

# HISTORY COUNCIL OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA INC.

PO Box 6809 Halifax St  
Adelaide SA 5000

[Alison.mackinnon@unisa.edu.au](mailto:Alison.mackinnon@unisa.edu.au)  
[www.historycouncilsa.org.au](http://www.historycouncilsa.org.au)

---

Issue no. 11

## *President's Letter*

18.12.2006

Dear Colleagues

### *The state of history: does South Australia care?*

Several issues have come to my notice lately which make me really wonder if we as a community are doing all we can for history in South Australia. In other words: does South Australia care? Are we moving so fast into the digital age that we are in danger of losing some of our distinctive treasures? Let me discuss just three issues: the moving of the Royal Geographical Society library from the State Library of SA, the reduction of hours of opening of archives for researchers, and the issue of history teaching.

### *The Royal Geographical Society library*

The Royal Geographical Society Library (the York Gate Library) is surely one of South Australia's treasures. It does not seem so long since 2005 when it celebrated the 100th anniversary of the ownership of the York Gate Library by the RGS. The collection contains valuable explorers' accounts, colonial histories and handbooks, rare 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century atlases and scientific periodicals. The original collection was augmented in 1924 by that of Thomas Gill, first treasurer of the RGS, a collection which contained much material on Australian and South Australian exploration. Further material was added from the collection of Dr F Lucas Benham in 1939 – containing a wealth of anthropological, geographical and travel material. More came from the Jim Faull Local History Collection. The website tells us:

*The Library, and in particular the York Gate Library, is known nationally and internationally, and helps to bring acclaim and public attention to the Society. Many of its pre-twentieth century books, as well as some of the periodicals and, obviously, the manuscript items ...are not held elsewhere in South Australia or Australia. The Society's Library makes a significant contribution to the State and national information resource.* (<<http://www.rgssa.org.au/library.html>>)

If this is the case why is the RGS library not more widely known? How many members of the public use it? Why is it being moved from the SLSA to a destination yet to be determined? Clearly the State Library has supported it generously over the years – perhaps the time has come for the State government to subsidize it so that it can remain in the State Library - a jewel in the library's crown. It seems that the Libraries Board does not support its continuing place in the SLSA. What will go in its place in the State Library? What is the continuing role of our historical collections in a digitized future? Surely our descendents will not thank us when everything is on Google and we can no longer touch or see the originals. Why do we not have regular displays of some of these treasures – and media coverage to go with them? This might give a boost to history teachers who could bring their students in to see icons of our past.

### *Archives and opening hours*

Archives opening hours are another victim of the digital age. There are, of course, very positive aspects here: more records have been digitized and are available on-line. And it is the case that fewer researchers are using archives' reading rooms, preferring where possible to

read material on-line. We must surely rejoice that regional and distant researchers have access to records in this way. Yet if we continue this way archives' reading rooms will surely disappear. And as a researcher I have to admit that there is nothing quite like that wonderful experience of opening up old records, reviewing attendance records books that teachers have laboured over, touching letters that have been handled by one's research subjects, poking about in archives and making serendipitous findings. This experience of working in archives as well as providing a tactile and visual dimension to learning, reinforces for students and researchers the historical frame within which they are working I heard author Dava Sobel say recently in an interview, 'There is nothing like the magic of the original'. How can we value both the digital and the magic of the original records?

### ***The state of history teaching***

We continue to be very interested in the outcome of the History Summit held in August this year and, in particular, in the recommendations of the working party established there. We welcome the boost to history teaching and a HCSA working party has prepared a paper on key issues on history teaching in South Australia and presented the recommendations to members for feedback. We plan to take the final version of the working paper and recommendations to the State Minister of Education, the Hon. Jane Lomax-Smith, to let her know of our concerns. A meeting time has been requested and we are awaiting a reply.

### ***And towards 175...***

Of course the issue of the RGS Library, the archives' opening hours and history teaching are all related. The changes all reflect aspects of a modern state preparing for a technological future. I would argue that we still need to remember that past in shaping a distinctive future. And South Australia does have a very distinctive pattern of settlement and of legislative reform. Juggling both sets of needs – a well-planned future and a vibrant past – is not easy but we must advocate for it. One way we might bring all these issues together is through preparations for the 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of white settlement in SA – coming up sooner than you think – in 2011. To this end the HCSA plans to hold a stakeholders forum on that issue in early 2007. Watch this space ...

And a happy festive season to you all!

**Alison Mackinnon**



### ***News about our members***

Please send us news about members' activities! We will do our best to inform all member organisations of relevant events and information via e-mail and/or the HCSA website.

