which involves all State and Territory archives. The aim of the project is to select the founding documents of the Commonwealth, State and Territories, and to produce a website to display these significant documents. The selection of the appropriate documents has been done by a reference group of eminent historians with Professor Alan Powell as our representative.

The aim of the project is to use new media to capture the attention of Australians, and of an international audience, to these documents of national significance, thereby enhancing an understanding of the Australian Federation and also of the role of archives in democratic government.

Target audiences are:

- tertiary and secondary teachers and schools

- researchers, media producers and the general public in Australia and overseas

- Australian and overseas cultural and educational organisations

- Australian people interested in finding out more about their history and government

- future Australians

- developers of subsequent projects to celebrate the centenary of federation.

The website will be launched in January 2000 following a series of pre-launch tests.

After all the planning and preparation, we are finally into the implementation phase of this project. The first priority is conversion of twenty three agencies using the mainframe RMS system which is not Y2K compliant in its current form. Agencies are also converting to using Thesaurus titling, based on *Keyword AAA*, for records at the time of conversion to the new recordkeeping system. This is a major change in work practices that has taken considerable effort to plan and implement.

As of 13 August, the following agencies have converted from the Mainframe RMS system to the RecordsConnect System comprising TRIM and IBM's DB2 Universal Database.

Office of the Commissioner for Public Employment

Department of Housing

Department of Local Government

NT Tourist Commission

Territory Health Services – all regions

Office of Aboriginal Development

Department of the Chief Minister

Department of Industries and Business

Department of Education

Department of Lands, Planning and Environment

Parks and Wildlife Commission of the NT

Department of Asian Relations and Trade

Department of Mines and Energy

Northern Territory University

NT Correctional Services

Department of the Legislative Assembly

Department of Primary Industry and Fisheries

NT Treasury

Conversion has generally gone quite smoothly. Considering that on average we have converted three agencies per week, there have been surprisingly few problems.

The acceptance of TRIM in agencies has been terrific. Most staff are adapting to the new system very quickly.

The following training has been conducted since May 1999:

10 users for Train the Trainer (3 days).

40 user for administrator training (2 days).

158 users for update user training (1 day).

31 users for enquiry user training (2 hours which is generally undertaken by agency staff, rather than the project team.

5 Users for limited update (electronic records management) training (1 day).

A pilot for Electronic Records Management commenced in the Department of the Legislative Assembly on 3 August. This pilot will run for eight weeks and will form the basis for a business case to be presented to Cabinet for Electronic Records Management across the Northern Territory Government (where appropriate).

When the conversion of all the RMS agencies has been completed, the project team will focus on other NT Government agencies, and replacement of the wide array of file and document tracking systems in all agencies (including the above agencies) with the use of TRIM. This will provide significant productivity benefits for agencies and enable them to have a single view of their corporate information.

For further details on the Project, please visit our website at www.nt.gov.au/nta/ .

The Records Connect Team(which includes NT Government and IBM personnel)

Back row l to r: John Hodgson, Shane Higgins, Simon Rice, Craig Scott
Front row l to r: Ann Chu, Celina Hodge, Jeanette Collins, Heather Norris

ORAL HISTORY –
DIGITISING THE WORD

Most oral history interviews lodged in the NTAS collections in the past were originally recorded on analogue cassette tape. About six years ago, Archives began to record on digital audio tape (DAT), which is now the most common medium being used for new recordings here. There are many differences between the analogue and digital methods but, from an archival point of view, an important advantage of digital audio is that it can be copied many times without adding "noise" to the record.

There is still some debate about which is a "better" archival sound medium, but certainly digitally recorded audio has become the professional standard, and there are significant advantages where the sound material is used in non-archival settings, such as extracts for broadcast, or in websites. The NTAS web-site (see www.nt.gov.au/nta) has an oral history exhibition using some short extracts from just a few of the interviews recorded about Cyclone Tracy in our collections. You can read the transcripts and, if your computer has sound, the sound of the voices can be easily and quickly downloaded for you to hear.

From the archival preservation point of view, whenever a new tape recording is lodged in the oral history collections, it is important that it be copied. Although some work was done in the past to copy old cassettes to archival open-reel tape, for some time now the NTAS has been making a cassette copy of all new recordings, also for permanent preservation. This has several uses. To save wear on the master recording, this reference copy is used to make working copy cassettes for use in transcription; and it can also be used by researchers who wish to listen to the interview, either to check the text transcript, or as a substitute for it.

