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AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF ARCHIVES

**STANDARDISATION OF DESCRIPTIVE PRACTICE AMONGST CUSTODIANS OF
ARCHIVES, MANUSCRIPTS AND RECORDS IN AUSTRALIA**

REPORT AND PROPOSALS FOR DISCUSSION

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Based on an examination of published guides and finding aids from
:Archives Office of New South Wales (AON)
:Australian Archives (AA)
:ANU Archives of Business and Labour (ANUABL)
:Melbourne University Archives (MUA)
:Public Record Office, Victoria (PRV)
:Riverina College Archives and Records Service (RCA)
:University of Newcastle Archives (UNA)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Standardisation raises two related issues -

- * standardisation of descriptive style or formats;
- * standardisation of methods or systems.

This Report deals largely with the second of these questions upon the resolution of which, it is suggested, consideration of the first will depend.

It is postulated that there is no real prospect of ever merging data about records holdings except for highly selective and specialised operations, such as the National Library's Guide to Manuscripts. Successful merging of data about creating agencies is regarded as highly problematic and largely unnecessary for government and other non-collecting archives ("dedicated archives") and should be contemplated, if at all, only for data about agencies the whereabouts of whose records is uncertain owing to the processes of administrative change and inheritance ("inherited records"), misappropriation or lodgement elsewhere than with the archives of which they form a part ("estrays") and placement with collecting archives in accordance with the archives policy of the creating/controlling body or person ("distributed archives").

Each custodian has a broader duty to the public than to describe merely those records in its possession. For dedicated archives, this duty requires that they describe, and participate in co-operative efforts which help to describe, the entire archives of the administration (government, business, family, estate, etc.) for which they are responsible by describing or locating inherited records (whether acquired or surrendered) and estrays (whether misappropriated or properly distributed). A similar duty rests on custodians of distributed archives who should seek also, if it is feasible to do so, to co-operate in merging data about record creators into a single, comprehensive union listing (desirably as part of the proposed national register), principally by the development of listings ("inventories") of record creators.

Subject to a feasibility study, it is proposed that a comprehensive classification scheme for Australian archives and manuscripts be developed (the "Australian National Digest of Archives") within which each participating custodian should list data about broad record groupings held. The level at which record groupings should be posted to the Digest might vary enormously from custodian to custodian the object being merely to indicate what type of records are held by each custodian (by reference to the uniform classification scheme) and to provide suitable citations or references sufficient to enable users to make a first point of entry into the system of guides and finding aids maintained by each custodian separately.

A variety of techniques, consistent with the broad scheme outlined above, should be developed for dealing with inherited records, estrays and distributed archives and with all family/personal archives maintained on archival principles. Amongst the techniques to be employed, the inventories of record creators referred to above, would be one of the most important.

The proposals outlined in the Report may be summarised as follows:

- * each custodian should go on describing its records holdings exactly as it does now;
- * each custodian should identify and give unique reference numbers or citations to broad groupings of records/records creators/record classes identified within its existing system (assuming most custodians will be following methods which are broadly similar to those examined so far);
- * each custodian should offer its referenced groupings for listing under one or more of the headings in an agreed National Digest of Archives for common use;
- * as an optional further development, consideration should be given to developing techniques for comprehensive merging of data about record creators of family/personal archives and selective merging of other (agency) record creators in the AA's proposed national register of archives.

The three indispensable tasks, therefore, would be identification and referencing of record groupings within existing systems, development of a national digest (classification) scheme, and submission of referenced (group) entries to the digest once it is developed.

In the report which follows, much attention is given to the techniques which might be employed to achieve desired ends. The successful implementation of these techniques depends upon the willingness of custodians to attend to them. This, in turn, depends upon determination of a prior issue which cannot be resolved here: viz. whether there is general acceptance of the nature of the problem to be addressed. It is strongly recommended that the Council regard this issue as worthy of consideration in its own right regardless of any views it may form on the practicability or adequacy of the technical solutions here proposed.

If it is determined that there is a gap in current descriptive practices of sufficient importance to warrant action, and irrespective of whether the action determined upon follows these or any other set of proposals, it will then be necessary to prepare a concrete action plan for implementing them. I urge the Council to keep these three related primary issues clearly but distinctly in mind in its future deliberations.

This Report to the Australian Council of Archives on the standardisation of descriptive practice raises two distinct but related matters: standardisation of descriptive style or format and standardisation of methods or systems. It is based on an examination of the publicly available finding aids of seven custodians.

2. As to the first matter, though standardisation of style is not undesirable in itself, it is a contingent question, depending for its resolution upon the extent to which standardisation of method and/or integration of systems may be adopted. It is not dealt with, therefore, in this Report beyond a brief outline (in Appendix A) of the standard style adopted here for the purposes of example and illustration.
3. It may, however, be worth recording a tentative conclusion on the matter of integration of systems which is relevant to both matters. There has been much speculation about the opportunities, which may or may not exist, for the adoption of common systems and the potential for networking. That networking opportunities exist and may indeed be realised for at least one custodian - the Australian Archives - with a widely distributed system of its own and an adequate resource base, I have no doubt. I am frankly skeptical that such opportunities, if they exist at all, will be found to have much practical application for other custodians - for, even if the technological capacity developed through the application of networking to the Australian Archives' own system were generally available, its general implementation would still be dependent upon the resource capacity of other participating custodians to produce input for that system of a kind and quality which it would require.
4. It will be argued here that large-scale pooling of data about records holdings or about record creators whose archives are already described in the guides of the government archives authorities and of the "in-house" archives systems is neither feasible nor desirable and that widespread exchange of data is not, therefore, a high priority. All the available evidence is, moreover, that custodians engaged in system development of their own cannot easily adopt the applications of others to their needs because of economic and other non-technical constraints which, quite apart from the incompatibility of existing systems in which there is already a considerable investment, override even very compelling arguments in favour of uniformity of style and method - not the least of which is the desirability of removing from users the burden they now face of having to cope with the diversity of guides and finding aids we produce.
5. It has been argued that there would be advantages in a common format for descriptive data to allow for merging. The experience of library union catalogues suggests, however, that this benefit is more apparent than real even when data is generated under a methodology as tightly disciplined as traditional library cataloguing and that common systems work

better to provide centralised cataloguing and cataloguing in source - processes which have no equivalent in archives work. Moreover, it is yet to be demonstrated that extensive merging of data would produce benefits which would warrant the time and effort involved.

