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OFFICEBEARERS' REPORT

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING, 25 NOVEMBER 2010

Over the past year the Archives has maintained its core activities – collecting and preserving material relating to Australia's gay, lesbian and queer history; and celebrating that history with the materials and stories collected. We can be very pleased with what we have achieved.

Relocation of the Collection

But before we get to that, it is worth noting activities that have taken up so much of our time – and have moved us well along the path of being a safe and comfortable place to work in. The upstairs area now houses the most frequently used parts of the collection: periodicals, ephemera, theses, articles and monographs, photos, posters, audio cassettes, CD/DVDs, and a selection of reference books.

Last year we reported on progress with the fit out of the new upstairs space, so generously made available to us by the Victorian AIDS Council. At that stage we had completed the installation of the lockable shelving and had set up working space larger and more pleasant (natural light!) than we had been able to provide in the basement. We breezily announced that we would be setting up a compactus in the basement, enabling us to bring most of the collection together into one place – the first time in a very long time (how much of the books will fit is still our only uncertainty). But to give some indication of the size of this task – in order to enable the compactus to be installed and the walls plastered (to reduce dust hazard), we needed to arrange temporary offsite relocation of 250 boxes to commercial storage.

As it turned out, refitting the basement was such a task that it was dubbed Relocation Stage 2 and a great deal of time and effort was spent on planning, purchasing, implementing. We are pleased to say that that task is now finished and only the final effort of moving stuff in remains.

The cost of the relocation was about \$43,000 (stage 1 about \$17,000; stage 2 about \$26,000.)

The committee wants to express its heartfelt gratitude to Gary Jaynes who once again devoted himself to making this happen, applying his eye for detail and Excel spreadsheet skills to great effect.

The Significance Assessment

A significance assessment was funded by a project grant from National Library of Australia's Community Heritage Grant program. The assessment was conducted by Sarah Rood of Way Back When – Consulting Historians, and resulted in a number of detailed recommendations which will serve as a guide to work on the collection and future collecting. The overall assessment was very positive and will assist ALGA in future applications for funding assistance from public institutions. It has already supported a successful application for funding by the Community Heritage Grant program for a preservation needs assessment, to

be undertaken early in 2011. (Essentially, there is a three stage funding process – significance, preservation needs, preservation action.)

Memorials

One of our sadder tasks is to help the community remember those who have died, drawing on our collections and our connections .

Val Eastwood died the day of the last AGM, but when we sent the annual report out to members, we had Val on the cover with her dates of birth and death. A memorial function in January 2010 at the Melbourne Town Hall (overlooking the site of Val's most famous cafe) included a number of tributes (one of them prepared by the Archives) as well as a display of photos. Graham Willett published an obituary in *The Age*.

James Spence was a friend of many of us and we were greatly saddened by his death. An exhibition of photos by and of James was curated by Helen Pausacker at our Open Day in July, and an album of the photos is now held in the collection.

Grants and fundraising

The Archives is, as most of us know, an entirely self-supporting community-based and volunteer-operated organisation.

Membership and donations remain our primary source of funds. In the last year we have received \$8611 from 79 separate donations. Of this amount, some \$6169 came as specific purpose donations from 42 people, mostly for binding of periodicals. (This was in fact oversubscribed, and parts of some larger donations were allocated to shelving expenses.)

In the middle of the year our attention was called to the fact that Jean Devanny's *Virtuous Courtesan* (one of the earliest novels in Australia to feature homosexual characters) was for sale. The cost was prohibitive, but at the suggestion of one member we sent out a call for people willing to donate to a purchase fund. This was very successful and we are now pleased to be able to include this volume among our rarer treasures.

But we have also received and have been working with a few government grants. These include:

City of Melbourne for the book *The Secret Histories of Queer Melbourne*. This has been a long time coming, but we are very pleased to say that production is in the final stages and we expect the book launch in the new year.

GVEHO (Grants to Voluntary Environmental and Heritage Organisations) from the federal Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts has provided a grant over three years. The current tranche is being used for oral history logging and development of a collection management system.

People

This year's membership stands at 122 – our highest ever.

