

U M M A



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## Openness and Privacy

One of the enduring complications and challenges in archival work is establishing and administering rules of access. It also represents one of the classic differences between archival and library work. Rarely if ever do we see a library — traditional or “virtual” — completely banning a book or digital object from its readers, although an age limit for example might prevent erotica from being consulted by children, and certain reading room conditions might complicate use of rare, fragile or extremely expensive material.

In our sphere, questions of access can arise from the moment archives begin their life as records. In all but the most simple and open organisations, certain files inevitably will carry sensitivities and be available only on a “need to know” basis. The classic instances include certain name-identified and financial documentation, and this would apply across the government, non government and business sectors alike. Often the requirement that confidentiality regarding internal access to files and databases be observed rises with the increasingly specialist focus of an organisation’s business. Thus not all the records of a research facility or trauma counselling unit would be automatically or

immediately available to all its employees or the public. As for the records of an individual or family, we learn from childhood that there are certain documents (e.g. letters, diaries and wills) that are private and thus “off-limits”.

The Commonwealth and state government sectors have best arranged the ground rules for access, with freedom of information, archives and privacy legislation specifically covering who may see what, and establishing rights, mechanisms and grounds for appeal. Broadly speaking, access to universities’ own records and archives are also subject to such statutes.

In the non government, business and personal spheres, access is largely unregulated, and bodies such as the University of Melbourne Archives must negotiate the ground rules with representatives of entities such as political parties, trade unions, businesses, professional associations and sporting clubs, and also with significant individuals or their families. Such negotiations aim to achieve an acceptable compromise which balances two conflicting values: openness and privacy.

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## The University of Melbourne Archives

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The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010, Australia

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from page 1 Most organisations and families wish to ensure that their achievements and reputations, their heritage and their history, is remembered and memorialised. Fewer are entirely comfortable with the close scrutiny of posterity and are prepared to facilitate future studies of their past. But it would also be quite natural to want to prevent that scrutiny producing unwarranted, hurtful or what may be considered to be incorrect conclusions, including those drawn by researchers with a political axe to grind. There can also be the privacy of third parties to consider, such as people who confided in a relative or who assumed or were assured of professional-client confidentiality. In certain circumstances, there can also be culturally based "sacred/secret" considerations to observe.

On the other hand, archives such as those located within universities are established to support teaching, learning and research. The fewer access restrictions the better, especially when the documentation was confidential and unselfconsciously produced. Records which allow one to see the inner workings of a bureaucracy, to time travel back to a boardroom or cabinet meeting, to look over the shoulder of a novelist, to eavesdrop on a consultant or ministerial staffer giving frank and fearless advice, are of course highly prized by students of the past.

So there is an inherent tension between openness and equity on the one hand and privacy and confidentiality on the other; between collecting for use and private recordkeeping for the needs of the moment. In short there is a spectrum of possible responses within which the archivist negotiates, aiming for an acceptable compromise representing the needs of today's and future researchers while appreciating the potential depositor's understandable concerns. The range of possibilities do include extremes. At one end is the urge to guarantee privacy through

destruction, deliberate failure to create a record, use of "post it" notes, and deliberately circumspect notation. At the other extreme is an almost anarchic disregard for sensitivities whose various modes include the "kiss and tell" diarist and the government, business or family which shows maturity and confidence in allowing uncensored "history" to be the judge, starting with yesterday's files.

Archivists aim to maximise openness while acknowledging the need for some restriction. The passage of time does erode sensitivities however. We are wary of accepting very long closure periods (e.g. over 70–100 years), especially when applied to entire collections. If there has to be restriction, the simplest and best approach is a fixed time period which applies to all. To the extent that there is an industry standard, it is 30 years.

A popular compromise for depositors involves establishing a category of approved users (e.g. the problematic "bona fide" researcher) or a mechanism which vets them (e.g. letter of authorisation from a company secretary or executors of an estate) and/or the result of their uses (e.g. submission of manuscript, draft report, thesis, etc. and agreement to make changes). Particularly in an environment dedicated to research, free inquiry, peer review, openness to scrutiny and corroboration of research findings, however, archivists are uneasy about privileging access for some but not others. Of course the commissioned or "official" historian or biographer who is granted early or exclusive access to a collection sees it differently.

In summary, balancing openness and privacy is important to get right: for the original owners, for the archival custodians, and for research. ❖

Michael Piggott  
University Archivist

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**ENTRIES CLOSE Friday 15 December.**

*For an Entry Form:* Contact the University of Melbourne Archives 8344 6848 or pick up a form at the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room, 3rd floor, Baillieu Library, the University of Melbourne.

