

Origins

Newsletter of the UNSW Archives

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UNSW
THE UNIVERSITY OF NEW SOUTH WALES

Archives and Records merge

In May 2006 the University Archives and Records Administration Section were merged into the new Records and Archives Unit. Paul Macpherson has been appointed manager of this new unit.

The merger will benefit records management for the university, resulting in better business practices and compliance with the State Records Act. The former Records Administration Section shared responsibilities with the University Archives for records management over many years, although each unit reported to different administrative areas. In recent years the University Archives has reported to the University Librarian within the Division of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Quality Improvement), while the Records Administration Section is situated in the Division of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic). Bringing these two units into one

administrative structure within the portfolio of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic) will enable a well-managed corporate records program for UNSW.

The University Archives will remain located in the University Library building and continue with its other activities — collecting records that reflect the history of UNSW and conducting the Oral History Program. ❖

ANDREW WELLS

The amalgamation of the University Archives with the Records Administration Section, outlined by Andrew Wells, is not only required by the business needs and statutory responsibilities of the university but also reflects modern recordkeeping philosophy, in which there is no clear-cut division between records and archives. All records capture, maintain, and deliver information

as evidence of human activity to satisfy business needs, social needs and cultural needs and are kept for as long as they are of value, whether that be for a day or for a millennium.

The new unit, and this new approach, will result in some changes to the way the University Archives are organised: more tasks are likely to be shared or divided in new ways between the Records Management Unit and the Archives and renewed emphasis in both units will be given to assisting the university to gain advantages from improved recordkeeping and to meet its obligations under the State Records Act 1998. The changes should, however, be seamless so far as users of the Archives are concerned and research access to the collections will continue as normal.

I look forward to my involvement with the Archives and its depositors, donors and users. ❖

PAUL MACPHERSON

RESEARCH PROJECT REPORTS

The Evolution of Studio One (D10)

For this edition of *Origins* we asked two students from the school of History, Luisa Lyons and Luke Burman, to write about projects they researched during 2005 in the University Archives. Luisa, who has been investigating the evolution of Studio One, is currently completing an Arts degree with a double major in English and History. She hopes that her future career path will combine performing, theatre, writing, and research. Luke has looked at the history of the University Regiment, in which he recently completed his training; this year (2006) he has been pursuing honours studies in history and his dissertation will look at the portrayal of military history in computer games.

My study of the history of Studio One resulted from my major project in the Researching and Writing History course in 2005. As an active member of the New South Wales University Theatrical Society (NUTS) and a regular audience member in Studio One, I was interested in discovering the history of this space.

Building D10 was built between March 1952 and September 1953 along with a number of other 'huts' on lower campus. There is little available information on what D10 was used for from the time of its completion until it was taken over by the school of Drama. According to maps of the UNSW campus dating from 1959–67 held by UNSW Archives, D10 was occupied by the school of Metallurgy and used as a laboratory.

In 1965 Dr Philip Parsons joined the department of Drama (which, in 1966, became the school of Drama, within the faculty of Arts) as senior

lecturer. In a break with conventional pedagogy, Parsons recognised the inherent need for a practical element in the teaching of drama to university students. However, he and his colleagues encountered a problem, one that would continue to haunt student theatre for many years — a lack of available theatre space. The Old Tote Theatre (now Fig Tree Theatre) and the Parade Theatre were for the sole use of, respectively, the Old Tote Theatre Company and the National Institute for Dramatic Art (NIDA); other spaces such as the Physics and Science Theatres were inappropriate for experimental productions. In 1970 the school of Drama was allocated four classrooms for tutorial space; these became known as Studios One (D10), Two, Three and Four. In the course of making the transition to a theatrical space D10 appears with different names in the extant sources: in programs from the early 1970s, for

instance, the building is referred to as the 'Drama Hut'. In my research I discovered that most people with a connection to the building from that era only identified with the building when given that name as a cue. It is therefore unclear exactly when the name 'Studio One' came to be associated with this building.

