

Ingenuity, Persistence and Hard Labour: Impressions of the Forty Years of ARANZ

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Good morning all, it's a real pleasure to be here with you to mark this significant occasion in the life of the Association. Thank you to Sean McMahon and his organising committee for the invitation to deliver this paper.

In the time allotted to me, it is just not possible to cover all of the significant activities undertaken by ARANZ over the past forty years – hence my reference to ‘impressions’ in the sub-title of my paper. They are my view of what is significant, others would certainly come up with a different list, but hopefully there would be a great deal of overlap between us.

In September 1978, while commenting on the implementation of the Smith Report, Graham Bagnall, a former Chief Librarian of the Alexander Turnbull Library and a notable historian and bibliographer, said, with regard to the Association:

But you are young: a far wider circle than historians will find you indispensable, and, with ingenuity, persistence and hard labour, you will get there.¹

I believe that his reference to ‘... ingenuity, persistence and hard labour’ can be applied to almost all of the major activities undertaken by ARANZ over the forty years, and sums the period up well, hence my adoption of his phrase.

But let us begin at the very beginning, with a recap of the rationale for the formation of ARANZ. This requires placing its formation in context. During the 1970s, annual conferences of the NZ Library Association (NZLA) had usually contained one or more sessions relevant to archivists and records managers. However at the 1974 conference, on 21-22 February, something out of the ordinary occurred. The afternoon of the first day had a session which was devoted to papers on the theme of local authority records. During these, as Stuart Strachan has recorded: “it was apparent that there was considerable dissatisfaction with the state of archives in general, national as well as local.”

The meeting of approximately 80 people then unanimously passed a resolution recommending to the NZLA Council that a committee be established:

To make specific recommendations for the future development of national and, in particular, local archives in New Zealand...

The inclusion of the word 'national' in the resolution was especially significant for the future formation of ARANZ, as it showed those present were thinking of the wider import of the committee's work, not just a narrow focus on local authority archives. The following day saw two important developments. Firstly, a smaller meeting to that on the previous day recommended the following to the proposed Archives Committee:

1. That the Committee be as widely representative as possible of organisations concerned with archives.
2. That a newsletter be issued quarterly and that Mr Strachan be asked to edit it.
3. That the Committee, set up by Council, should appoint working parties to formulate standards of archival practice regarding all aspects of archives administration.
4. That the Committee organise a training session or workshop for archivists within the next year.

The NZLA Council on 22 February approved the resolution passed the previous day.

The revived Archives Committee did not waste time in getting cracking and, over the next two years, a lot happened as a result of its work. The first issue of Archifacts appeared in April 1974, and it continued to be produced on a quarterly basis. Its existence was important as it served as a channel of communication for archival matters and especially for discussion on the future state of archives in New Zealand. The Committee, via the NZLA, made an unsuccessful submission on archives during consideration of the Local Government Bill 1974. Significantly, planned meetings of academics, staff of institutions, and researchers were held in the main centres to discuss major archival issues in their communities, in particular regional records offices. A major seminar on archives and manuscripts was held in September 1975, in Wellington. Organised by Tom Wilsted, Manuscripts Librarian of the Turnbull Library, it was attended by 51 people, far more than was initially expected, and was judged a great success. Tom was to play a leading role in the formation of this Association. Submissions were sent on proposed insertions to the

Archives Act and Local Government Act.

Meanwhile across the Tasman, similar developments were taking place, where intense discussions amongst archivists culminated in the formation of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA), in April 1975. The profession had decided to break away from the Library Association of Australia, which had been the body representing many of them. Archivists wanted to control their own destiny. Awareness of this significant development circulated in this country.

In New Zealand, the April 1976 issue of *Archifacts* announced

For some months there has been discussion among archivists and others about the need and practicability of an association concerned specifically with archives, manuscripts, records management and similar subjects. While only a small number are employed professionally in this field, the Archives Seminar held last September showed that there are many who have an interest in such records because they use them for research or genealogical purposes. For this reason the Archives Committee of the N.Z. Library Association has appointed a subcommittee to investigate the need for such an association.

