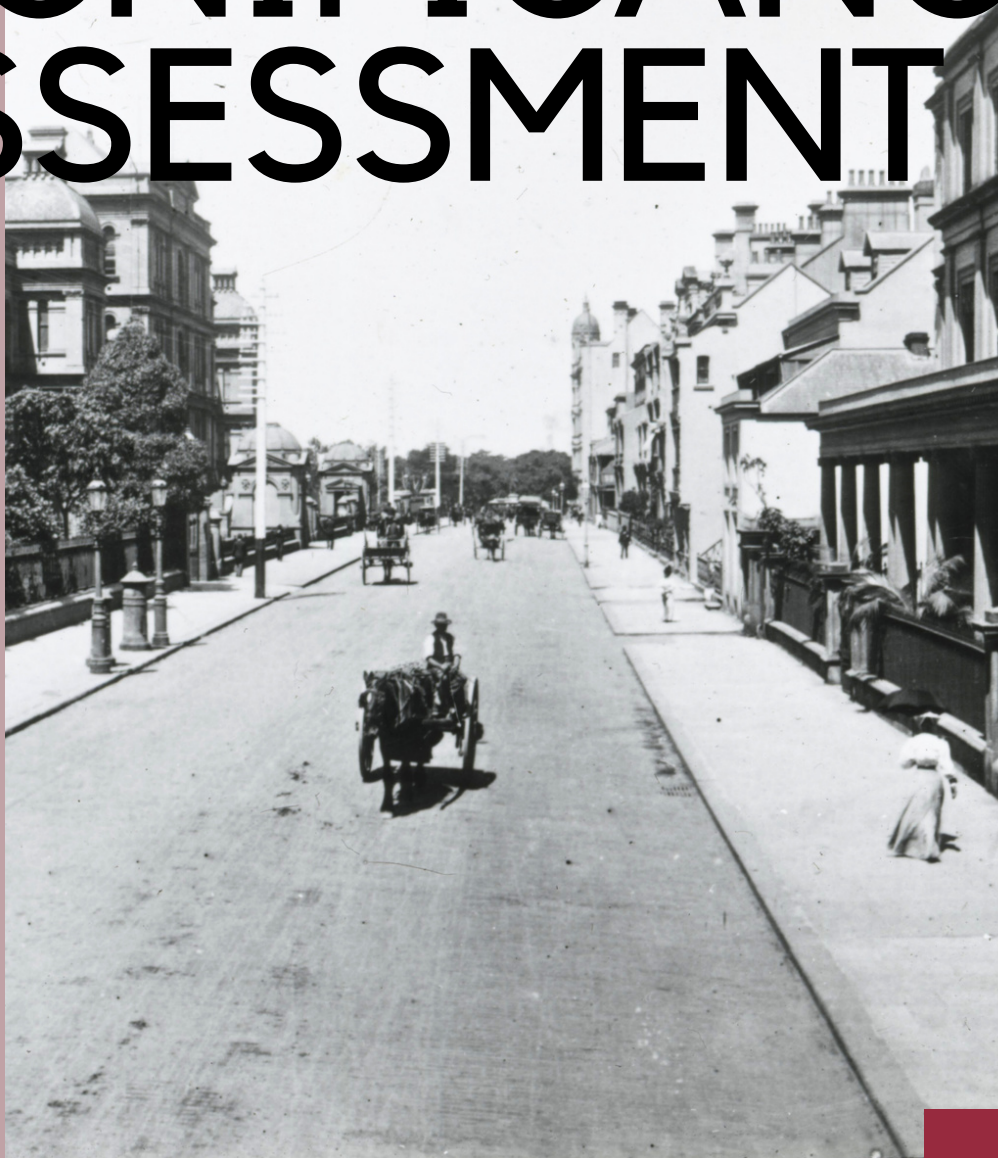




2014 LIBRARY SIGNIFICANCE ASSESSMENT



Macquarie Street, Sydney.
RAHS Photograph Collection.

Royal Australian Historical Society Library Significance Assessment



Ethel and Arthur Foster Newspaper cutting book Vol.4

RAHS Library collection

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Abbreviations

RAHS	Royal Australian Historical Society
JRAHS	Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society

Part 1 Executive Summary

A brief summary of Statement of Significance

The Royal Australian Historical Society Library collection, which includes the RAHS archive, has an exceptional level of potential for research. It is a facility of national significance.

The collection demonstrates a very high level of historic significance. It provides an understanding of the changes in Australian historiography during its 113 years of operation; the patterns of historical collection and donation; the importance of individual creative arts, especially writing and photography and the role of curatorial support and direction.

Parts of the collection have exceptional aesthetic value. There are many objects with a unique aesthetic value, especially photographs, prints and paintings and rare books.

The social value of the collection is exceptional providing a unique service to members, affiliated societies and the public generally especially those in regional NSW who have limited access to historical repositories in Sydney and yet have a strong desire to relate to their local or regional history. The open access nature of the library – conducive to collegiate interaction – makes it a welcoming and accessible facility for both professional and amateur historians.

At the same time the library collection is a record of a social institution and its changing character over more than a hundred years, the efforts, concerns and activities of its contributors and custodians.

Short, medium and long term collection management and interpretation/exhibition impacts

The most important short term measures necessary are: to write a new library collection development policy as a roadmap to optimise the existing collection and guide future acquisitions as well as enable 21st century access and management of digitally-born material; and create a RAHS records management policy. Seek professional advice about how best to undertake urgent conservation. These tasks require a consultant or consultants as RAHS does not have the resources to do this itself.

In the medium term consider re-organisation of the collection according to the impact of environmental factors and if necessary improve the environment for better preservation. Promote open access and library use, and rationalise space to maximise quiet areas in the library, and storage in the basement. Cull in accordance with the new collection development policy. These goals may well require extra staff time.

In the long term plan and budget for a supervised and extended digitisation program to enable better quality images and indexing to facilitate online access. Invest in suitable software to permit

searching across all the library databases and appropriate indexing to facilitate online access. Continue RAHS publications including local NSW histories, possibly moving to e-publication. Maintain existing and develop new partnerships with institutions, individuals and patrons, as well as involving the local history community in supporting the library collection. Continue to create collaborative occasions which also support the library and generate income.

Description of process undertaken to assess and produce the report-

Number of visits to the collection to work on the assessment and understand the collection

The consultants visited the collection together for two full days (12 & 25 February 2014). The first session was spent reviewing the collection with the Librarian and assessing various aspects of the collection. The second session was predominantly spent talking with RAHS Councillors, the executive officer and Librarian, with some further review of the collection. In addition one councillor was interviewed via Skype and a former librarian was consulted by phone.

Collection research in consultation with owners

The Collection is managed by the Councillors of the RAHS and its officers – the executive officer and librarian. Both consultants talked with four councillors, the executive officer, the current librarian and a former librarian:

- Anne-Maree Whitaker, RAHS President since 2012, Councillor for nearly 20 years, professional historian
- Elizabeth Ellis, RAHS Vice President, Chair of RAHS Library committee, former Mitchell Librarian (2001–2008)
- Carol Liston RAHS Councillor (20 years), professional historian, Associate Professor, University of Western Sydney
- Christine Yeats, RAHS Councillor, archivist, professional historian, former Acting CEO at State Records NSW
- Suzanne Holohan, RAHS executive officer, 2012- present
- Donna Newton, RAHS Librarian 2007 – present
- Kylie Rees, former RAHS Librarian 1996- 2004
- Baiba Berzins, archivist, professional historian, former Mitchell Librarian 1981-87.

Ms Berzins has never been a councillor at RAHS but is familiar with the Library collection. She conducted two RAHS Library collection valuations for insurance purposes (1999 and 2004) of replaceable items only, not including serials or photo collections. She has extensive experience researching in many local historical society libraries and is an accredited valuer for the Federal government's Cultural Gifts Program.

Ms Newton's work encompasses answering inquiries, assisting library users, directing volunteers

and organising the collection. She also assists with the publication of the Society's Journal and enjoys the challenges and satisfactions of research. She says after seven years, she is still finding items in the library that she was unaware of. Her time in the library is equivalent to 3.5 days a week, as she has other RAHS duties.

