

The Baptist Church Archives Queensland 2012-2020

By David Parker

The history of the Baptist Church Archives Qld from its inception up to 2012 was published in *The QB Forum* No 83, December 2012, and as a separate folder available at <http://www.dparker.net.au/archist.pdf> and on request in paper form. Here we present the continuation of the story up until a period of significant changes in 2020, with some overlap for the sake of continuity. This account includes not only the various physical developments but also seeks to state the various factors involved in the work of the Archives and an explanation for the principles adopted for its operation. An update to the history of The Baptist Historical Society of Qld will be published later in the year.

Introduction

With the Archives at the 30-year mark in 2012, the activities and services were well set up to provide, manage and make available the records of the Baptist denomination in Queensland over the following years.

The Archives at work

Facilities

The physical premises at the QB Centre 53 Prospect Road Gaythorne, first established in 2005 when the Baptist Union moved to this site, were housed in the Building 4, the largest on the property. It was well located on the ground floor at the end of a corridor off the main entrance to the building and near the lift providing access to the main Baptist Union offices in the adjacent building. It was an L-shaped room with a floor space of 59 sq m with adequate space for the 15 bay compactus (200 metres of shelf space) in which the general files and other documents were housed. There were also several filing, stationery and display cabinets for secure storage of some of the key documents, along with plenty of space for desks and work areas. The display cases were expanded in 2013 with the installation of two additional units given in memory of long-time Archives supporter, Rev M. C. Williams, MA, BD, one used for a small library of reference books and the other for various physical artefacts.

The activities of the Archives were serviced by a computer and copier/printer connected to the main Baptist Union network and with internet access. The room was airconditioned and dehumidified continuously, keeping it at the optimum level of 20C and 50% RH, although it had taken some effort to get to this situation.

There was space for considerable growth in holdings, but another adjacent room which was used for storage of other Baptist Union documents was always considered as an obvious area for expansion of the Archives if it ever became available. That possibility presented itself in 2016 when there was a wholesale re-configuration of Baptist Union offices due to the departure of a major tenant from the QB Centre. This business had occupied a considerable amount of space (including one whole building) and to find a replacement which could take over its space without any significant change was an unlikely prospect. So the alternative became a necessity – changing the Baptist Union offices around so that the vacant spaces could be rented more easily. The Archives was taken into this scenario, and at first was offered space in another building. This was not an attractive proposition and so the offer was declined.

Further planning led to the Archives being left at its existing location, but it was offered the adjacent space which was not needed any longer for its original purpose. The offer was very quickly accepted. It was an area of 44 sq metres and consisted of one small room (which became a second computer room) and a larger space ideal for storage, work, and meetings. A connecting door was cut into the wall dividing it from original Archives area making the new arrangement extremely convenient. A considerable amount of furniture from

the departing tenant also became available to the Archives, including large tables, benches, filing cabinets, stationery cabinets, chairs and a white board, all of which were ideal in fitting out the new Annex and improving the existing arrangements. The main drawback to the new space was that it was not climate controlled. It shared an air-con system with a meeting room next door which was mainly controlled from that other room. In 2017, BHQ bought a new improved dehumidifier for the main Archives area and the old one was moved to the Annex. This helped a little, but it was clear that the Annex could not be used for storage of critical material. However, with its large desk area it was a great benefit as a work and meeting room, and for general storage.

Team

The Archives was served by a dedicated team consisting of Miss Anne Cameron and Mr R W (Bill) Hughes, who had been working effectively over the previous few years. They had developed their own particular projects and specialities, while Dr David Parker managed the overall operation of the Archives including acquisitions, responding to queries and relationships with the churches and the Baptist Union.

