THE UNIVERSITY CELEBRATES: UNSW ANNIVERSARIES 1959 – 2009

In 2009 the university celebrated its diamond jubilee, its incorporation on 1 July 1949. Among other events, a Town and Gown Dinner was held at the University Club, with champagne and strawberries on the roof. The University was also a focus of its Diamond Jubilee celebrations, the University's 40th Anniversary cake, Chancellor Gordon Samuels cutting

Cover UNSW Open Day, 1969 [CN243/160], Photographer: Allan West

Cover UNSW Open Day, 1969 [CN243/160], Photographer: Allan West

his other milestones. A traditional 'coming of age' year, the university's twenty-first celebration at its 1970 Foundation Day Dinner was a particularly ‘colourful spectacle’ with special decorations and an orchestrated tribute that included two UNSW undergraduates signifying the university. 1949-1970 UNSW souvenirs were issued to guests at the conclusion of the night. Likewise, for the Foundation Day Dinner held to celebrate the university's twenty-fifth anniversary in 1974, a special souvenir booklet highlighting the university's history was created. This commemorative booklet was also produced as a special issue of the then UNSW alumni publication, Letter to Alumni.

Perhaps due to this largesse of celebration during its twenties, the university did not mark its thirtieth anniversary in 1979 to any great degree. The Foundation Day Dinner was held as usual, but there does not appear to have been anything particularly distinguishing this dinner from the preceding or succeeding years.

The preliminary discussions for the university’s fortieth anniversary also began initially on a small scale. In January 1989, following the instigation of University Archivist Laurie Dillon for some commemorative event, Chancellor Gordon Samuels wrote to Vice-Chancellor Professor Michael Birt, approving of the idea and noting that ‘I have never before considered year forty as of particular note, but I suppose that we have not had anything since our twenty-fifth anniversary. Since the annual Foundation Day Dinners had ceased to be held by the university from 1984, a different format of dinner was planned – an Anniversary Dinner was held on 3 November 1989, with invitations sent to all staff, and attended by seven hundred people. A special anniversary souvenir booklet was issued mid-year, which included a timeline of the university’s achievements.

Plans for the university's fiftieth anniversary began much earlier than all previous anniversaries. In August 1992 Douglas Howie, Managing Director of UNSW Press, wrote to the Vice-Chancellor John Niland, suggesting that as 'the last published history of the university appeared in 1983 – with the university's fiftieth anniversary in the not too far distant future, perhaps consideration should be given to a new history to celebrate the occasion'. This was approved shortly afterwards, with Patrick O'Farrell appointed as author, and the book to be released in 1999 as UNSW: A Portrait.

The preliminary discussions for other activities to be held during the jubilee year began with a Vice-Chancellor's Forum on 9 November 1998 for a select group of fifty to raise ideas and promote discussion on the fiftieth anniversary celebrations. A year later the fiftieth anniversary planning group Committee '99 held its first meeting. This forward planning resulted in a jubilee year full of special celebratory activities that began with an official launch and site campus placements on 1 December 1998 and concluded with the 50th Anniversary University Reception on 10 December 1999.

Events of particular note included the opening of the Scientia building, the dedication of the Red Centre and Rupert Myers' buildings, the presentation of Jubilee medallions to 75 long-serving UNSW employees and supporters, the Aboriginal Reconciliation Gathering and the UNSW Expo, as well as a Foundation Dinner and a dinner for the past leaders of the main UNSW student organisations. Age may be just a number, but major anniversaries certainly provided UNSW with an opportunity to celebrate and a reason to reflect on its past achievements. For looking back is often the best way of ascertaining the characteristics that an institution should maintain into the future, thereby helping to ensure that UNSW will still be held in the same high regard at its next significant milestone.
THE UNIVERSITY ARCHIVES IN 2009/10

