

# Creating an Electronic Research Archive - Turning a Good Idea into a Reality

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## ***Abstract***

*The development of digital archiving technology has opened up many possibilities for enriching the research environment, by making available on the WWW resources that were previously available to only those who could physically access known collections or documents.*

*This paper outlines the political, legal and technological hurdles that have to be overcome to make a virtual research archive a reality. In describing the development of the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library, which will be a physical and virtual research archive, the complex issues of gaining support for major projects, developing the business plan and identifying what will be included in the library and related projects, copyright issues, and identifying and developing strategic partnerships with owners of physical items and similar research archives will be explored. Descriptions of the major projects, for which the Library is seeking funds, are included.*



## **Introduction**

This paper describes the rationale, planning and action taken thus far to create the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library that will be a physical and virtual research archive within the greater Deakin University Library system. In some ways, speaking to an audience that is particularly interested in technology, this paper is a bit ahead of its time. This is not because the technology is so bleeding edge, but because the concept is still to be turned into reality. However, the story of turning a good idea into reality is worth telling as it may provide encouragement and a blueprint for people who have other great ideas.

The concept of a research facility that would inform and celebrate the contributions of Alfred Deakin<sup>1</sup>, after whom Deakin University was named, has been developing since 1994. It started out as the “Alfred Deakin Room” where books and memorabilia, either owned by Deakin or about him, would be displayed. This idea did not receive official support but was resurrected in 1997, not long after I became University Librarian.

The concept of a “Room” was not visionary or exciting and, therefore, it was difficult to attract approval and funding. There was support from within the Library to capitalize on the special collection that had already been formed and there was also strong support from academic staff in the Faculty of Arts. By 1997, technology had also advanced a long way making it possible to develop research resources that could be accessible via the Internet. Therefore, it was possible to envision a much more impressive research facility than had previously been considered. A business case was developed and presented to the Vice-Chancellor’s Advisory Committee.

## **The Good Idea: An Electronic Archive within a Prime Ministerial Library**

The proposal was for Deakin University to create the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library in the refurbished, historic Waterfront Campus in Geelong. It was argued that a prime ministerial library in his honour would be extremely appropriate. Apart from his significant role in the Federation Movement and his political contributions, Alfred Deakin was a prolific reader. He read extensively in English and French and across many disciplines. Through his meticulous notes, which are preserved in the National Library of Australia, a bibliography of many of the books that would have been in his personal library was being compiled by Library staff. For many years Deakin University Library had collected books by and about Alfred Deakin and his family and this collection forms part of the existing Deakin University Library Special Collection at the Waterfront Campus. Therefore, it already had created the backbone of the physical collection, including 75 books from Alfred Deakin’s private library, which have been donated by his

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Deakin is recognized as one of the architects of Australian Federation. He was three-times Prime Minister of Australia, leading the 2<sup>nd</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Governments. He was the 1<sup>st</sup> Attorney General, serving under Sir Edmund Barton, Australia’s first Prime Minister.

family, and portraits, sketches, photographs, cartoons, political commentaries, moving film footage and other memorabilia on Alfred Deakin.

However, the vision of the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library was not for just a physical collection based on the existing material. The business case called for a virtual, as well as physical, collection. By mounting text and images on the Internet, the resources of this unique archive would be available to a global audience. The Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library would digitise the Alfred Deakin Papers, which are held at the National Library of Australia, and other Deakin material in the public and private domain.

The University Executive embraced this vision and gave whole-hearted support for the creation of the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library. The goals were to:

- Celebrate Alfred Deakin and his contribution to Australia for the benefit of all Australians.
- Build a unique collection of published and archival materials and memorabilia, creating a visual record of his life.
- Provide innovative facilities and services for researchers, including electronic access to a digitised collection of archival material via the Internet.
- Further scholarship by publishing new insights on Deakin's contribution, particularly to the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia.
- Provide an educational experience to the community through exhibitions and activities of wide appeal.
- Reconstruct Alfred Deakin's Library.

It was recognised that the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library will provide links to other cultural institutions and collaborate with them so as to provide all Australians, and indeed the global community, with information on Australia's heritage. Some of these links would be to the National Library of Australia, the National Archives of Australia, National Sound and Film Archive, State Library of Victoria, Museum of Victoria, the Public Records Office (Victoria), John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library, Bob Hawke Prime Ministerial Centre, and new Victorian Immigration Museum.