6. Notwithstanding these large reservations, it is my conclusion that the provision of a comprehensive and uniform means of public access to the archives and manuscripts of Australia is warranted. I believe, however, that the means to be employed, which must inevitably involve some measure of merging or pooling of data, should be developed around descriptions of records holdings at a broader level than provenance. In particular, I believe it is necessary to provide guidance on the whereabouts of records which are not kept in the archives of the administrations which maintain them but in the "collecting" (distributed) archives and of estrays and inherited records including those held in the archives of the administrations which do maintain them - i.e. the government archives authorities and "in-house" archives (the dedicated archives).

7. Many custodians already have a considerable investment in their systems and cannot reasonably be asked to reprocess their data or modify unduly the guides already produced to meet unspecified ends of dubious value, especially when so much needs to be done to extend descriptive control over uncatalogued or imperfectly described materials. Nevertheless, without disturbing existing systems overmuch, it will be possible to set down methods for bringing diverse systems towards a common methodology which will achieve some if not all of the benefits of a more thoroughly integrated approach so as to smooth over the existing diversity. If this is combined with the development of agreed standards of descriptive style, it may be expected that, in the long term, new work and revision will gradually move closer towards a common presentation. That the issue of standardisation as such is long overdue for sustained and serious debate cannot, in my view, be doubted. As many have pointed out, the transition to computer-based systems almost inevitably involves modification of time-honoured methods and in such circumstances unique opportunities for adapting to the new technology in a standardised way open up. Only one who sees none of the benefits of standardised and integrated descriptive processes could stand aloof from the discussion at such a time.

8. The most notable feature which the guides examined have in common with each other is the linkage they establish, naturally enough, between records and provenance. Records are uniformly attributed in some way to their creators.

9. Attribution of provenance is complicated, however, by problems of administrative change and inheritance - the archives equivalent of the problem of joint authorship in library cataloguing. Insofar as this problem impinges on the question of

dealing with estrays, inherited records and distributed records it is directly relevant to this discussion.

10. Just as librarians moved away from main entry, archives theory has provided its equivalent of added entry through the development of the series system which, in essence, is to archives work what the principle of joint authorship is to library cataloguing - permitting simultaneous attribution to more than one creator.
11. Proponents of the series system would point out that the consequences of administrative change and inheritance, with which the system is designed specifically to deal, are by no means unique to government archives - as a glance at finding aids which describe business or union archives will quickly confirm - nor to the disturbance of series and record groups by transfers of records and functions between governments. The problems of inheritance and disturbance of record keeping systems and provenance over time are to be found in the vast majority (in quantitative terms) of all archives and manuscripts. Holding these views, it is only fair that I should state from the outset my conviction that the series system provides the only wholly satisfactory theoretical method so far developed for dealing with these problems.
12. The unresolved difficulty arising out of this theoretical development is that in practice it appears to require an extensive and highly structured analysis of the administrative/personal framework (context) in which the records creator operated (and through which the records subsequently passed) in addition to the simple attribution of records to provenance once the groups to which they have traditionally been posted have been abandoned.
13. It is only in the AA itself, where the series system developed in this country, that anything like the analysis of structures which the system seems to require has been undertaken. Elsewhere, except for the Northern Territory Archives, which inherited its system from AA, nothing like it has been tried to my knowledge.
14. Two State Archives (Victoria and South Australia) which have adopted the series system have concluded that extensive analysis of structures is beyond them and have modified the system accordingly. If these experiments succeed, it may demonstrate that the system can be applied without the concentration of effort on structural analysis and research which has hitherto been regarded as one of its hallmarks. Elsewhere, the complications of mixed provenance and inheritance are dealt with, rarely in a satisfactorily systematic or comprehensive way, by more traditional indexing and cross referencing techniques.
15. The re-introduction by Victoria of record grouping does not imply abandonment of the series system. It is acknowledged

that structural analysis will still be needed to show both systematic (control and subordination) and chronological (previous and subsequent) relationships at least for the groupings themselves and as far as possible for series and possibly also for key agencies (e.g. departments of state). The point of this apparently irrelevant digression is threefold:

- (a) to highlight what may be seen as an inherent bias in the authorship of what follows;
- (b) to re-affirm my belief in the value of the series approach (in one form or another) for custodians contemplating future modifications to their systems; and
- (c) to justify my adherence in the proposals which follow to certain methods inherent in the series system approach.

This is not the place to argue the merits of that system or any particular variation of it nor to urge its adoption generally. It is the primary assumption of this Report that it will not be adopted generally and that in the foreseeable future any practical measure standardisation of must be achieved through integration of a wide diversity of systems without seeking to change them substantially.

