

The end of history?

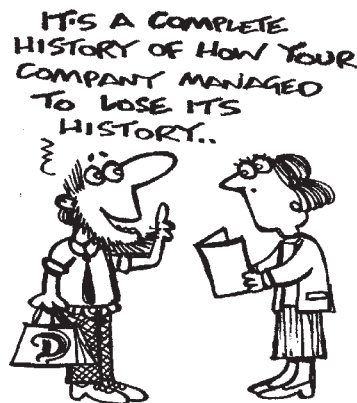
In many ways the lot of historians of companies and organisations is becoming increasingly more difficult. Acquisitions and mergers often result in the culling or dispersal of records of the target organisation. The relocation of head offices that often follows mergers and the periodic restructuring frequently results in the disposal of other records no longer considered current. Few organisations now have libraries and central record repositories where historical material traditionally was collected: this material has been lost when libraries have been disbanded. Moreover, storage of hardcopy records is frequently undertaken by contractors, and is often considered an unwarranted expense with only those records being kept that are required by law, and then only for the time required.

The greater use of personal computers and the Internet has minimised the need for libraries and facilitated the rapid circulation of information in digital form. It is not always possible for copies of this circulated information to be stored in a central databank, and that stored on personal computers is regularly purged, certainly when personnel leave the organisation and often when systems are upgraded.

The periodic culling of records is not a problem in itself: even professional archives do that. However, records disposal needs to be done in accordance with guidelines that help ensure important records are retained. Indeed, the digital storage of records should be a benefit because it requires minimal space and effort. Basically, all that is required is the will to keep records and an awareness of what might usefully be preserved for future historical use.

Several types of records are crucial in preserving the history of any organisation. Board minutes are always important, while annual reports provide regular summaries of information, issues and developments. Regular newsletters provide a useful chronicle of events and the people associated with them. Company memoranda advising staff of major new appointments or reorganisations generally provide useful information. Miscellaneous consultants' reports and due-diligence documents provide important information about critical events, while major advertising campaigns often reflect changes in policies and attitudes.

It should not be a difficult matter for organisations to ensure the preservation of such information. This will certainly facilitate the work of future historians and ensure that an organisation's history is able to be recorded in the detail that it deserves.



D&A's Scope of Work

D&A continues to be busy, with new projects succeeding those completed.

June Donovan completed her work as the cultural heritage officer with the Defence Science and Technology Organisation (DSTO) early in 2006, but has since been contracted to undertake a complementary project to document major achievements by DSTO and its predecessors.

Early in 2006 Peter Donovan completed a history of DSTO's Sydney operations. Senator Sandy Macdonald, Secretary to the Minister for Defence, launched the book at a gathering at Pymont, Sydney, on 28 April 2006 that marked the 50th anniversary of the establishment of the Royal Australian Navy Experimental Laboratory, DSTO's predecessor.

Our major continuing project, is a history of Johnson & Johnson in Australia and New Zealand (see page 2). It remains on schedule for publication in the second half of 2006.

Work recently began on a history of Morris Wake, his ancestors and successors. This story closely reflects that of agricultural settlement on South Australia's Eyre Peninsula and the manner in which this has changed over successive generations.

More than a 'Band-Aid' company

Johnson & Johnson is known around the world for its JOHNSON'S Baby Powder and BAND-AID Brand Adhesive Bandages: indeed, the latter have passed into the English language to describe a quick and simple solution to any issue. Yet the company was never identified solely with these products. It was founded on the manufacture and sale of plaster bandages with JOHNSON'S Baby Powder being developed originally to guard against any skin irritation caused by the plasters. The company began making sutures very early on. So the history of the company covers more than what came to be called 'consumer products'.



The company commissioned D&A to write its history to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the incorporation of the Australian company in February



1931. However, the history of Johnson & Johnson in Australia extends back further than that. There is trade evidence of Johnson & Johnson products being available in the late 19th century.

The modern Johnson & Johnson is a complex corporate entity, easiest to understand as a family of separate, subsidiary companies. So, the relatively simple story of one company becomes increasingly complex after 1960 when Johnson & Johnson acquired another Australian company as a means of

manufacturing and marketing pharmaceutical drugs. This ultimately became Johnson & Johnson Medical, which specialised in medical devices, after spawning two other companies, Janssen Pharmaceutica and Cilag-Chemie, that later merged to form yet another subsidiary, Janssen-Cilag, to market prescription drugs. Tasmanian Alkaloids, a world leader in the production of morphine and thebaine, was acquired from Abbot Laboratories, and became another wholly-owned subsidiary. Other worldwide acquisitions by the parent company, such as Clinical Diagnostics which marketed pathology testing platforms (1994), and of the hip and knee implant maker DePuy (1998), have meant other companies have joined the local family.