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## Writer's Papers Acquired by UMA

by Jane Ellen  
Australiana Librarian  
University of Melbourne Library

In June, the UMA acquired a collection of personal papers from the estate of the short story writer, John Morrison. This valuable collection consolidates an earlier accession of John Morrison's papers acquired by the Archives in 1995. Both accessions include correspondence and manuscripts, but the latest acquisition, together with John Morrison material held in one of the Archives' divisional partners, Special Collections, effects a satisfying and cohesive bringing-together of different strands of his papers.

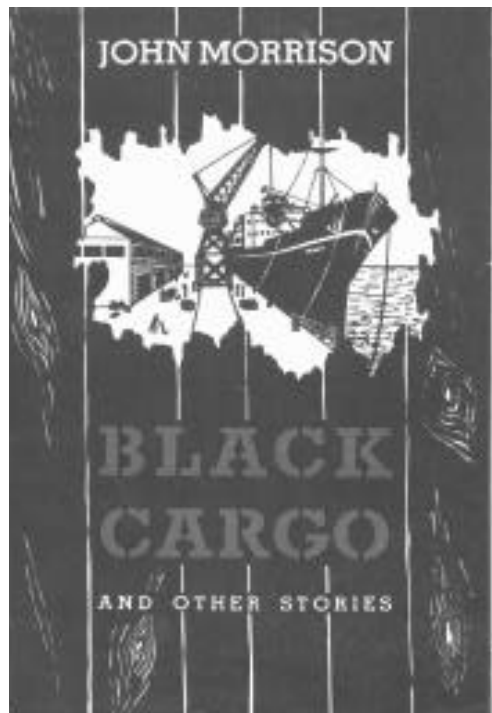
John Gordon Morrison (1904–1998) was born in Sunderland, England and migrated to Australia in 1923. He initially worked on sheep stations in NSW but after marrying in 1928, he settled in Melbourne and worked on the waterfront during the 1930s and 1940s, an experience that provided him with fertile ground for the short stories he began publishing in the 1930s. He joined the Communist Party around this time and was later a member of the Realist Writers' Group in the 1950s. After leaving the waterfront, he worked as a gardener but despite a life of full-time labouring work, he was able to publish two novels and three collections of short stories before his retirement in 1963. It is for his naturalistic and finely observed stories of working life that he is mainly regarded.

The UMA's collection includes correspondence, manuscripts and typescripts of John Morrison's short stories and of the book reviews and articles he wrote for *The Age* and *The Herald* after his retirement. There are also personal documents, such as membership cards from the Waterside Workers' Federation, an biographical and bibliographical notes. Of special interest is previously unacknowledged Morrison

material in the offprints of stories from the *Communist Review* published under the name "Gordon" between 1938 and 1939. There is also correspondence from other Australian writers, obviously treasured by Morrison and retained by him after he'd donated earlier installments of his papers to the National Library and to UMA. These include letters by Katharine Susannah Prichard, Frank Hardy, Dorothy Hewett, Vance Palmer, and his close friends, Alan Marshall and Frank Dalby Davison.

This acquisition also consolidates and enhances material in the University Library's Special Collections. In addition to holding copies of all of John Morrison's works, the *Meanjin* Archive contains 188 letters between him and *Meanjin* editor, C. B. Christesen, written from 1947 until 1974, as well as manuscripts and press cuttings. Special Collections also holds sets of the communist periodicals, the *Tribune*, *Realist Writer* and *Communist Review*, that Morrison occasionally wrote for, although most of his stories were published in *Meanjin* and *Overland*. In a letter from Frank Hardy, the author upbraids Morrison for preferring to publish in the "bourgeois" *Meanjin* rather than *Tribune* and dissects the "errors" in both Morrison's politics and his art, for Morrison was a sensitive and undogmatic writer whose artistic judgement was not deflected by any urge

to proselytise. In these and other letters, the temperament of the times is well captured and in addition to biographers and literary historians, the John Morrison collection will provide future researchers of the "mentalities" of those caught up in the polarising political dramas of the 1950s with a rich lode of source material. ♦



*John Morrison's Black Cargo and Other Stories, Australian Book Society, 1955. McLaren Collection, Special Collections.*

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# The University of Melbourne Archives and the SS Great Britain

by Dr Mark Richmond  
Archivist

One of the many interesting items in the Archives' most recent intake of Bright Family Papers in May this year is a "log" kept by 19-year old Reginald Bright when, fresh from Eton, he migrated from Liverpool to Melbourne aboard the family company-owned iron steamer *SS Great Britain* in 1852.