Range and scope

The collection content spans the period from the late eighteenth to the end of the twentieth century, with a predominance of items covering the late nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. The consultants viewed a range documents and other items across the whole collection at History House and examined some items in detail. It was difficult to view most of the items stored in the basement as access is restricted by rolls of carpet and boxes on the floor.

Comparative collections

The Jessie Street Library, Sydney is a specific collection founded in 1989 and devoted to 'preservation of Australian women's work, words and history'. While it has rented premises and has moved a few times, it is a recognised institution. It relies on donated material and has a strong collection of feminist serials and posters. It also has a large archival collection concerning Australian women of the 20th century. Apparently there is 'variety, complexity and intellectual challenge in this impressive and unique collection.' It has a well defined collection policy on its website.

The City of Sydney archives specialises in material relating to its geographical area. The archive has strong newspaper and photograph collections and has been donated two sizeable photographic collections. In 1998 the City Library's Local Studies Collection was added to create the Sydney Reference Collection. This holds material in several formats relating to the City of Sydney now and in the past; including: the City's villages, indigenous history, cultural history, political history and its personalities, and monographs and serials relating to the archive profession. It aims to build a comprehensive collection of published books about Sydney and is supported by the Council of the City of Sydney.

Supported by the Royal College of Physicians and like RAHS, based in a heritage house in Macquarie Street, the History of Medicine library, as opposed to a medical library, is concerned with the history of medicine. Accordingly to librarian, David Russell, researchers (150 per year) are a mixture of post graduates, retired doctors, College fellows, authors, journalists, lawyers and family historians. There is a close connection with the School of Medical Humanities at the University of Sydney. Access is free as the College views this as a philanthropic facility. Its collection consists of works relevant to the history of medicine, some dating back to 1500 and it has a rare book room as well as comfortable reading areas.

Summary description of the organisation and its collection

The Royal Australian Historical Society (RAHS) was founded in 1901, to collect historical material and disseminate historical knowledge. The RAHS collection of documents, images and artefacts illustrates its governance as a social and historical institution, the donations and interests of its members, and its contribution to research. The library collection also reflects the philosophy and practice of history over the last 113 years.

The RAHS Library is responsible for two collections: the Library research collection which is the subject of this assessment and the archives and accumulated operational records dating from its inception in 1901. The library collection consists predominantly of print and photographic material covering a range of topics, including state and national history, with particular emphasis on NSW local history. The library is on the first floor of History House, the RAHS headquarters at 133 Macquarie Street, Sydney. Some library material is also stored in the basement, where the Society's archives are located.

Approximately 250 people access the collection in person each year, in a pattern that has been stable for the last 15 years.¹ RAHS members have free access and non-members pay \$5.50 per visit. The Library is open from 10-4 Monday to Friday: 30 hours a week (50 weeks, 1500 hrs pa). All material is on open access and the librarian is on hand to assist. Eighty per cent of inquiries, often for copies of JRAHS articles, are by email or phone.

Volunteers – and occasionally library students – assist with accessioning, cataloguing, indexing, scanning images, conservation, writing book notes for *History* magazine, filing, mounting displays in the auditorium, shelving and compiling the RAHS Minutes card index. This assistance is equivalent to about 25-30 hours a week.²

History and significance of the organisation and its collection

The Australian Historical Society (later Royal Australian Historical Society or RAHS) was founded in 1901 at a time when interest in Australian history – especially the early years of white settlement – was growing. The birth of this new Society coincided with the growing availability of 'foundational' primary sources such as the NSW Department of Lands correspondence, maps and plans. The use of such sources was demonstrated in 1906, and in the years after, when the Society's first Journal was published. As historian Brian H. Fletcher commented,

¹ Kylie Rees, 'The Library of the RAHS', in Alfred James (ed), *Much Writing, Many Opinions, the making of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Journal of Royal Australian Historical Society, V87, Pt 1, June 2001, pp. 134-139.

² Information and figures from Library Report in *History*, March 2013, p. 17.

For nearly a century ... the Society nurtured historical writing and encouraged a spirit of free enquiry ... it succeeded in promoting understanding of Australia's past and generating interest in it, thus contributing to the development of Australian culture.³

Despite the interest and support of a few academics and prominent Sydneysiders such as David Scott Mitchell, the RAHS predominantly drew its strength from enthusiasts 'for whom Australian history was a hobby'. These people continue to be the 'heart and soul' of the RAHS, and many of the affiliated local historical societies, to the present.⁴

During its early years the RAHS took on roles which would later become the preserve of other bodies such as the National Trust of Australia. An early interest in the built environment, including campaigns to save Sydney's old buildings was evident. Foundation Society members such as Arthur and Ethel Foster created a valuable and unique resource by systematically photographing colonial buildings about to be demolished. Another early photographer was stationer and amateur cyclist Frank Walker who travelled throughout New South Wales in the first decades of the twentieth century creating a comprehensive photographic record of rural and regional areas. In these early years the Society initiated a number of projects such as operating its own museum and in the 1920s an attempt was made to collect oral history.⁵ Later in the 1950s it was a significant boon to the 'history community' when the RAHS initiated the re-issuing of First Fleet journals, described as the 'corner-stones of Australian history'.⁶

From its early days the RAHS has mentored local historical societies. This program was placed on a more formal basis in 1934 when the Clarence River Historical Society became the first society to affiliate with the RAHS. Other local societies did likewise. In 1961 the first gathering of affiliated societies took place in History House, then located in Young Street, Sydney and this relationship is re-affirmed each year at regional conferences run by RAHS. As President Dr Ken Cable remarked in 1978, 'the appearance of a multitude of local, district and specialist societies' was a most important development for the RAHS.⁷ The Society provides leadership to 360 affiliated historical societies with over 40 000 members, and particularly seeks to encourage best practice in collection management. Since 1991 the RAHS has distributed funds to affiliated societies and to individual members (and others) through the Heritage Office of NSW Cultural Grants Program funding to

³ Brian H. Fletcher, 'The Royal Australian Historical Society and the writing of Australian history' in Alfred James (ed), *Much Writing, Many Opinions, the making of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Journal of Royal Australian Historical Society, V87, Pt 1, June 2001, pp. 1-2, 6.

⁴ Marjorie Jacobs, 'The Royal Australian Historical Society, 1901-2001, Pt 1, Students of a like hobby: the Society, 1900-1954,' in Alfred James (ed), *Much Writing, Many Opinions, the making of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, V87, Pt 1, June 2001, p. 16.

⁵ Ibid, pp. 16, 18-19, 22-24.

⁶ Brian H. Fletcher, p. 3.

⁷ Mari Metzke, 'Affiliated Societies of the RAHS', in Alfred James (ed), *Much Writing, Many Opinions, the making of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, V87, Pt 1, June 2001, pp. 104-109.,

support historical research and publications.⁸

One of the Society's main problems in its early decades was the lack of secure premises. After a peripatetic start, the RAHS established a building fund in the early 1920s with the aim of eventually owning its own premises. Twenty years later in a depressed wartime property market this became a reality and a building at 8 Young Street, Sydney was purchased and given the name History House. This was, in the words of RAHS president JH Ferguson, to be dedicated as 'a temple to the cause of truth, understanding, intellectual freedom and just judgement'.⁹

In the late 1960s when this site became attractive to developers, History House was sold and another home was found for the Society at 133 Macquarie Street. In early 1971 the move was made to the historic 1870s town house on this site. Another History House became the headquarters for the RAHS which has remained there ever since doing its work, in the words of one councillor as 'a seat of learning outside the academy'.¹⁰ Along with all RAHS's other possessions the library collection was moved from Young to Macquarie Street. Originally on a second floor, it was later moved to its present location on the first floor.¹¹

Today RAHS offers regular daytime and evening lectures and members' nights at History House, excursions, regional seminars and also 'webinars' – interactive seminars to skill members and affiliated societies. It promotes local history events across the state.