16. On the other hand, the techniques of structural analysis and treatment of multiple provenance inherent in the series system are uniquely well adapted to records description in digest rather than catalogue format (see Appendix C) - i.e. in describing records in terms of provenance as well as in terms of custody despite the complications of administrative change and inheritance. They are, in this respect, more like bibliographies or serials catalogues than like standard book catalogues or indexes. The digest approach is needed to deal with estrays and inherited records and is well adapted to dealing with distributed records.

17. The MARC:AMC format appears to be based on cataloguing principles which are less well adapted, in my view, to dealing adequately with the special problems of multiple provenance and split custody. The digest approach is to be preferred because it more nearly conforms to the principles of arrangement and description which, however imperfectly they are applied in particular instances, give broad similarity of purpose and style to the guides and finding aids which archivists actually produce. [Note: This conclusion is speculative and is not yet demonstrated; it may be that the MARC:AMC format has more going for it than I am prepared to allow in which case, if that can be demonstrated, this conclusion will have to be revised. In any case, however, that format would have to be shown to be adequate for the descriptive purposes of each custodian and superior for the purposes of "national cataloguing" since, for this latter purpose, it would almost certainly require much more work and conformity to uniform standards than what is being proposed here. It is sufficient to note that what I am proposing for a national digest system would not preclude any custodian minded to do so from adopting the MARC:AMC format for its own descriptive purposes.]

18. A national digest of Australia's archives may operate at any one (or more) of the available levels in the hierarchy of description in common use. It is recommended that no national effort be made to consolidate data on records themselves - that the non-standardised descriptions of records holdings remain the separate and uncoordinated responsibility of each custodian and that no merging of that effort or responsibility be contemplated.

19. In the first instance, it is recommended that no consolidation of data at the level of provenance (record creators) be undertaken but that at least limited merging should be contemplated for the future and that, therefore, standardisation be encouraged to the extent necessary to permit the contemplated action to be taken in due course.

20. Finally, it is recommended that joint action for the standardisation and merging of data at the context level should be undertaken permitting reference to the guides and finding aids of each participating custodian from a classified analysis of the totality of Australia's archives at the broadest level and that, to achieve this, a standardised approach to the identification of broad groupings of archives should be agreed upon and applied.

21. There are, broadly speaking, four methods used to describe records in the guides and finding aids examined:

- (a) the accession system: each deposit is listed in random order or order of arrival and indexed by name of creator/depositor in an alphabetical and/or classified listing (RCA);
- (b) the record series system: each series is listed by creator and listings are arranged in numerical (indexed) or alphabetical order (AA;PRV);
- (c) the record class system: all records are described under a heading for each creator within alphabetical, classified or sequential listings (ANUABL;MUA;UNA);
- (d) the record group system: all records are grouped under broad headings (usually function-related) which may include records of more than one creator and/or of mixed provenance (AON).

In all cases, the headings used to group data concerning each body of records described by provenance is further grouped within the system of guides provided. ANUABL and MUA do this by subdividing their guides into chapters, UNA by issuing its guide in sequential parts, and RCA by grouping record creators under headings in its classified index. AA and PRV group their numbered series under record creators (Agencies and Persons) and further groupings under Organisations/Families and Record Groups respectively. At AON, clusterings of records by or in a manner which delineates provenance occur within groupings which are not themselves single-agency record groups with cross-references and indexing to overcome the complications of inheritance and administrative change.

22. Assuming that data on records is to remain largely unmerged, there is no need (beyond consideration of facilitating user familiarity) to consider standardisation of records description. Custodians need be asked to do no more than they are already doing and to provide, within a nationally agreed classification scheme, a unique identifying reference to each body (grouping) of records at the highest level of description.
23. The level at which each custodian chooses to describe its holdings in a national system will clearly be a matter for it to decide having regard to the nature of the descriptive scheme each uses, the character of its own records holdings and the ease with which their data can be integrated, and whatever general principles may be laid down by common agreement.
24. It is recommended that the government archives authorities should aim to produce, for description in the national system, somewhere between 50 and 250 entries; that custodians of other dedicated archives and of distributed archives should aim at producing between 1 and 50 entries. This seems a fair balance between their likely relative size and importance and the need to differentiate holdings.
25. It is fairly clear that, in the archives authorities working the pure record group (AON) and group modified series (PRV) systems, the groups themselves are the right level of description for entry in a national digest system to fall within these parameters. The other custodians examined would not be able to meet these rules if they wanted to enter data concerning record creators and it is recommended that no custodian should make entries by provenance in the national digest system.
26. As every custodian so far examined groups its record creators further and the resulting groupings come out at about the right number in each case to meet the criteria outlined above, it is recommended that this broader level of description be used in each case as the basis for entry of data into the national system. The feasibility of bringing in other custodians than those examined so far on this basis needs to be determined.
27. A national digest of Australia's archives is needed to provide:
- * a description of the succession of government in Australia (and possibly Papua New Guinea) sub divided into State, Commonwealth and Territory chapters desirably with supporting chapters on Imperial government to describe linkages with overseas record systems;
 - * a description of the types of non-government enterprises sub divided into chapters sufficiently broad to avoid extensive overlap (e.g. banks, political parties, businesses, unions, etc.); and
 - * a description of family and personal archives;
- as a means of classifying descriptive data on the holdings of all custodians under a uniform scheme. Conventions would be needed

for dealing with government and semi government bodies (e.g. municipalities, universities and colleges, government owned banks and businesses, public hospitals, etc.) which span these divisions.

