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The Smoking Gun: Recordkeeping and Accountability

By Associate Professor Sue McKemmish

Sue McKemmish is an Associate Professor in the School of Information Management and Systems at Monash University. With her Monash colleagues she has developed innovative, integrated, multi-disciplinary approaches to records management, archival and information management education at postgraduate and undergraduate levels within the framework provided by records continuum and information continuum theory. She heads the SPIRT research project which is developing a national framework for standardising recordkeeping metadata. Through the Centre for Information Management and Systems Practice, she and Monash colleague Barbara Reed currently manage a consultancy project to deliver a Records Management and Archives Skills Training Program to the National Archives of Australia. Sue McKemmish is editor of *Archives and Manuscripts* and a Laureate of the Australian Society of Archivists.

The paper begins by defining in broad terms the role of recordkeeping in public accountability, then goes on to consider the interrelated theme of accountability in public recordkeeping by dwelling on failures in recordkeeping accountability and their consequences to organisations and society. Of course there are many examples of how good recordkeeping underpins accountability, but the interrelationship between accountable recordkeeping and public accountability can be most spectacularly demonstrated through the failures. On a more positive note, the paper then focuses on the components of accountable public recordkeeping regimes and the role of the archival authority in them. It concludes by considering how, in light of the reinvention of recordkeeping and archiving in recent times, archival roles and accountabilities are being redefined in fundamental ways. The paper was presented by invitation as the keynote address at the 22nd Annual Conference of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, "Records and Archives Now – Who Cares?", in Dunedin, 3-5 September 1998.

Before embarking on an exploration of the role of recordkeeping in public accountability, it is useful to consider briefly how the ground is moving around us. The shifting paradigms of our time include living and working in cyberspace, and related changing social and organisational structures and relationships, as well as the reconstruction of the public and private sectors associated with the politics of economic rationalism. These radical changes in the way society and our organisations are structured, and the way we relate to each other, share information and do business, have far reaching implications for recordkeeping. And in these contexts we need to re-think what public accountability and accountable recordkeeping mean and how they are assured.

Here are two very different views on paradigm shifts:

A door like this has cracked open 5 or 6 times since we got up on our hind legs. It's the best possible time to be alive, when almost everything you thought you knew is wrong. (Valentine in Tom Stoppard's *Arcadia*, Faber and Faber, London, 1993, p. 48)

He saw an ichthyosaur ... He stood face to face with the skull of a beast that must have lived ... unimaginably longer ago than even the most generous computations from Scripture allowed for the beginning of the world ... and thought – and thought what? '... The moment of my unbelief. The beginning of my make-belief ...' (Matthew in Graham Swift's *Ever After*, Picador, London, 1992, p. 101)

Valentine is a late 20th century chaos mathematician commenting on the 'splintering and blurring' of Newton's vision of an orderly and predictable world that has occurred in the last twenty years. He was excited and challenged by the paradigm shift he was experiencing. Matthew was a 19th century surveyor, amateur geologist and believer in God who came face to face with a dinosaur at a dig in Lyme-Regis. He was dismayed and defeated – this was the moment when his ordered pre-Darwinian world fell apart. In the late 20th century, it is interesting to ask audiences of recordkeeping professionals: are you a Valentine or a Matthew? Because at this point in history, if you're a Matthew, then you're probably in the wrong business.

Throughout the paper I will be taking a broad view of the role of recordkeeping, a view which is associated with records continuum thinking. It defines the role of recordkeeping in relation to accountability as:

- facilitating good governance
- underpinning accountability mechanisms
- constituting corporate, national and societal memory

- constructing individual, community and national identity
- providing authoritative sources of information.

The definition of accountability embraced by this view encompasses historical and cultural accountability as they relate to memory and identity, as well as democratic accountability. It is important to note that recordkeeping does not exclusively provide for accountability, although sometimes recordkeeping professionals speak as if it does. A key issue for the profession is to work out the specific role of recordkeeping vis a vis other agents that provide for accountability, construct identity and constitute memory.

To begin our exploration of recordkeeping and accountability, thus broadly defined, I want to look at some definitive statements of the recordkeeping-accountability nexus.

