



# PARBICA panorama ISSUE 2007/ 3

September 2007

From TheEditor's desk

For some time, I have thought there must be an arcane and tragic relationship between the worldwide loss of languages and the loss of rainforests and coral reefs. But all are happening. The losses are great. Worldwide, one acre of rainforest disappears each second. Coral reefs vanish at twice that rate. Half of all 6,000-plus languages will perish in the next century and another 2,400 will approach extinction.

In North America alone, there are about 270 distinct languages, struggling survivors of a group once much larger. Yet, most Americans are unaware of and in general unconcerned about most of them, and in some cases are even hostile to them, insisting on "English only".

The first thing to learn about languages is that there is no such thing as a "primitive" language. The thesis that some languages intrinsically are better than others has to be denied. In 2000, linguists, archivists, scientists and computer scientists met at the University of Pennsylvania to devise ways to save languages by converting as many as possible into detailed digital records, including sound files, all to be posted on the Internet.

It comes as somewhat of a shock to learn that Tongan now is an endangered language, joining Samoan and Fijian. As part of its enlightened educational programs, New Zealand has this year added Tongan to its curriculum. Associate Minister of Pacific Island Affairs Luamanuvao Winnie Laban said, "Losing a language is to lose diversity, culture and identity. Everyone suffers." *The Contemporary Pacific*, V.19. No. 2, 2007, includes a fascinating article by Yuko

Otsuka (DPhil, Oxford), Making a Case for Tongan as an Endangered Language.

New Caledonia has 27 (or more) Kanak languages and 341 tribal groupings. Virtually all that has been published about the environment (as one example) is by Europeans. In 1988/98, the University of New Caledonia was founded. Ismet Kurtovich is among the key local historians improving research and teaching materials.

An example on a different front is Henri Blaffart of Conservation International, who notes "The Kanaks have an incredible knowledge of their environment. There are some old guys in these villages that have so much traditional wisdom they could be PhDs in biology."

Most Pacific archives have holdings in various formats that relate to older uses of language (often more than one language). They thus have a purpose beyond the first reason for their creation. Court records, for example, may include testimony of elders, verbatim as given and as translated. Oral histories in themselves obviously capture spoken language.

Archivists, who may not have done so recently, should review their records in all categories to identify those of possible use in language studies. There could be many rewarding surprises. At PARBICA 12 in October at Noumea, we will be reminded of these responsibilities as we see, perhaps with new eyes, the magnificent Jean-Marie Tjibou Cultural Centre, the units of which were given an "unfinished" aspect as a reminder that Kanak culture still is in the process of becoming.

## Presidents Message

The stage is set for the next PARBICA Conference. Thanks to the efforts of your Bureau and our hosts, the Archives of New Caledonia, who have worked tirelessly in the last months to put together a programme that will be meaningful and relevant, and from which all participants will gain in terms of knowledge, networks and socially through personal experiences of the rich cultures of our hosts.

The conference will bring to the fore some crucial issues. We will discuss our new "Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit" along with "archival basics" and "digital archiving." Oral histories and traditions which form a significant part of Pacific communities is also on the agenda.

Once again the conference gives us Pacific archivists and records managers the precious opportunity of fellowship. This will facilitate the free flow of valuable ideas and experiences, and enable the identification of areas and partners we can collaborate with in furthering the cause.

With this in mind, I would like to encourage you to come prepared, and use every opportunity to actively contribute, for it will be another two years till the next conference and we must make the most of this -occasion.

Your Bureau looks forward to welcoming you in Noumea.

Vinaka vakalevu.

Setareki Tale  
President

## Endangered Archives Programme

The **Endangered Archives Programme** at the British Library is now accepting applications for the next round of funding. Detailed information on the timetable, criteria, eligibility and procedures for applying for a grant is available on the Programme's website. **The deadline for receipt of preliminary applications is 2 November 2007.**

The focus of the Programme is on the preservation and copying of important but vulnerable archives throughout the world. The Programme is completely open as to theme and regional interest, although applications concerned with non-western societies are particularly welcomed.