28. The National Digest would permit each custodian to describe (more effectively than could ever be possible through our separate finding aids) the totality of its holdings and, in particular, estrays, inherited records, and distributed records in the context of an agreed method for presenting data about record creators uniformly.
29. It would not, of course, replace subject/function indexing or draw together references to records by research topics. Subject/function analysis of records series, record classes and deposits/accessions may never be possible except on a small scale and selectively. It may not be possible at the level of provenance. PRV believes, but is yet to demonstrate, that it may be possible for record groupings at about the number it has registered and AON has adopted and which is the level of entry at which it is proposed those custodians should contribute to the National Digest - i.e. about 50 to 250 - enough to give adequate differentiation without imposing too great a workload. It is likely that some institutions may feel able to give subject/function analysis at other levels of description and this would make merging, if it were ever feasible, more difficult since the approach would not be universal. There may be potential, given broad similarity of functions, to develop a uniform function/subject thesaurus for use by State and Territory Archives or by distributed archives in certain areas (when indexing groups) but the practicability and usefulness of such methods need to be demonstrated.
30. The National Digest would not, therefore, guide users to the Sydney end of Victoria's pre-separation administration (in the Archives Office of New South Wales), for example, under its description of Victoria, although PRV would undoubtedly wish to refer to this feature in its own guides and finding aids. Records of Victoria's local administration, however, which have for any reason ended up in someone else's custody, e.g. the records of Victoria's Western Port Settlement in the Archives of New South Wales, would be so classed, just as the pre-separation archives of Victoria would be classed to New South Wales as well as to Victoria since they are, properly, part of the Archives of New South Wales prior to 1851 as well as being part of the Archives of Victoria.
31. Distributed archives would be classed to the appropriate headings in the National Digest. The chapter on union archives, for example, would list those custodians holding union records and as far as possible cite record group references from each custodian's guides.

32. The seven custodians whose guides were examined all list record classes (i.e. all records of one creator), record series or deposits/accessions under

- * agency/person/family creating (in the case of AA, PRV, MUA, ANUABL, and UNA);
- * record group in the description of which agency creating is reasonably clear (in the case of AON); or
- * agency/person/family creating within a scheme of classified index headings (in the case of RCA).

The RCA index headings are analogous to the groupings of agency/person/family creating used by MUA (the 31 chapter headings in its Guide) and ANUABL (which divides its Listing into two sections: Business Archives and Union Archives). All three may therefore be reasonably asked to describe their holdings at this level of entry in the National Digest, ranging in number from two (ANUABL) to thirty one (MUA).

33. AON has rather more than 100 groups in its Concise Guide (1970) and PRV has registered about 90 groups to cover Victoria's Government administration since 1836.

34. PRV's groups are based largely on ministerial portfolios together with several non ministerial groupings (e.g. educational institutions for schools, colleges and universities). AA also groups agencies within portfolios on some of its inventories of agencies but its primary classification at the highest level is into Organisations (e.g. Commonwealth of Australia, Colony of New South Wales) and Families.

35. UNA may be said to have described only one group (viz. Archives and Manuscripts held in the University of Newcastle Archives) which it has described in a Listing issued in two successive parts dealing with accessions during two successive periods. A second group (viz. Cemetery Records held in the University... Archives) is described in an Appendix to Part II of its Guide. In this case, it is possible to identify one group (the entire holdings), two groups (Parts I and II as one and Cemetery records as the other), or three groups (Parts I and II and Cemetery records), whatever is most convenient.

36. AA's holdings may be identified as making up two groupings only, viz. Records of Government Bodies (the CO/CA Group) and Records of Families/Persons (the CF/CP Group). Alternatively, each registered organisation within the CO/CA "Group" could be regarded as a more appropriate level of entry for the National Digest. It would be desirable, however, to establish a CF/CP "Group" within AA's system to limit the number of entries to the National Digest itself. If this were done, AA would have its registered organisations plus one composite grouping for family/person archives as its broadest level of description for submission to the National Digest.

37. It appears, therefore, that each custodian examined so far could without much trouble describe its holdings in the

proposed National Digest by reference to broad groupings it has already identified (above the level of provenance) numbering, for these seven custodians, about 400 groups in all. These groupings are already for the most part uniquely identified in the AA and PRV systems (with CO... and VRG... numbers) and it would seem a reasonably simple step for the other five to adopt unique reference numbers, as part of a universal common system, for whatever groupings they prefer to offer from their respective systems to the National Digest. In the attached examples, trial registration numbers have been assigned which have a common prefix for the non-government archives, i.e. PRG1+, but the need for a central register could be avoided by simply adopting conventions as to code prefixes or block allocation of group numbers.

38. Once the overall arrangement of the National Digest is agreed, its maintenance would not appear to present many difficulties provided each participating institution continued to describe its holdings in terms of these kinds of groupings. A National Digest referenced to record creators would need to be continuously updated each time records were received from a new depositor. The rate of change at the broader level of description, however, will obviously be much slower and yet it provides sufficiently precise identification for the Digest to be useful.

39. The National Digest itself could be maintained in one of three ways. It could be produced centrally as part of the proposed National Register by Australian Archives on the basis of data submitted by participating custodians. It could be published centrally by the ACA itself with nominated custodians taking editorial responsibility for each chapter based on data submitted by participating custodians. Both editorial and publishing responsibility could be distributed (with provision for financial support from ACA funds and/or government grants if obtainable) amongst ACA members with the result that each "chapter" would be issued as a separate booklet, in series with rest, at irregular intervals on the basis of data submitted to the editors by participating custodians.

40. The entire holdings of participating custodians, probably 1000 - 2000 groupings in all, would be analysed in the National Digest, referenced and located. The Digest would show, for example, that the records of the nineteenth century NSW Government are now to be found, inter alia, amongst the holdings of the archives authorities of New South Wales itself (NRG 1, etc.), Victoria (VRG 3, etc.) and the Commonwealth (CO 2) and those citations would lead directly to the guides of each custodian in which those records are more fully described. Similarly, it would show that union archives are to be found in ANUABL, MUA, etc. and give group citations in each case for reference into their respective guides.