Some of the most telling statements of the significance of recordkeeping to the constitution of memory and the construction or memorialisation of identity come out of periods of life and death struggles – they reveal how desperately communities and societies fight to preserve or obliterate collective memory. This first quote comes from gay writer Edmund White commenting on the imperative in face of the AIDS epidemic to both "bear witness to the cultural moment" and memorialise individual lives before it and they vanish.

Maybe it's tactless or irrelevant to critical evaluation to consider an artist, writer, dealer or curator in the light of his death. Yet the urge to memorialize the dead, to honor their lives, is a pressing instinct ... There is an equally strong urge to record one's own past – one's own life – before it vanishes ... To have been oppressed in the 1950s, freed in the 1960s, exalted in the 1970s and wiped out in the 1980s is a quick itinerary for a whole culture to follow. For we are witnessing not just the death of individuals but a menace to an entire culture. All the more reason to bear witness to the cultural moment. (Edmund White, 'Esthetics and Loss'(1987), in *The Burning Library: Writings on Art, Literature and Sexuality 1969-1993*, Picador, London, 1995, p. 215)

The next is from the ongoing fight to repatriate Catalan records seized during the Spanish Civil War.

The collective memory of a nation is indispensable if we want to understand who we are ... where we came from ... and where we are going. Archives are the documentary base of this collective memory, which itself is so important to maintain and strengthen national identity. (*Avui*, 1996: commenting on demands for the repatriation of Catalan records seized by the Castilians during the Spanish Civil War and held ever since in the Archives of Salamanca)

This quotation refers to the role of archives in maintaining and strengthening national identity. However archives may also play a vital role in the transformation of national identity – the South African experience being the most potent current example. It is also interesting to note how the politics of national identity and collective memory challenge traditional notions of the archives as impartial custodian.

The following quote is perhaps the most telling of all.

Libraries, archives, museums and cultural institutions throughout Bosnia have been targeted for destruction, in an attempt to eliminate any material evidence ... that could remind future generations that people of different ethnic and religious traditions once shared a common heritage in Bosnia. The practitioners of ethnic cleansing are not content to terrorize and kill the living; they want to eliminate all memory of the past as well. (Andras Riedlmayer, 'Killing the Memory: The Targeting of Libraries and Archives in Bosnia-Herzegovina', *Newsletter of the Middle East Librarians Association*, No. 61, Autumn 1994)

At one level the destruction of records in Bosnian-like contexts is about ensuring that there is no evidence of the rights of the people you seek to oppress (eg their ownership of land and other possessions, their rights as citizens etc.). At another level, the deliberate targeting of repositories of collective memory in Bosnia is an incredibly potent indication of the significance of collective memory and our "memory palaces"¹. For if a people is eliminated and their collective memory erased, it is as if they never existed at all.

This next example is typical of the definitive statements about the role of recordkeeping in relation to good governance and democratic accountability in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s which have come out of the various Royal Commissions and inquiries into cases of corporate and government corruption and mismanagement. These cases have involved the fall of governments, the collapse of state banks, the bankrupting of the empires of the so-called corporate cowboys – "built on mountains of debt and creative accounting" – the prostitution of professional management, accounting and auditing standards, and the impotence of the regulatory

authorities, the "muzzled watchdogs which failed to bark"². The casualties included Australia's largest industrial group and its three largest television networks, Victoria's largest building society, Australia's three largest merchant banks – and of course thousands of individual shareholders and members of the public who ended up underwriting the debts. This statement by the Royal Commission into the Commercial Activities of Government in Western Australia (WA Inc) refers broadly to the role of recordkeeping in relation to effective democratic accountability and historical accountability.