The Programme's objectives are achieved principally by making a number of grants to individual researchers to locate relevant collections, to arrange their transfer to

suitable local archival home where possible, and to deliver copies to the British Library and a local institution for the benefit of researchers worldwide. Pilot projects are particularly welcomed, to investigate the survival of archival collections on a particular subject, in a discrete region, or in a specific format, and the feasibility of their recovery.

The Programme is administered by the British Library and applications are considered in an annual competition by an international panel of historians and archivists.

For further details of the projects funded to date as well as application procedures, please visit the Programme's website [www.bl.uk/endangeredarchives](http://www.bl.uk/endangeredarchives) email: [endangeredarchives@bl.uk](mailto:endangeredarchives@bl.uk)

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>PARBICA 12 Final Program</b> <b>Archives without Boundaries: Cooperation and Shared Solutions</b></p>
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**Monday 1 October**

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AusAid Workshop on PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit  
Venue: Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)  
Convenor: *Ms Dani WICKMAN (Australia)*

**Welcome**

*Mr Setareki TALE (PARBICA President, Fiji)*  
*Mr Ismet Kurtovitch (Host, New Caledonia)*  
Secretariat of the Pacific Community

**Introduction to the Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit**

*Ms Dani Wickman*

**Different Records Management Traditions**

*Ms Ingrid UTCHAO (New Caledonia) and others*

**Making the Brochure work for you**

Techniques for the using the Brochure  
*Ms Dani WICKMAN and others*

**Train the Trainer: Presenting the Toolkit Brochure**

*Ms Christine MARTINEZ (France)*

**Introducing the Checklist**

*Mr Mark SEMMLER (Australia) and Ms Dani WICKMAN*

**Tuesday 2 October**

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Day 2 of the AusAid Workshop on PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit

**Introduction to Recordkeeping Requirements**

*Ms Dani WICKMAN*

**Introducing the Guidelines Module**

**Options on how to Fulfil the Checklist and Guideline Requirements**

*Ms Dani WICKMAN*

**The Way Forward**

*Ms Dani WICKMAN and others*

**Making a Commitment**

*Ms Dani WICKMAN*

**Conclusion**

*Ms Evelyn WAREHAM*

19:30 – 21:30 Launch of PARBICA Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit

Venue: Australian Consulate

## Wednesday 3 October

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PARBICA 12

Venue: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

### Customary Welcome

#### Opening and Welcomes

*Chair: Ms Evelyn WAREHAM (PARBICA Secretary General)*

- **Welcome to New Caledonia**
- **Welcome to Secretariat of Pacific Community**
- **Response and welcome on behalf of ICA, Mr Ross GIBBS (Australia, ICA)**
- **Response and Introduction to PARBICA 12 Conference, Mr Setareki TALE (Fiji, PARBICA President)**

**Cooperation, Shared Solutions and Partnerships in the Pacific, Mr Edward VRKIC (Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat)**

**Latest Developments & Current Issues in the Pacific:** Introduction of all participants. Each PARBICA member country, state and territory representative presents one major achievement or challenge since last conference in 2005.

*Chair: Mr Setareki TALE (Fiji, PARBICA President)*

**Pacific Archival Statistics, Ms Dianne MACASKILL (New Zealand)**

### Informal Strategy Discussion on Priorities and Areas for Cooperation

Afternoon

Buses depart from Hotel Le Surf at 14:30 for **optional professional visits to:**

1. **Archives of New Caledonia, or**
2. **Datafilm (firm specialising in microfilm and digitisation)**

Customary Welcome, Presentation and Dinner in the Valley of Tiaty, Tribe of La Concepción  
Buses depart from hotel 18:00

An opportunity to learn about Kanak heritage and culture and to enjoy traditional island food. Please dress warmly and comfortably– we will spend the evening in a forest setting, where it can be cool.