The Library Collection

One of the founding objects of Australian Historical Society (later RAHS) as stated in November 1900 was,

the collection and preservation for the use of members of the Society, of all books, newspapers, records, coins, stamps, prints, relics, and matters having reference to Australian History, especially as regards New South Wales.¹²

From the start there was strong emphasis on collecting photographs and as a former RAHS librarian notes, the donation in 1901 of a series of 1879 Charles Bayliss negatives marked the beginning of a unique collection of Australiana.

The society's interests and concerns are reflected in its collectors and its collection, especially items such as those documenting City of Sydney buildings that were to be demolished and Mrs Ethel Foster's images of Devonshire Street cemetery before its demolition in 1901.

In 1954 the donation of the Foster collection of books, glass negatives and press clippings marked

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Marjorie Jacobs, pp. 25-26.

¹⁰ Christine Yeats, personal communication, 25 February 2014.

¹¹ Marjorie Jacobs, pp. 40-41.

¹² Kylie Rees, pp. 134-139.

another milestone in the library's collection. In the same year Captain JH Watson donated his 1350 glass negatives, used as projected slides at the Society's lectures and for illustrations in the JRAHS, together with his substantial collection, including a number of rare books. In addition Frank Walker donated books, photographs, negatives and manuscripts. He had created approximately 2000 glass lantern slides documenting his 36 000km cycling trips through NSW between 1896 and 1905.¹³ A selection of these which record the Blue Mountains have been digitised and catalogued under a new system, made possible by a NSW government grant to commemorate the bicentenary of the first European crossing of the Blue Mountains in 1813.

Over the years the RAHS library was managed by volunteers, some of whom brought considerable expertise to their work. For example in the 1940s City of Sydney librarian CH Bertie and Mitchell Librarian Hugh Wright worked for 10 years, two afternoons a week creating order out of the library's 'chaotic condition'. One of their achievements was to catalogue the collection using the Dewey Decimal System. In 1952 in recognition of their efforts the library was named CH Bertie and Hugh Wright Memorial Library.

During the 1950s there was some paid staffing of the library but this did not continue into the next decade and the collection was apparently 'somewhat haphazard' until the late 1960s when retired librarian Jean Arnot took over its management in a voluntary capacity. At this time donations to the library fund were made tax deductible resulting in more funds becoming available: the collection gradually became an 'Australian history library'.¹⁴

Nevertheless the library was run down and rarely used. As a result many items were dispersed. In 1970 manuscripts, photographs, maps and architectural drawings were given to the Mitchell Library, (see details at: <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemDetailPaged.aspx?itemID=421471> and <http://acms.sl.nsw.gov.au/item/itemdetailpaged.aspx?itemid=421546>

In 1981 objects, photographs and some paintings were given to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences – today known as the Powerhouse Museum which lists 458 items in its catalogue http://www.powerhousemuseum.com/collection/database/collection=Royal_Australian_Historical_Society

Volunteers managed the library until 1984 when a paid librarian, Frank Dunn was appointed, who formerly worked at the State Library of NSW. Since then, although there have been some paid staff available for library work, the situation has fluctuated and it is only since 1996 that there has been a full time paid librarian. Library technician Donna Newton has filled this role since 2007.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid, pp. 134-135.

¹⁴ Marjorie Jacobs, p. 40.

¹⁵ Ibid, pp. 135-139.

Described as the repository of ‘most valuable, but under-used resources’,¹⁶ it is not surprising that the library was not equipped to meet the challenges of a time of ‘radical technological change’. With no full time professional librarian, the library’s importance withered. This situation was not helped by changes to staff positions and funding cuts in the 1980s and 1990s. The huge task of computer cataloguing and making effective and consistent use of new technology was the greatest challenge that was accomplished gradually with the assistance of funding from the NSW Department of Planning.

Finally the library began to take its place as a viable 21st century institution. As historian Rosemary Annable commented in 2001,

The RAHS library catalogue is still the only catalogue of a major historical collection that enables researchers to search by local government area, making it an invaluable tool for local and regional history and for heritage studies.¹⁷

Since then catalogue keyword searching has improved, but changes in local government areas have not always been noted in entries.

Space, both to study in, and to shelve and store the collection, has been a recurring issue during the library’s history.¹⁸ Today staff comments echo this concern. Reserving a quiet area can be difficult within the limits of the library.

The library collection documents the history of the RAHS, the people involved with its evolution, development and shifting fortunes. The complete collection of RAHS publications illustrates the changing nature of Australian historiography as well as historians’ interests. It is a research resource specialising in NSW local history that offers open access to all materials with librarian expertise to hand. The importance of the increasingly rare phenomenon of browsing in a library should not be underestimated. As journalist Elizabeth Farrelly commented recently, ‘Book-browsing is a pastime of incalculable value, bringing the glorious happenstance by which an adventurous mind thrives, and is only partly replaced by net-surfing.’¹⁹

One of the greatest challenges at present for the RAHS library is to ensure that it is known more

¹⁶ Rosemary Annable, ‘The Royal Australian Historical Society, 1901-2001, Pt 3, Closing the first hundred years: the Society from the 1980s to 2001,’ in Alfred James (ed), *Much Writing, Many Opinions, the making of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society, V87, Pt 1, June 2001, p. 47.

¹⁷ Ibid, pp. 50-51.

¹⁸ Kylie Rees, pp. 138-139.

¹⁹ Elizabeth Farrelly, *SMH*, 6 March, 2014, p. 29.

widely in the history community – both amateur and professional – so effective and broad use can be made of this important resource. As Elizabeth Ellis notes, the library is a ‘legacy well worth maintaining and its continuity is an integral part of RAHS ... it gives validity and substance to what would otherwise be a series of rooms.’

Description of the collection

The Society’s collection includes:

- Books, including reference copies are organised under the Dewey Decimal System. They are catalogued in the digital Book Index, 23 585 items (including vertical file material below)
- 9x4-drawer filing cabinets of vertical files (a mixture of photocopied and original material) are organised under the Dewey system. They are catalogued in the digital Book Index, 23 585 items (including books above)
- Watson and Foster press clippings books are listed under a separate digital Press Clippings Index, 7253 articles.
- other press clipping collections are catalogued in the digital Book Index.
- Reference collection including hard copies of Sands Directory, the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, *Who’s Who in Australia*, *Hunter Valley Register*, *Sydney Morning Herald index*, *Statistical Register of NSW*, *Historical Records of NSW*, *Australian Encyclopaedia*, are catalogued in the digital Book Index
- Cemetery records (hard copy and CD/DVD) from most of NSW are important reference material, catalogued in the digital Book Index, 370 items
- RAHS publications which span more than a century are digitally indexed. JRAHS 1906-2013, *History* magazine 1988-2013, Conference papers, 1964-1995, Annual Reports 1901-2013, are catalogued in the Journal, Magazine and Conference Index, total 3771 items
- photographic collection: 75 percent of images have been digitised and are catalogued in the Photographs Collection Index, 11 463 images. Approximately 3000 items are not yet catalogued or indexed
- glass negatives or slides collection: images have been digitised and are catalogued in the Glass Slides Index, 7613 items.
- Frank Walker's glass negatives or slides: images have been digitised and are catalogued in the Walker Pictures Index, 1938 items
- series: Affiliated Societies' newsletters digital index under title/ subject, is not available online 3689 issues.
- manuscripts (mostly twentieth century) are listed in the Manuscripts Collection Index, 1060 items.
- maps: a few but they have not yet been accessioned.
- multimedia – formats include: audio cassettes and video, CDs DVDs and film.
- paintings and lithographs (approximately 150) are listed in McWilliam & Associates P/L, *A valuation of the contents of History House under instruction from the Royal Australian*

Historical Society as inspected at 133 Macquarie Street Sydney, 2000 on the basis of replacement value suitable for insurance purposes as at June 2006, and either hang on the walls, or are stored in the basement.