41. Sample extracts from the proposed National Digest are attached (Appendix D).

42. Users approaching custodians on the series system (AA and PRV), would need to refer next to the Inventories of Agencies and Persons provided. Custodians using an accession/deposit system (RCA) would also need to generate Inventories of Agencies (for each numbered record grouping) as a stepping stone between the National Digest and their records descriptions (Inventories of Records) either as now, in the form of indexes or as Inventories of Agencies proper which would effectively replace any existing indexes (see also Appendix B).

43. Strictly speaking, the production of Inventories of Agencies and Persons would not be necessary from custodians using the pure record group (AON) or the record class (ANUABL, MUA, UNA) systems since reference may be made directly from the National Digest to the Inventories of Records for the numbered groups. Inventories of Agencies and Persons (or indexes which perform the same function under an accession system) may, therefore be regarded, for the purposes of standardisation of method, as a necessary part of guides to holdings (Inventories of Records) of custodians which need them - i.e. those on the series and accession system - peculiar and indispensable to those systems only. [Note: Although an index, principally to agencies, is provided by AON in its Concise Guide, it is not indispensable to that system.]

44. Alternatively, the development of separate Inventories of Agencies and Persons may be adopted as a desirable goal for all custodians participating in the proposed national system. Although it would be possible to adopt the scheme outlined here in all other respects without imposing a requirement on custodians using the record group and record class systems to develop separate Inventories of Agencies and Persons, it is recommended that they should be encouraged to do so as an agreed element within the national system. There are good reasons why they should be introduced by custodians using the record group and record class systems.

45. Firstly, it brings them into line with the standardised style used by other custodians on the series and accession systems.

46. Secondly, it provides a source of index data for their Inventories of Records which is at least as effective as those methods already employed (see also Appendix B). Thus, instead of being merely an additional chore, the preparation of Inventories of Agencies and Persons could be a constructive enhancement of those systems.

47. Thirdly, it provides a solution to the problems of multiple provenance for systems other than the record series system. The defects of record group, record class and accession systems in providing comprehensive analysis by provenance have been outlined by Scott and others at some length. In each of the guides examined which use one or other of these systems (except

UNA's) a solution is sought by cross-references (ANU), or by indexing (RCA), or both (AON; MUA). As it is not proposed that users of these systems should now adopt series description techniques, the development of Inventories of Agencies by them will not, of itself, improve the quality of their output since the intellectual processes which go into developing the Inventories will be essentially the same as those which produce the existing cross-reference and indexing structures. The principal advantage lies in the discipline which allows the development of standardised rules governing the attribution of provenance which is now lacking with the result that users can never be entirely sure in each case what approach to provenance has been used.

48. Finally, it permits the selective merging of data for purposes which are outlined below.

49. The essential premiss of the proposed approach is that descriptive data on records and provenance should not be merged (see also Appendix C), that the guides (Inventories of Records) of each custodian should remain the primary point of reference for data about holdings and that a National Digest should aim only to point users, within the national system, to the guides and finding aids produced by each custodian for a full description of the records.

50. There will be occasions, however, where a merged index of selected record creators would be a useful addition, or preferable alternative, to this approach. This is the case certainly with the distributed archives and may be so where inherited records and estrays make up so little of a record grouping that citation of the whole record grouping in the Digest is more misleading than helpful.

51. If custodians of distributed archives, subdivide their Inventories of Agencies (within each record group) into sub-headings identical to the chapter headings used in Part II of the National Digest and all custodians did likewise for family and personal records, the resulting Inventories could without much trouble be merged into a Consolidated National Register of Archives. Such a step might be many years off but by adopting a common descriptive style early the groundwork for its eventual implementation would be laid.

52. Merging of Inventories of Agencies from the government archives authorities is not recommended as the volume of information generated would be out of proportion to quantity being merged from smaller custodians and would tend to obscure rather than illuminate. The whereabouts and nature of dedicated official archives can reasonably be deduced by basic prior research. Official estrays and inherited records not identified through the National Digest could, however, be merged into a Consolidated Index by means of Supplementary Inventories prepared by the government archives authorities and the use of Part I chapter

TABLE SHOWING IMPACT OF PROPOSED STANDARDISED SYSTEM ON PARTICIPATING CUSTODIANS

Custodian	Functions		
	Unchanged	Modified	New
AA Pure Series System	Inventories of Series [Inv. of Records] Inventories of Agencies Inventories of Persons Inventories of Families Inventories of Organisations Summary Guide National Register	{ Consolidate into CF/CP { "Group" and number	Submit entries for organisations and for CF/CP "Group" to National Digest Consolidated Index*
AON Pure Group System	Concise Guide [Inv. of Records]	Number Groups Index to Concise Guide through Inv. of Agencies, Inv. of Families/Persons & Suppl. Index to Inv. of Records [Concise Gd]*	Submit entries for Groups to National Digest Inv. of Agencies* Inv. of Families/Persons*
PRV Group Modified Series System	Inventories of Series [Inv. of Records] Inventories of Agencies Summary Guide [development of List of Holdings]		Submit entries for Groups to National Digest Inv. of Families/Persons*
ANUABL Record Class System	List of Holdings [Inv. of Records]	Number "Groups"	Submit entries for Groups to National Digest Inv. of Agencies* Inv. of Families/Persons*
MUA Record Class System	Guide [Inv. of Records]	Number "Groups"	Submit entries for Groups to National Digest Inv. of Agencies* Inv. of Families/Persons*
UNA Record Class System	Guide [Inv. of Records]	Number "Groups"	Submit entries for Groups to National Digest Inv. of Agencies* Inv. of Families/Persons*
RCA Accession System	Guide [Inv. of Records]	Number "Groups" Convert indexes to Inv. of Agencies & Inv. of Families/Persons*	Submit entries for Groups to National Digest

* optional pending agreement on merging of data on provenance

headings from the National Digest on Inventories prepared by custodians of distributed archives which include official estrays.