## Thursday 4 October

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PARBICA 12

Venue: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

### Workshop 1

#### ASA Workshop on Archival Basics

*Convenor: Dr Sigrid McCausland (Australia)*

##### **Introducing Archives**

An introduction to the theory and practice of working with archives  
How we identify archives and the work of archivists

##### **Key Archival Principles**

Provenance and original order and how they are applied in accessioning and processing archives

##### **Arrangement and Description**

Documenting information about archives and how that information enables archives to be used

##### **Preservation Basics**

*Convenor: Ms Marianne TISSANDIER (New Caledonia)*

## Thursday 4 October *continued*

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PARBICA 12

### Workshop 2

#### UNESCO Workshop on Digital Archiving

Convenors: *Mr Alan Howell (Australia) and Mr Abel Caine (UNESCO Apia)*

##### **Digitising for Access**

Why digitise? Advantages and disadvantages. Digital imaging workflows. Selection for digitising. Cataloguing/Metadata

##### **Making images accessible**

Technology primer. File management. Web access to images. Minimum standards for digital access.

##### **Digital Archiving**

Into the future: on the preservation of knowledge in the electronic age. Facilitated discussion chaired by: *Mr Alan HOWELL*

Ready, Set, Go Digital: Digital Readiness in Archival Institutions: *Ms Cassandra FINDLAY (Australia)*

**Digital Access and Digital Archiving.** Facilitated panel and presentations from speakers representing the region and sectors

Chair: *Mr Abel CAINE*

PARBICA Public Talk and Reception; Venue: Tjibaou Cultural Centre, 18:00

Archives without Boundaries: Cooperation between Archives Institutions in the Pacific Region, *Mr Setareki TALE* (Fiji, PARBICA President) and *Ms Evelyn WAREHAM* (New Zealand, PARBICA Secretary General).

## Friday 5 October

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PARBICA 12

Venue: Tjibaou Cultural Centre

### Opening

- **Customary Welcome**
- **Welcome to Tjibaou Cultural Centre**, *Ms Marie-Paule TJIBAOU*
- **Response and Introduction to the Day**, *Mr Setareki TALE*

**Cooperation with Local Communities - “We Are What We Remember”:** How Pacific institutions can support local and traditional memory and expand the meaning of ‘archives’ through their programmes.

*Mr Emmanuel TJIBAOU* (Tjibaou Cultural Centre), *Ms Anne NAUPA* (Vanuatu), *Mr Albert VAEA* (Tonga)

### Cooperation between Archives: Experiences and Lessons Learnt

#### Panel Discussion

- *Ms Mila TULIMANU* (Tuvalu) and *Mr Richard OVERY* (New Zealand): Assisting Tuvalu’s Archives
- Reconstructing the National Archives of the Solomon Islands
- *Mr Ismet KURTOVITCH* (New Caledonia): Vanuatu Supreme Court Historical Archives

### Shared Solutions

**UNESCO’s Memory of the World**, *Mr Abel CAINE* (UNESCO)

**Archivists without Boundaries**, *Ms Christine MARTINEZ* (France)

## Friday 5 October *continued*

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PARBICA 12

Venue: Tjibaou Cultural Centre

**Solutions for Professional Development.** How to support the professional development of archives and records staff through cooperation.

*Ms Norehan JAAFFAR (Malaysia) [tbc], Ms Sigrid McCAUSLAND (Australia), Ms Cheryl STANBOROUGH (Yap)*

### **Group discussion on areas for cooperation and shared solutions**

#### **Closing Session**

- **Conference Wrap-Up**, *Mr Setareki Tale (PARBICA President)*
- **Presentation of Official Photograph**, *Mr Ismet KURTOVITCH (New Caledonia)*
- **Invitation to Congress 2008**, *Ms Norehan JAAFFAR (Malaysia)*

19:30 Closing Dinner, Venue: Hotel Le Surf

## Saturday 6 October

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PARBICA General Business Meeting, Venue: Hotel

### **PARBICA General Conference**

*Chair: Mr Setareki TALE (Fiji, PARBICA President)*

### **Le Service des Archives de la Nouvelle-Calédonie**

The Archives Service of New Caledonia was established by a deliberation of the Congress of New Caledonia in 1987 and preserves more than 20000 bundles and registers.