## **Negotiating Internal and External Support**

As with any such venture, there are a number of stakeholders who must be convinced of the worth of the project and who must be satisfied with the way the project will be developed and conducted. The complexity of bringing to fruition such an ambitious project requires an understanding of the political environment in the broadest sense.

Internally, it was important to have this project owned by the greater University community, not just by the Library. This has been achieved by the creation of the Alfred Deakin Commemoration Committee, chaired by one of the University's Deputy Chancellors, with membership drawn from two of the Faculties (Arts and Business & Law), the Marketing Division and the Library. This Committee reports to the Vice-

Chancellor, with links to the University's Council through the Chair, and its Terms of Reference are much broader than just the creation of the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library.<sup>2</sup> The Committee is the vehicle for mainstreaming activities that celebrate Alfred Deakin's contributions, and formalizes the Library's role in establishing this research archive.

Other internal stakeholders are the Library staff, who must be committed to, and great ambassadors for, the project. Through the Library's Strategic Plan and regular communications to staff, the rationale for the project and updates on progress have been conveyed to ensure everyone knows about why, how and when. The University's Information Technology Services Division and Flexible Learning Office have also been consulted on a myriad of issues relating to standards for digital objects, software specifications and options, graphic design of images for the physical space, WWW pages, CD-ROM products and travelling exhibitions proposed. The involvement of these internal partners will ensure that the best solutions are developed for the wide range of products and services that are envisaged in the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library project.

Very important stakeholders are the descendants of Alfred Deakin, who have been regularly kept informed on proposals and developments, principally through the Vice-Chancellor's Office. The University appreciates the strong support it has received from the Deakin family. As the project progressively obtains funding for various aspects of the project, it is envisaged that family members will have a greater role.

External partners are also vital for the success of such a project. The Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library project has been greatly influenced by the professional work undertaken by the Curtin University Library in their creation of the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. Both libraries are keen to collaborate on advancing the understanding of the role of the Australian Prime Minister and for developing easily accessible electronic research archives.

The National Library of Australia and the Public Records Office (Victoria) hold the majority of the original and publicly available resources by or about Alfred Deakin. Therefore, to advance this project, it was vital to gain the support of both institutions to ensure that access to source material would be possible. I envisage a very close partnership, with benefits accruing to all involved, as this project develops.

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<sup>2</sup> The Terms of Reference of the Alfred Deakin Commemoration Committee are:

1. To make recommendations to the Vice-Chancellor on ways in which the University can commemorate the life and work of Alfred Deakin.
2. To oversee the development of the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library.
3. To generate ideas for submissions for funding to assist with the establishment of this Library and the ongoing commemoration of Alfred Deakin's contribution to the Federation of Australia and the political and social development of the nation.
4. To help the University to establish partnerships that will help commemorate Alfred Deakin.
5. To ensure that all the projects developed are mainstreamed by December 2001.

## **The Digital Archive Project**

The business case recognized that a great deal of funding for this venture would have to be found from non-University sources. The timing of the proposal to create the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library was opportune as both Commonwealth and Victorian Government funds were available for projects to celebrate the Centenary of Federation. To date, three grant applications have been written, with another one currently being developed.

The major grant application was to the Australian Research Council (ARC) / Department of Education, Training and of Youth Affairs Research Infrastructure Equipment and Facilities Scheme for the creation of a digital research archive. This collaborative grant application was made by the University of New South Wales, Curtin University of Technology, with Deakin University as the lead institution.

The grant application outlines the rationale for the digital archives. “The project will make a major contribution to the national infrastructure supporting research in Australian political and social history by making available to the research community, via the Internet, document archives on three former Prime Ministers (Deakin, Curtin and Keating). This will dramatically improve access to resources that were previously available to only the few researchers who were physically able to visit the dispersed archives of these prominent Australian Prime Ministers. In addition, access will be greatly enhanced to the existing print collections of historical materials as the descriptive cataloguing undertaken for the digital archives, which will provide links back to the original documents, will be much more detailed than existing finding aids.