Tom Wilsted, Stuart Strachan and Rosemary Collier were appointed as the subcommittee. From the start, the emphasis was placed on any new organisation being an 'interest group', not a professional body, a very important distinction compared with the new body in Australia, which was controlled by professionals. It would focus on training, staffing of institutions, standards for the preservation and use of records and, most importantly, acting as a pressure group for better archives legislation.

Over the next few months, public meetings were held in a number of cities, with particularly well attended ones being those in Wellington and Dunedin. No surprise there! There was strong support at these meetings for the view that urgent attention was required to radically improve the state of archives and records management nationally. Consideration was given to continuing to make progress with this via the Archives Committee, joining with the N.Z. Historical Association, or taking the ASA route. All three options were rejected for various reasons, e.g. lack of focus and potential membership size. There was, however, overwhelming national support for almost identical motions at the meetings for the formation of a standalone Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, and for the formation of regional steering committees to co-ordinate the drafting of a constitution for the new body. Things were certainly on the move.

And so, after only a few very busy months of hard work, the day of the new dawn arrived. On Saturday 2 October 1976 at 9.30am in the New Zealand Library School's premises, Borthwick House, 85 The Terrace in Wellington, about 45 people gathered (there were also 27 apologies) and approved a constitution and other essentials to bring ARANZ into existence and to publicise its formation.² You can read all about it in the February 1977 issue of Archifacts.

The Objects of the new Association were as follows:

1. To foster the care, preservation and proper use of archives and records ...
2. To arouse public awareness of the importance of archives and records ...
3. To promote the training of archivists, records keepers, curators, librarians and others ...
4. To encourage research into problems ... and to publish the results of this research.
5. To promote the standing of archives institutions.
6. To advise and support the establishment of archives services ...
7. To publish a bulletin ... and other publications ...

Most importantly, the decision was made that ARANZ should be a 'broad church' organisation, unlike the ASA, with all those interested in archives and records being welcomed as members. New Zealand was just too small to do otherwise.

In the next section of my paper, I want to assess how well ARANZ has met these Objects by selecting and discussing a number of significant examples from its multifarious activities over the past forty years. I do not intend dealing with Archifacts, as this is the subject of another paper. However, before I do so, I would like to pay a personal tribute to all those who worked so hard over several years to bring ARANZ into existence, notably Tom Wilsted and Rosemary Collier and those who served on the regional committees, but especially Stuart Strachan who has not received, in my opinion, adequate acknowledgement to date of the absolutely pivotal role he played from 1968 to 1976.

As I have already mentioned, one of the drivers for the creation of ARANZ was considerable dissatisfaction with the overall state of archives and record keeping throughout New Zealand. The new Council of the Association was determined to address this situation at a very early stage, at its second meeting in December 1976, when it was decided to invite a prominent overseas archivist to:

... report on the archives situation in New Zealand, and to make recommendations for its future development, and that the Department of Internal Affairs be approached with a view of seeking their co-operation.³

The decision to invite a prominent overseas expert to prepare the report was not a surprise – there were many precedents for doing this, and besides, the Council was of the view that only such an independent person's report would have sufficient credibility for possible implementation. Involving the Department was an obvious step, as it administered the National Archives, was responsible for the Local Government Act and other relevant legislation – and besides, its Minister controlled access to lottery funds which could fund such a project. All went well, with receipt of a lottery grant, and planning and circulation of a survey to institutions. In February through March 1978, Dr Wilfred Smith, Dominion Archivist of Canada came here for six weeks. He toured the country and met with key people and organisations. The resulting fifty page "Smith Report" was published in June 1978.⁴ His report to ARANZ, *inter alia*, traversed the past and present archives situation, critiqued in some detail the National Archives, which he described as follows: "The heart and centre of a national archives system must be a strong National Archives..."; discussed specialist archival institutions eg Turnbull, business, church, etc; and proposed a structure for education and training for both archivists and records managers. Dr. Smith also did not neglect the public, with a section entitled "Promotion of the Appreciation and Use of Archives." Finally, he outlined a vision for a "National Archives System." The implementation of a national plan for the development of archives he bequeathed to ARANZ, the Report's commissioner. There were twenty-eight Recommendations in total. It was relevant to almost all of the Objectives of ARANZ, so a very good start.