Since our last issue of Origins we have continued to work closely with our Records Section on providing disposal advice to our University units. Records disposal projects under way in the Records Section have resulted in an increase in file transfers and in ongoing disposal assessment and processing work done in Archives. A major emphasis of our work during the last few months has been on collection preservation and accessibility. We have reassessed our existing TRIM database entries of administrative files against current State Records Disposal Authorities and as a result have been able to consolidate our holdings freeing up valuable storage space. We also checked our TRIM database entries for archival files to ensure data is correctly captured. All images held by us in electronic format have been uploaded into the Media Bin Image Library owned by Marketing Services; the relevant metadata including detailed descriptions for these photographs however still has to be added to the Library. We have also begun to transfer our Oral History Interviews from DAT recordings onto PC storage. The Archives was pleased in 2009 to host a visit for participants of the short course in Managing Historical Archives which is run by the School of History and Philosophy. In June/July this year we were able to host the field work component for the 2010 course participants. The students’ contribution to the Archives has been much appreciated. The short course is coordinated by Dr Peter Orlovich, Visiting Fellow. Our outreach work also included assistance with UNSW’s 60th Anniversary on-line slideshow, the writing of school histories and the Milner Science exhibition at New College Village. The Archives also added a new on-line exhibition to its website showcasing its Poster collection. Again it was the generous assistance of the U Committee which allowed the Archives to continue the University’s Oral History Program. The most recent project focussed on University enterprises. To participate in the program we invited Joshua Owen, Director of the Institute of Administrations, A/P Michael Johnson, founding director of the Public Sector Research Centre; Scientia Professor Peter Saunders, Social Policy Research Centre; E/P Kenneth Cox, WHO Regional Teacher Training Centre, Prof. Miraca Gross, Gotten Education, Research, Resource and Information Centre; E/P Ronald Hackstet, Biomedical Engineering, Prof. Bruce Milthorpe, former head Graduate School of Biomedical Engineering and member of the Executive Committee of the former Cooperative Research Centre for Eye Research and Technology as well as Deputy President (Academic) UNSW Asia; and Dr Max Nicholls, early staff member of the School of Human Genetics & member Alumni Associates. 

COLLECTING HISTORICAL ARCHIVES

During July and August of this year, extended leave allowed me to undertake volunteer work assisting the holdings of the City of Cologne (City of Cologne Municipal Archives) registering their archival records. This is Phase III of a disaster recovery process. On March 3rd 2009 the Archives building of the City of Cologne and two adjoining apartment blocks collapsed. Sadly the disaster meant that two young men lost their lives, many occupants lost their homes and the archival holdings of the City of Cologne disappeared into the ground. The holdings consisted of more than 50 shelf kilometres of archives documenting some 1300 years of city history. The exact cause of the disaster is still under investigation. About 1800 volunteers came from Germany and all over the world to assist with rescuing the archives. After six months about 83% of the material had been retrieved from the disaster site. It is expected that about 5% will be lost completely and that the remaining 10%, which are below ground water level, will be retrieved by the end of this year. Salvage operations are under way at this point in time. After the initial salvage work the records are now boxed and stored in 10 different archival locations throughout the country called ‘asylum archives’. The collection is dispersed throughout the various locations and has to be identified so that series, record groups and accessions can be ‘reunited’ and context recreated. One of the asylum archives is located at the University Archives of the Westfälische Wilhelms-University of Muenster which is where I worked. I was able to stay with friends in Muenster who were happy to assist and provided me with free accommodation while I worked as a volunteer at the Archives. One of my friends even became a volunteer herself! Work at the various asylum archives is coordinated by Karoline Meyntz, Archivist at the City of Cologne Archives, who makes you feel welcome and introduces you to staff members, work procedures, records and software in use. As a volunteer you work hand in hand with an archivist or conservator of the Cologne Archives, which means there is always a professional with special knowledge of the holdings and procedures on hand. Depending on the location of an asylum archive Archives staff members from Cologne either commute daily or they travel and stay the week in the host city. During my time in Muenster I worked with four different teams which was enjoyable and also interesting as all had their own style and approach to work. The work itself requires concentration. Box by box each item, however large or small, is identified and described, and the extent of the damage to each item is classified. The item then receives a bar code, is securely packed in archival boxes and in acid free folders where necessary and information about each item is entered into a database. Special salvage software called ACTAprom has been developed for this purpose which is connected to the indexing software for the holdings. The database provides item identification, the location by barcode and box number, and thus allows for the reunification of individual files or documents, series and collections. The data entered into ACTAprom contains information about the collection and the item’s original number and details about the provenance/originating department or, if a collection and a number cannot be identified, a description of the item is given. The damage to the item is described, its barcode scanned and, if an image was taken to allow exact identification at a later stage, the item is linked to its image file. The damage to each item is classified as none, lightly, moderately or heavily and assessed against the categories soiled, mechanical damage (e.g. torn, punched), deformed, mouldy, water damaged, and damage to text/ script/image. The information on the database will not only be used to reconstruct the context of the holdings but also to identify the extent of and plan for the necessary restoration work. Pretty much all of the material is at least slightly soiled. A fine layer of concrete dust seemed to cover the material, whereas some relatively new files in lever arch folders which had only recently been transferred to the Archives were heavily damaged and soiled. During the process one gets to see a wide variety of archival materials. The papers I have registered included legal instruments from the 15th, 16th and 17th century, files concerning military occupation in Cologne after WW1, Immigration Department files and many private collections of architects, photographers, scientists and organisations and registers of birth, deaths and marriages; all records of great importance to the History of Cologne and the wider community. Looking at the damage to individual items requires a considerable amount of correct storage conditions and individual item numbering.