53. The proposed system would provide for each custodian a national standardised data structure and descriptive system within which its own guides and finding aids could be developed to give a broadly uniform presentation which still permits wide flexibility. Thus, the guides of each custodian would be structured around the National Digest to provide:

- * an INVENTORY OF RECORDS for each record group or record creator virtually identical to the existing guides, listings, and inventories of series of participating custodians;
- * an INVENTORY OF AGENCIES prepared for each record group or organisation listed in the national digest (optional for custodians using the group and class systems); and
- * an INVENTORY OF FAMILIES AND PERSONS for each record group.

Sample Inventories of Agencies (Appendix E), Families/Persons (Appendix F) and Records (Appendix G) are attached. A sample Consolidated Index (for estrays and inherited records and for distributed archives) is also attached (Appendix H).

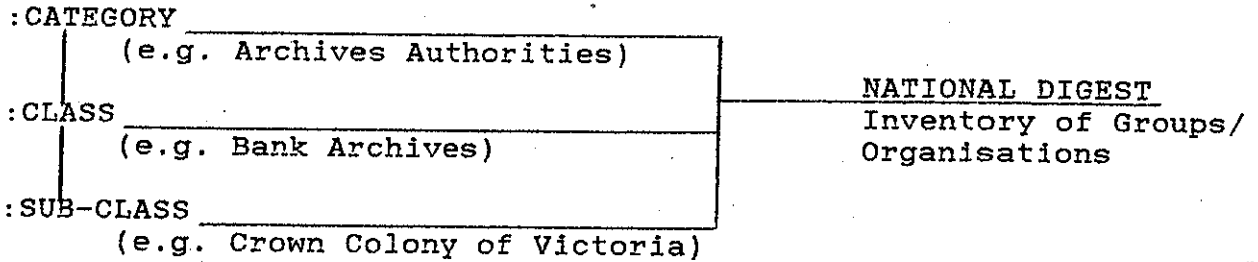
54. The system proposed would not supersede the NLA's Guide to Manuscripts which operates on a different approach altogether and some custodians may well continue to submit data sheets to that publication in addition to their contributions to the National Digest system. Some manuscripts libraries may never find it feasible or profitable to participate in the National Digest system and the NLA's Guide would remain the only consolidation available in such cases.

55. The first step is to ascertain whether the systems in place in the Tasmanian, Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian State Archives and in the War Memorial are compatible with the proposed system and that most, if not all, of the non-government custodians' systems will "fit". Assuming it is decided in principle to proceed, the next task is to agree on the National Digest.

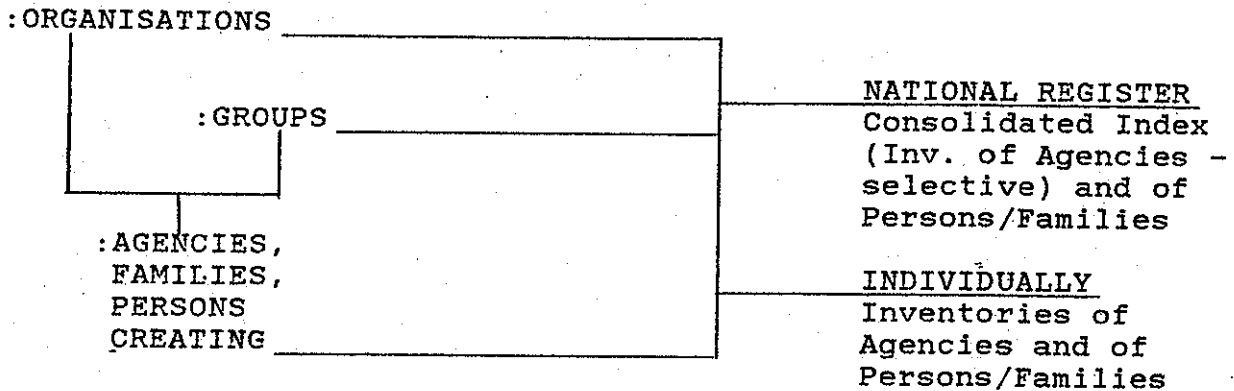
56. The extent to which, in practice, centralised coordination is needed must be decided. As it is unlikely that a Consolidated Index could ever be produced except as part of the AA's proposed National Register, the AA's response is needed at each stage in developing these proposals further if they are adopted in principle by the ACA, because if the AA is not willing to accept that development in principle as part of the future role of the National Register then that application and so much of the above proposal as is dependent upon it becomes irrelevant.