Proper recordkeeping serves two purposes. First it is a prerequisite to effective accountability. Without it critical scrutiny by the Parliament, the Auditor-General and the Ombudsman can be blunted. Secondly, records themselves form an integral part of the historical memory of the State itself. A recordkeeping regime that does not address both requirements is inadequate. The record creation, maintenance and retention practices of government and its agencies are matters for which ministers and chief executive officers bear a particular responsibility. These matters, doubtless, are ones for which those officials are to be held accountable in their management of their portfolios, departments and agencies. But overall responsibility for records cannot be left with these officials. A separate body should be entrusted with the general oversight of public records, equipped with powers adequate to the purpose. (Western Australia, *Report of the Royal Commission into Commercial Activities of Government*, 1992, Part II, p.4.6)

What the Commissions and inquiries also typically reveal is both a failure in public accountability and in recordkeeping accountability. Their findings highlight the significant links that exist between mismanagement and corruption on the one hand, and poor and negligent recordkeeping on the other. As the Commonwealth Auditor General noted in relation to the notorious "Sports Rorts Affair", "poor recordkeeping attracts corruption like flies to a carcass"³, a point emphasised in the following quotation.

If the Police Service is serious about getting its house in order, and ridding itself of the corrupt officers who are still left after the purge of the late 1980s, then it must enforce standards of accountability, and it must keep its records faithfully. (NSW Independent Commission Against Corruption, *Investigation into the Relationship between Police and Criminals, Second Report*, April 1994, p. 39)

As is evidenced in this quote, the recordkeeping and accountability failures reported relate to both the macro level and the micro level.

The final quote on the recordkeeping-accountability nexus comes out of an environment that is part of the shifting relationship between the public and private sector. The case of the outsourcing of the communication system of the Victorian Metropolitan Ambulance Service provides an interesting insight into the specific role of recordkeeping in accountability⁴. For those unfamiliar with the Australian scene, outsourcing refers not to the privatisation or corporatisation of formerly government functions. Rather it relates to the contracting out by government agencies of both core and housekeeping functions to private sector providers. Significantly, responsibility remains with the government agency which is accountable to parliament for the activities of the private sector service provider.

In virtually all of the arrangements relating to consultancies and outsourcing, key documentation supporting critical management decisions could not be produced by the Metropolitan Ambulance Service (Victorian Auditor General's Office, *Metropolitan Ambulance Service: Contractual and Outsourcing Practices, Special Report 49*, June 1997)

The background to this statement is that in a June 1997 report to the Victorian parliament, the Auditor General reported on serious deficiencies in the contractual and outsourcing practices of the Metropolitan Ambulance Service, including the management of tendering processes, the specification of contract terms and conditions, the award of contracts, and the monitoring of contracts. These deficiencies had resulted in substantial financial losses to the state and led to a police investigation into corrupt actions.

The Auditor General found that, in virtually all of the arrangements referred to above, key documentation supporting critical management decisions could not be produced by the Service for audit examination, and that this was a serious impediment to the audit investigation, and likely to be a significant impediment in the proposed police investigation.

The range of highly dubious practices followed in the past management of these consultancy and outsourcing arrangements included the absence of documentary evidence to substantiate how the thirty four registrations of interest were short-listed to the four potential suppliers who were invited to submit tenders. The Service was also unable to produce critical information to support the evaluation of tenders and the selection of the preferred

supplier, thus raising doubts as to the integrity of the tender process. The Auditor General found that a completely free hand had been given to consultants through total delegation of responsibility without any evidence of scrutiny or assessment of their performance by the Service. There was also a total absence of evidence of the performance of any cost-benefit analyses to support the decision to enter into long-term contracts with private sector providers.

The Auditor General also found that the Service's current Chief Executive Officer has initiated a range of actions aimed at improving the effectiveness of the Service's contract management. A number of the measures taken include recordkeeping-related initiatives, eg the establishment of a contracts management department, the creation of a contracts register, the development and adoption of a contracts administration manual outlining policies and procedures for all aspects of contract management, and the progressive formulation of meaningful performance criteria for all contracts. A formal system of delegations has also been introduced, and there is now a requirement for all senior management to submit pecuniary interest statements. Finally an adequate records management system has been implemented.

At macro and micro level the reports referenced, whether they refer to a more traditional setting or an emerging environment, chronicle typical failures in recordkeeping as presented below⁵.