The Committee has seen a few changes. Mark has returned after studying abroad. The sad news is that after a break overseas, Esther is heading off to live in Sydney. ALGA Vice-President from 2008 to 2010 and a volunteer for the past 10 years, Esther has made major contributions in many aspects of ALGA's work. Starting in 2001 she took on the job of organising our photo collection, identifying large numbers of photos about which little was recorded, developing an index and arranging for the photos to be housed into acid free sleeves and albums. Painstaking work over nearly a decade has vastly improved the accessibility of the photo collection and the quality of its housing. Esther has been a judge in ALGA's annual thesis prize from time to time, and in 2008, she played a key role in organising events to celebrate the Archives' 30th birthday (the Queer Quiz and birthday party at Fitzroy Town Hall were memorable highlights from that year). In recent years she has prepared funding submissions which resulted in ALGA being granted funds for various projects (significance assessment, digitisation of photos, oral history logging and the development of a collection management system). We'll miss her energy and enthusiasm, and feel sure that wherever she lives, Esther's exceptional talents won't be lost to queer archiving.

Volunteers and their activities

In all the demands on the committee's time this year, volunteers would be within their rights to feel a little overlooked. Despite this, many have continued on with their work: John Waugh (website and listings, also legal advice on copyright, contracts etc); Lee Johns (indexing magazines and newspapers); Luke Rogers is digitising VHS videos; Barry McKay and John Stevens have digitised audio cassettes. Angela Bailey has digitised scrapbooks. Various people helped with the relocation from basement to first floor (Katie Neville, Trevor Sutherland, Paul Wilson). Graham Carbery continues to do secretarial work on periodicals and membership. We have new regulars in Anton and Harsh. Many thanks to you all – and to anyone we might have forgotten. We have put volunteers near the top of the list for next year's priorities.

The collection

Listing, indexing and organising the collection has continued over the year. The aim is to have good top-level lists available for users and, wherever possible, to have these online (or at least their existence made known online) to help potential users to prepare for their time with us.

Listings include the Melbourne Gay Teachers and Students Group papers, including administrative records of the book *Young, Gay and Proud*, *The Galah*, Australian GLBT-themed exhibitions and the oral history logs. Digitisation has included: a major collection of audio cassettes about 1970s and 1980s activism in Sydney; oral history interviews from audio cassettes (ongoing); VHS videos (ongoing).

Collection use

With our extra space, we can have 4 or 5 visitors at a time, and most weeks on our open days, that has been the case (a mix of regular volunteers and researchers). Researchers engaged in honours and postgraduate work, researching books and documentaries and films and exhibitions, have used materials to help them with topics as diverse as: the gay media in Australia 1970-2000; lesbians in Australia from 1939 to 1965; male sex workers in Australia; anniversaries of the Laird Hotel as a gay venue, the ALSO Foundation (media series) and the Melbourne G&L Chorus; masculinity in gay media; the sex-radical movement; pre-movement Melbourne, social landscape and biographies; homosexual aspects of general history of sexuality in Australia since 1788; abuse in same-sex relationships; the history of the AIDS councils; gay and lesbian migration; lesbian/gay issues in education in the last 40 years; early 1980s gay

media re AIDS; legal rulings entitling queer bars to institute sexed and gendered door policies.

Some researchers have made visits from other states to access the collection, and in one case, from overseas.

Publications

A second edition of Graham Carbery's 1993 survey of the history of reform of Australia's anti-homosexual criminal law is now on ALGA's website, updated to include a new appendix on age of consent laws across Australian jurisdictions at March 2010.

The *Periodicals List* is now in its tenth edition.