PROPOSED NATIONAL DATA STRUCTURE : HIERARCHY OF DATA ELEMENTS

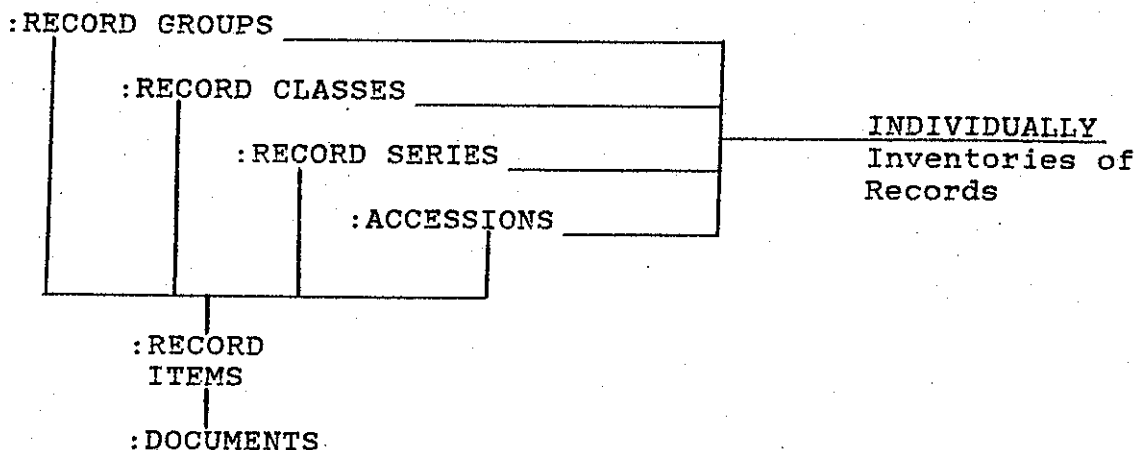
CONTEXT



PROVENANCE



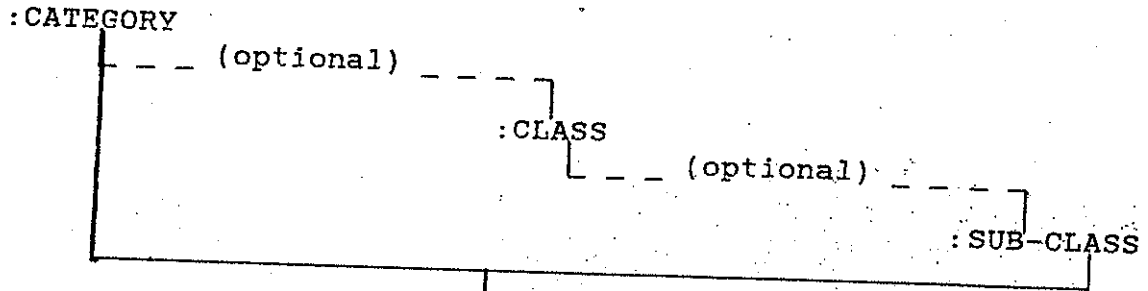
RECORDS



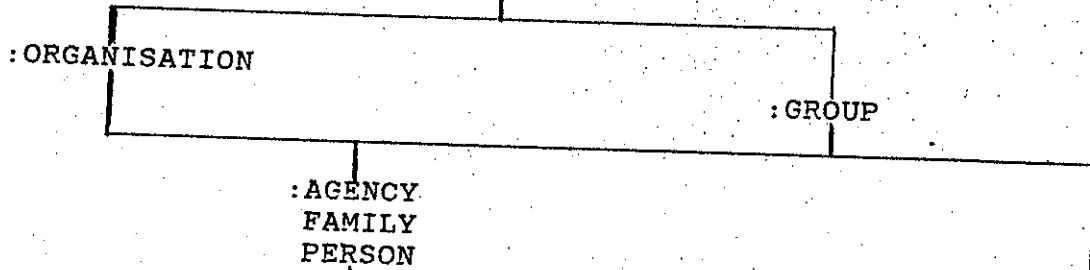
The above diagram would need to be in 3 dimensions to show the linkages between levels in the hierarchy. Broadly speaking, each element at each level can be subordinated to any element at the next level up except for RECORD GROUPS which are accorded GROUP status at the level of PROVENANCE. The Australian Archives' FAMILY does not fit the structure until a new CF/CP "Group" is created within their system.