The Association took the Report and ran with it, by devoting a seminar to it, held on 4 September 1978, and attended by one hundred participants. While there were some diverging views from speakers, at its conclusion, a motion was unanimously passed, as follows:

This meeting supports, in principle, the findings of Dr Smith, and instructs Council to implement these in the best manner possible, by the best means possible.⁵

I have done a somewhat subjective analysis of Dr Smith's recommendations

and concluded that most of them were not implemented in the years immediately following, or in the specific form proposed, but over time a goodly number of the areas he focused on have seen significant change for the better.

Perhaps the major impact of the 'Smith Report' was in its consciousness-raising, with the right people and organisations, that things did need to change. Certainly, ARANZ has never stopped working on some of the recommendations, especially those pertaining to the strengthening of the National Archives, more of which later.

The next area of endeavour I wish to examine is training for archivists and record keepers, Object number three of the Association's Objects. From the beginning, there was a real focus on the practical side of this, with major national and local seminars being organised over the years, both centrally and by branches, for practitioners. Examples of these are the ones on Photographic Conservation (September 1982), the long running school archives workshops organised by the Auckland Branch and those run by the Otago/Southland branch in recent years.

In addition, in an effort to reach and draw in recordkeeping members, for a number of early years, a records management newsletter was inserted into Archifacts. Rosemary Collier led this initiative and should be acknowledged and congratulated for this.

It has to be admitted that this work has not been systematically planned over the years, and that resources to keep it going depended on the willingness to be involved of a small number of experienced people. However, while ARANZ Council was well aware from Dr. Smith's report that formal education for archivists and record keepers needed major attention, it took fifteen years before that came to pass. In June/July 1993, Dr. F. Gerald Ham, a leading United States archivist and archival educator, was brought to New Zealand by ARANZ to "listen, observe, consult and recommend" a "plan for the initial and continuing education of New Zealand archivists and records managers ..." ⁶ This ninety-six page "Ham Report" is a very valuable stocktake of the education and training situation pertaining to practitioners in 1993, as it contains data from three questionnaires circulated to archivists and records managers.

Dr Ham made eight recommendations in his report, with the three main ones being those pertaining to the establishment of a university postgraduate qualification for archivists, a Certificate in Records Management at a polytechnic for records managers, and ARANZ's role in promoting education and professional development. He also made proposals for continuing education for both groups, an Archival Field

Service, and that National Archives act as a Clearing House for Archival Information.⁷

Following publication of the Report, there followed a long and frustrating process, as ARANZ Council (the work was ably led by Brad Patterson) endeavoured to implement the recommendations. Suffice it to say, that despite lengthy negotiations with two universities, it was not possible for agreement to be reached with either for a full archives course. However, since that time, Victoria University has developed its Masters of Information Management, Postgraduate Diploma, and Postgraduate Certificate of Information Studies courses, which include archives and records management subjects. The Open Polytechnic now provides relevant Bachelors, and a Diploma in Records and Information Management. One could conclude that Dr Ham's two central recommendations have now been implemented, and that ARANZ should take the credit for this, at least with sowing the seeds, if not the direct implementation.

One area of very successful activity has been that of the Association's annual conferences and, more recently, symposia, which have delivered stimulating papers and discussion. Several conferences have been jointly held with the ASA, both here and in Australia. There has been one conference devoted to a Maori theme, *Nga Taonga Tuku Iho - Treasures Passed Down*, held in Rotorua in 2004. Tiena Jordan, in addition to being the Convenor of that conference, also organised a day-long seminar with the same theme, in Wellington in 2012. Time for another one!! Many conferences have had distinguished overseas professionals attend and give keynote papers. Without ARANZ, these people would have been most unlikely to have come here, so a big tick to the Association. Sometimes in conjunction with a conference, training workshops have also been held – there was one on Arrangement and Description yesterday. Arranging these on a regular basis is important for members, especially those not in the larger institutions, and fulfils a need for continuing professional education and training – another Object.