Events and community outreach

In a relatively quiet year on the events front, the following occurred:

* The history walk was replaced at Midsumma 2010 by a "virtual" history walk; well, actually a public lecture by Graham Willett, "Queer Oz Folk", with readings by Daniel Marshall, Wayne Murdoch, Helen Pausacker and Esther Singer

* A well attended open day on 4 July included an exhibition of photos of the late James Spence, curated by Helen Pausacker. Peter Di Sciascio and Dale Withers commented on material they donated to the Archives this year. Peter, who has a research interest in 20th century Australian women artists, donated a rare book (only 1000 copies made) about a notable Australian artist, Janet Agnes Cumbræ Stewart (1883-1960) who was also a lesbian. At the open day he introduced this and two other donated books: *In a picture land over the sea ... Agnes Goodsir 1864-1939* (an Australian lesbian who became an accomplished painter in Europe) and *Colors* magazine No. 7 (published by Benetton c.1992), a special international AIDS edition which was controversial at the time. Dale donated a newsletter, *Watch and Ward*, produced in December 1943 on board the hospital ship *Wanganella*. Australian theatre designer Loudon Sainthill and his long time partner, Harry Tatlock Miller, were part of the editorial team which produced the newsletter.

* ALGA was a co-sponsor of the 10th Homosexual Histories conference in Sydney, organised by the NSW Pride History Group. Timed to coincide with the 40th anniversary of the national rights organisation Campaign Against Moral Persecution (CAMP), the "Into the streets" conference included several presentations about CAMP NSW but also the significance of CAMP in other Australian cities: Adelaide (David Hilliard), Brisbane (Carol Low) and Melbourne (Graham Willett, "Society Five and its audience").

Among the acquisitions of note this year we have:

- Three rare books – including the already mentioned,
 - Jean Devanny's *Virtuous Courtesan* (1935), held in only 3 Australian Libraries;
 - *The Pastels of Janet Cumbræ Stewart*, (1921 edition, 1000 copies) , donated by Peter Di Sciascio;
 - *Homosexuals Today : A handbook of organizations and publications* (1956), published by the ONE Institute, Los Angeles (acquired by a Sydney man living in London in the 1950s, and not held by any Australian library).

- The literary papers of Lyn Palmer, poet, 1939-1965, donated by Angell Productions
- A collection of audio cassettes of radio coverage of gay activism in Sydney, 1970s-1980s - donated by Peter de Waal with assistance in digitisation by Barry McKay
- Articles from *Australian House and Garden*, 1962, re bachelor living, donated by Dale Withers
- Mildura Gay and Lesbian Support Group's administrative records 1997-2007
- Coloured plates and captions of an exhibition at Midsumma 2010 of costumes worn by the late Vivien St James, courtesy of Alan Mayberry
- CD of interview with Shirley Breen, friend of Val Eastwood, about 1940s and 50s camp life in Melbourne, courtesy of JOY 94.9
- Book *Quite possibly so ... John Gilmour Slater : a life*, written and self-published by Richard Peterson on 18 April 2010, to coincide with the 83rd birthday of Richard's friend John Slater – an English gay man, now living in Melbourne, who has written widely about Australian urban art.
- Photo portraits by John Storey of activists for Melbourne Gay Liberation c.1972-75
- T-shirt and photo collection depicting events at the Laird Hotel, donated by former proprietor, David Allen
- Photo collection from the opening of CAMP Clubrooms, Brisbane, 1971 - donated by Cora Zyp

This is by no means exhaustive – it is intended only to give some indication of what we collect and how the collection is developing.

Thesis Prize 2009

Congratulations to Leigh Heatherton for winning ALGA's 2009 prize for the best fourth year honours thesis in the field of GLBT studies. His BA (Hons) thesis in La Trobe University's Politics and International Relations Program was titled 'Death of a movement? : The Australian gay movement and its contemporary manifestation'.

Future Plans

Following on from our committee planning day earlier in 2010, and with many of the bigger projects around relocation drawing to a close, we want the committee to meet in early 2011 to set some priorities for the coming year. Some of these are concerned with the continuation of our use of the collection to celebrate Australian gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, intersex and queer histories. Our Open Days and Working Bees have often prioritised the diversity of the collection (and the diversity of pasts that it embodies), as have the history walks, exhibitions and books. We are always on the lookout for new ways to highlight the rich tapestry that is our community.

In relation to fundraising, we have launched an Xmas Appeal as the opening of a larger fundraising project. Our intention is to raise enough money to employ a part-time worker – the collection is rapidly outgrowing the purely-volunteer model – though, of course, we are keen to retain the volunteer focus as the chief means of operation. This is a big ask, but we draw confidence from the success of our earlier fundraising for the relocation.