Among the oldest and the richest holdings are:

- the archives of the Private Council (from 1859 ),
- the archives of the General Council, then, of the Territorial Assembly and the Congress,
- the Registry Office of the municipalities since its creation,
- the capital of different Courts (from 1856 ),
- the collections of printed archives (Moniteur, JONC, BONC...),
- the archives of the former Service of Immigration or of Native Affairs, of the registers of pay from 1863, notarial acts, collections of budgets, the archives of the former Post Offices and the old plans of the Topographic Service.

This list is not exhaustive, in addition there are municipal archives resulting from administrative subdivisions, or deposits of private archives resulting from companies, associations or private individuals. For example, the Service keeps the archives of the ministers Maurice and Raymond Leenhardt and other private papers.

The Archives Service of New Caledonia can acquire by agreement the archives of the Provinces, the Municipalities and the metropole administration in New Caledonia such as Justice, Army, and High Commissioner. It also preserves and makes available an important collection of ancient photos and old films.

## Historical Data on New Caledonia

contributed by Ismet Kurtovitch

The presence of Lapita pottery dating back to 1300 BC is the earliest proof of Melanesian population in New Caledonia. The country was then inhabited by **Melanesians**.

The archipelago was discovered and named "New Caledonia" by English Captain James Cook on September 4, 1774. For nearly 70 years, between 1774 and 1840, little contact with the archipelago was recorded. From 1840, seafarers and traffickers established a few trading centres, and then from 1843 British Protestant **missionaries** first, then French Catholics, settled. On September 24, 1853, by order of Napoleon III, Rear-Admiral F evrier-Despointes officially took possession of New Caledonia. The first convicts landed in 1864, marking the beginning of the penal colony and the penitentiary administration, which remained until 1897, when the convoys stopped arriving, bringing about the slow extinction of the **penal colony** over a quarter of a century.

Even if, from 1895, colonials from Metropolitan France were encouraged to settle in New Caledonia, the climate, land and human factors led to the gradual abandonment of the **free colonisation** policy.

Discovered by the engineer Garnier in 1864, nickel mining began in 1874, and led to the introduction of imported labour. During the Second World War, the territory served as a military logistics base for American troops.

In 1946, New Caledonia chose to become an overseas territory, a status confirmed with the advent of the Vth Republic of France, but this was nevertheless the beginning of a period of institutional instability, characterised by the adoption of ten different statutes through until 1998.

The **Matignon Accords** and the referendum law of November 9, 1988 enabled the territory to regain stability for the ten following years. In 1998, a referendum was organised in order to approve the Noum ea Accord, which defined a new statute for New Caledonia, and attempted to clarify some of the unspoken aspects of its history.

□ **Melanesians.** *The groups of Melanesians living in the archipelago when Europeans arrived constituted a very diverse population, divided into small linguistic and political areas. This population, that remains little known today, was the result of various and successive migration waves coming from Southeast Asia, from the end of the second millennium BC, with the arrival of Oceanian populations speaking Austronesian languages.*

□ **Missionaries.** *In the 1830-1840 period, the political and confessional rivalry between English and French that was in full swing in Europe, was also playing out in the Pacific between Protestant and Catholic evangelists.*

□ **Penal colony.** *75 convoys of convicts landed in New Caledonia between 1864 and 1897, to carry out three types of sentences: transportation, deportation and banishment. The most common sentence was transportation, those sent to the colony to serve hard labour; deportees or "communards" were condemned political insurgents from the Paris commune; lastly, the banished were delinquents condemned in the criminal courts for repeat offending.*

□ **Free colonisation.** *Desire to populate New Caledonia with "free" Metropolitans as opposed to convicts in forced exile. This policy however ran contrary to the penal colony powers governing the country. After the penal colony was closed, there were further attempts at colonisation, among them the "Feillet" plan, which also failed, marking the end of all colonisation attempts.*

□ **Matignon Accords.** *Generic term encompassing the Matignon accord and Oudinot accord, signed by the delegations of "RPCR" and "FLNKS", and then French Prime Minister Michel Rocard, bringing an end to a tense political situation through the establishment institutional stability.*

## REPORTING ON THE MATIGNON ACCORD

by Sarah Walls

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New Caledonia's Kanak independence leader, Jean-Marie Tjibaou, spoke his last words in public at a customary ceremony on the island of Ouvéa on 4 May 1989. It was his first visit to the island since 19 Kanak militants had been killed there by French troops sent to free gendarmes captured by the Kanaks during the 1988 French Presidential elections. An uneasy peace had returned to the rest of the French Pacific territory, but on Ouvéa the trauma had sown lethal seeds.