- objects and furniture: are listed in McWilliam & Associates P/L, *A valuation of the contents of History House under instruction from the Royal Australian Historical Society as inspected at 133 Macquarie Street Sydney, 2000 on the basis of replacement value suitable for insurance purposes as at June 2006*. Many items were relocated at the Powerhouse Museum during 1970s and 1980s. Some are used or on display in the rooms, others are stored in the basement
- Rare books room contains some important and iconic works.
- At the rear of the auditorium six (1m wide) glass-fronted cabinets display items from the library collection.
- Approximately 50m of RAHS archives

Relationship between the building and its contents ie the moveable heritage (if relevant)

RAHS is in the fortunate position of owning its premises, History House at 133 Macquarie Street where it has been located since 1971. Since then two proposals to sell the property, when major repairs were needed and lack of tenants threatened the Society's operations, have been resisted.

RAHS currently uses only the ground floor, the first floor and part of the basement. The ground floor function rooms (apart from the auditorium) are mainly furnished with the Society's antique furniture, and pictures from the RAHS collection adorn the walls. The library occupies three-quarters of the first floor, while staff use an office and the area behind the reception counter. Rental from the remaining basement area and the top two floors provides a regular income to support the Society's activities and pay four part-time staff and a full-time librarian position (35 hours/week).

The importance of the ownership of an area where the library can operate and additional space from which rental income can be derived to fund a full-time librarian cannot be underestimated.

According to Elizabeth Ellis, this is in contrast to the Royal Society of NSW which lost its purpose-built premises (Science House) and as a result the contents of its library had to be stored in a warehouse: apart from a small number of rare and valuable items, it is no longer accessible.²⁰ In order to function effectively a library must have a dedicated space and a curator/librarian to organise it and provide assistance with inquiries.

Situated in the heart of the City of Sydney close to other research and library collections such as the State Library of NSW, the Mitchell Library collection and the City of Sydney Customs House Library, the location of the RAHS library is also an asset. In addition it is easily reached by train, bus or ferry. As Elizabeth Ellis remarks, 'one of the greatest stabilising elements [for the RAHS] is

²⁰ Elizabeth Ellis, personal communication,, 25 February 2014.

that it owns the building, with its presence and historical significance which gives a specific identity to the physical entity.²¹

Community comments

A survey of members, including questions about the library, was conducted in 2007. This revealed that approximately 10 per cent of members joined RAHS primarily to use the library. Library users – 65 per cent of those surveyed – used the catalogue and were satisfied with staff assistance. Librarian Donna Newton reported that most clients commented on the swift response to inquiries, and appreciated the personal help, the quiet studious atmosphere and the open access shelving. RAHS executive officer Suzanne Holohan hopes to survey members again soon.

Members of the public sometimes drop in to the library out of curiosity. Affiliated historical and family history societies organise bus trips to visit, and tours of the library are arranged at new members' evenings. It is planned to include interviews with library users as a feature in the Society's *History* magazine. This will provide feedback as well as promoting the library.

Condition of the collection

Library Collection Development Policy

The current Library Collection Development Policy (2010) is not an adequate document to guide and facilitate the organisation of the library. Accession criteria need refining. At present any book given to the Society is kept, or sold if it is a duplicate. However, there is no de-accessioning policy. A strategy needs to be evolved too for retaining digitally-born material such as local historical society websites and newsletters

Shelving Space

Surplus stock is taking up valuable shelf space. In the library, where space is at a premium, the book collection has almost reached its limit. A policy-driven cull – done with caution – of unused or inappropriate books would create valuable room for relevant items. In the basement multiple copies of past JRAHS occupy 3.5 compactus bays and should be disposed of, while possibly maintaining a few of each edition.

Vertical Files

The drawers present a random mix of photographs ephemera, newspapers and more. There is much useful material in these files. Some of the potted school and post office histories, using SRNSW and NAA files are a case in point. These were previously compiled by staff in the relevant government departments, but not any longer. Such 'bare bones' histories are useful as an introduction and for those who do not have time to consult original files and for many amateur historians they can

²¹ *ibid*

provide an accessible way into these archives. Baiba Berzins especially mentioned the value of the vertical files, when researching her RAHS commissioned book, *North Coast Women, a history to 1939* (RAHS, Sydney, 1996) and for other research. Nevertheless this collection needs culling especially in light of the present easy access to digitised newspapers through Trove. Care should be exercised that such a cull does not dispose of useful material.. Work urgently needs to be done on this part of the collection as some drawers in the filing cabinets are very crowded and hard to open.

Multimedia collection

This consists of audio cassettes and video, CDs, DVDs and film. Some material is not specifically local or NSW in subject and should be culled according to the planned new collection development policy. Once their condition is ascertained, retained analogue audio and video should be digitised for preservation.

Physical condition of collection

The physical condition of collection is generally good. Books are shelved in metal compactuses and on timber or metal shelves. Glass negatives and slides are stored in wooden card-catalogue drawers. The condition of the negatives is largely good although about ten per cent have deteriorated and a few are broken. Ideally they should be stored in individual acid-free sleeves. Some (total number unknown) of the glass slides have been preserved as celluloid film negatives

Climate/environment

Both the first floor library area and to a lesser degree the basement are subject to some temperature fluctuation. Air conditioning which can control the temperature throughout most of the library is used for the comfort of clients, rather than preservation of the collection. Humidity was not measured but a dehumidifier may well be required in Sydney's climate. The first floor collection is also regularly exposed to light. This situation needs a review by a qualified conservator].

Conservation

The Watson and Foster news clippings books are very fragile and require urgent conservation and digitisation. (see Items 1 & 2) No other items were seen or mentioned by RAHS.

Photograph collections

There are 3000 outstanding photographs not yet catalogued or digitised (Osborne collection, Leonard Bond collection, Kodak factory collection, Adastra aerial views 1935-7). Collection-unique originals, other than Frank Walker's, include John Powell's images of the Blue Mountains and systematic record of Sydney streets and Percy Gledhill a local history enthusiast.

Although approximately 11 400 images are already digitised they were originally scanned at low resolution (thumbnail size) and are inadequate for reproduction and need re-scanning at higher resolution. This means also that images cannot be enlarged by online searches when often little can be discerned. Some RAHS funding, supplemented by a NSW government grant, has made it possible to start the process of digitising and indexing the Frank Walker collection using new software which will eventually enable the whole photographic collection to be easily sourced by search engines such as Trove.

Original photographs and photo albums are stored either in the library or in the basement. Some photographs are dispersed throughout the vertical files. Ring folders on the library shelves contain sleeves with sample images from the glass negative and glass slide collections as well as negative film strips which give an idea of the collection's extent.

The Frank Walker 2000 glass lantern slides collection is kept in the first floor staff office (approximately four or five drawers high, 2m width) and the rest of the glass negatives and slides collection (7600) in the basement. The former drawers used to be in the Rare Books room, but it would be preferable for them to be in the library. The negatives and their storage drawers are heavy and the floor in the front part of the library may need to be tested for its weight-bearing capacity.

Most of the 7600 images in the glass negative collection have not been assessed to see if they are unique to RAHS collection.²²

Manuscripts

Carol Liston feels the historical significance of this part of the collection has been under appreciated, and that it is important for understanding the history of the collections of manuscripts ephemera and news cuttings.²³

RAHS publications: Journal, *History* magazine and e-news

The Society's publications are important and the peer-reviewed JRAHS is widely respected. The use of an online publisher such as InformIT for the Journal, with readers paying to view articles would generate income. Librarian Donna Newton receives many inquiries for JRAHS articles.

RAHS President Anne-Maree Whitaker emphasises the importance of digitisation of the JRAHS to make these more accessible. Carol Liston says that 'Booknotes' in *History* magazine is an important method of communication as received books and their reviews result in acquisitions for the library or alerts the library to an item which should be acquired.²⁴ The fortnightly e-news has been successful in raising the library's profile.

Affiliated Society newsletters

These mainly date from the 1960s and 1970s and are crucial part of the collection, especially as the only other repository, albeit incomplete, is the State Library of NSW. They are filed vertically in open document boxes, interspersed with books, according to Dewey Decimal order. Most are flimsy – a few pages stapled together and suffer from difficulty getting them out of the boxes. They would be better stored in archival documents boxes for preservation and shelved together for easier access, supervision and management.