During my time at the asylum archives at Muenster University Archives we registered just under 90 shelf metres of records. There is much more to do so it is estimated that we will take another three to five years to register the rescued archives. Overall I found it a worthwhile and enriching experience being able to help and getting to know part of such an important historical collection, to meet and work with German colleagues and to learn part of the German archival jargon on the way.

Karin Brennan

Many of the older papers I have seen were in surprisingly good condition, whereas some relatively new files in lever arch folders which had only recently been transferred to the Archives were heavily damaged and soiled. During the process one gets to see a wide variety of archival materials. The papers I have registered included legal instruments from the 15th, 16th and 17th century, files concerning military occupation in Cologne after WW1, Immigration Department files and many private collections of architects, photographers, scientists and organisations and registers of birth, deaths and marriages; all records of great importance to the History of Cologne and the wider community. Looking at the damage to individual items requires a considerable amount of correct storage conditions and individual item numbering.

During my time at the asylum archives at Muenster University Archives we registered just under 90 shelf metres of records. There is much more to do so it is estimated that we will take another three to five years to register the rescued archives. Overall I found it a worthwhile and enriching experience being able to help and getting to know part of such an important historical collection, to meet and work with German colleagues and to learn part of the German archival jargon on the way.

Karin Brennan

Many of the older papers I have seen were in surprisingly good condition, whereas some relatively new files in lever arch folders which had only recently been transferred to the Archives were heavily damaged and soiled. During the process one gets to see a wide variety of archival materials. The papers I have registered included legal instruments from the 15th, 16th and 17th century, files concerning military occupation in Cologne after WW1, Immigration Department files and many private collections of architects, photographers, scientists and organisations and registers of birth, deaths and marriages; all records of great importance to the History of Cologne and the wider community. Looking at the damage to individual items requires a considerable amount of correct storage conditions and individual item numbering.

During my time at the asylum archives at Muenster University Archives we registered just under 90 shelf metres of records. There is much more to do so it is estimated that we will take another three to five years to register the rescued archives. Overall I found it a worthwhile and enriching experience being able to help and getting to know part of such an important historical collection, to meet and work with German colleagues and to learn part of the German archival jargon on the way.

Karin Brennan

Many of the older papers I have seen were in surprisingly good condition, whereas some relatively new files in lever arch folders which had only recently been transferred to the Archives were heavily damaged and soiled. During the process one gets to see a wide variety of archival materials. The papers I have registered included legal instruments from the 15th, 16th and 17th century, files concerning military occupation in Cologne after WW1, Immigration Department files and many private collections of architects, photographers, scientists and organisations and registers of birth, deaths and marriages; all records of great importance to the History of Cologne and the wider community. Looking at the damage to individual items requires a considerable amount of correct storage conditions and individual item numbering.