PROPOSED NATIONAL DATA STRUCTURE : RELATION OF DATA ELEMENTS

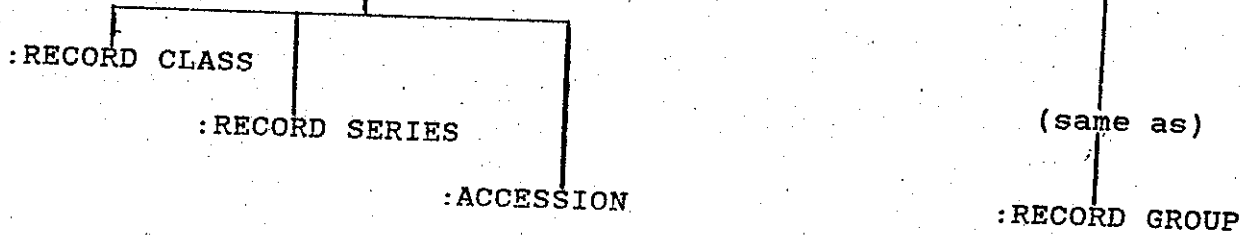
CONTEXT



PROVENANCE



RECORDS



ch11

Glossary

- ACCESSION : A deposit of RECORDS other than a RECORD SERIES or a RECORD CLASS.
- AGENCY : A record creator other than a family or person showing PROVENANCE.
- CATEGORY : A division of CONTEXT corresponding to the broadest level of description. Three Categories are identified for the proposed National Digest, viz. Commonwealth, State and Territory Archives Authorities (Part I); Other Archives Custodians (Part II); Family and Personal Archives (Part III).
- CLASS : A division of CONTEXT subordinate to CATEGORY. Prototype Classes have been identified in Parts I & II of the proposed National Digest, e.g. Great Britain (1707-); New South Wales (1788-);...Not Otherwise Classified. Only one prototype Class, identical in this case to the CATEGORY, has been identified in Part III. See also RECORD CLASS.
- COLLECTING ARCHIVES : See DISTRIBUTED ARCHIVES.
- CONTEXT : The level of description superior to PROVENANCE. See also GROUP and ORGANISATION.
- DEDICATED ARCHIVES : An archives custodian responsible for the records of the body which sustains it and for such INHERITED RECORDS as legitimately form a part of those records; also the archives for which such a custodian is responsible. Hence Dedicated Records.
- DEPOSIT : See ACCESSION.
- DISTRIBUTED ARCHIVES : An archives custodian responsible for the records of bodies other than the body which sustains it ; also the archives for which such a custodian is responsible. Hence Distributed Records.
- ESTRAY : A record no longer kept with other records with which it belongs unless it is an INHERITED RECORD.
- FAMILY : A record creator comprising more than one individual showing PROVENANCE.
- GROUP : A grouping of AGENCIES, PERSONS, or FAMILIES or of RECORD CLASSES or ACCESSIONS by administrative structure or by any other convenient basis at the level of PROVENANCE. Also a RECORD GROUP. A Group may comprise the entire holdings of a custodian or as many segments of it as may conveniently be separately identified.
- IN-HOUSE ARCHIVES : See DEDICATED ARCHIVES.

INHERITED RECORDS : Record no longer kept with other records with which it belongs as a result of legitimate translation from its original provenance by administrative change or personal inheritance.

ORGANISATION : A grouping of AGENCIES by administrative structure at the level of PROVENANCE.

PERSON : An individual who is a record creator showing PROVENANCE.

PROVENANCE : A level of description related to the record creator
See also AGENCY, PERSON and FAMILY and GROUP and ORGANISATION.

RECORD CLASS : A description of all of the RECORDS of a single record creator (AGENCY, PERSON, or FAMILY) - i.e. a single entry description of records by provenance.

RECORD GROUP : A grouping of RECORDS on any convenient basis other than AGENCY . Also a GROUP when used at the level of PROVENANCE.

RECORD SERIES : A description of RECORDS of one or more record creators (AGENCY, PERSON, or FAMILY) which is usually less than the totality of records of each record creator.

SERIES : See RECORD SERIES.

SUB-CLASS : A division of CONTEXT subordinate to CLASS. Prototype Sub-Classes have been identified only in Parts I & III of the proposed National Digest, e.g. Kingdom of Great Britain (1707-1801); etc.; Families; Persons. In Part II, each prototype Sub-Class (e.g. Bank Archives) is identical to the corresponding CLASS but they could clearly be further subdivided (e.g. on a geographical basis) if desired. Similarly, if the degree of sub-division and specificity shown in the prototype Sub-Classes in Part I were thought to be unnecessary, they could be eliminated there so that each CLASS in the proposed National Digest displayed a single listing of GROUPS and ORGANISATIONS.

Note: A national data structure could, alternatively be based on the existing Commonwealth system by lifting their ORGANISATION structure up to the level of CONTEXT (as they in fact have done in their own system). The proposed data structure is developed on the assumption that not all participating custodians will be working the pure series system now or in the foreseeable future and that AA's version of it cannot, therefore, be used as the national data structure. This issue needs to be carefully and fully considered.

NATIONAL DIGEST OF ARCHIVES

Data Entry Sheet

Custodian

Name:.....
 Address:.....
 Phone: (.....)

NEW GROUP/ORGANISATION ENTRY

Title:.....
Gp/Org. No.:.....
 Date Range:..... Loc'n:.....

Is this Group/Organisation to be entered in:

Part I Y N Part II Y N Part III Y N ?

Under which heading(s) should the Group/Organisation be entered?

Part :.....
 Part :.....
 Part :.....
 Part :.....
 Part :.....
 Part :.....
 Part :.....

REVISION TO EXISTING GROUP/ORGANISATION ENTRY

Title:.....
Gp/Org. No.:.....
 Date Range:..... Loc'n:.....

Is the revision to be made to data shown above? Y N
 If yes, give new data above.

Is the revision an alteration to the heading(s) under which the Group/Organisation is to entered? Y N

If yes, give details both of heading(s) from which the entry is to be deleted and heading(s) to which the entry is to be added.

Part :..... Delete/Add
 Part :..... Delete/Add
 Part :..... Delete/Add
 Part :..... Delete/Add
 Part :..... Delete/Add
 Part :..... Delete/Add
 Part :..... Delete/Add

COMMENTS

.....

Registration Codes:

CO	1 -	:	Commonwealth Organisation	Australian Archives
CRG	1	:	Commonwealth Record Group (Families/Persons)	Australian Archives
DRG	1 -	:	Northern Territory Record Group	N.T. Archives
NRG	1 -	:	New South Wales Record Group	N.S.W. Archives
QRG	1 -	:	Queensland Record Group	Qld Archives
SRG	1 -	:	South Australian Record Group	PRO, South Austr.
TRG	1 -	:	Tasmanian Record Group	Archives, Tas
VRG	1 -	:	Victorian Record Group	PRO, Victoria
WRG	1 -	:	Western Australian Record Group	W.A. Archives
PRG	1 - 50	:	Non-government Record Group	ANUABL
PRG	51 - 100	:	" " " "	MUA
PRG	101 - 150	:	" " " "	RCA
PRG	151 - 200	:	" " " "	UNA
PRG	201 - 250	:	" " " "	etc
PRG	251 - 300	:	" " " "	etc

Location Codes:

AAA : Australian Archives
AAC : Australian Archives, Canberra
.....
ANU : Archives of Business & Labour, A.N.U.
.....
MUA : Melbourne University Archives
.....
RCA : Riverina College Archives & Records Service
.....
UNA : University of Newcastle Archives
etc.