Throughout the 1970s the only doors to the building were the double doors on the western side. The front section of the building has always been performance space. The middle room, now used as a dressing-room, was once used as 'stagehand space'. The back room, now a storage area for flats and props, was used as a dressing-room for productions and as another classroom for the school of Drama.

Technically, Dr Parsons was not supposed to teach practical elements within the drama course, so in 1973 he established the Green Room Society (GRS) as 'a kind of student dramatic society simply for students from the Drama department'. Dr Parsons's wife and artistic collaborator, Katharine Brisbane, recalls that D10 was 'a good little space' because it was allowed to be 'messy' with 'paint on the floor'. The space, just a large, square room, was flexible and intimate — attributes it still possesses. The GRS was highly active during its time, staging several evening productions each year, as well as many popular 'Lunch Hour Productions' of shorter works. Its most successful production was Molière's *Le Misanthrope*; this amateur-professional production, staged in Studio One in 1973 under the direction of John Tasker, was well-attended and attracted media attention. The ABC ultimately bought the rights to *Le Misanthrope* and recorded the production for transmission. Despite research enquiries at a number of archives including the ABC and the National Film and Sound Archive, I was unable to locate a copy of this production. Over this period the GRS made a number of approaches to the university administration to seek its assistance in securing a licence for Studio One as a performance venue so that members could advertise its productions to the general public, but these approaches were all unsuccessful.

Crucial to the historical recognition of D10 as a theatre is the fact that most users of the space regarded it as a classroom rather than as a theatre. Towards the end of the 1970s the GRS discovered that it no longer had an accessible 'theatre space' because classroom shortages meant that the building was in constant use as a classroom. GRS activities were subsequently limited, then, to 'lunchtime performances two days a week', while evening performances were restricted because of issues over the use of sets.



Graffiti protest at Studio One as part of the continuing campaign for more theatre space on campus, April 1980. [CN50]

By 1978 the school of Drama was in desperate need of a properly equipped and more professional theatre and made submissions to the university authorities on this issue. Students from the Dramsoc (the Drama Society) also ran a concerted campaign, placing a number of articles in *Tharunka*, for example, and producing protest badges. Some individuals felt so passionately about the issue that they spread graffiti over Studio One and adjacent buildings in the area. In September 1978 the University Council formed a committee to investigate the availability and utilisation of theatre space on campus and it received various submissions highlighting the difficulties faced by the school of Drama. While no concrete decisions were made at that time, the process set in train events that would ultimately lead to the building of the Io Myers Theatre, which was opened in 1982.

Since that time Studio One has remained a theatre space and

has been used on a regular basis by NUTS (formed in 1986) and other amateur theatre groups for theatre performances, workshops and auditions. Little documentary evidence is available, however, about productions mounted in Studio One, reflecting a significant gap in the historical record.

At the time of writing the long-term future of Studio One is uncertain. In Campus 2020, UNSW's blueprint for future development of the Kensington campus over the next fifteen years, D10 is earmarked for demolition, or 'possible demolition', to make way for the 'creation of a new green space area' or 'a landscaped public area'. In the short-term, though, it will remain as a theatre space since Studio One was officially licensed by Randwick City Council, in June 2005, as a Place of Public Entertainment (PoPE). The theatre is now able to seat up to 70 patrons for a performance, although it must renew its licence after five years. Repairs and upgrades have recently been undertaken to ensure that the building complies with occupational health and safety regulations as well as guidelines stipulated under the PoPE licensing rules.

Studio One has been serving the UNSW campus and society as a cheap, accessible and intimate theatre for nearly thirty years. It has played an important role in adding to the campus experience of many students and staff who have graced its stage or attended its shows as audience members. From my perspective, to lose it would be a tragedy. ❖

LUISA LYONS

The University Archives welcomes donations from the university community to allow the Archives to pursue additional projects outside its normal funding. Donations made through the UNSW Foundation Ltd are tax-deductible. Donors should indicate their preference for the donation to be directed to the University Archives. The Foundation can be contacted on (02) 9385 3277 or at unswfoundation@unsw.edu.au