The *Great Britain* was the first large screw-propelled iron ship to cross the Atlantic. Launched in July 1843, she was designed by the great I. K. Brunel (1806–59), engineer (with his father) of the Thames Tunnel project and the Great Western Railway, who designed in 1837 the first transatlantic steamer, the *Great Western*, and in 1858 the *Great Eastern*, which first successfully laid a transatlantic cable.

Acquired by Gibbs Bright & Co in 1850–51, the *Great Britain* became an emigrant ship on the Australian run, making 32 voyages over 20 years, averaging 60 days out and 60 home. She also carried troops to the Crimean War and Indian Mutiny 1855–57, and in 1861 the first English cricket team to tour Australia. Later, she was converted to a windjammer, taking Welsh coal to San Francisco, but when damaged rounding Cape Horn had to shelter in the Falklands, where, lacking repairs, she was used for many decades as a wool store before being beached in Sparrow Cove in 1937. Rescued by the *SS Great Britain* Project in 1970, she was brought back to Bristol for restoration.

Gibbs Bright & Co had modified the vessel for the Australian run, which would follow the steamer course down the east Atlantic, bunkering in Cape Town and using sail where possible. On this first voyage, the ship met contrary currents and winds in the Atlantic, and had to put back well short of Cape Town to return 1,100 miles (nearly 2,000 kilometres) to bunker at St Helena. As a result, the days to Melbourne were 83 rather than the expected 60.

Reginald Bright (1833–1920) was from a prominent west country landowner family which had extensive mercantile and shipping interests in the partnership Gibbs Bright & Co of Bristol, Liverpool and London. With his elder brother Charles (1829–1915) who followed him to Melbourne arriving in January 1854, and W. H. Hart, he formed the local house Bright Bros., which would later become the Australian arm of Gibbs Bright & Co (from whom the Archives also holds a comprehensive collection of records). A cousin, Samuel Bright, was also involved with the Melbourne firm.

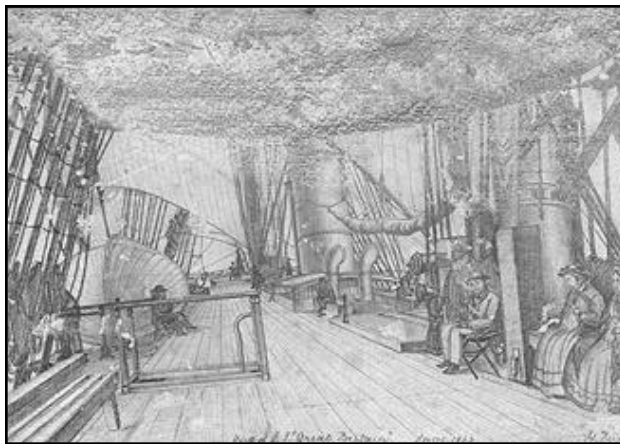
Both brothers were prominent in society, Charles presiding over the Melbourne Club in 1869, Reginald in 1885. But while the older brother married the daughter of Victorian

Governor Sir John Manners-Sutton, Reginald never married. And while all three returned to England towards the end of the century, Charles's eldest son Alfred continued on with the Gibbs Bright firm.

## Reginald Bright's Log

The cover of the log is inscribed: Reginald Bright "Engineer Log/of Great Britain SS/Commencing Aug 21st 1852/First Voy. To/Australia", while the title page announces "Reginald Bright/Private Log".

A number of different sections of neatly written entries, including more than one form of log, are entered throughout the volume, which is not paginated. The primary log he kept at the front of the book. It comprises a double-page spread, with columns on the left in which are recorded (after the day's date) such things as: the hour; coal consumed; readings from the steam gauge, the vacuum gauges, and thermometer; revolutions; the



"On the deck, looking aft". In 1863, Melbourne merchant and amateur artist Herman Zumstein journeyed back to Europe aboard SS Great Britain. Two sketches and his shipboard diary survive (Zumstein Collection, UMA).

numbers of boilers in work; gravity of water in boilers; name(s) of engineer on watch; and description of coal. On the right-hand page is a table showing the day's consumption, and remaining quantities of coal, tallow, engine oil, lighting oil, and waste, then a column for remarks — usually, on the wind, course, rate of knots, extent of sail and engine use and, finally, the distance run; the remarks column also includes a note of landfalls, for example, at St Helena on 15th September, and Cape of Good Hope on 10th October.