Although the NTAS has developed detailed professional standards in respect of the way transcripts are compiled and checked, and finally cleared with interviewees, there is a growing realisation among researchers, encouraged by Archives, that a text transcript cannot really convey all the meaning that can be appreciated by the listener who can hear the information and ideas in the particular way that the original speaker was presenting, either intentionally or otherwise.

However, one of the main aspects influencing the way researchers use oral history is that a transcript is a very efficient way to access interview content, while a tape can be difficult and far more time-consuming to use. As a way of encouraging more reference to the original sound, one advantage of having the sound in digital format is that it carries a time code, so transcripts of digital recordings can be annotated with numerous accurate pointers to where any section might be on the tape. Most transcripts include a detailed content listing and summary, and these are also now being compiled with time and track markers. Summaries and listings with these details will also make it easier to use sound recordings without requiring the full verbatim transcript.

One problem up till now has been that DAT readers were not seen as practical in the Search Room environment, so the NTAS has now initiated the next step in digitising operations— new interview tape recordings, whether recorded digitally (DAT) or on analogue cassettes, are copied to an audio compact disk (CD). Even if the master was an analogue cassette recording, the copy CD is time-coded and, if the master was recorded on digital audio tape (DAT), all the original time codes and any index (or track) markers are also reproduced on the CD. These CD reference copies are now made instead of the cassette copies, and will be permanently preserved as the medium for research use.

However, there is another (fairly revolutionary) aspect to the new digital procedures: at the same time as the audio CD is made, another CD is made, of the kind read by a computer. The NTAS is now able to use software that comes from the court reporting environment—the transcriber plays the sound from the computer CD by using a foot-pedal attached to the computer, while the word-processing software used to type the text is also open. Thus the transcriber can play and back-space the CD sound at will whilst entering text through the keyboard.

CD copies for use in transcription are much clearer, and more easily controlled in the CD reader than in the old cassette systems. In the Search Room, the more easily-used audio CD will greatly encourage researchers to listen to all the nuances of meaning and colour of expression in the original recording, hopefully more often than was practical in the past with tapes.

NT HISTORY AWARDS FOR 1999

The recommendations of the Northern Territory History Awards Committee for the 1999 NT History Awards were approved and issued in July by the Hon. Daryl Manzie MLA, Minister for Corporate and Information Services. We congratulate the following recipients of the 1999 Awards:

Peter & Maureen Dunham of Darwin: $2000 for researching the O'Shea family history in the Northern Territory.

Shirley Brown of Alice Springs: $3000 for recording the stories of 50 famous Australians and their experiences in the Alice Springs region.

Arnhem Land Historical Society: $3500 for researching a brief history of Arnhem Land.

Genealogical Society of the NT and the National Trust Gulf Branch: $3000 for researching pioneer graves in the Borroloola and Gulf District and the Anthony Lagoon and Barkly District.

Peter Evans of Sydney: $1000 to complete research on the RAN Fairmile Ships based at Darwin during World War 11.

Clayton Fredericksen of Darwin: $4000 for archaeological research and heritage management at Fort Dundas, Melville Island.

Lisa Watts of Alice Springs: $3000 for researching the indigenous history of Pikilyi (Vaughan Springs, Mt Doreen Station).

Yvette Park of Alice Springs: $1200 to research the lives of Eastern Arrernte woman, Rose Cooper, and her daughters.

Teresa Napurrurla Ross of Alice Springs: $2000 to record and document accounts of the Coniston Massacre.

Barbara James of Darwin: $2800 to research the Territory's oldest church building and site, the Old Wesleyan Church in Darwin.

Genealogical Society of the NT: $3500 to continue researching the Pioneer Register of the Northern Territory.

Darwin High School: $1000 to assist students researching the history of the Darwin High School site.

Thanks must go to all the applicants. As in other years, the quality of applications was of a high order, and it is unfortunate that we are unable to support more projects. Unsuccessful applicants are encouraged to apply again next year.

*C*ONTRACT FOR RECORDS STORAGE AND DISPOSAL SERVICES

In May of this year, the Northern Territory Government issued contracts for records storage and disposal services with Centralian Records Management (Alice Springs) and Pickfords Records Management (Darwin). The gist of these contracts is that NT Government agencies are now free to deal with the contractors directly when planning and implementing a strategy for storage of secondary records (those records no longer required for current administrative purposes but which cannot be destroyed until some time in the future. Records which are to be kept forever (as archives) must still be transferred to the NTAS.