I should like to turn now to consideration of the Association's branches, which I regard as being an essential part of ARANZ and whose strength is a measure of the strength of the organisation as a whole. For the first twenty years, there were six branches – Auckland, Waikato/Bay of Plenty, Central Districts, Wellington, Canterbury, and Otago/Southland. Since then, three of the six (Auckland, Waikato/Bay of Plenty, and Canterbury) have gone into recess. The result is that members and potential members have minimal access to the usual activities undertaken by branches – meetings, institutional tours, workshops etc. I don't wish to dwell on this sorry situation, except to say that I urge the new Council

to consider taking up the matter of the revival of the branches in recess.

Partnerships and alliances with other organisations featured strongly for a goodly number of years, and are also included as an Object of ARANZ in the Constitution. Indeed without it being provided for in the Constitution, there was an unwritten understanding in the early years to have a senior representative of the NZ Society of Genealogists elected to the ARANZ Council. One such person was Colleen Main. This arrangement proved to be very beneficial to both organisations, and the strength of the relationship was proven to when both took joint Court action against the Crown. However, over the past 15 years, this association has weakened considerably. There have also been links with the NZ Historical Association, but these have become more tenuous over the years. However, it is good that the current Council has a senior historian, Professor Charlotte Macdonald, as a member. We need to remember that one of the key Objects of this Association is to ‘... foster the proper use of archives and records, both public and private ...’ and that without users, there is no point in keeping archives. It has been a source of real concern to me that for quite some years now, ARANZ has not maintained strong relationships with the user communities – eg genealogists, and historians (both academic and groups such as railway and maritime historians). We ignore these researchers at our peril, and one of the reasons I rejoined the Otago/Southland Branch committee earlier this year was to involve users more in the Branch’s activities. We also now have two user representatives on the Committee.

I want to turn now to talk briefly about the effect on ARANZ of the very unfortunate formation in 1989 of the NZ Society of Archivists. This Society was set up after a prolonged fight within ARANZ for its control by a small group who wished the Association to be controlled by and exist more for the “professional” archivists and records managers, not the strongly-supported and very sensible “broad church,” as it had been up until then. When their efforts were resisted and their proposal eventually rejected, as I believed was the right thing to do, they formed a new organisation, the NZ Society of Archivists Inc. Ironically, some of them continued as ARANZ members! However, the battle for the “hearts and minds” of ARANZ’s members did considerable damage to the Association, in terms of its numbers, the time its Council could devote to other matters, its finances, and its reputation. The immediate years leading up to this split and several years thereafter were very low ones for this Association, and it took a long time for ARANZ to rebuild. The Society ceased to exist on 9 January 2006, and its remaining assets came to ARANZ. Its journal, the NZ Archivist, ran from 1990 to 2004 and

contained much useful information – to make it more widely available, ARANZ digitised the issues in 2014 and access is available on its website.

Lastly, in this traverse of some of the highs and lows, I need to discuss the matter which has consumed the most resources (certainly financial), time and attention of the Association throughout its forty years. I refer, of course, to the status, standing and resources of National Archives/Archives New Zealand. Quite rightly, ARANZ has concluded since 1976, and indeed before this as I have already mentioned, that without a strong Archives at the centre of the hub, the rest of New Zealand's record keeping and archival framework will be weak. The Smith and Ham Reports confirmed this view was the right one. However, it has been a war with many battles on a number of fronts to date, in order to try and raise the status and standing of Archives and to see it led and resourced adequately – and the war has not yet been won I regret to say. The Smith Report was the ammunition for the first salvo and ARANZ Council did its very best from 1978 onwards to see that Dr Smith's recommendations for improving its status within Government, its staffing, the erection of a new purpose-built and freestanding building, its organisation, etc. were implemented. Things took a long time to change for the better, but thanks to the persistent efforts of this Association, as well as a few very dedicated individuals within National Archives, especially Ray Grover (Director and Chief Archivist 1981-91), progress was made. Ray's time saw much in the way of improvements in staffing, internal reorganisation and work, the establishment of regional offices in Auckland and Christchurch (with planning for one in Dunedin) and, his most important achievement of all – convincing the Government to set aside the Government Printing Office at 10 Mulgrave Street as the new Head Office home (the relocation there occurred in 1990/1991). ARANZ was involved in all this, most especially a review of accommodation. A successful battle was fought with the Department of Internal Affairs (DIA) and the State Services Commission to stop Archives being placed in the planned new National Library building.

