

Short History of the Archive

In 1982, Professor Alan Crown, Dr Neil Radford, the University Librarian and Dr Jennifer Alison (Gifts and Exchange Librarian) received an initial grant of \$10,000 from the Australian Research Grants' Commission to establish an Archive of Australian Judaica at the University of Sydney and Marianne Dacy was employed to implement the project. A substantial collection has been built up over twenty-seven years, after its initial establishment on July 4, 1983. The archive was housed initially as a special collection within the Rare Books Library and then moved to the former Rare Books newspaper annexe. It has now moved to Floor 1 within the Rare Books Library, but will be relocated when the library renovations are completed.

The Archive was established to meet the urgent need of preventing further deterioration of records, the discarding of papers and the loss of primary source material. Again, it was designed to provide a central repository in an environment that allows for sustained academic research.

The first collection obtained was from Karen Angell, the daughter of Dr Max Joseph, a refugee from Nazi Germany and a doughty fighter for justice. The entire collection has been copied on to DVD and a copy sent to the Washington Holocaust Museum. One of the first large organisational archives received was the records of the NSW Jewish Board of Deputies, dating from 1938. Other large archives include the records of the Australian Zionist Federation, which, unfortunately, have many gaps. The ARGS grant was given for a further three years, and then the Mandelbaum Trust undertook to pay for the salary of the archivist for three days a week. This arrangement has continued to this day. In essence, the Archive is a collection of source materials relating to Jewish Life in Australia from the origins of the Australian Jewish community in 1788 with the arrival of the first fleet, up to the present day.

Most of the holdings date from the period of the Second World War. However, the research which is supported from this material is broad based. It covers demography, history, economics, international relations, law and politics, and includes any research field where there is a legitimate concern about minority reactions and roles in the community. Users include students, authors, museums and film makers, not only from Australia, but globally. Today the collection is comprehensive, and supports a wide spectrum of research. Most users locate material on the webpage catalogue. Professor Crown, who initiated the project continued in his role as project director till his death on November 2nd, 2010. Since John Shipp's retirement, Prof Suzanne Rutland (Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies Department) continues as the project director.