There is a section in the log containing Reginald Bright's "Remarks on ships company &c.", containing some fairly candid assessments of individuals, and it is not hard to imagine how "the ship's company" felt about having a son of the owner's family in their midst for 83 days! Other pages are devoted to notes and discussions about coal, both quality and quantity, including a 15th September entry in which he speculates on the reasons for the large discrepancy between the amount of coal remaining and the amount that should be remaining according to the log of the amount actually used.

A further section gives a fairly detailed list of modifications and repairs needed on the ship. Several pages given over to the questions asked by the Admiralty of captains seeking to pass an examination in steam, along with a list of answers, suggests that he may have been contemplating this as a career.

Another section records his "Remarks on stores etc." His observations include the undue warmth of the beer because of too much straw packing; the demand for soda water powder; complaints about the cigars; the demand for cider and ale in pint bottles; the sauternes and hock are well received, while an entry stating that "no moselle has yet been drunk" has been scored through; the ham is very good but the salt fish varies; the engineers complain that the rum is no good, but the passengers like it, as they do the brandy and gin; the tobacco is regarded as inferior and yet supply is running short, and there is also a complaint that not enough cards were put on board; some of the brown sugar is not good, and is marked "second use"; the soup "bouilli" is not liked by people in the second cabin, who say it is like boiled oakum, and would much prefer salt pork or beef; finally, all the ice in the ice houses melts away by early September!

As well, there is a brief diary or section of notes made by Reginald Bright after their arrival in Melbourne, 10.00 pm Thursday 11th November 1852. He writes that they have anchored about one-and-a-half to two miles from the beach, and that the Town of Melbourne is a further two miles on from the beach along a flat dusty road; the town itself is well planned, with wide streets — but they are not yet made, everything being "out of order" now. Other comments on various subjects include:

- **Lodgings** — scarce and expensive, two pounds a week "for bare walls";
- **Servants** — 45 to 50 pounds a year, "& won't work unless they choose";



"On the poop deck, looking aft". (Zumstein Collection, UMA.)

- **Labour** — though there is a good supply from returned gold diggers, it is still very dear at 15 to 20 shillings a day;
- **Water** — all comes from the Yarra River, and though 30 shillings a ton carted, it is "not at all good";
- **Gold diggings** — the yield at Bendigo is falling off, and distress is expected due to a water shortage; many have gone to a new diggings at the Ovens, others have returned to California;
- **Prices** — for commodities on the diggings are "enormously high";
- **Shepherds** — are plentiful, at 35 pounds a year;
- **Wool, tallow, and mutton** — the tallow trade is extinct because of the demand for mutton from a swollen population, and it is feared that the supply of wool will be exhausted for the same reason;
- **Transport** — lighterage is very high; several steamers service the ships in the bay and also ply between Melbourne and Williamstown; the "Maitland", operated by the wharf owner, (G. W.) Cole, is the best; there is talk of a railway from Melbourne to the beach; also of making the Yarra navigable (a cause Charles Bright pursued later in his career)— though the water in the harbour is deep quite close to shore, no boat of over nine or ten feet draught can go up-river because of three bars; and finally
- **The locals** — "All the people very independent, (we) always treat them well & coax them, — (there is) great difficulty to get them to come for passenger and luggage".

For such detailed and well observed descriptions on the voyage and after his arrival, Reginald Bright's log constitutes one of the gems of the University Archives' Bright collection. And given the significance of the ship and its past and subsequent Australian and international maritime history, the log is now of world interest. ❖

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## Photograph and Image Project 2000

by Sue Fairbanks  
Deputy University Archivist



*Examples from the above photo collection: above left: Anti-Kerr rally, 1976, held to commemorate the sacking of the Whitlam Government 12 months earlier. John Ellis Collection. Above, right: Site for Chemistry building as seen from the eastern apse of Wilson Hall on the second day of work, 1938. Pathology and Geology buildings in background. University of Melbourne Photo Collection.*

In February 2000, the Archives, Special Collections and Grainger Museum Division at the University of Melbourne Library began an ambitious project to create a website through which it will make the photographs and other images in the Archives' collection more accessible to researchers and the public.

In the longer term, the website will become a very important interface between the Archives' holdings and the research community. It will be used to make all of the Archives' special format holdings — from films to architectural drawings — more accessible, as well as to deliver imaged documents.

