

Demise of the AJCP

Graeme Powell has had a long association with the Australian Joint Copying Project, now defunct

The Australian Joint Copying Project, one of the oldest microfilming projects in the world and an outstanding example of Australian library cooperation, came to an end on 30 June 1993.

The Project was initiated by the National Library (NLA) and the State Library of NSW in 1945 and microfilming at the Public Records Office in London commenced in 1948. It continued without a break for 45 years and in that time produced 10 000 reels of film of manuscript material relating to Australia, New Zealand and the Pacific.

The documents filmed were held in all the major libraries and archives in Britain and Ireland and material was also located and copied in museums, learned societies, businesses and private homes. They dated from the mid-eighteenth century and documented such themes as exploration, colonisation, convict transportation, free emigration, politics and public administration, defence and military conflict, foreign policy, imperial relations, trade and foreign investment, science and sport.

In addition to the two original partners, about twenty libraries in Australia and New Zealand at various times contributed to the funding of the AJCP. Complete or partial sets of the film are held in a number of libraries in both countries.



AJCP stalwarts Margaret Phillips (on left), Microfilm Librarian at the NLA who has edited a number of AJCP Handbooks; Sara Joynes who was the last AJCP Officer in London 1987-93; and Graeme Powell who was her predecessor, 1979-87.

Since 1988 the NLA had alone been responsible for the administration of the AJCP and it had foreseen that the Project would have to end in 1993. Rising film costs, poor exchange rates and declining acquisition budgets had made it increasingly difficult to maintain full-time staff in London and carry out an active filming program. Moreover, while manuscripts of Australian and Pacific material will continue to come to light in Britain, it was felt that most of the outstanding collections, particularly from the

colonial period, had been filmed and that the original aims of the Project had been well and truly achieved.

The NLA remains interested in identifying and, where possible, copying unique material of Australian interest held in other countries, thereby making it more accessible to Australian researchers. Filming projects in European countries, North America or elsewhere are likely to be smaller and more specific than the AJCP but it is hoped that they would be carried out on a cooperative basis. ■

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