Rare Books room

While some books are rare and have an interesting provenance (for example Dame Mary Gilmore's copy, donated in 1947 of Justice Kenyon, *Aboriginal Word Book*, The Lothian Publishing Co, P/L, Melbourne, 1930), most are also held by the nearby Mitchell Library. Works such as James Scott,

²² Ian Jack, 'Some photographic collections of significance', RAHS May 2012.

²³ Carol Liston, personal communication, 6 March 2014.

²⁴ Ibid.

Remarks on a Passage to Botany Bay, 1787-1792, Trustees of the Public Library of NSW in association with Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1969 could probably be relegated to the ordinary collection. Other 'foundation' works such as David Collins, *An Account of the English Colony in New South Wales*, Vol. 1, BH Fletcher (ed.), AH & AW Reid, Sydney, 1975, while not rare, should remain in the rare books room as RAHS was instrumental in having this reprinted. Volumes of interstate history such as *History of Queensland* could be de-accessioned. Kylie Rees emphasised the importance of several books because of their previous ownership and associations and those that are signed or annotated by people such as Dame Mary Gilmore, or former Councillors.²⁵

Currently stored in the basement, bibles such those owned by the Marsden and Hassall families have been conserved and could be housed in the Rare Books room. How this room is to be used needs clarification as at present it also serves as an office. When the executive officer relocates to alternative office space, this important room will be unsupervised. Elizabeth Ellis feels the criteria for placing items in the Rare Book room need refinement and assessment and that consideration is given to items such as Sands Directories for relocation there as long as access to these is not restricted

Collection intactness

A student volunteer is currently searching RAHS minutes and other records to provide further information about items presented to the Powerhouse Museum in the past. In some instances donated collections were split and some significant items, such as a portrait of CH Bertie (after whom the library is named) is in another collection. A list is currently being compiled of some important items that hopefully can be returned from the Mitchell Library to RAHS library.

Open Access

Councillors and others mention the library's open access as one of its most important attributes. This attracts researchers who want to browse, as well as seeking assistance which is readily at hand. Furthermore it allows an introduction to, and chance to gain familiarity with reference material which may otherwise be only available on microfiche/microfilm, a less 'user friendly' mode of research.

Space for reading and researching

Both staff and Councillors expressed concern that there is insufficient space for people using the library. Currently only four, or at a squeeze five people could be seated at one time. However, at times this space is also needed by volunteers and staff working on the collection. There is limited computer catalogue access (one), and a microfiche reader printer occupies table space, but is rarely used.

Quiet space to read and research is another issue. The office/ reception area is necessarily busy with phone calls and work related conversation. The back of the library is quiet but an adjacent room is soon to be used as another office which will impact on the library.

Library website

The RAHS website is vital as a way of attracting researchers and displaying the collection

²⁵ Kylie Rees, Personal communication, 6 March 2014.

(approximately 80 per cent of inquiries are external). The current need to search across seven different indexes could be improved if all databases could be combined under one search engine. The introduction of new technology (currently initiated with the Frank Walker indexing and digitising project) interacts with major search engines, especially National Library of Australia's Trove which brings many more people to the library website. The library now uses HistoryPin and Flickr to advertise knowledge of its image collection. RAHS e-news has had an impact on library awareness. A new publications and website subcommittee has been formed to rewrite the library pages and, with assistance of the State Library of NSW Innovative Projects staff, to investigate the process of updating the RAHS Wikipedia entry

The Library Committee

The library committee which meets four times a year currently comprises five councillors, one of whom represents the Professional Historians Association, the Executive Officer and the librarian. This committee's terms of reference are currently being reviewed. While the committee has considerable combined expertise, members contribute in an honorary and advisory capacity.

Initiation and co-ordination of projects

Assistance in reorganising the library and its systems, and overseeing special projects is urgently needed. A librarian contracted for six to twelve months to design and effect new systems would be ideal. After that period a minimum of one day a month would then be needed to ensure these are implemented.

RAHS Archives

By default, the library manages the RAHS's own records which are stored in the basement. Although these were organised by voluntary archivist and councillor the late Professor Marjorie Jacobs during the 1980s and 1990s, further work is needed in describing and indexing contents of boxes. A records management policy needs to be created and the records organised accordingly. This requires an outside consultant to assess the state of past and current records, to work with everyone on a policy for dealing with them and to ensure that it is put into practice.

Statement of Significance for the entire collection

This assessment of the collection's significance employs national themes identified by the Australian Heritage Commission and, shown in brackets, themes compiled by the NSW Heritage Council. Levels of significance are: exceptional, high, moderate, little, intrusive.

Scientific/research significance

The collection has an exceptional level of potential for research, especially items such as press clipping volumes which are historic artefacts reflecting the collecting philosophy of people such as Captain Watson and Arthur and Ethel Foster, and photograph creators and collectors like Frank Walker. Another especially valuable component is the RAHS archive. These six series of records provide a unique record of 113 years of debates, decisions and dilemmas of NSW's first historical organisation. These also provide a rare insight into the workings of what began as a purely voluntary, but a multi-faceted Society with a wide range of core business to the present when it is one of a range of historical and heritage organisations in NSW. This evolution demonstrates not only the changing nature of historic debates but also the way in which the history 'community' has evolved in NSW. Its collection of local history societies' newsletters gathers a unique resource, sometimes not surviving in other collections when local records have been lost in disasters such as fire or flood.

The collection's importance as a history research repository is highlighted by the selection of historic themes below:

Historic

The collection demonstrates a very high level of historic significance. It offers an understanding of the changes in Australian historiography during its 113 years of operation, the patterns of collection and donation, the importance of individual writing, curatorial support and direction.

The collection covers several important themes in the history of Australia (NSW themes are indicated in brackets). Some of these are:

Peopling Australia (Aboriginal cultures and interactions with other cultures) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme, particularly early 'foundation' documents such as Watkin Tench, *Sydney's First Four Years*, (Angus & Robertson, in association with RAHS, Sydney, 1961) and John Hunter, *An Historical Journal of Events at Sydney and at Sea, 1787-1792*, (Angus & Robertson, in association with RAHS). Works in the rare books collection also shed light on Aboriginal languages such as two works by Lancelot Edward Threlkeld: *A key to the structure of the Aboriginal language: being an analysis of the particles used as affixes to form the various modifications of the verbs; shewing the essential powers, abstract roots, and the peculiarities of the language spoken by the Aboriginal peoples (Australians) in the vicinity of Hunter River, Lake Macquarie, etc, in NSW, together with comparisons of Polynesian and other dialects*, Kemp &

Fairfax, Sydney, 1850 and *An Australian language as spoken by the Awabakal, the people of Awaba or Lake Macquarie (near Newcastle, NSW)*, Charles Potter, Sydney, 1892.

Peopling Australia (Convict) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme, particularly articles in the JRAHS such as Frank Driscoll, 'Macquarie's administration of the convict system, JRAHS, V 27, 1941; Anne Conlon, 'Mine is a sad yet true story': convict narratives 1818-1850, JRAHS, V 55, March 1969 and Beverley Earnshaw, 'The lame, the blind, the mad, the malingerers: sick and disabled convicts within the Colonial community', JRAHS, V81, June 1995.

Peopling Australia (Ethnic influences and migration) - Many works in this collection, especially in more recent years, demonstrate this theme, such as Bruce Pennay, 'Welcoming the young: Bonegilla remembered' and John Petersen, 'Settled and unsettled - accommodating post-Second-World War migrants in New South Wales', *History*, V 92, June 2007; Sandy McNaughton, 'The Roxy Cafe in Bingara', *History*, V 104, June 2010; Kathrine Reynolds, 'Letters and diaries as useful tools in the construct of history: a case study of emigration from Frauenstein to Australia 1852 -54', JRAHS , V 95, June 2009.

Developing local economy (Agriculture) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme: manuscripts such as *The Illustrated Sydney News and NSW Agriculturist and Grazier*, 31 March, 1876. Vol.XIII, No.4 and JRAHS articles such as Walter S. Campbell, 'Wheats in NSW - from the foundation of the colony', JRAHS, V 22, 1936 and Edward Duyker, 'Land use and ecological change in central NSW', JRAHS V 69, September 1983.