A format management database will underlie the website, allowing Archives staff to manage preservation of the non-paper format items that often accompany archival collections. These include the aforementioned films as well as audio and video recordings, artworks and museum objects.

This year though, the Photograph and Image Project 2000 has concentrated on preparing the database and website to display an initial 1,000 images from the John Ellis Photograph Collection and a further 400 images of the University of Melbourne.

The Archives acquired part one of the John Ellis Photograph Collection of Peace and Protest Movements in Melbourne (1971–1996) in 1999. The collection consists of 12,000 negatives and images taken by John Ellis during his participation in Melbourne's social protest movements since the Vietnam War. It

includes a catalogue in which John has recorded dates, times and people involved with him in protest, as well as his stories of people and events. From these, John has selected 1,000 of the most significant photographs to be digitised and exhibited on the Archives website with the stories that accompany them.

The digitisation of part of the John Ellis Collection will herald another innovation for the Archives — the opportunity to collaborate with academics from the History Department to prepare a multimedia teaching unit for first year undergraduate students.

The project, titled "Pathways to the Past: enhancing undergraduate research work in Australian history", has been funded by an ITMM Project Grant awarded to Associate Professor Alan Mayne and Dr Andrew Brown-May. The aim is to expand the range and depth of first year undergraduate research assignments in Australian history by exposing students, via web-based multimedia, to a diverse range of primary sources otherwise not easily accessible. The John Ellis photographs of peace and protest on the Archives website will be incorporated into the module to be used in second semester 2001.

The University celebrates its sesquicentenary in 2003. Display of photographs of the University of Melbourne on the website is therefore timely, as interest in the University's history, particularly through the History of the University Unit, is gathering momentum.

The 400 University photographs that will be accessible on



*Visit of the Duke of Edinburgh (Prince Phillip) to the University, 4th March 1954. The Duke is standing with the Vice-Chancellor, Prof. George Paton and Chancellor, the Hon. Sir Charles Lowe. University of Melbourne Photo Collection.*

the website have been digitised on CD-ROM for some time, but without the means to make them readily accessible to researchers and the public, their use has been limited. The photographs represent a substantial part of the holdings of over 1,000 historic University images which the Archives has acquired from a variety of sources in the past 40 years. Once available online, the University photographs will be searchable for specific buildings, grounds and people within the University community.

The website and its underlying format management database will support further development of multiple access points to the information and images held within it. Plans are maturing to make the catalogue records and images from the website available on the University Library's online catalogue. This will enable researchers to locate images as well as publications on desirable subjects during the one search. A longer term possibility also exists of making the Archives' image holdings accessible through the National Library of Australia's service, PictureAustralia.

The project has involved extensive cooperation in the planning stage between staff of the Archives (Michael Piggott, Peter Bode, Jason Benjamin, Sue Fairbanks, Fay Anderson), the Grainger Museum (Brian Allison), and the Ian Potter Museum of Art (Lisa Sullivan). In the implementation stage, Information Division staff have also contributed: from Information Development and Marketing (David Cunnington, Andrew Gfrerer), the Information Resources Division (Eve Young), and Photography and Digital Imaging (Bob Ivison, David Adam). Librarians and archivists from many of the leading state and national institutions have also given their advice with great willingness.

The Archives, Special Collections and Grainger Museum Division owes an enormous debt of gratitude to all participants. We look forward to demonstrating the website when we launch it in 2001. ❖

## The Myriad Uses of Archives (continued)

The Archives continues to support an amazing variety of topics from local interstate and overseas researchers pursuing student, academic, contract and private research interests. Noted in recent access forms were projects involving:

- Melbourne University Football Club in the post-World War 2 period;
- Sir James Barrett's role in Wyperfeld National Park;
- Research for an exhibition on Norman MacGeorge;
- Biographical essay on Sir David Derham;
- Refrigeration and refrigeration machinery;
- History of physical education in Australia;
- Investigation of the history of the workplace-based brass bands in Australia;
- Melbourne Food Guide;
- Biography of World War 2 Tatura internee Leonhard Adam;
- University plans of the South Lawn Car Park;
- Research on the career of Sir Bertram Makennal;
- Inter-war Australian modular furniture; and
- History of the Victorian Women's Graduate Association.

### Well done Liz, Fay and James!

Archivists have their patron saint (St Lawrence), and their own honours system, the standard "gong" being an MIA, or "Mentioned-In-Acknowledgments".