As darkness fell, Tjibaou told the families of the dead men whose graves lay by the sea that their sacrifice must not be forgotten. "It's human, sacrifices are quickly forgotten," he said. "We benefit from the advantages gained and sometimes our vision is a bit clouded and we don't see very clearly on the path of the word we've given each other. [Les dernières paroles publiques de Jean-Marie Tjibaou, La Dépêche Kanak No 272, 17 Mai 1989. I have translated Tjibaou's words in French into English.]

Moments later, Tjibaou himself lay dead, shot in the head along with his deputy, Yeiwéné Yeiwéné, as they stood in line to greet people. Dead too was Djubelly Wea, the embittered local Kanak leader who had fired his weapon and been shot in turn by Tjibaou's Kanak bodyguard. The ceremony intended to mark the lifting of a year's mourning instead plunged New Caledonia's independence movement into mourning anew, and dealt its momentum a critical blow.

Tjibaou's last words have been preserved thanks to a recording of his speech in French made by Lionel Weri and published by the Kanak Press Agency two weeks after his death. Such archival material takes on added significance when it keeps alive the memory of a person of national and regional significance, as was Tjibaou.

A former priest and a poet, Tjibaou had remarkable generosity of spirit, even towards his foes, allied with a far-sightedness and pragmatism which made

him a formidable political leader and negotiator. With his humour, his psychological and political insight, and his deep knowledge of French and Kanak culture, he was at home in both the European and Pacific worlds and able to engage with anyone, from the powerful to the powerless. He was the most effective advocate his people had had for a century.

As an Australian journalist covering New Caledonia and the French Pacific from July 1988 till early 1991, I was privileged to meet Tjibaou and other participants in the territory's peace plan, and to explore and report on this complex society then numbering just 160,000 people. In 1984 conflict over independence between the indigenous Kanaks and the non-Kanak majority had flared into insurrection, leaving nearly 50 people dead by the end of the Ouvéa hostage crisis.

In the last year of his life, I recorded two interviews with Tjibaou, one in August 1988 and the other in January 1989. They were among the few interviews he gave after signing the Matignon Accord, and cast significant light on his attitude to it. He explained why he had accepted a peace plan that provided no guarantees on independence, what sort of independence he was fighting for, how he hoped to change people's hearts and minds on the issue and how he saw the future of his country and the region. Sound, transcription and translation files of these interviews are now available through the Pacific Research Collection at the Australian National University.

In July 1988 when I arrived in New Caledonia, tension, hostility and uncertainty about its future were still widespread, and the local media were as polarised as the communities they served. Australia had supported the FLNKS (Kanak Socialist National Liberation Front) in getting New Caledonia listed with the UN Special Committee on Decolonisation in 1986, and there was suspicion of Australian journalists among the pro-French community. With the advent of a peace plan intended to improve communal

relations and open the territory to the Pacific region, I considered it important to try and cover the full spectrum of local political opinion as fairly and comprehensively as I could.

Both Tjibaou and the leader of the main pro-French party, Jacques Lafleur, had to contend with considerable discontent in their ranks about the peace plan. For the independence movement, the plan meant deferring the independence issue for 10 years with no guarantee of independence at the end of it. For Lafleur's supporters, it meant agreeing to another referendum, when they had already rejected independence in a referendum in 1987.