Developing local economy (Communication) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme especially rare books such as CW Bean, *The Dreadnought of the Darling*, Alston Rivers, London, 1911 and other books such as Peter Murray Plowman, *Darling paddleboats*, Rosenberg, Dural, NSW, 2005 and Keith Vincent Smith, *Mari nawi : Aboriginal odysseys*, Rosenberg, Dural, NSW, 2010. Material in vertical files is also relevant, for example Cronulla Post Office file which usefully lists all post masters to 1970 (VF 383.42 CRO)

Building settlements, towns and cities (Towns, Suburbs and villages) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme especially books such as Louise Tiffany Daley, *Men and a river: a history of the Richmond River District, 1828-1895*, MUP, Carlton, 1968; Bobbie Hardy, *West of the Darling*, Jacaranda Press, Brisbane, 1969; Virginia Macleod, *Manly A Pictorial History*, Kingsclear Books, 2008 and Pauline Curby, *Randwick*, Randwick City Council, 2009.

Educating (Education) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme such as items in vertical files, for example Corowa Public School file which contains a 24-page typescript with photos 'Corowa Public School, 1878-1978' written by JJ Fletcher, a former historian employed by the Department of Education (VF 373.91 COR) also books such as RW Rathbone, *Ever Forward: a centenary history of Bexley Public School 1887-1987*, Bexley Public School, Bexley, 1987. Affiliated societies' newsletters provide an educational resource for their local community.

Governing (Government and administration) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme but probably the most pertinent are contained within RAHS archives, organised in six series

of documents, which represent 113 years of administration and governance of a vital NSW NGO.

Governing (Law and Order) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme such as items in vertical files, for example Darlinghurst Gaol file (VF 725.6 DAR) and books such as Deborah Beck, *Hope in hell: a history of Darlinghurst Gaol and the National Art School*, Allen & Unwin, Crows Nest, 2005.

Developing Australia's cultural life (Creative endeavour) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme – donated manuscripts, scrap books, photographs, prints, paintings and, numerous articles for the JRAHS and the collection of newsletter from affiliated societies. Publications which have been commissioned by RAHS are very pertinent (for example Baiba Berzins, *North Coast Women, a history to 1939*, RAHS, Sydney, 1996) or have been assisted by a grant administered by RAHS (for example Pauline Curby, *Battlers' Boomtown - Coraki in the Early 1890s*, Northern Rivers Publishing, Lismore, 1992). Grants such as these have not only made possible the publication of a range of works from regional NSW but also helped raise the standard of local history writing.

Developing Australia's cultural life (Religion) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme: manuscripts such as William Grant Broughton, 'Bishop Broughton rides again ... told in the very words of his own journal for 1845: of his 3000 mile tour, 'alone' in the NSW of just 100 years ago'. (MF 283.91 BRO) and glass negatives such as the line reproduction of St John's, Parramatta [Parramatta Church] call no 224.

Developing Australia's cultural life (Social Institutions) Many works in this collection demonstrate this theme but probably the most pertinent are: the RAHS library itself, named the CH Bertie and Hugh Wright Memorial Library, in honour of two key early councillors and library contributors and the RAHS building, History House, an 1870s town house which is a fitting home for the state's oldest historical organisation

Artistic/aesthetic significance

The collection has exceptional aesthetic value. There are many objects with a unique aesthetic value, especially prints and paintings, and rare books such as Lancelot Edward Threlkeld's 1850s publication mentioned above. In addition glass negatives and images, many of which are unique to RAHS, have an exceptional aesthetic value such as Charles Bayliss' 1880, HMS *Alert*, Farm Cove, Sydney, NSW (Call No 020324). There are many other such images.

Social/spiritual significance

The social value of the collection is exceptional in that it provides a unique service to members, affiliated societies and the public generally. At present 80 per cent of inquiries to the library are by email or phone, often for copies of JRAHS articles. This is an especially important service for those in regional NSW who have limited access to historical repositories in Sydney. In addition the open

access nature of the library makes it a welcoming and accessible facility for both professional and amateur historians. Features of the library such as open access to hard copy Sands Directories are important for those who visit the library in person as demonstrated by the fact that currently these are the most used library resource.

At the same time the library collection is a record of a social institution and its changing character for more than a hundred years, the efforts, concerns and activities of its contributors and custodians.

Comparative criteria – exceptional, high, moderate, little, intrusive.

Provenance

The library collection and RAHS archives is securely provenanced to RAHS. Donations such as Frank Walker's nearly 2000 glass slide collection together with his manuscripts and articles submitted to the JRAHS and Arthur and Ethel Foster's 33 collected volumes of news clippings, 250 books and 381 glass negatives are unique and highly important for their connection with founder members of the society. Some of the 7600 glass negatives and slides in the collection have never been assessed and it is thought that many may be copies of originals held by other institutions.

Rarity/Representativeness

Press clipping volumes have exceptional rarity and are in themselves artefacts reflecting the collecting philosophies and interests of people such as Captain Watson and Arthur and Ethel Foster. Many of the artworks and images in the library collection and some books in the rare book room are rare examples demonstrating key themes in the history of NSW. A number of works have an interesting provenance (for example Dame Mary Gilmore's copy, donated in 1947 of Justice Kenyon, *Aboriginal Word Book*, The Lothian Publishing Co, P/L, Melbourne, 1930). RAHS archives as the unique record of 113 years of administration of NSW's oldest historical organisation has an exceptional degree of rarity. Most of the book collection is representative of what might be found in a local studies or local historical society collection but it is extremely rare to have assembled such a rich collection of local history material which covers the whole state of NSW.

Condition/Completeness/Intactness

Generally the condition of the collection is good apart from the Watson and Foster news clippings books which are very fragile and some require urgent conservation. The RAHS library collection is not intact as many manuscripts and images were given to the Mitchell Library in 1970 and its museum collection to the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (later the Powerhouse Museum) in 1980.

Interpretative Capacity

The library collection has a high potential for historical interpretation especially in relation to local history in NSW. Its collection of newsletters and bulletins from affiliated societies is unique and in tandem with its collection of local histories, gathered together in one repository, makes it an important research facility for NSW local history. Personal collections and donations as well as writings also have potential to interpret the changing attitudes and preoccupations of history and historical interpretation during the twentieth century.

The collections' electronic catalogue optimises the capacity to search specific information and material, while its open access permits browsing and discovery through juxtaposition, serendipity and chance.

Key recommendations

The library collection development policy should be rewritten. As well as considering collection accession and disposal criteria, it should include reappraisal of the purpose and use of Rare Books Room and the management of electronic publications, such as affiliated Society's newsletters and websites.

A RAHS records management policy should be developed. It should include a disposal and retention schedule and provision for the management and retention of relevant as well as mandatory electronic records.

Urgent conservation

Watson and Foster news clippings require immediate measures, by a professional conservator, to preserve the volumes and minimise handling.

Accommodation The part of the collection housed in first floor room should be assessed to measure temperature and humidity fluctuations and any impact of light on fragile and rare items. Likewise the basement storage room should be assessed to measure temperature and humidity fluctuations and changes in climatic controls and conditions. This requires a professional consultant.

Further organisation of the collection

Cull books, some multimedia material and vertical files in accordance with the new collection development policy.

Promote open access and library use

Rationalise space to maximise quiet areas and the best use of Rare Books room and gradually provide more computer terminals for online and catalogue reference. Invite interest in and understanding of the library's role by arresting informative displays in the auditorium which is visited by many people interested in history, but who may not go upstairs to the library. Improve the library website and make the online catalogue more 'user friendly' by combining multiple indexes.

Digitisation

Some RAHS funding, supplemented by a grant, has started this process with some of Frank Walker's image collection and an ongoing digitisation and indexing program is already under way. This and other projects such as rescanning 7600 images need scoping and a projected budget to ensure ongoing funding to complete these tasks.

Retained audio (reel to reel and cassette tapes) and video material should be digitised before original versions further deteriorate.

Rare, unusual and fragile items, such as Watson and Foster news clippings volumes should be digitised – all pages. Seek special funding for this project.