### ***The HCSA Public Lecture***

The third annual HCSA public lecture was presented by Professor Eric Richards at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, 25 July at the SLSA Lecture Theatre on 'British White Australia in Perspective'. A large crowd enjoyed the lecture and the light refreshments and discussion afterwards. Jill Roe's lecture, the second in our series has now been published in the Historical Journal of SA. We hope to establish publication as a tradition.

**STOP PRESS:** Professor Susan Magarey will be presenting the 2007 HCSA public lecture in July on a topic drawn from her writing of the biography of Dame Roma Mitchell.

---

### ***The History Council's website***

The website was launched at the 2006 HCSA public lecture. The address is <[www.historycouncilsa.org.au](http://www.historycouncilsa.org.au)>. The website is intended to be member-driven, so it will become an important means of communication between the Council and the broader historical community. Features include a readily updated 'What's On' calendar, and links to member organisations and other useful websites. We have appointed a web manager as an interim step while we establish this as a vital administrative position for the Council. We are very pleased that the Historical Society of SA will be joining us in this venture. All members are asked to use the HCSA website to email their organizations' url and 2007 calendar of events to the secretary and permission for Beth to add the links and events to the HCSA calendar. All members are also asked to ensure that a link to the HCSA website is added to their organizations website.

---

### ***Invaluable New Resource for Australian History***

In the last newsletter I mentioned that the *Australian Dictionary of Biography Online*, based in the Research School of Social Sciences at the Australian National University, had been officially launched.

The General Editor, Dr Di Langmore, says that the *ADB Online* will unlock an eight-million word treasure: 'The hardcopy version of the ADB, now up to its 17<sup>th</sup> volume, has long been an essential and vital resource for anyone studying history in Australia. Now that it's online, anyone with an interest in Australian history – from school children through to academic historians will be able to search, free, for information on historical figures. The *ADB Online* has a range of search options from a simple text search right through to some very sophisticated structured searches by categories such as occupation, cultural heritage and religious influences. The 10,000 articles range between 500 and 6000 words each and each entry contains pointers to further information. Australian history now really is at everyone's fingertips'. To access *ADB Online*, go to <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/adbonline.htm>.

An important point for us: The ADB includes 432 biographies of significant South Australians! <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs>

---

### ***State History Conference 2007***

The History Trust is calling for papers for 'Country Connections', the 16<sup>th</sup> State History Conference. To be held in the Barossa Valley, 3-5 August 2007, the Conference will focus on the history of South Australia's country towns and communities, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, from local, state, national and global perspectives. In particular the Conference will encourage papers that present new research, new histories and new perspectives. For a list of suggested topics and issues, and for further information about the Conference please contact either Jan Mudge or Kate Walsh, History Trust of South Australia on (08) 8203 9888 or <[jmudge@history.sa.gov.au](mailto:jmudge@history.sa.gov.au)> or <[kwalsh@history.sa.gov.au](mailto:kwalsh@history.sa.gov.au)>.

-----

## *HCSA Recommendations on the Teaching of History*

After reviewing the state of history teaching both nationally and in SA, a HCSA working party has consulted with members and has arrived at these recommendations .

### *Policy Recommendations*

*We acknowledge the vital importance of the global context in framing our history as a European settler society – this must be the setting for what appears below.*

- **Australian history should be taught as an identifiable course in the compulsory years of secondary education and beyond leading to more Australian history in SA university settings.** [It is recognized that a working party has been formed by Commonwealth Government to develop a model curriculum, and that this work is to be completed in 2007. We believe that this step should be supported, as long as there is a genuine and responsive consultation about the draft of the new course, allowing sufficient flexibility to incorporate the particular interests and needs of South Australian stakeholders.]
- **Teachers of Australian history in secondary schools must be adequately trained and able to implement current pedagogy**
- **Before leaving primary school all students should be introduced to notions of history/heritage issues in South Australia**
- **Before leaving compulsory education all students should undertake studies related to indigenous people of SA, particularly in relation to the group/s who occupy or have occupied the land on which their school is located**
- **Students in South Australia should understand through the use of primary and secondary sources the unique contributions that SA has made to national and international reform**

### *B Links with communities and regions*

- **Resources should be provided to the History Trust and to public libraries to strengthen community linkages between local historical societies and the schools in local areas**
- **Government should look to engaging more education officers in educational facilities (museums, state library, archives, art gallery etc).**
- **Resources should be provided to local councils (or local councils be encouraged to allocate resources) and libraries to support local historical societies in contact with schools.**
- **Through the History Trust and Public Library Service historical societies be encouraged to develop programs through their schools and libraries and access funds on competitive application**

- That by 2011 – SA’s 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the proclamation of white settlement – a Museum of South Australia be opened – one which the History Trust and related organizations be commissioned now to develop.
- Federal and State government funds be directed to the provision of History curriculum and pedagogy expertise and support via the education systems and SSABSA and public libraries and museums.
- Federal funds be directed to the universities to develop further expertise in History teaching pedagogy and to apply it in teacher training courses.