During my time at the asylum archives at Muenster University Archives we registered just under 90 shelf metres of records. There is much more to do so it is estimated that we will take another three to five years to register the rescued archives. Overall I found it a worthwhile and enriching experience being able to help and getting to know part of such an important historical collection, to meet and work with German colleagues and to learn part of the German archival jargon on the way.

Karin Brennan
Did you know that the University has a full symphony orchestra?

The UNSW Orchestra has around 65 players and givesconcerts of fine music on campus at least twice each semester. It’s a true community orchestra. Players represent all faculties on campus, with Music and Engineering students making up a large proportion.

The Orchestra’s performances cover a wide range of music from the 17th century until today. Here is a small sample of works played: symphonies by Beethoven, Brahms, Mendelssohn and Shostakovich, solo concerti by Chopin, Mozart, Tchaikovsky and Vivaldi, and other orchestral works by Bizet, Handel, Holst and Rossini. Among modern works the Orchestra has performed are pieces by six composers on the UNSW campus. And almost every soloist in the 50’s or so concerti that have been performed was a student at this university.

Presenting such an array of music at a standard that will win the sincere applause of paying audiences is hard work that requires determined preparation. At the same time, this music-making by volunteers is underpinned by an enormous amount of voluntary effort. But not everything can be achieved in this way. The Orchestra’s professional leadership, rental or purchase of orchestral scores, acquisition of less common musical instruments, and accommodation charges are some of the items for which funds are indispensable. Proceeds of ticket sales are not sufficient to cover these items, so the Orchestra seeks regular supplementary funding.

The UNSW U Committee has been a sustaining financial supporter of the Orchestra for many years. Initially, the contribution was intended to cover these items, so the Orchestra seeks regular supplementary funding. The UNSW U Committee has been a sustaining financial supporter of the Orchestra for many years. Initially, the contribution was intended to cover these items, so the Orchestra seeks regular supplementary funding. The UNSW U Committee has been a sustaining financial supporter of the Orchestra for many years. Initially, the contribution was intended to cover these items, so the Orchestra seeks regular supplementary funding.

The Orchestra is fortunate in having had the same principal conductor and musical director, Colin Piper, since its inception. Colin’s enthusiasm, caring leadership, and enjoyment of live performance are infectious for both players and audiences. No wonder, then, that the two weekly-and-a-half hour rehearsals are generally well attended and that long-term student players leave the Orchestra with reluctance as graduation day approaches.

The Orchestra was formed in 1989 by three undergraduates, Jan Howe, Handel, Hola and Rossini. Among modern works the Orchestra has performed are pieces by six composers on the UNSW campus. And almost every soloist in the 50’s or so concerti that have been performed was a student at this university.

The 20th Anniversary Concert of the UNSW Orchestra, 28 August 2009

Photographer: Benjamin Sim

The UNSW Orchestra has a full symphony orchestra, do come and enjoy our concerts in 2011 and after.

Oral History Project

Funding from the U Committee has allowed the University Archives to conduct a series of oral history interviews with members of staff who have had a long involvement with one of university’s Centres or similarly associated bodies. As part of our Senior Administrator interview series we also conducted an interview with Emeritus Professor Ken Reinhardt, the founding dean of COFA. The range of interviews completed to date has already created a rich and exciting resource for researchers interested in the establishment of Centres at UNSW. These include the WHO Regional Teacher Training Centre for Health Personnel / Regional Training Centre for Health Development (RTTC/RTC), the Institute of Administration, Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre (GERRIC), the Social Policy Research Centre (SPRC), and UNSW Asia. All of the Centres, former and current, shape an intrinsic part of the university’s history and we are indebted to all the participants who have agreed to be part of the project.

The interview program features the full range of former and existing UNSW Centres to explore the impact that changes within the tertiary education sector have had upon teaching and research and to document the relationship of the Centres with the university’s broader community. Interviews include the former Director of the Institute of Administration, Mr Joshua Owen, Scientia Professor Peter Saunders of SPRC, and Professor Marcus Grocis, founding and current Director of GERRIC.