“The project will identify, digitise and describe material in the public and private domain and create a system of distributed digital archives linked to an overarching WWW site for Australian Prime Ministers. Information resources in the private domain, through this project, will be made available to all researchers, thus greatly facilitating the research process. The project will enhance the indexing and description of the material contained in existing, physical prime ministerial collections in such places as the National Library of Australia and the National Archives of Australia. Researchers will be able to identify primary resources, down to the page level in some instances, thus greatly enhancing access to the information contained in these archives.

“The three Prime Ministers in this proposal span the period since Federation to the present day and, as such, the Australian Prime Ministers web site will contain resources that will provide a valuable insight into the creation and development of the Office of the Prime Minister. The electronic archives will be a unique resource for researchers of Australia's political and social history and political processes and will raise public interest in the Australian republican debate and the Centenary of Federation.”

This project plans to build on the highly successful research and development carried out over the last three years by the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library in the creation and

maintenance of digital archives. The model for digital archives implemented at Curtin is at the leading edge of both technology for storage and retrieval of digital objects, and in the complex environment of archives management. This project would further develop the model, by extending the digital archive from an Intranet environment to the Internet, and by establishing a system of distributed servers and archives linked via the WWW. The electronic archives of these Australian Prime Ministers, accessible from the overarching www site, will create an invaluable collection for scholarly research that will be available 24 hours per day/seven days per week.

The ARC will not announce the successful projects, to be funded in 2000, until November 1999. However, Deakin University Library will be able to start creating the Alfred Deakin component of the digital archive with funds allocated to the grant application from the University's Research Budget in 2000 regardless of whether the application receives ARC financial support.

Unfortunately, a decision on the software to be used cannot be finalised until the extent of funding is known. The intention would be to use the Excalibur RetrievalWare archival management software that is used by the John Curtin Prime Ministerial Library. However, other options are being explored. Information from digitising projects undertaken by the State Library of New South Wales (Joseph Banks' Papers), National Library of Australia's Pandora Project, the American Memory project of the Library of Congress (an historical collection for the National Digital Library), projects undertaken by various U.S. presidential libraries, and elsewhere will be considered before a final decision is made.

Fortunately, there is now a wealth of technical advice available for those planning to undertake a major digitising project. I refer readers to "Everything you wanted to know about digital imaging but were afraid to ask", "Technical Recommendations for Digital Imaging Projects", "Digital formats for content reproductions" and "Digital Image Collections: Issues and Practice".

One aspect of the Alfred Deakin digital archive that is worth noting is that it will be accessible from the Library's Innopac catalogue, as well as from direct WWW connection. Our intention is to ensure that links are made from the traditional finding tool, the catalogue, to the WWW resources.

### **Copyright Considerations**

The Library has gained legal advice pertaining to copyright issues related to the digital archiving project. Alfred Deakin died on 7 October 1911. The various State Copyright Acts, the *Copyright Act 1905* and the *Copyright Act 1911* apply to his published works, that is anything written by Alfred Deakin and made available to the public during his life or after his death.

Anything written by Alfred Deakin and published during his life would be in the public domain on or before 1 January 1970. Therefore, copyright no longer exists in these

materials. Unless access conditions apply to any such Deakin material, no permissions are required to reproduce the material in a digital format.

Material published after his death and before 1 May 1968 can be reproduced pursuant to clause 219 of the *Copyright Act*. The Library will have to publish a notice of intention to publish and pay the copyright owner a royalty based on the retail price of the new edition (in this case – nothing).

Materials first published on or after 1 May 1968 will become part of the public domain 50 years after the end of the year of first publication. Therefore, the Library will need to obtain permission to copy this category of material, should any such material exist.

Copyright is perpetual on unpublished documents, and although libraries have special exemptions under the *Copyright Act* to make copies under some circumstances, it is considered that these sections do not apply to this project. Therefore, the Library will be seeking permission from Deakin's family and others, to reproduce this type of material into a digital format.

## **The Alfred Deakin Travelling Exhibition**

Another significant project, part of the suite of projects that surround the creation of the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library, is being funded by the National Council for the Centenary of Federation. Funds from the History and Education Program have been granted to create a travelling exhibition, interactive CD-ROM and exhibition WWW site celebrating Alfred Deakin's contribution to the Federation of Australia.