The JRAHS (1901-2013) should gradually be digitised.

Publications

Baiba Berzins feels that publications such as her RAHS commissioned book, *North Coast Women, a history to 1939* (RAHS, Sydney, 1996) are good publicity for the use of RAHS collections and helps to promote their wider use. The peer-reviewed and well-respected JRAHS should be e-published (see above digitisation).

Partnerships

While it is important for the library to maintain its independent status it needs to interact with, mutually support and sometimes seek funding from historically-minded organisations and individuals.

Negotiate with the State Library of NSW to explore the potential for a memorandum of understanding to allow RAHS to take over responsibility for all NSW historical societies' newsletters. This would be advantageous for SLNSW, saving space and administration; and would enhance the RAHS library's collection, as it is already the best location for accessing these.

Discuss with the Mitchell Library return of any items, eg manuscripts, which were placed in its care, where this has compromised RAHS collection's integrity and their loss may have alienated donors and potential donors.

Community involvement

Involve the Affiliated Societies in raising funds so the library can purchase missing hard copies of Sands Directory, an item frequently used by members and researchers. It should also be emphasised that these bodies need to ensure that RAHS has full runs of their newsletters. Also arrange for their newsletter indexes to be supplied to RAHS library.

Executive officer Suzanne Holohan plans a 'sponsor a Journal issue' in order to pay for digitisation. Use of this will then generate income.

Baiba Berzins mentioned the benefits of active support by a patron with a high profile in the history community – such as the late Manning Clark, whose name and interest lent weight to the establishment of the Manning Clark Collection at Southern Cross University, Lismore.

PART II

Detailed assessment of the most significant items in the collection

Item 1 Captain James H Watson news clippings collection

Description: 32 bound volumes of news articles, dated between 1880s to 1930s, cut out and glued onto the pages. Each volume has an Australian Historical Society bookplate. Some are indexed by alphabetical pages at front. Articles are not all dated. Topics include: obituaries, Australian Historical Society meetings, notices, obituaries, buildings, railways, shipping, industry, elections, eminent people, mainly men. Sample volumes include:

Vol. 1 has a copy of the Australian Historical Society constitution tucked inside front cover

Vols. 6 and 29 are devoted to the subject of Captain Cook

Vol. 12 A centenary souvenir of Tasmania, 1803-1903

Vol. 9 Coastal northern Australia including encounter with Aborigines

Vol. 11 *50 years ago*

Vol. 16 European news

Vol. 18 *50 years ago* and Sydney suburbs.

Articles are sourced from *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Truth*, *The Bulletin*, *The Sun*, *Australian*, *Evening News*, *Australian Star* and *Daily Telegraph* and others.

History and Provenance: Captain James Watson joined RAHS in 1904 and served as Honorary Research Secretary from 1915 until 1932, being made a life member in 1925. Writing soon after Watson's death, KR Cramp remarked,

It was his greatest pleasure to attend the Society's office daily and there indulge his hobby of research on all matters connected with the history of churches, shipping, and early Australian families. He gradually trained the Sydney community to turn to him for information on all matters and sundry.²⁶

Although the collection is attributed to James Watson (1842- 1934) seven volumes have bookplates indicating donation by other compilers: Vol. 23, donated by V Mann esq. in 1929, Vol. 28 donated by Miss Agnes Millin in 1943, Vol. 29 donated by Robert Harris in 1933, Vol. 14 donated by the late Frederick Phillips in 1920 and Vols. 4, 30 & 31 were donated by Frederick Phillips in 1928.

Community recollections: This collection records what an important founder member of the RAHS felt constituted important history to be preserved.

Context of use: Individual articles can be located through the Press Clippings Index.

²⁶ KR Cramp, 'Captain JH Watson, A life sketch and an Appreciation', JRAHS, Vol. 20, 1934, pp. 432-439.

Type of material, manufacture and condition: 32 bound volumes, either with title 'News Cuttings', 'Scrap Album', or 'Album'. Covers are cardboard. Vol. 18 has a fine Art deco cover. Vol. 16, manufactured by Marcus Ward and Co London describes the book as: 'A Ready Reference Receptacle for scraps of print from our chief sources of knowledge the Newspapers.'

Newspaper articles have been neatly glued onto paper pages.

Some volumes are in poor condition and need conservation. Vols. 13, 17, 18: the edges of the pages are disintegrating. Vols. 20, 22 & 24: binding is disintegrating and there is some damage to articles too. Vols. 25, 27, 28 all need conservation. Volumes 11, 12, 19 & 32 no longer have their original covers and have been rebound. Glue or paste used to stick articles may affect legibility over time.

Handling should be minimised. Digitisation of the pages would ensure survival.

Comparative examples: RAHS Ethel and Arthur Foster news clippings collection

Statement of Significance:

James Watson's news cuttings collection is often paired with Ethel and Arthur Foster's collection as both are scrapbooks of articles from contemporary newspapers. Yet the two collections have differences.

Watson's collection is only 80 per cent attributable to him. The style and organisation of his collection is neat and methodical, but largely impersonal.

It is a representative example of a common activity and artefact of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. It demonstrates a way of creating a history resource at a period when there were few published works and little historical information. The selection of content indicates the compiler's interest and understanding of history.

Content is rare although some articles may be found on line as the National Library of Australia's newspaper digitisation project progresses.

As James Watson was a founder member of the Society, like Ethel and Arthur Foster and Frank Walker, his collection demonstrates creative activities and interests of an important contributor to the historical record.

Item 2 Ethel and Arthur Foster news clippings collection

Description: 33 volumes of news clippings pasted into scrap books created from a mixture of purpose-made scrap books, cash books and (volume 33) a novel by Sir Walter Scott. Sizes vary. These compilations include newspaper clippings; souvenir booklets; small monographs; correspondence, drawings, tickets, invitations, postcards and photographs.

History and Provenance: Created by Ethel Foster, nee Roberts, (1870- 1955) and her husband Arthur Foster (1861-1924). Married in 1896 the Arthur and Ethel Foster soon became founder members of RAHS, with particular interest in photographing the buildings and landmarks of Sydney, which were being demolished, especially the Devonshire Street, or Sandhills cemetery removed in 1901 to make way for Central Station. Ethel was made the first woman Fellow of the Society in 1924, the year her husband died. She founded the RAHS Women's Auxiliary in 1927 to encourage fund raising and social activities. Arthur Foster bequeathed money to the Society, which eventually purchased History House in Young Street in 1941 and the lounge room, containing Foster donated books, pictures and other historical items, was named for Ethel Foster.²⁷

Community recollections: This collection records what these founder members of the RAHS (particularly Ethel) felt constituted important history to be preserved.

Context of use: Individual articles can be located through the Press Clippings Index.

Type of material, manufacture and condition: news clippings pasted into scrap books created from a variety of purpose-made scrap books, cash books and a novel by Sir Walter Scott. Sizes vary. Vol. 7 is fragile; Vol. 10 is damaged; Vols. 14 & 23 pages are fragile; Vols. 29 & 30 are fragile.

Comparative examples: Watson news cuttings books

Statement of significance: Ethel and Arthur Fosters's news cuttings collection is often paired with James Watson's collection as both are scrapbooks of articles from contemporary newspapers. Yet the two collections are different. Ethel Foster's selection of content – for it appears to be predominantly hers – relates to history but is personal. Some examples are letters received by her in response to research about a department store; the role of an Archibald prize winner's wife in supporting his work; the arrival of an aviatrix; photographs of buildings and views and exquisitely drawn headstones from the Sandhills cemetery.

It is a representative example of a common activity and artefact of the nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century. This was a way of creating a history resource at a period when there were few published works and little historical information. The selection of content indicates the compiler's interest and understanding of history.

Content is unique and personal, news articles are rare although some may be found as the National Library of Australia's newspaper digitisation project progresses.

Ethel Foster was a founder member of the Society, like Frank Walker and James Watson, her collection demonstrates creative activities and interests of an important contributor to the historical

²⁷ Anne-Maree Whitaker, 'Arthur and Ethel Foster', *History*, March 2006, pp. 6-8.

record.