Johnson & Johnson was a long-time sponsor of The Quiz Kids that aired on the Macquarie Broadcasting Service on Sunday evenings. The company took up the sponsorship in 1944 after Colgate-Palmolive declined to renew its sponsorship after 116 episodes. The program, hosted by John Dease and often presented before live audiences around Australia, aired on 48 stations nationally by 1948 and was among the top six shows nationally. It celebrated its 1000th program in August 1961, though by then was in decline after failing to make a successful transition to television.



National Printing Industry Award

Donovan & Associates' publication on the history of Adelaide Airport recently received a silver medal at the 23rd National Print Awards for a book printed in four or more colours. The presentation was made at a ceremony in Sydney on 19 May 2006. The book was produced by Donovan & Associates, designed by Vas Spagnuolo, and printed by Hyde Park Press of Netley, South Australia.

Shown above are Phil Baker (Managing Director of Adelaide Airport Limited) holding the award with, from left, Richard Koch and Vas Spagnuolo (Hyde Park Press) and Peter Donovan.

Other News

Peter Donovan was recently appointed an inaugural member of the Register Committee of the South Australian Heritage Council, the main objective of which is 'to advise and assist [the Council] to administer the South Australian Heritage Register'.

Peter presented a paper at the 14th International History Conference held in Sydney from 12 to 16 July. His paper was on the firm's oral history of the Adelaide Gaol. While the project was undertaken some time ago, it has not been widely publicised — and it was particularly relevant to several conference themes.



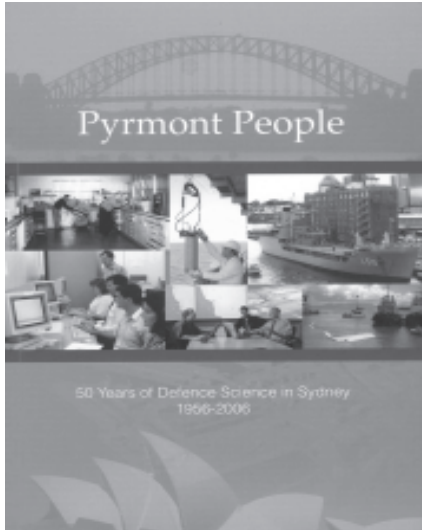
Other Lives

Both Peter Donovan and June Donovan took time off from writing history to help make history by officiating in the newly revamped Melbourne Cricket Ground during the Commonwealth Games in March 2006.

The upper photograph shows Chief Judge Peter Donovan (right) overseeing the conduct of the final of the men's triple jump.



The lower picture shows June Donovan (third from the left) appropriately for a historian, working as the recorder for the men's decathlon long jump.



New Publication

Pymont People: 50 Years of Defence Science in Sydney, 1956–2006 by Peter Donovan was published by the Defence Science and Technology Organisation, Edinburgh. The book is in softback, measures 240 mm x 170 mm, has vi + 122 pages and is illustrated in black and white.



Photograph taken following the launch of *Pymont People* in Sydney on 28 April 2006. Left to right; Peter Donovan, Dr Nanda Nandagopal (Deputy Chief Defence Scientist), Senator Sandy McDonald (Secretary to the Minister for Defence), Dr Roger Lough (Chief Defence Scientist).

Copy editing of *Donovan News* is by Bernard O'Neil.
The cartoon is by Stephen Stanley.



DONOVAN & ASSOCIATES

History & Historic Preservation Consultants

Donovan & Associates is a consulting firm which specialises in matters relating to aspects of historical research, writing and historic conservation. The firm undertakes a wide variety of tasks based upon these specialties. Major projects completed by the firm include large commissioned histories and heritage studies, recording of oral history and providing advice on records management.

Donovan & Associates was established in 1980 and has since undertaken work for clients throughout mainland Australia on projects that have involved research and work in all parts of the country.

Donovan & Associates' services include:

- * Corporate and institutional histories
- * Regional and local histories
- * Heritage surveys and assessments
- * Land tenure research
- * Oral history programs
- * Advice on cultural tourism
- * Advice on historical displays

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