The travelling exhibition and CD-ROM will include images from Deakin's personal and political life and will be mounted on four modules of three panel frames. The four modules will cover different aspects of Deakin's life and will be linked by common graphic design techniques that will provide a Federation theme throughout the exhibition. The same graphic design will be used to create the theme and ambience of the physical Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library at the Geelong Waterfront Campus.

The travelling exhibition will be available for loan to public libraries and schools, and for display in other community settings. The CD-ROM, which will be developed using Macromedia software and which will accompany the travelling exhibition, will provide additional information not possible in a static display. The CD-ROM will also be available to schools and public libraries throughout Australia.

A virtual, WWW version of the travelling exhibition will be accessible from any Internet workstation. This will bring Alfred Deakin's contribution to a global audience.

## **The Alfred Deakin Facsimile Series**

Funds are being sought from the Victorian Federation Grants Scheme to commence *The Alfred Deakin Facsimile Series*. While this is a very low technology project, publishing a



limited number of copies of Alfred Deakin's first publication, *Quentin Massys: A Drama*, it is consistent with the Library's goal to make accessible information that will enhance the understanding of Alfred Deakin, the man and politician. The intention is to fund the 2nd publication in the series from the sale of copies of the first volume, and to continue the publishing effort in a similar way until all Deakin's published items are easily accessible in the public domain.

## **The Physical Entity – the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library**

The Library, in conjunction with the University's Building & Grounds Division, are in the process of designing the physical entity to be known as the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library and Special Collection. The intention is to relocate the Library's existing Special Collection, including the material on or by Deakin already held, into new accommodation with high visibility and direct street access. The Geelong Waterfront Campus of Deakin University is strategically placed within a cultural and tourist precinct, and close to the central business district and central railway and bus stations. The proposed Library should be a valuable addition to this precinct.

This new library, which will be part of the University Library network, will comprise a high technology reference and reading room, with closed access collections held in environmentally controlled special accommodation. The University has allocated \$500,000 for the creation of this Library and additional funds will be sought from the Victorian Government.

It is hoped that once this physical space is available, the Library will be able to attract additional donations of material on or about Alfred Deakin. It will be a challenging building project to convey the ambience of the early 1900s with the modern technology required to exploit a digital research archive and other Internet resources. However, I am sure that we will succeed.

## **Conclusion**

My preliminary notes for the content of this paper contain the following points:

1. Have somebody important as the reason for the project.
2. Have the germs of the collection already.
3. Identify lots of other information that could be made available.
4. Have colleagues who stimulate interest and enthusiasm.
5. Find models that inform the development of the project.
6. Gain high level support.
7. Create a business plan.
8. Go for it!
9. Keep advertising – make it happen.

What I have described is a project "in progress". I am still trying to turn a good idea into reality. However, success breeds success. The highest level of support from within the

University has been given. Support from the Deakin family is very encouraging. The first major grant application has been successful and others are being considered. The creation of the physical space is well into the planning phase. The creation of the digital archive should commence in 2000 regardless of whether the ARC grant is successful.

I am confident that the Alfred Deakin Prime Ministerial Library, with its electronic research archive, will become a reality.

## References

“Everything you wanted to know about digital imaging but were afraid to ask” by Roy Tennant, *Library Journal*, December 1998, pp.33-34.

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“Digital formats for content reproductions” by Carl Fleischhauer, Technical Coordinator, National Digital Library Program, Library of Congress, 13/7/1998 (<http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/formats.html>)

“Digital Image Collections: Issues and Practice” by Michael Ester, (<http://www.clir.org/pubs/abstract/pub67.html>)

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## **Sue McKnight**

Sue McKnight has been University Librarian at Deakin University since 1996. In mid-1999, she was seconded to the Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor as Senior Associate. Sue holds professional library qualifications, a Bachelor of Business and a Masters degree in Public Administration.

She has been very active in professional associations, holding senior office in the Australian Library and Information Association, the Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services and the Australian Institute of Management.

Prior to working at Deakin University, Sue held positions at The University of Queensland Libraries, the Queensland Electricity Commission, the Queensland Parliamentary Library and in public libraries in Brisbane and Toowoomba. She has also undertaken private consulting. Sue publishes on a wide range of professional topics including library services for remote users, technological advances, management and professional development.