The latest comes from Dr Simon Cooke, who has just published *A Meeting of Minds; the Australian Psychological Society and Australian Psychologists 1944-1994*. In the Acknowledgments section (p x) he explains: "The bulk of the Australian Psychological Society's archives is now held at the University of Melbourne Archives. For a year or more, the Archives were my regular place of work. My time in the Archives was made all the more enjoyable by the company of Liz Agostino, Fay Anderson and James Bennett".

Incidentally Simons doctoral thesis, *Secret Sorrows: a social history of suicide in Victoria, 1841-1921* (Melbourne University History Department, 1998) which is held in Special Collections at the Baillieu Library, also includes a generous generic MIA: "The interlibrary loans staff of the Baillieu Library never once complained about the lugubrious titles I asked them to obtain".

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# The Santospirito Project

by Cate Elkner  
Doctoral History Student

In April this year work commenced on a collaborative project involving the University of Melbourne Archives working in partnership with the Department of History and CoAsIt, the peak Italian cultural and welfare agency in Australia. This is the first time that the Department of History has been awarded a PhD scholarship under the ARC's Strategic Partnerships with Industry — Research and Training (SPIRT) scheme. The industry partner CoAsIt is home to the Italian Historical Society, founded in 1980, which recently acquired the manuscript collection of Mrs Lena Santospirito.

The project combines archival arrangement and description (supervised by UMA's Michael Piggott) with historical research, and will result in a PhD thesis, as well as a comprehensive guide to the Santospirito collection and an electronic finding aid. Necessarily, the project is very conscious of the potentially thorny issue of the relationship between the archivist and the historian, and the possible pitfalls when the roles are combined.<sup>1</sup>

The original physical arrangement of the collection had been lost by the time it arrived, housed in a trunk, at the Italian Historical Society. However, a document discovered within the collection sets out the classification system used by Mrs Santospirito to organise her filing cabinet while the records were in active use. The guide to the collection will describe the original order of the records in detail, while the current physical arrangement of the records (in broad subject categories) will be maintained.

To enhance access to the collection, a finding aid is being developed which will enable researchers to search the database by name and key word. Mrs Santospirito's son, Tony, has been working as a volunteer for months, developing a descriptive listing of the records which will be the basis for the electronic finding aid.

Mrs Santospirito was an Italo-Australian woman who worked for the welfare and advancement of the Italian community in Victoria, most notably during the postwar period which saw the number of Italian-born people in Australia rise from 33,632 in 1947 to 227,689 in 1961.<sup>2</sup>

The majority of the records relate to Mrs Santospirito's work as President of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief from c.1945 to 1955. The Committee was established by Archbishop Mannix in 1940, originally to provide assistance to internees of Italian origin and their families. The work of the Committee evolved from 1945 with the advent of Australia's



*Mrs Santospirito, 3rd from left, photographed c.1946 with members of the Archbishop's Committee for Italian Relief, with bales of blankets being sent to Italy through UNRRA. (Courtesy of the Italian Historical Society).*

post-war immigration program. The Committee organised social activities, sought employment and accommodation for unassisted migrants, and also provided financial assistance.

The Santospirito Collection also contains Mrs Santospirito's personal correspondence with Arthur Calwell. Calwell was a strong advocate for the Italian community whose personal intervention in the Department of Immigration assisted migrants to obtain Landing Permits and effect family reunions.

The collection incorporates records of Mrs Santospirito's involvement with many prominent members of the Melbourne Italian community, including B. A. Santamaria, Gualtiero Vaccari and Father Ugo Modotti, an Italian priest who was almost interned by the Australian authorities, suspected of being a Fascist. One notable item is a long letter from the "Pyjama Girl Murderer" Antonio Agostini, written from Pentridge Prison, in which he tells his life story and provides a unique snapshot of the inter-war Italian community in Melbourne and Sydney.

The Santospirito Collection provides a unique perspective on the response of the Church, the government and the Italo-Australian community to the influx of migrants after 1945. This project opens up new possibilities for dialogue and collaboration, not only between archivists and historians, but also between the University and the Melbourne community. ❖

## NOTES

1. See, for example, Alison Pilger, "Archivists and Historians: the balance beam of professional identity", *Archives and Manuscripts*, Vol. 20, No. 2, Nov 1992, pp 227–235. (NB The author is a qualified historian previously employed by the Public Record Office Victoria. Editor.)
2. F. Lancaster Jones, "Italians in the Carlton Area: the growth of an ethnic concentration", in *The Australian Journal of Politics and History*, volume x, April–December 1964, p 83.