Local History Co-ordination Project

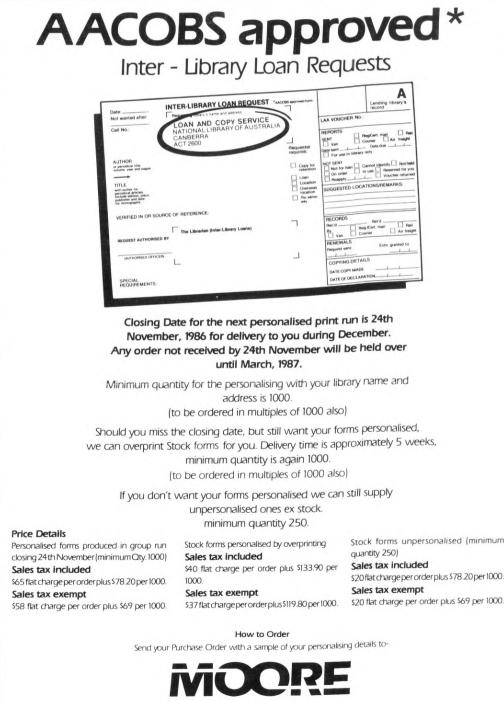
A Local History Co-ordination Project has been set up in the School of History to assist the writing of local history in New South Wales in the years leading to the Bicentennial. Established by Professor Patrick O'Garrell and Assoc. Professor John Ingleson, the Project has been in operation since May. It is funded jointly by the Australian Bicentennial Authority and the University of New South Wales. Anne O'Brien and Julia Horne have been employed as its full-time workers.

The broad aims are to co-ordinate the writing of local history throughout New South Wales, to provide help where required in historical method, and to work for long-term support of history-related activities. We will write no history ourselves but provide a central point of reference and information for those who are writing local history. As a university outreach program, its main impetus is to narrow the gap between university history dePage 8

partments and local historians. Situated as it is in the School of History at the University of New South Wales, the Project is well placed to engage the services of academics who are experienced in the study of history and who feel a strong commitment to communicating that experience to the wider community. But the Project also calls upon professionals who are experienced in different approaches to history such as display method, oral history and publishing.

The Project's monthly news bulletin, Locality, acts as a means of reporting and exchanging information. It contains information about relevant events, activities and projects as well as substantial articles, and readers are encouraged to contribute to the bulletin. Given the extent and range of local history activities in New South Wales, the Project's role of co-ordination — via Locality is vital.

A motivating force behind the Project is that its activities should be determined in consultation with those at whom they are aimed. The Project is running a series of conferences and workshops in city and country on writing local history. The programs for



these are not static; they will change to suit the different needs of city and country communities. Rather than impose a pre-conceived program on local historians, the plan is to visit local areas, talk to interested people, assess areas of need and offer services geared to the needs of that particular community. The first such field trip was to attend a small meeting at the Council Chambers in Queanbeyan, at the invitation of Queanbeyan's Town Clerk to meet local people interested in their area's history. As a result of that meeting, nourished particularly by the ideas of those present, a regional conference was organised and held on 20 September. A wide variety of people from the south-east region attended, representing groups such as local history societies the National Trust, schools and professional architects working on conservation. A num

ber of independent researchers attended. The conference included a paper by Peter Orlovich about the Action Committee or Local Government Records. This committee was established in 1981 to encourage local government authorities to establish and maintain proper facilities for the storage management and use of their own archives

Peter Spearritt, director of *Historic Record Search*, explained that this nation-wide Bi centennial project was aiming to locate and register paper-based historic documents held in private hands. Both of these initiatives in volve identifying historic records which, of course, are the mainstay of any history writing: to include discussion about them in conference/workshop programs, as well as in *Locality*, is an important aspect of the Project's co-ordinating role.

The first workshop was held in August is Sydney and will be repeated in October. Th program was intended to provide a context fo local history writing. Papers were presente on the essential elements to consider in study ing local history, ways of using evidence an drawing conclusions, communicating histor via museums and aspects of publishing. Th number attending workshops is limited to 3 to allow as much participation and discussio as possible.

The Project also offers research advice t authors writing local history. We travelled t Forbes, Parkes, Bathurst, Orange and Ilfor in early August to meet with local historian there who are engaged in preparing manu scripts for publication. We also talked wit members of local council and local history l brarians whose interest and support of the area's history is vital for raising the commu nity's awareness of its origins, development and thus planning for its future. Again after these consultations, a conference is bein planned for this region to be held at Parke on Saturday 22 November. Sessions planne include discussions on oral history, display ing historical themes and relationships be tween family and local history.

The project aims to encourage as much discussion about local history as possible. T this end, we invite enquiries on (02) 697 2379 or write to us c/-LHCP, School of History UNSW, PO Box 1, Kensington, NSW, 2033. T subscribe to *Locality*, please send to the above address your cheque or money order made ou to the LHCP for \$10 (for 12 issues) with you name and address.

Anne O'Brie Julia Horr

Stephen O'Connor's qualifications appeared as BA, DipLib, MSocSc (Hons). They should have been listed as BA, DipLib, ALAA. He is currently completing his Masters degree.

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