These oral history interviews followed a similar framework which explored the interviewee’s family background, education and employment, selection of area of expertise and the circumstances that led them to UNSW. The participants covered their first impressions of UNSW and the changes they had seen in the institution over the years. The interviews then focused on the opportunities of each Centre, the various challenges that they faced and the characteristics that make each Centre unique. Often it was not just the participant but also their partner and family whose lives became intrinsically involved with the Centre. This was certainly the case for Emeritus Professor Kenneth Cox OAM. After serving as Director of the RTTC/RTC from 1975 to 1992, he has continued to research and write in his retirement. Professor Cox’s involvement with the international students who came from all over the Western Pacific Region to study in Australia became a family affair. From early in his time as Centre Director, Professor Cox would hire a bus to take the students on a tour of Sydney and then to his home for Sunday lunch. The and it would each choose a recipe that reflected their home country and they then prepared an international lunch with the help of Ken, his wife Libby and their children. These lunches, known as ‘cook-ins’, are very well remembered by the participants and culminated in Libby publishing a cookbook of the students’ recipes.

We were fortunate that Emeritus Professor Ken Reinhardt was available to be interviewed. He began his interview by covering his time as one of the first UNSW students to graduate with a Graduate Diploma in Industrial Design and then moved on to his experiences as founding dean of the School of Art of the Alexander Mackie College, where he commenced work on 24 October 1974. Professor Reinhardt was told to employ staff, find a building, equipment and write courses for 600 students by March 1975. Remarkably, he was only two weeks late in achieving this objective. Initially the School covered three campuses: a five storey building at 200 Cumberland Street, which included Ken’s office on the top floor with the remainder of the space used as studios for the students; Burton Street campus (within East Sydney Technical College) and Liverpool Street Campus (formerly the Marist Brothers School and now the Robinson Gallery). Ken reflected on the struggles that students encountered due to the travel involved in occupying three campuses. The School of Art was renamed the Art Institute in 1982 and on 1 January 1990 the Institute was amalgamated with UNSW to become COFA. COFA continued to develop and expand the number of students, the range of courses and the physical facilities. As part of the expanded COFA, the Marist Brothers School and now the Robinson Gallery became part of the university’s history and we are indebted to all the participants who have agreed to be part of the project.

The interview program features the full range of former and existing UNSW Centres to explore the impact that changes within the tertiary education sector have had upon teaching and research and to document the relationship of the Centres with the university’s broader community. Interviews include the former Director of the Institute of Administration, Mr Joshua Owen, Scientia Professor Peter Saunders of SPRC, and Professor Marcus Grocis, founding and current Director of GERRIC.

These oral history interviews followed a similar framework which explored the interviewee’s family background, education and employment, selection of area of expertise and the circumstances that led them to UNSW. The participants covered their first impressions of UNSW and the changes they had seen in the institution over the years. The interviews then focused on the opportunities of each Centre, the various challenges that they faced and the characteristics that make each Centre unique. Often it was not just the participant but also their partner and family whose lives became intrinsically involved with the Centre. This was certainly the case for Emeritus Professor Kenneth Cox OAM. After serving as Director of the RTTC/RTC from 1975 to 1992, he has continued to research and write in his retirement. Professor Cox’s involvement with the international students who came from all over the Western Pacific Region to study in Australia became a family affair. From early in his time as Centre Director, Professor Cox would hire a bus to take the students on a tour of Sydney and then to his home for Sunday lunch. The and it would each choose a recipe that reflected their home country and they then prepared an international lunch with the help of Ken, his wife Libby and their children. These lunches, known as ‘cook-ins’, are very well remembered by the participants and culminated in Libby publishing a cookbook of the students’ recipes.

