

**ASSDA Melbourne Node
LIEF 2009 Archival (Accession) Workshop – 2**

**Workshop Notes
Day 1 – Tuesday 9th June, 9:30am – 5:00pm**

Attending:

Elizabeth Mulhollann (UTS) - Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri;
Len Smith (ANU) - Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri
Gordon Briscoe (ANU) - Tues, Wed, Thurs
Rachel Tropea (UoM) - Tues, Wed, Thurs
Michael Jones (UoM) - Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri
Gavan McCarthy (UniMelb) - Tues, Wed, Thurs
Gabrielle Gardiner (UTS)- Thurs
Alex Broom (UoS) - Tues, Wed a.m
Paul Monaghan (UTS) - Tues, Wed, Thurs, Fri
Karen Dennison (ANU) – Tues a.m., Thurs a.m.
Janet McDougall, Anna Larsen, Sharron Turner (ANU) – Tues a.m.

References:

Julie Mcleod – Accession Report (from LIEF 2009 Archival Workshop – 1)

9:30 Introduction

Gordon Briscoe:

Gordon's background is in history. Born in Northern Territory, before WW2. Ward of the State. Scholarly interests – Matric - economics, statistics, accounting, political science. Activism - Maralinga testing, atom bombs at Woomera. Honours thesis on aboriginal development and capitalism in the Northern Territory. Weapons development. Atomic energy commission in Western regions. Interests then shifted – PhD - aboriginal health. Population Health Research in a regional sense, in Western Australia and Queensland. Half and full caste population. Came in contact with Len Smith.

Publications:

Len R. Smith: "The Aboriginal Population of Australia", The Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia, Canberra, 1980.

Gordon Briscoe: "Counting Health and Identity: A history of Aboriginal health and demography in Western Australia and Queensland 1900 – 1940", published by Australian Studies Press for the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Canberra ACT 2003.

Len R. Smith: Associate Researcher, Demographic Research Centre, part of ASSDA. Background in demography. Collected an enormous amount of material, ATSIDA, want to make it available to others.

Records: had to move them quickly, have been bundled together and moved to 20 Balmain Crescent.

Gavan: Accession – Mapping collection as is. Document that without destroying context,

structure and relationships between stuff. Goal to have it all in archival boxes, so we can tell the story as far back as it goes. Documentation processes you go through is absolutely

critical. Goal is to complete first pass documentation, or accession, this week. We will review the process continually to ensure that we keep on track. Have to be incredibly meticulous, and consistent. We have to look at how the records document themselves. At this stage, we take everything as we find it, document it, think about the context, not thinking about what we want to keep at this stage. Rich story held in the records.

Tools:

*Heritage Documentation Management System (HDMS), using one part – the Accession table. Michael will do data entry, the rest of us will work in teams using 'Accession Sheets', pencil.

*Accession Sheets – these forms have been prepared for each team for documenting the collection, and emulate the fields in the HDMS.

*Camera – to take photos of boxes, contents, with Accession numbers, and on the shelves. Also, use the camera to record Len and Gordon when you ask them questions.

*Use texta to label boxes, and pencil to fill in accession sheets

Len Smith:

Structure of research projects. First set of records relate to Len's PhD, book, census and other records of population health dynamics. Beginning at first time of European contact. This collection here is the only place where that population data is all together.

1. Census and other records – population dynamics – births, deaths - tabulations. Referendum, Len contacted the ABS, said didn't have records that Len knew existed. They don't have them 'archived', or they're 'closed' access. Len found the information they said didn't exist. Sitting in binders, tabulated material.

2. Annual Aboriginal Census, 1921 – 1944. From 1921 census on, got population estimate including aboriginals. Till 1944. This is the main material we want to document. Gordon gathered this material. Unique source of way population changed during this period. Stopped declining, started growing. Increasing involvement of police, of aboriginals in employment etc.

1930s fed govt started to get involved, gave grants to states.

1952 – "New Assimilation", states had full power over aborigines, 1952 – 1967, 1967 referendum, gave fed govt power to include aboriginal people in census, and other powers. Gordon was a ward, didn't get citizenship till 1969. But in WA was later. Act repealed later there.

3. Individual Records – Northern Territory Aboriginal Population Record (NT APR). Legal status of aboriginals, wards of the state based on race. This became untenable. NT govt compiled a list of full blood aboriginals. Len and Gordon have copies of this list. Gordon also collected info about population in Mt Isa too. Also, Queensland register of deaths by Spanish flu which Gordon has written about. Urgent demand for family history information.

4. Background Information – Protectors reports, Census Reports, Year Books etc.

5. Information pulled together through various projects – the records of those projects are also incredibly important. Gordon and Len's dissertations and publications (see above), drafts, correspondence etc.

10:30 Morning Tea

11:00

3 groups, tackle room 7 and long room today. Gordon's room later (folders to be boxed).

Room 7 - Leader – Elizabeth

Long Room – 3 components + drawers – move stuff on table to meeting room. Boxes on shelves, bookshelf, [map drawer], table.