*C Links with State Strategic Plan*

- That SA consider developing distinctive *South Australian values*, those distinctive values linked with progressive political ideals (as demonstrated through Federation, women’s suffrage, early indigenous land rights, pluralism).
- Such distinctive SA values/ideals to be promoted through a range of agencies including tourism and organizations in the cultural sector and linked with activities and places of specific heritage/historical interest
- That history issues be linked with the Digital Bridge.

*HCSA Working Party on the Teaching of History)*



*The Federation of Australian Historical Societies (FAHS)*

We are full members of the FAHS. New Executive member Diana Chessell, who has taken over from Nigel Ridgway as our FAHS representative, has provided the following report: The November Meeting focussed on five key issues: history teaching in schools (the FAHS have sent letters and lobbied); the work of the Collections Council of Australia; the development of a regional hubs project across Australia; operational issues about FAHS (office accommodation, funding, liaison); and training and support for agencies Australia-wide. The latter will be served by the forthcoming publication by FAHS of three booklets – The Publishing History Guide, Lobbying and Community Outreach Guide, and the Heritage and Tourism Booklet.

See also the <<http://www.history.org.au/lists>> website which lists the latest FAHS submissions re the Productivity Commission, Regional Cultural Alliance and National Cultural Heritage together with FAHS publications, newsletters and Australia-wide links.

**Diana Chessell**



*Reminders*

*A balancing act: past - present - future*

The Adelaide Parklands Symposium, University of South Australia was held on Friday 10 November 2006. Proceedings from this very successful conference may be found on the Hawke Centre website at: <[www.hawkecentre.unisa.edu.au](http://www.hawkecentre.unisa.edu.au)>.



### ***Current Executive and Council members***

At the AGM in October the following officers and delegates were appointed:

#### ***Executive (6 members max.)***

President	Alison Mackinnon, Hawke Research Institute, University of SA, < <a href="mailto:alison.mackinnon@unisa.edu.au">alison.mackinnon@unisa.edu.au</a> > (08) 8302 4370
Vice President	Bernie O'Neil, Professional Historians Association < <a href="mailto:bernard.oneil@adelaide.edu.au">bernard.oneil@adelaide.edu.au</a> > (08) 8261 0077
Secretary	Annette Mills, State Library of South Australia < <a href="mailto:mills.annette@slsa.sa.gov.au">mills.annette@slsa.sa.gov.au</a> > (08) 8207 7347
Treasurer	Beth Robertson, Oral History Association < <a href="mailto:beemar@ozemail.com.au">beemar@ozemail.com.au</a> > (08) 8278 4045
Members	Christine Finnimore*, Migration Museum, History Trust of South Australia, < <a href="mailto:cfinnimore@history.sa.gov.au">cfinnimore@history.sa.gov.au</a> > (08) 8207 7697 Diana Chessell*, Individual member, < <a href="mailto:diana.chessell@unisa.edu.au">diana.chessell@unisa.edu.au</a> > 0415 052 174

#### ***Council (14 members max.)***

Kirsty Buchan	Australian Society of Archivists (SA Branch)
Peter Brinkworth	Pioneers Association of South Australia
Samantha Farnsworth	State Records of South Australia
Enid Woodley	National Archives of Australia
Hugh Magarey	National Trust, SA
Wilfred Prest*	History, University of Adelaide
Andrew Buxton*	History Teachers Association of South Australia
Greg Slattery*	Rocky River Historic and Arts Society
Carol Fort	History, Flinders University
Peter Adamson	Historical Society of SA
Robert Swarbrick*	Barossa Goldfields Historical Society
Kevin Kaeding*	Heritage Preservation Association
Martin Lambert	Engineers Australia
Vacancy	

\* = Co-optees

### ***Forthcoming Executive and Council meetings***

Meetings of the History Council are held in the State Library at 5.30 p.m., generally on the first Tuesday of the month (any changes to the dates, venues or times will be advised):

- Executive – January tbc
- Council – Tuesday, 13 February 2007, SLSA staff meeting room

### **Please remember to recruit new members to the History Council.**

And your organisation needs to be a financial member of the HCSA in order to participate in HCSA activities.