We were fortunate that Emeritus Professor Ken Reinhardt was available to be interviewed. He began his interview by covering his time as one of the first UNSW students to graduate with a Graduate Diploma in Industrial Design and then moved on to his experiences as founding dean of the School of Art of the Alexander Mackie College, where
SHORT COURSE IN MANAGING HISTORICAL DOCUMENTS PRACTICUM

Seven participants who were enrolled in the Short Course in Managing Historical Documents, which has been offered annually through the School of History and Philosophy at the University of New South Wales since 1999, undertook the practical field work component of their course in the University Archives from 28 June to 2 July 2010. The practical component is the second of a two-week intensive short course on the principles and techniques of managing archives, manuscripts and personal papers which caters, in the main, for people who are responsible for the care, control, management and cataloguing of historical records and personal papers as part of their professional responsibilities, or who simply have an interest in learning about the care and management of archives out of personal curiosity and interest. The practical component of the course provided an opportunity for participants to apply the theoretical principles of managing archives which are explained in the first of the two-week programme in a practical or archival context, during which the participants compile an archival finding aid, in the form of a guide to or an inventory list or collection of the archives of an organisation or the personal papers of an individual.

The coordinator and director (Dr Peter Orlovich, Visiting Fellow with the School of History and Philosophy) and the seven participants in the Short Course practicum session in 2010, with the support of Paul Macpherson, Manager, Records and Archives Office, to undertake the practical component in the University Archives, arranging and describing the academic and research papers of two distinguished UNSW scholars and the archives of the now defunct College of Fine Arts Students’ Association (COFASA). In the absence of Karin Brennan, who was on leave at the time, the participants, with the recovery and conservation of records following the 2009 collapse of the Historical Archive of the City of Cologne in Germany, Karin Brennan, Assistant University Archivist facilitated the arrangements for the practicum.

The seven participants enrolled in the Short Course included Dominique d’Hennin (Archivist, Kincoppal School, South Wales), Sarah Ind (Charles Sturt University), Kathy Lyons of the School of History and Philosophy, Professor Martyn Lyons of the School of History and Philosophy, Paul Macpherson and Katie Bird congratulated the participants and thanked them for their valuable contribution to the management and description of the collections for which they were responsible.

Three archival finding aids were compiled during the practical component of the Short Course in Managing Historical Documents, which included the UNSW Foundation student papers of Emeritus Professor Antoni Karbowiak compiled by Kathy Switzer and Dominique Novak d’Hennin, a Guide to the Papers of Emeritus Professor John Michael Dwyer, Immunologist, compiled by Elizabeth Sheridan and Sarah Ind, and a Guide to the Archives of the Student Association of the College of Fine Arts, University of New South Wales, compiled by Marissa O’Connor, Alexandra Lean and Karen Gorsuch. Emeritus Professor Karbowiak, who was born in Poland in 1923, graduated from the University of London in 1949, and after further study, was awarded a Doctorate in 1953, before being appointed as a Senior Researcher with Standard Communications Laboratories in England. He was appointed Head of the Microwave Department in 1958 and Head of the Optical Systems Group in 1964. In that year, he was appointed to the Chair in Electrical Engineering at UNSW, and by 1966 was Head of the Department of Communication. In 1968 he was awarded a Doctorate of Science in Engineering from the University of London, and by 1976, he was elected a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts in the United Kingdom. He was a member of the Committee of Inquiry into Telecommunications Services in Australia in 1981/82. In 1987 he retired from UNSW and was appointed Emeritus Professor in 1988. From 1990 to 1994 he undertook research and teaching at the Hong Kong City Polytechnic, and on January 1, 2001 was awarded a Centenary Medal by the Australian Government for Service to Australian Society in the field of Telecommunications.

Professor John Dwyer AO, PhD, FRACP, Hon DLitt(ACU), was born in Melbourne in 1939, attended St Patricks College in Sydney and graduated from the University of Sydney in 1966. He served successively as an Intern, Resident and Registrar at St Vincent’s Hospital from 1966 to 1969 before accepting a Fellowship as a consultant physician of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians in 1968. From 1969 to 1971 he was a Research Fellow at the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute in Melbourne, during which time he completed a PhD in Clinical Immunology. In 1971 he joined Yale University School of Medicine, where he was appointed Associate Professor of Medicine and Paediatrics and Professor of the Department of Medicine at UNSW, and was appointed a UNSW Emeritus Professor in 1991. In 2005, Professor Dwyer retired and was appointed the UNSW Emeritus Professor. He was founding Chairman of the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance in 2008. A second edition of his book, The Body at War: The Story of our Immune System was published in 1993.