Macro Level Failures in Recordkeeping Accountability

Piecemeal recordkeeping regimes

Inadequate recordkeeping law

Weak or non-existent links with other accountability players & mechanisms

Archival authorities not "equipped with powers adequate to their purposes" or with outdated or distorted mandates

Lack of professional standards and benchmarks for recordkeeping best practice

Micro Level Failures in Recordkeeping Accountability

Failure of Cabinets, senior ministers, public servants, police officers, boards of directors, CEOs and businessmen and women to make records in the first place or to "keep them faithfully" once made

Deliberate cases of illegal destruction

Inadequate or non-compliant corporate recordkeeping systems in both the public and private sector

And over and over again, the point is made that inadequate recordkeeping regimes limit the ability of society's watchdogs and corporate compliance managers to enforce accountability – in governance and corporate affairs, and in recordkeeping.

The consequences of recordkeeping accountability failures are analysed below in terms of organisational and societal risks⁶.

Organisational Risks of Recordkeeping Accountability Failures

Lack of evidence that an organisation did something under contract or according to regulation

Inability to find mission critical information

Loss of proof of ownership, rights, obligations

Lack of documentation of who knew what when

Inability to locate in its proper context information that may be incriminating in one context and innocent in another

Inability to demonstrate that policies and procedures were in place and consistently followed

Societal Risks of Recordkeeping Accountability Failures

Functioning of society and its institutions impaired

Evidence of the rights of people as citizens and clients lost

Inability of societal watchdogs to call to account governments, corporations and individuals

Loss of collective, corporate and personal identity

Loss of individual, corporate and collective memory

Inability to authenticate and source mission critical information

Having considered the role of recordkeeping in public accountability and explored cases of accountability and recordkeeping failures, I now want to move on to consider what actually constitutes accountable recordkeeping. This is a question that is being addressed by the Records Continuum Research Group at Monash⁷. So far the Group has concluded that the components of accountable recordkeeping include:

1. Accountable recordkeeping regimes at macro level

An accountable recordkeeping regime is defined as a unified framework of identified policy objectives and implementation directives, and a consistent strategic orientation that operate throughout a jurisdiction over time. Within a recordkeeping regime, an integrated set of laws, rules, policies, directions and procedures are acknowledged, enforced & monitored. Responsibilities and accountabilities are specified. (Monash Records Continuum Research Group, 1998)

2. Independent recordkeeping authority with powers adequate to its purpose

3. Professional standards and best practice promulgated and accepted by society

Examples of such standards and best practice include:

- Standards Australia AS 4390 *Records Management Standard*, Homebush, 1996
- The proposed ISO Records Management Standard, based on AS 4390
- The Australian *Records and Archives Competency Standards*, National Finance Industry Training and Advisory Body Ltd, Melbourne, 1997
- International and national archival descriptive standards, eg ISAD(G)
- Australian recordkeeping metadata standards currently in development⁸.

4. Compliant recordkeeping systems at micro level

A compliant recordkeeping system implements the requirements of a recordkeeping regime in an identifiable unit in the jurisdiction (eg a government agency or company). It encompasses all records systems, policies, procedures, business rules, responsibilities, accountabilities, resources and technologies in the unit. (Monash Records Continuum Research Group, 1998)

5. Beneficial alliances with other accountability players and relationships of trust with accountability stakeholders

The accountability players at micro level include: CEOs, senior managers, information managers, auditors, lawyers, FOI officers, business process designers, software vendors, IT professionals, contract managers, compliance and risk managers, and service providers.

At macro level, accountability players include: sociologists, historiographers, information and cultural players, society's watch dogs, standard setters, regulatory authorities, IT shapers, and law makers. Accountability stakeholders include: all of the above plus citizens, clients, consumers, individually and collectively.

To explore further what is involved in establishing accountable recordkeeping, it is instructive to look at an example – the National Archives of Australia's approach to trying to ensure accountable recordkeeping in outsourcing arrangements, based on the philosophy expressed in this statement:

Proper recordkeeping is a crucial part of all government administration and accountability. It is the basis for establishing and maintaining documentary evidence of government activities and decisions supporting good business practice. The need for proper RK is equally applicable if the activities are outsourced. (National Archives of Australia, *Records Issues for Outsourcing including General Disposal Authority 25, A Guideline for Agencies about their Responsibilities for Recordkeeping in Outsourcing Arrangements*, March 1998, <http://www.naa.gov.au/govserv/techpub/gda25/GDA25a.html>)