The facility in Alice is up and running and local agencies are encouraged to use this service right now (and, indeed, some already are). The Pickfords facility is under construction at Berrimah and, if all goes to schedule, should be ready to take in records in early December. The Pickfords contract also includes provision for the imaging of records, and this should be noted by those agencies in the Territory who wish to embark on wholesale scanning and indexing of their documents.

Ultimately, there will be a huge cost saving in storage of secondary records as most records of this type have been stored in costly office accommodation or in uncontrolled environments in storerooms and sheds.

Contact Barry Garside at the NTAS on 89247494 (ph) for further advice about these services.

Contacts for the respective facilities are:

> **Alice Springs**
> Mr Drury Pyper
> Centralian Records Management
> 12 Hele Crescent
> Alice Springs NT 0870
> Phone: 8953 3566. Fax: 8953 4474
>
> **Darwin**
> Mr Les Bullard
> Pickfords Records Management
> 889 Stuart Highway
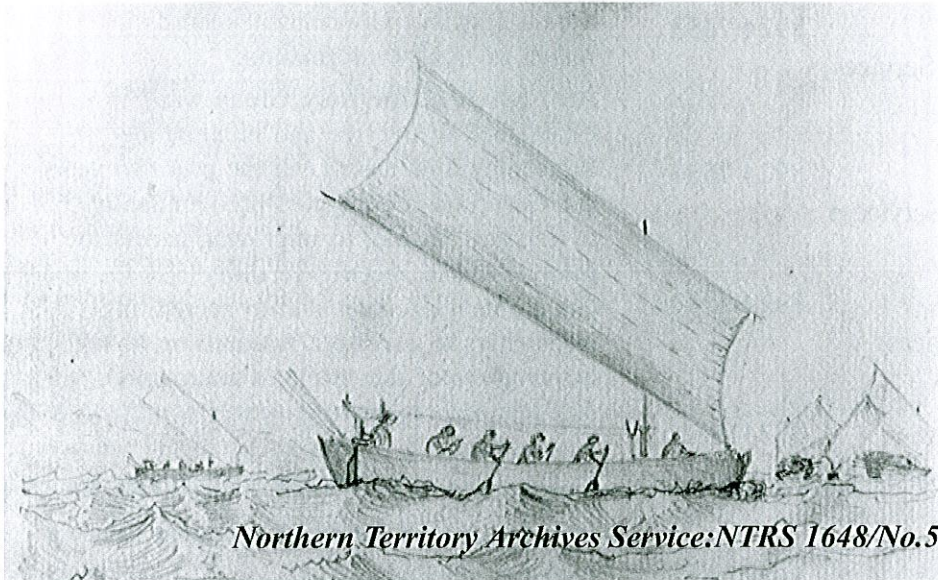> Berrimah NT 0828
> Phone: 8932 5999. Fax: 8932 5033

SPOTLIGHT ON........

ITEMS OF INTEREST IN THE NT

ARCHIVES SERVICE

The aim of this column is to highlight particular
series or items within series at the NTAS.

The pictures below are from the diary of John Macathur (NTRS 1648) who was both acting commandant and commandant of Port Essington for eleven years from 1837 to 1849 when the settlement was finally abandoned. The drawing of the prahu is one of several drawings included in his diary and the poem is the first of two verses. His diary shows that as well as being a meticulous record-keeper, he also had artistic talents which has left us with an a valuable snapshot of life in this remote outpost.

Northern Territory Archives Service:NTRS 1648/No.5

Northern Territory Archives Service:NTRS 1648/No.7

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*P*ROTOCOL FOR ABORIGINAL ACCESS TO RECORDS

The *Protocol for Access to Northern Territory Government Records by Aboriginal People Researching their Families* has now been in effect for nearly two years.

The Protocol is an agreement between the Territory Government and Aboriginal groups designed to assist Aboriginal people affected by past policies of family separation to access Territory Government records in search of family information.

An Aboriginal Advisory Group was established to oversee and monitor the Protocol and its use. Over the past two years the Group has deliberated predominantly over issues relating to improving access to information in specific Territory Government agencies and to accrediting researchers to carry out research on behalf of members of the 'Stolen Generations'.

The members of the Aboriginal Advisory Group comprise the following representatives:

Link-up Central Australia .... Anne Ronberg

Link-up Top End .... Rosie Baird

Stolen Generations Central Australia .... Vacant

Stolen Generations Top End .... Vikkie Hoult

Community representative .... Valerie Day

Territory Government .... Greg Coleman

Contact Greg Coleman at the NTAS for further information about the Protocol. Contact Andrew Pitt at the NTAS to seek access to Government records.

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