Lafleur's support was essentially founded on fear of what would happen were the territory to become independent. Until Tjibaou's assassination took him out of the equation, it was clear that as peace returned and fear ebbed, Lafleur was paying the greater price electorally. In November 1988, when a referendum on the peace plan was held, most voters in the Kanak-controlled north and the islands voted in favour, while in the more populous south, Lafleur's heartland, the majority voted against it. However, Tjibaou had taken the precaution of demanding a national referendum and not a local one, and the national majority confirmed the plan.

In May 1989, a month before the first provincial elections under the Matignon Accord, Tjibaou and his deputy, Yeiwéné, were assassinated. They were the third and fourth independence leaders to be shot dead since 1981. Despite initial fears that the peace plan would collapse, all parties remained committed to it. By the time I left the territory in 1991, there was already talk of a consensus solution in 1998 that would defer the need to put the politically divisive issue of independence to a referendum.

While the peace plan was the key story in New Caledonia, it was not the only source of interest for a journalist. I soon realised that this beautiful country, made up of a mountainous fragment of continent surrounded by a barrier reef with an outlying pendant of coral atolls, was a microcosm of global issues. Decolonisation, immigration, cultural diversity, urbanisation, youth

unemployment, consumption and waste management, environmental damage and protection, all the major issues of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were exemplified in New Caledonia.

The Grande Terre, the mainland, contained 20% of the world's nickel reserves, and mountains scarred with open-cut nickel mines could be seen from the coastal road. A Western consumer society and a traditional indigenous culture co-existed in close proximity. Cultural identity depended less on skin colour than on how one had grown up: I met Kanaks with fair hair and green eyes who had been raised in the tribe, and dark-skinned individuals who considered themselves European because they had grown up in the towns and lived as Westerners.

As I travelled the country, covering political meetings and talking to as many people as I could, I realised that FLNKS meetings were never held in a particular place simply because it was convenient. For Kanaks, the entire country, with its mountains, valleys, rivers, villages and fields, was invested with mythic and historic significance that was always taken into account.

While the Kanaks were determined to keep their history alive, for many local French settlers, the past had long been too shameful to acknowledge. New Caledonia had been a penal colony. Rebels from the 1870 Paris Commune and the first Algerian uprising had been deported there, along with over 25,000 ordinary convicts. Convict history was sensitive because it was recent, sometimes only two or three generations back, and because it raised political issues regarding rights to land that were still fiercely alive.

As well as Kanaks and local French settlers, New Caledonia was also home to islanders from other French Pacific territories, people of mixed-race and Asian descent, and people from former French colonies such as Vietnam and Algeria. A potentially rich pluri-ethnic society, it was still too compartmentalised to capitalise on its cultural assets. It bore all the marks of a colonial society, with the metropolitan French at the top of the social pyramid, the indigenous Kanaks at the bottom, and other groups in between.

Tjibaou's social vision was of a very different kind of multiracial society: one founded on recognition of Kanak sovereignty, and extending a welcome to those who came later. Right-wing Caledonians often said to me that they considered Australia's position on New Caledonia hypocritical, that Australia had dealt with its Aborigines by virtually wiping them out. As they saw it, Australia's history was similar to that of New Caledonia, except that Australia had rendered its indigenous population electorally insignificant.

These two opposing perspectives made me reflect on my country and realise the extent to which it was still marked by its colonial origins. The right-wing Caledonians were correct in one respect: in Australia indigenous people were often effectively "out of sight, out of mind". That was not the case in New Caledonia where Kanaks were visible everywhere.

Tjibaou's ideas made me realise the extent to which the decolonisation process

in Australia was still incomplete. What would an Australia be like that put recognition, respect for and reconciliation with its indigenous people at the centre of its sense of national identity? How could a healthy sense of national identity develop in a country of immigrants like Australia or New Caledonia if it was not grounded in recognition of the first inhabitants, if it drew a veil over historical injustices?

Jean-Marie Tjibaou's ideas were in advance of their time and of relevance far beyond the borders of New Caledonia. He made a significant contribution to the Pacific region, and undoubtedly would have made a far greater one had he survived. He reminded us all of the richness of Pacific culture and the importance of allowing all cultures, indigenous and non-indigenous, and all human beings to grow in mutual respect and reach their full potential, something he personally was denied.