However, in the 1990s, with a National Government in power, there occurred the greatest and most important battle of all – over whether the Chief Archivist controlled all of National Archives, or whether bits of responsibility could be hived off to the Department of Internal Affairs. This is the purchaser/provider split concept. A whole PhD thesis has been written on this matter, but I only have time to sum up the outcome alas. Suffice it to say that ARANZ was alarmed by the ridiculous ideas and intentions emanating from the Secretary of Internal Affairs, Dr. Roger Blakely, and which became public. It decided to take a courageous step

in an endeavour to stop these developments in their tracks. It launched a vigorous, well-planned and executed campaign of opposition. It was greatly encouraged by the view of Dr. Michael Cullen, a leading Labour politician and Minister of Finance in waiting, at the Association's conference in Dunedin on 4 September 1998, when he said that Archives should be an independent agency within Government, and used his well-remembered phrase when describing the DIA change proposals:

It is all simply pretentious nonsense, the product of third-rate minds struggling with second-rate ideas.⁸

Despite many warning shots, DIA refused to accept the view from ARANZ that what was being proposed was illegal, under both the Archives Act 1957, and also the Public Finance Act. The Association decided the matter was too serious to let go and that it had no alternative but to take action, by filing in 1998 for a judicial review against the Crown, in the High Court. It was supported in this by the NZ Society of Genealogists, as joint plaintiff, a step which was greatly appreciated by ARANZ and should not be forgotten. A very unfortunate, unwarranted and untimely consequence of this whole saga was the departure of the Chief Archivist, Kathryn Patterson.

ARANZ won some of its case in the High Court, but lost in the Court of Appeal. However, the two court actions not only held up DIA from progressing its intentions until the Parliamentary elections of 1999, but also caused them to be greatly modified. As we all know, Labour won and Dr Cullen, appointed Minister of Finance, lost no time in putting in motion the necessary steps for National Archives to become a separate Government department, which it did in 2000, as Archives New Zealand. Very regrettably, after ten years of independence and excellent work overall, Archives fell victim to a hostile view of it from a new National government and at least one of the control agencies. It was legislated out of existence, sadly becoming again a part of DIA in 2011. ARANZ, along with others, opposed this change vigorously, to no avail.

It is my personal opinion that ARANZ will need to fight yet another battle – to regain independence for Archives New Zealand – as the period since 2011 has demonstrated yet again that Archives simply cannot flourish under DIA. Indeed, it could be argued that things are worse now than they were in the previous period when DIA administered Archives.

In conclusion, despite all the above ups and downs, achievements and failures, ARANZ has much to be proud of, as I have tried to show. The archives and records scene in New Zealand is very much the better for its

existence. In terms of a record's value, it has now, after forty years, been appraised as having enduring value – and reached nirvana – being an archive!! I look forward to celebrating its half century in 2026.

This is a slightly revised version of the Paper given at the ARANZ Symposium in Wellington, on 26 August 2016.

Endnotes

1. A. G. Bagnall, 'The Historical Perspective' in 'Perspectives on the Smith Report,' *Archifacts* No. 7&8ns, September-December 1978, p10.
2. Minutes of a Meeting to Form the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, 2 October 1976.
3. *Archifacts* No. 1 n.s. February 1977, p6.
4. Wilfred I Smith *Archives in New Zealand; A Report*. Wn, ARANZ, 1978.
5. *Archifacts* No. 7&8 n.s. September-December 1978, p46.
6. F. Gerald Ham, *Towards Career Professionalisation; An Education Programme for New Zealand Archivists and Records Managers*. Wn, ARANZ, 1994, pp v, ix.
7. F. Gerald Ham, *Towards Career Professionalisation; An Education Programme for New Zealand Archivists and Records Managers*. Wn, ARANZ, 1994, pp 33-35.
8. *Archifacts*, April 1999, p56.