The National Archives' Guidelines include reference to many of the components of accountable recordkeeping outlined above. They highlight the need to specify the recordkeeping regime for records of outsourced services, including the application of archival, FOI, privacy, administrative, and audit law. The role of the National Archives of Australia in relation to records of outsourced services is defined, and an overview of the interrelationship between the various accountability players involved (eg Auditor General, Ombudsman, Privacy Commissioner) is provided. The Guidelines recommend that the contract specify requirements for accountable recordkeeping systems, including:

- record creating requirements
- appropriate ownership, disposal, privacy, security, disclosure and access provisions
- minimum recordkeeping standards and the need for compliance with the recordkeeping requirements of relevant law and AS 4390, the Australian Records Management Standard.

The Guidelines also emphasise the need to specify the requirements for agency recordkeeping relating to the management and monitoring of contracts.

As can be seen from this brief summary, the Guidelines highlight the importance of identifying the appropriate recordkeeping regime for the outsourced service or function, including relevant law, the role of and relationships between the various accountability players, with particular reference to the role of the National Archives, and the way that the rules relating to accountable recordkeeping mesh with the rules relating to accountable business activity. A critical issue is the identification of the recordkeeping responsibilities and accountabilities of the service provider. Another vital issue relates to the way contracts are drawn up, managed and monitored – this carries with it another "layer of recordkeeping responsibilities and accountabilities" back in the government agency which is administering the contract arrangements and is ultimately accountable to parliament for the outsourced function. How recordkeeping responsibilities are specified in a contract is in itself an enormous challenge – and it is essential, in meeting this challenge, that "business and social accountabilities are mapped against recordkeeping accountabilities"⁹. The outcomes of inquiries such as the Victorian Auditor General's into the Metropolitan Ambulance Service should help us to advance the specification of quality control and accountability related recordkeeping requirements.

In the last section of the paper I want to return to where I began – with shifting paradigms and the associated reinvention of recordkeeping and archiving. This reinvention has involved going back to some very fundamental questions – eg What are records? What is recordkeeping? What is the role of recordkeeping professionals in organisations and society? What is the role of archival authorities? Postcustodial thinking that looks to the integration of recordkeeping and archiving, and views custody as a storage or preservation strategy, is challenging the notion that custody by an archival institution is a basic principle of archival science. In Australia, records continuum thinking has involved reconceptualising appraisal, description and access as complex multi-layered functions and processes that capture, manage and make accessible records for business, social and cultural purposes as long as they are of value – a nanosecond or millennia. This view sees such processes as beginning at or before records creation and continuing throughout their life span. In this reconceptualisation, appraisal is carried out through iterative processes that evaluate business transactions, activities and functions to determine which records need to be captured and how long they need to be kept to meet business needs, the requirements of organisational accountability and community expectations. Description refers to iterative processes that capture and manage recordkeeping metadata. And access is concerned with iterative processes that establish terms and conditions of access and use in accordance with the rights of the parties to the

transactions that the records document, the business purpose of the transactions and community expectations¹⁰. Recordkeeping professionals have been developing new roles as policy makers, standard setters, strategic planners, system designers, educators, advocates and auditors, and this has involved the forging of new partnerships. All of these developments have fundamental implications for defining recordkeeping responsibilities and accountabilities.

We see aspects of this shifting paradigm reflected in the way the roles of archival authorities and archivists are being articulated. Take as an example, United States Archivist John Carlin's vision for the National Archives and Records Administration:

The National Archives is not a dusty hoard of ancient history. It is a public trust on which our democracy depends. It enables people to inspect for themselves the record of what government has done. It enables officials and agencies to review their actions and helps citizens hold them accountable. It ensures continuing access to essential evidence that documents

- the rights of American citizens
- the actions of federal officials
- the national experience...

NARA ensures for the Citizen and the Public Servant, for the President and the Congress and the Courts, ready access to essential evidence.

(John Carlin, *"Ready Access to Essential Evidence": The Strategic Plan of the National Archives and Records Administration 1997-2007*, at <http://www.nara.gov/nara/vision/naraplan.html>)

Another trust-related metaphor worth considering is that of the trusted third party which has the advantage of coming from the electronic commerce model¹¹. This metaphor could be used to express the role of the archival authority as concerned with setting up regimes and trusted systems that:

- authenticate records created in the context of social and business activities
- validate the recordkeeping related competencies of the parties to the transaction
- monitor the exercise of record-related rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders, and compliance with accountability requirements
- manage meaning and accessibility of records over time and beyond the domains in which they were created.