17 August 2007.

## **News – Updates - Events**

### **Pacific Regional Public Service Commissioners Conference Mulifanua, Samoa, from 18 – 20 July 2007**

Ross Gibbs, Director-General of the National Archives of Australia attended the Conference of Pacific Public Service Commissioners in Samoa where he spoke about "Recordkeeping for Good Governance". His paper on the Pacific Recordkeeping for Good Governance Toolkit generated much positive interest. Many Public Service Commissioners have key responsibilities for monitoring and improving the performance of the public service and its leaders and many have powers to set down rules and procedures for the administration of basic agency functions. They are in a position to be important champions for change in the area of records management and good governance. Ross Gibbs extended the invitation that the Public Service Commissioners consider joining PARBICA 12 in New Caledonia in the first week of October and expressed his hope that they would also encourage archivists and records managers in their respective governments to attend. We look forward to welcome representatives from Public Service Commissions in PNG, Nauru, Tonga and Vanuatu at Parbica 12 in Noumea.

## **The National Archives of Australia (NAA) to host the 2012 International Council on Archives (ICA) Congress**

NAA will be host for the 2012 ICA Congress to be held in Brisbane, Australia. This will be the 17<sup>th</sup> ICA Congress, and is expected to bring 2000 delegates to Brisbane. Themes planned for the Brisbane congress include 'archives in the digital age' and 'archival education'. The National Archives of Australia is especially interested to work together with PARBICA to maximise Pacific participation in the 2012 Congress

For more see

[http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/brandis/media/media\\_releases/2007/094](http://www.minister.dcita.gov.au/brandis/media/media_releases/2007/094)

### **Vanuatu News - Press Release (18/6/2007)**

*Extracts from the press release:*

"In response to the recent Court House fire, the Vanuatu National Cultural Council, the body responsible for the preservation, protection and development of the country's cultural heritage, has called on the national government to prioritise building of a new National Archives building to preserve the invaluable and irreplaceable documentary memory of the nation and to rebuild the Court House in its original style on the same site, to preserve the historical character of the building and site.

The plans for a new National Archives building have been in existence since the early 1990s, when the masterplan for the National Cultural Complex was approved by the Government.

The situation with the National Archives is now completely unsatisfactory. The bulk of the nation's archives are housed in the converted colonial asylum ("depot"), which was not built for the purpose of keeping national records and is now over 50 years old and cracked and crumbling in places. If a severe cyclone were to hit Vanuatu and remove part of the roof of the building, almost all the records kept there would be damaged beyond repair, as the records are stored all over the floor as well as piled to the ceiling. Another strong earthquake like the one in 2002 will destroy the building and destroy many records also. These records include many unique and irreplaceable documents relating to the administrative history of the colonial and independent governments, including

unique documents relating to all the important events and transactions in this country's history.

The appalling situation of the National Archives reflects the very low priority the Government has given to this important national institution: for the last decade the National Archives has been allocated an operating budget of next to nothing and budget allocation only for only one archivist. None of the Chief Archivists appointed to this position since Independence have ever had the necessary qualifications or support for this job, including the latest Chief Archivist, the recently deceased Mr Tom Sakias. Since Mr Sakias' death in December 2006, no new Chief Archivist has been appointed.

Due to the inability of the National Archives to properly keep the Government's historical records, each Government department was requested in the late 1990s to store their own archives until such time as the National Archives had its own building. The National Cultural Council is aware that these important national records being kept by Departments are often kept in a very unsatisfactory state: often the records are simply shelved or heaped up in a room, not catalogued or indexed and kept in non-air-conditioned conditions. ... What this means is that important Government records are being damaged and are deteriorating and access to particular documents is impossible because there is no way of finding them again."

### **Membership News – Ulrike Hertel**

Our best wishes go with Ulrike Hertel-Akuino who has resigned from her position as Museum and Archives Officer of Samoa in May this year.



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"We can be almost certain of being wrong about the future, if we are wrong about the past."

G.K. Chesterton (1874-1936)

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