Item 3 Frank Walker glass slides collection

Description: These 1940 glass slides record life in NSW at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Images include: Sydney and its suburbs, streets, churches, bridges, country towns, rivers, rural scenes and maps.

History and Provenance: Frank Walker (1861-1948) proposed the motion to form the Australian Historical Society in 1900 and remained a councillor until 1944. He had already started his travels in 1896 as a keen 'cyclo-photographer' and over the ensuing 12 years he covered approximately 36 000km, recording NSW country and town life and sharing his historical knowledge wherever he went. He upheld the Society's collecting role and donated 1940 glass slides documenting his travels, together with a 'comprehensive collection of historical miscellanea [sic] and numerous books and pamphlets.'²⁸ These illustrated his lectures, based on his own field research and writings, particularly on topics of exploration and local history. His account *Wanderings awheel in New South Wales: an account of various cycling tours undertaken during the years 1896-1908*, published in 1917, is held in the Mitchell Library. The introduction describes how he transported his equipment to prevent damage from movement or dust.

Community recollections: none

Context of use: Many people have their first contact with RAHS library via its image collection. Individual articles can be located through the Walker Pictures Index. Collections documenting places in the past often encourage further visual documentation. For example, photographer John Immig was recently inspired by Charles Bayliss' photographs of Sydney in 1879 to record images of contemporary Newtown.²⁹

Type of material, manufacture and condition: glass slides, approx 7cm by 7cm, created between 1896 and 1908. By the early 1880s dry glass plate negatives, coated with gelatin and sensitised with silver salts, were mass produced and had become popular with amateur photographers. These could be stored undeveloped for long periods of time. The format was overtaken by gelatin silver paper negatives and celluloid roll film during the 1902s. From these glass negatives a transparent positive image could be created, also on glass, to make a lantern slide viewed through a projector with a light source.

Glass plate negatives and lantern slides are very fragile and require careful handling as they easily chip, crack or break. The emulsion on the glass is vulnerable to scratching and flaking. They should

²⁸ JRAHS, 'Donations 1945', Vol. 31 Pt6, 1946, p. 406.

²⁹ SL, State Library magazine, Autumn 2014, p.18.

be stored vertically to minimise surface pressure and ideally should be kept in acid-free sleeves and boxes. http://archives.syr.edu/exhibits/glassplate_about.html. A digitisation project is underway.

Comparative examples: The RAHS has a collection of over 7500 glass plate negatives or slides, apart from Frank Walker's collection. Some of his images are held in the State Library of NSW.

Statement of significance: This collection is exceptionally rare and is a unique visual record of NSW - rural and urban - at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Combined with Frank Walker's writings it provides insight not only into life at that time, but also the enthusiasm of a historian/photographer. As Walker was a founder member of the Society, like Ethel and Arthur Foster and James Watson, this collection demonstrates creative activities and interests of an important contributor to the historical record.

Item 4 Sands Directories (hard copies)

Description: Sands Sydney Directory, published annually between 1859 and 1932, is an important historic resource. Its lists of householder and business names have become 'a fundamental source for research into Sydney history, especially family history'.

<http://photosau.com.au/CosSands/scripts/home.asp>

RAHS library holds an incomplete set (32 volumes) of Sands Sydney Directories, dating from 1864 to 1931. These are on display in the reference section of the library in a locked cupboard but are available to library users. Some of these volumes are extremely large, with the 1931 volume, for example, 26cm high and 13cm thick. Careful handling is required. In the lower section of the cupboard there are some duplicate volumes.

History and Provenance: RAHS member Richard J Yeomans donated most of this collection to the RAHS library in July 1949 but Ethel and Arthur Foster also donated an 1866 edition of Sands. Their bookplate is in the front of the volume.

Community recollections: According to RAHS librarian Donna Newton this is the most used resource in the reference section of the library and is consulted by a wide range of library users of all ages.

Context of use: It should be noted that Sands is extremely valuable not only for family historians but for many local and professional historians as well. Sands can be a source for research relating to heritage studies, house histories and conservation reports. Its listings are useful for research on individual streets, suburban development – in conjunction with subdivision plans – and demographic patterns within local government areas. Sands listings of occupations are also helpful, especially when used in conjunction with census information.

As noted on the City of Sydney Archives website, Sands is usually,

accessed through a fiche edition made by the State Library of NSW, but is not available on-line except for a limited service through the firm Ancestry.Com which covers only the 'alphabetical directory' file for each year.³⁰

As Mitchell librarian in the 1980s Baiba Berzins arranged for the State Library's Sands Directories to be microfilmed because they were, in her words, 'literally falling to pieces with the frequent use they received.' While using fiche editions of Sands helps preserve precious hard copies, this process can be daunting for those unfamiliar with how Sands is organised. This is especially so for amateur historians, but also many professional historians who do not use Sands regularly find it opaque and fail to maximise their use of this valuable resource.

The City of Sydney Archives is trialling digitisation of sample Sands volumes but long download times – caused by the large size of the files – have presented a problem. Therefore the availability of hard copies of Sands for RAHS library users is a boon. While many researchers happily progress to using fiche editions of Sands, they find that orientating themselves by use of the hard copies makes their research more productive.

Type of material, manufacture and condition: The volumes, all stitched with hardback cardboard covers, have mostly been re-bound. The 1866 volume, encased in Mylar, is in its original binding. A number of pages (pp 135-168) have been ripped out of this volume. There is some other incidental damage and age marks (foxing) on the pages of the 1864 volume. On the whole, however, these references are in excellent condition. Not all volumes were opened and examined.

Comparative examples: It is useful to compare the value of Sands Directory in hard copy with the relative lack of value of the hard copy Australian Dictionary of Biography which RAHS library also holds. This resource is much more easily accessed on line <http://adb.anu.edu.au/> where a simple search immediately brings up entries. On the contrary using hard copy necessitates an initial reference to the index before selecting the appropriate volume. Nevertheless for a decreasing number of library users who are not computer literate, the hard copy Australian Dictionary of Biography is still a useful resource

Statement of significance: The 32 volumes of Sands Sydney Directories held in the RAHS library have exceptional research value for professional, local and family historians. The availability of these volumes in hard copy makes accessing the riches of the resource a much more 'user friendly' process than using fiche copies, the organisation of which is not always obvious. In the future when further work is done on the digitisation of Sands, these may be better accessed on line, but at present this is not the case.

³⁰ <http://photosau.com.au/CosSands/scripts/home.asp>

Item 5 Affiliated Societies' newsletters

Description: Affiliated society newsletters and bulletins are unique to each society.

History and Provenance: During the 1960s and 1970s there was an upsurge of interest in local and family history, which received further impetus in the lead up to the national Bicentenary in 1988. As a result local historical societies and family history societies were established, and published their activities and the findings of their research. One of the earliest is The North Shore Historical Society 1959. Their contents vary, but they are often valuable for local history research, introducing people, places and events in detail. Such local history, when contextualized, enriches elements of national or state history. Sometimes it helps to re-write the historical narrative.

Community recollections: Each series reflects its local community life and connection with its past. The collection forms an aggregate of images, interests and history of NSW communities.

Context of use: Serials index is not available on line, only in RAHS library. A two-way exchange occurs if an affiliated society is missing a copy, it can obtain a duplicate from RAHS, or vice versa. This collection provides an open access centralised repository and resource.

Type of material, manufacture and condition: Most of these publications are printed or photocopied onto paper, sometimes with a paper cover, usually stapled. Sizes vary between A3 folded to A4, or A4 sheets, often folded to A5 and quarto. Some have been bound by RAHS into hard cover volumes. Generally they are flimsy, fragile publications prone to deterioration from handling and rusty staples.

Comparative examples: Jessie Street National Women's Library has an extensive holding of Australian and international women's magazines. While the State and National Libraries hold some of these journals the JSNWL collection often contains more complete runs.

Statement of significance: This collection has an exceptional level of significance because it documents local history research and activities across NSW in a way no other publications do. While the State Library of NSW holds many of these newsletters, the RAHS sets are more intact. Open access in the library also facilitates their use.

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