The College of Fine Arts (COFA) was established in accordance with the provisions of the Commonwealth Higher Education (Amalgamation) Act 1989, designed to re-organise tertiary education in the visual and performing arts in accordance with the provisions of legislation enacted by the NSW Parliament. The governance of the COFA was established, continuing much of the work begun by the City Art Institute Students’ Association. This included maintaining two galleries catering for students and emerging artists – the ‘Arthaus Gallery’ and the ‘Works Gallery’. In 1998 COFASA opened a new gallery with a similar purpose – the ‘Kodos Gallery’. In 2007 the Artwork Fund was established as the new student organisers for the Kensington and COFA campuses, and continued to administer the Kodos Gallery.

The extensive collections of papers of Emeriti Professors Antoni Karbowiak and John Dwyer, together with the archives of COFASA, provide a rich source of historical evidence for documenting the careers of two of the leading scholars and teachers of the University, and an insight into the complex history of the emergence of COFA and the COFASA.
E

dward Maxwell [Max] Nicholls was born at Crystal Brook, South Australia, a farming district one hundred miles north of Adelaide and twenty miles south of Port Pirie, on 9 February 1917. He was the seventh son and eighth child of William and Lillian Nicholls. Max was educated at Crystal Brook Public School and Prince Alfred College in Adelaide, before gaining a place at the University of Adelaide. Max had wanted to study medicine, but his father considered medicine more suitable. His medical studies led to an interest in genetics and Max's career at UNSW.

Several years after completing his medical degree, Max Nicholls had already completed an impressive curriculum vitae, having worked as a resident medical officer at the hospital in Darwin, as a general practitioner on Yorke Peninsula and in Mannon, a country town on the River Murray. While maintaining his practice in Mannon Max decided 'to do some study at the university and somebody recommended that I should go there'. He wanted to do the genetics that they had there because there was a very reputable genetics department at Adelaide Uni, so I enrolled in one of their subjects in human genetics and I'd been studying genetics and I thought, 'This is all right', and applied for it. He became, along with Visiting Professor Robert John [Bobbie] Walsh, one of the then only two staff within the discipline of Human Genetics at UNSW.

Professor Walsh was fundamental to the establishment of the New South Wales Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service. By the early 1960s the Service was well established and Walsh was ready to accept the challenge that came from the newly established UNSW medical school. In 1962 Walsh was appointed Visiting Professor of Human Genetics while continuing as Director of the Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service. In the early years of the department of Human Genetics at UNSW Walsh's base remained at the Red Cross' premises in the city, as there were no laboratories available at the university to conduct his research. Walsh resigned from the Red Cross to take up the full-time position as Professor of Human Genetics and head of the School of Human Genetics in the Faculty of Medicine as from 1 March 1967. This allowed him to devote more time to the school, which acquired several new staff by the end of the 1960s.

Walsh, however, was also to develop an increasing interest in the administration of the university. He served as a member of Council from 1969 to 1973 and as Chairman of the Professional Board from 1970 to 1973. As F. C. Cornice commented in his memoir on Walsh published in the Historical Records of Australian Science in 1985, ‘these administrative responsibilities did not leave him a lot of time to develop his own creativity nor to provide the same leadership in research, necessary to build up in the university a School of Human Genetics of international repute, as he had shown in the development of the Blood Transfusion Centre.’

In March 1973 Walsh was appointed to the position of dean of the Faculty of Medicine, which he held until his retirement in January 1982. At that time there were three senior lecturers in the School of Human Genetics, apart from Walsh as head of School. In September 1973 the School of Community Medicine was established, with the proviso that the School of Human Genetics would be integrated into the new school.

Once the staff of the former School of Human Genetics had been absorbed into the School of Community Medicine, the incentive for research in human genetics faded. This was a disappointment for Max Nicholls. As he comments: 'Bobbie had become dead and then, to a large extent, lost interest in genetics. Rather than getting a new school, they just changed our name to Community Medicine but we went on teaching genetics. Then in due course, around the late 1970s or early 1980s, they took away most of our genetics from us.'