The changing role of archivists is reflected in the shift of perception which depicts them not as passive keepers of documentary detritus, Luc de Sante's "caretakers in the boneyards of information"¹², or Jenkinson's neutral, impartial custodians of inherited records, but as Terry Cook's "active shapers of archival heritage, ... intervening agents conscious of their own historicity in the archive-creating process"¹³, or Margaret Hedstrom's builders of "interfaces with time"¹⁴.

This shift has enormous implications for what archivists and archival institutions are accountable for and to whom. The following questions provide a starting point in the exploration of these issues:

- Who is accountable: who are the players in the recordkeeping accountability game?
- To whom are they accountable: who are the stakeholders?
- For what are they accountable: what are the specific roles and responsibilities of the players?
- What kinds of accountability partnerships are involved?
- And what kind of relationships of trust?
- What are the layers of accountability in recordkeeping regimes?
- How can business and social accountabilities be mapped to recordkeeping requirements and accountabilities?

In the Terry Cook and Margaret Hedstrom constructs, archivists become agents of corporate and societal memory, builders of "memory palaces", participants in processes which shape the record and provide interpretative interfaces to the past. In these roles they leave archival imprints on the record. A key accountability issue therefore becomes, how explicit and indelible should these imprints be? And how should we account for them?

Earlier in the paper, it was emphasised that recordkeeping is but one of the agents of corporate and societal memory. From a recordkeeping perspective, more work has to be done on unravelling the dynamics and politics of corporate and societal memory, keeping in mind, as Terry Cook exhorts us to do, Milan Kundera's words that "the struggle against power is the struggle of memory against forgetting"¹⁵. What is the specific role of

recordkeeping in structuring corporate and societal remembering and forgetting? A key insight in this unravelling might relate to Barbara Reed's notion that recordkeeping is essentially about the validation of the processes of remembering and forgetting. But whose remembering and whose forgetting?

1 Terry Cook used this metaphor in his principal paper in the Third Plenary Session of the XIII International Congress on Archives, Beijing, 1996: 'Archives in the Post-Custodial World: Interaction of Archival Theory and Practice since the Publication of the Dutch Manual in 1898'.

2 Trevor Sykes provides a comprehensive and damning account of these cases in his book, *Bold Riders: Behind Australia's Corporate Collapses*, Allen and Unwin, St. Leonards NSW, 1994.

3 The "Sports Rorts Affair" is a celebrated case that illustrates much about the relationship between poor recordkeeping and incompetent, negligent or corrupt public administration. It involved the former Minister for Sports in Australia, Ros Kelly, her failure to account for decisions relating to the award of government grants to sporting bodies, and her inability to counter allegations that she had distributed the money disproportionately to marginal electorates to gain electoral advantage for the Labor Party. The Affair centred around the use of a whiteboard to record the process of decision making that went on in the ministerial office – and its subsequent erasure. It spawned a splendid series of recordkeeping related cartoons: in which Ros Kelly was eventually depicted as wiping herself out as well. In the final analysis, the key question was: did Ros Kelly behave corruptly and get caught out, or was she merely a poor recordkeeper, the victim of an inadequate recordkeeping system and a piecemeal recordkeeping regime? For an account of the "Sports Rorts Affair", see: James McKinnon, 'The "Sports Rorts" Affair: A Case Study in Recordkeeping, Accountability and Media Reporting', *New Zealand Archivist*, Vol. V, No. 4, Summer/December 1994, pp. 1-5.

4 The following information about the outsourcing arrangements of the Victorian Metropolitan Ambulance Service is drawn from a case study prepared by Barbara Reed for the Monash University-National Archives of Australia Records Management and Archives Skills Training Program, 1998.