Alpha-numeric codes for each team, used for database, accession sheets, and box labelling – ATSI2009-A001, ATSI2009-A002 etc. Label boxes with this code, and carton numbers within each accession, i.e. 1, 2, ... 5/5 on last box. 1/1 for a single carton in an accession. Label every side of box. If there are markings on box that might conflict with our numbering system, cross it out. If it is a note, like "papers to be sorted", LEAVE IT! It's part of the story of the records.

Order of processing on shelves - start processing left to right, top to bottom.

Whole collection to end up in cartons.

Descriptive list of contents of box, as you find them.

Gavan talked people through the Accession Sheet, which is a reflection of the fields that form the accession table in the HDMS. Some fields will be filled out at the end, like the dates field, when you have completed describing the contents of the accession unit:-

Transfer date is the date of registration for our purposes.

Physical location, bay, shelf number, north wall, room, etc. (facing front door from the inside, west is front door).

Provenance – who's records are they; who collected the records. Gordon and/or Len's records at this level.

Accession Title – meaningful content e.g. "Videos of ...", rather than 'Miscellaneous'.

Title Qualifier – e.g. box might have a meaningful title which goes in the accession title, but you might want to qualify it with some more info, extra stuff not included, "also contains..."

Control – control codes, i.e. any existing control codes, unique identifiers already on the files, useful for identifying records which may have been filed together.

Date range - of accession unit, may have a circa or ?, info gathered from files.

Date Qualifier – contents may include stuff from 1892 – 1975, however most of it is from 1972 – 1975. so you would record "mostly 1972 – 1975" in this field.

Linear Quantity – how much shelf space it occupies. Helps with reports, collection size.

Estimated number of Inventory items – how is stuff divided up, a unit of records that should never be split up, e.g. volume or file. Consider it as a digitised unit, e.g. dividing up a lever-arch folder into manageable units in terms of digitising it, as well as using a digitised unit.

Archive – in this case, yes to everything.

Access – may be reasons they should be closed, some stuff, etc.

Retention – may be a designated retention period, can't be made available till [year], etc.

Details – influenced by how much you know about what's going to happen next. E.g. if you know they will be inventory processed, don't need much detail. In this case, we don't know

when or by whom this work will take place, so we will need to describe is each inventory unit, e.g. a file is an inventory unit.

Title on file – date range – width of file/unit

12:30 Lunch

1:15 Accession as a group – we looked at a box of unstructured files as an example, photographed the box and then sorted the records by laying out the individual 'units of management', i.e. files or 'chunks' of loose papers. Return to box in same order each file is described.

We then split up into Accession in teams of three or more, with Len and Gordon moving around the groups to give advice.

3:30 Afternoon Tea

4:00 Review and Revise

Rachel's team – 5 boxes of loose files, the rest are structured, i.e. tapes, computer printouts etc. Tapes marked up and Nesstar – Karen to enquire.

Michael's team on box 2; Elizabeth's team on box 3. Very unstructured - 3cm chunks cause there's not enough structure to split them further. Rachel, Alex and Karen (half day) to work with Len on book shelves tomorrow.

Days 2-4 – Wednesday 10th June – Friday 12th June, 9:00am – 5:00pm (NOTE: TPP members will be attending a meeting on Friday instead of the workshop).

A name was decided on for the archive:- Documenting Demography and Health records of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders.

In the morning of Day 2 we went over ways of entering notes in the Details field so as to be very explicit and unambiguous.

- Use "includes" when describing a selection, e.g. includes x, y, z.
- Use "contains" to indicate that you are describing the full contents of a file, or box etc.
- Structured data entry descriptions in a consistent fashion, i.e.
 - 1 folder – "[title]"
 - notes about content
 - date
 - linear quantity
- 4 folders = 4 titles. Date each title, or make it clear that it is an overall date range relating to all files
- Spell out acronyms, do not abbreviate titles
- Be explicit, define everything you do,
 - e.g. 1: We have used the term "loose papers" here to mean papers not found in folders
 - e.g. 2: Box of loose papers, including... We organised the papers into piles of

between 1-3cm, and into manila folders.

- e.g. 3: The numbers below were assigned during the accessioning process

We then broke up into teams and continued processing.

Work continued this way into Day 3.

After lunch we reviewed our progress. Most of the Accession will be completed by the end of the week, except for boxes in Room 7. The boxes have been labelled with their Accession and box number; Len will go through the contents and fill out accession sheets for them, and then send them on to Melbourne for processing into the database.

At the end of the day Maggie Shapley gave us a tour of the ANU Archives, where the records will eventually be housed.

On Day 4 some staff attended TPP/Exec Meetings. Michael, Elizabeth, Len and Gordon finalised the remaining processing.

In the final analysis, although the documentation of the contents of the archive was not completed this week, most was, and the remaining stuff was boxed and labelled with Accession IDs. These IDs and the location of the boxes is recorded in the HDMS, and Len, who is now trained up in accession documentation, will fill out accession sheets and send them on to us at the ESRC for processing into the HDMS.