Max decided not to remain as part of the Centre for Biomedical Engineering, as he obtained an invitation from Associate Professor Peter Farrell of the Centre for Biomedical Engineering. Max obtained a joint appointment between the Centre and the Faculty of Medicine. When the Centre for Safety Science was formed in 1986, the Dean of the Faculty of Engineering, Professor Noel Svensson, invited Max to transfer to Safety Science and, as a result, he left the Faculty of Medicine. He said 'I was still doing Human Genetics wherever or whenever, but I transferred my allegiance to Safety Science, from Biomedical Engineering to Safety Science.'

Max Nicholls retired from UNSW in 1992, but his interest in genetics did not end there. He notes that 'I am stilloccasionally looking at the genetics of the brain. All those books about the brain, how it works, and I still don’t know the answers. I think they will see me out'.

This is a selection of records and private papers received by the University Archives from January 2009 to October 2010. Regular additions to the annual reports, newsletters, and booklet/leaflet collections for UNSW's administrative units, faculties, schools, centres, organisations and associations have not been included in this list. Access enquiries to the collection are invited. In some instances access is restricted or special conditions apply.

Mechanical Engineering IV students, 1956 [2/2120] Photograph. E/P R. A. Bryant

Personal donations


Papers of the Accounts Department, 1948.

Presentation of diplomas, bronze medallions & prizes booklets, 1952-2006.

Reports and Competition Entries for Student Records. Video / DVD and Video Recordings mainly re student records and achievements, 1957.

Video Recording, 2006; Certificate of the Affirmative Action Program of the Memorial Service for AJ van der Poorten, 15 October 2010.


Human Resources. Treasury Handbook of the Accounts Department, 1948.


Media and Communications Unit. Media & Communications Office. Posters of UNSW TV, ca. 2008; negatives of photo shoot of Professor F. Hilmer, ca. 2000; posters.


Secretariat/Secretary to Council. Various consignments of minutes, papers and papers for Council and Academic Board and their committees; for Faculty Board & Standing Committees of the faculties of Science, Engineering, Built Environment; Law; Business/Australian School of Business and Medicine; additions to correspondence and photographs of the Chancellor.

Student Equity and Diversity Unit. Certificate of the Affirmative Action Program of the Memorial Service for AJ van der Poorten, 15 October 2010.


University of New South Wales Foundation. Records relating to the conferral of an Hon DLett to Cate Blanchett and the Town & Gown Dinner to Celebrate the 60th Anniversary of the University of New South Wales; posters, memorabilia and photographs of the Back to Bacchus Ball 2009; photographs of the Turning of the sod Ceremony for the Tyree Energy Technologies Building 2009; Vice-Chancellor, Office of. Records of the VC, Professor M. Wainwright; Messages to Alumni from the VC 2000s & 2008; medals, objects & photographs.

Executive Committee Meetings, 1964-1984; Study Leave Report by June C. Griffith 1973; caricature sketch of Professor Mike Archer with parrot, 2005; A Day in the Life of Science CD and University Union Earth Mug, 2009.


History and Philosophy, school of. Staff meeting minutes, 1994-98.


Philosophy, school of. Staff meeting agendas and papers 2002.

Science, Faculty of. Posters ca 2005; faculty records.


University organisations and associations

ARC @ UNSW Sista: a Zine for the Women of UNSW, 2009; programs and leaflets promoting Foundation Day 2010.

Harry Reed Memorabilia formerly displayed in Jockey's House. The display case contains a cap, saddle & photographs, 1920.


Publications


KARIN BRENNAN

The Archives is open by appointment
Monday to Friday,
9 am – 1 pm, 2 pm – 5 pm

Closed on public holidays and 25 December to 1 January

Location
Level 1, University Library

Postal Address
University Archives
The University of New South Wales
SYDNEY NSW 2052
AUSTRALIA

Telephone
(02) 9385 2906

Assistant University Archivist
Ms Katie Bird
(02) 9385 2908

Facsimile
(02) 9385 1228

Email
archives@unsw.edu.au

Website
http://www.recordkeeping.unsw.edu.au

Origins is prepared by the staff of the University Archives

design by Di Quick

ISSN 1326 – 5407