5 The typology of failures in recordkeeping accountability is based on analysis of the findings of a range of Royal Commissions, inquiries and studies which investigated public and corporate mismanagement and corruption in Australia in the 1980s and 1990s, and related accountability failures. In addition to those already referenced in this paper, they included: Office of the Auditor-General of Western Australia, Performance Examination, Report No. 2, May 1994: Records Management, 1994. This report relates to a review of records management at macro and micro levels in the public sector in WA. The review was prompted by the findings of seven other public reviews that had linked poor accountability to deficiencies in records management, most notably the WA Inc Royal Commission and the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Victoria, Pleasant Creek Training Centre Inquiry, Report to the Director-General of Community Services Victoria, April 1991. This report dealt with incidents of sexual abuse of intellectually disabled residents of the Pleasant Creek Training Centre. Poor and negligent recordkeeping was found to be a contributing factor, including incomplete, inaccurate, inconsistent or missing incident and investigation reports, poor security resulting in unauthorised access to records by night supervisors, and inadequate cross-referencing to Community Services Victoria's central filing system.

Queensland, Electoral and Administrative Review Commission (EARC), Issues Paper No. 16, Archives Legislation, September 1991. This paper details the case of the 'lost' records of the Queensland Electoral Commission which related to the redistribution of electoral boundaries in that state in 1985. The records were apparently either destroyed or removed following the 1989 election and change of government. The discovery of this 'loss' led to EARC's decision to institute a review of archival law in Queensland.

For further analysis of a selection of these cases:

Sue McKemmish, 'Recordkeeping, Accountability and Continuity: the Australian Reality' in *Archival Documents: Providing Accountability Through Recordkeeping*, edited by Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward, Ancora Press, Clayton, 1993.

6 The typology of organisational risks was developed by David Bearman: 'Archival Management to Achieve Organisational Accountability for Electronic Records' in *Electronic Evidence: Strategies for Managing Records in Contemporary Organisations*, Archives and Museum Informatics, Pittsburgh, 1994, p. 13, 23-4. The issue of societal risks was in part explored in Sue McKemmish, 'Evidence of Me...', *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 24, No. 1, May 1996, pp. 28-45. The findings of a recent inquiry which highlight issues of historical recordkeeping, public accountability and related societal risks are reported in:

Commonwealth of Australia, Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, *Bringing Them Home: Report of the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children from their Families*, 1997 (available at (http://www.hreoc.gov.au/nat_ing/ing_cont.htm))

7 The members of the Records Continuum Research Group are Sue McKemmish (Director), Frank Upward, Barbara Reed and Livia Iacovino. Anne Picot has also contributed to the analysis of accountable recordkeeping presented here, in particular the definitions of accountable recordkeeping regimes and compliant recordkeeping systems. (For more information on the Group, see: [http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/.](http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg/))

8 For more information on the current Australian initiatives in this area, see: Sue McKemmish, Adrian Cunningham and Dagmar Parer, 'Metadata Mania', conference paper presented to the Australian Society of

Archivists 1998 Conference, Place, Interface and Cyberspace: Archives at the Edge, Fremantle, August 1998 (available on <http://www.sims.monash.edu.au/research/rcrg>).

9 A particular area of interest of Records Continuum Research Group member, Barbara Reed, who has explored the issues of the layers of recordkeeping responsibilities and accountabilities involved in outsourcing arrangements and their specification in contracts in modules of the Monash University-National Archives of Australia Records Management and Archives Skills Training Program 1998.

10 These broad definitions of appraisal, description and access are being developed by Records Continuum Research Group members Frank Upward, Barbara Reed and Sue McKemmish.

11 Margaret Hedstrom has also referred to electronic commerce models: 'Building Record-Keeping Systems: Archivists Are Not Alone on the Wild Frontier', *Archivaria*, No. 44, Spring 1997, pp. 44-71.

12 'The Contents of Pockets', *Granta*, No. 41, Autumn 1992, p. 140.

13 Terry Cook, 'Archives in the Post-Custodial World: Interaction of Archival Theory and Practice since the Publication of the Dutch Manual in 1898', op.cit.

14 Margaret Hedstrom, 'Interfaces with Time', Keynote Address to the Australian Society of Archivists 1998 Conference, Place, Interface and Cyberspace: Archives at the Edge, Fremantle, August 1998.

15 From *The Book of Laughter and Forgetting*, 1980, quoted by Terry Cook, op.cit.

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