Anne Cameron

With many years' experience in a senior position in the Baptist Union of NSW office before her retirement, Anne Cameron was an expert at dealing with documents and denominational processes. One of her regular tasks at the Archives was preparing the annual batch of Baptist Union minutes (Board, Administrative Services Group, Ministerial Services, and QB magazine etc) for binding. This involved working through the papers generated during the particular year to remove staples, putting them in the correct order and labelling. Another of her most useful projects was the development of series of Finding Aids which required detailed checking of the holdings of particular groups (such as the Theological College or Mission to Queensland) and preparing lists showing what documents were held, along with the dates and locations. These Aids were invaluable whenever research into these groups was required. A similar project involved listings of the documents held in the Archives relating to local churches.

Another useful project was to continuously update the Historical Record. This was a document commenced several years earlier when the historical details about the Baptist Union and its appointees was no longer published in the Baptist Union Yearbook. The absence of this material diminished the value of that publication and it soon became merely a directory of contact details of churches, pastors and Baptist Union offices, rather than the Yearbook that it had been since it began publication in 1907. A companion listing also managed by Anne was the Churches' Record showing the dates of formation/closure, locations, names and other useful information about churches. This information too had been dropped from the Yearbook, making the compilation of a separate document a virtual necessity. It was a complex task due to the rapid formation and closure, mergers, relocations, and changes of names of churches. These were increasingly common occurrences making the compilation of the list difficult, a problem exacerbated by the difficulty of obtaining correct and timely data. Statistical data relating to the churches which had also been previously published in the Yearbook was another regular acquisition of the Archives and that was processed in a major spreadsheet by David Parker.

RW (Bill) Hughes

Bill Hughes, as "Principal Researcher" devoted his efforts in a number of areas, especially working on



particular historical projects. Some of these had developed from his earlier participation in the history of Baptist work in Central Queensland which was published at the time of the sesquicentenary of the Rockhampton Baptist Church in 2012. Some of these histories were produced a small stand-alone books. A major project was a biography of Rev William Moore, a

pioneer of Baptist work in Brisbane who arrived in the colony in 1855, a short time before the establishment of the first church. He was a layman at the time, following his trade of market-gardening, but soon involved himself in a number of church developments becoming in time a recognized pastor. The biography, “The Gardener: Pastor William Moore 1826-1906” was published by the author in 2015 as an e-book and as an attractive printed volume. An interesting development of this story in 2019 was the donation by the family of a valuable silver platter which had been a farewell gift to Moore from the Petrie Terrace church (see photo). There was also a development of Bill’s earlier research on the little-known Fortescue Street Baptist churches when in 2017 a parchment containing its constitution and members list of the Fortescue Street church was discovered in the Baptist Union office. A photograph showing the earlier Edward Street church was also published in 2015. Other publications, under assignment, were a history of the City Tabernacle’s organ and choir and its hostel, Willara House.

One of Bill’s most important projects was the digitisation of the Archives photographic collection, a long project taking place over many years. With valuable guidance from a seminar on the topic of photo digitisation arranged by a local unit of the ASA in March 2015, policies were developed for the project and work started in that same year. It was decided to produce a high quality file for each photograph along with a comprehensive index entry containing a full description of the size, condition, subject, origins and other relevant information. The master photographs and index would be filed on the Archives’ computer system. The idea was that once the scanning was completed, there would not normally be any reason to touch the physical photographs again, so they were stored away securely. Opportunity was also taken to cull the collection so that only the important and relevant items were retained.

Equipment

Equipment for on-going Archives’ activities was gradually improved and extended. For example, the photograph digitisation program was made possible through the purchase in 2014 of a high quality A3 size book scanner with associated software, funded by BHSQ. A second computer was installed in the Archives in 2015 so there was now a dedicated digitisation work-station enabling the project to progress steadily.

One of the further benefits of the departure of the major QB Centre tenant (which resulted in the addition of the Annex to the Archives) was the acquisition in 2016 of one of their photo/copier machines which was no longer needed by that business. It replaced an aging machine which had been originally discarded by another Baptist Union office and in use at the Archives for 5 years. The “new” unit only needed minimal maintenance for it to be ready. One advantage gained by this machine was the addition of colour copying and printing. Although old, the machine lasted a few years until it was replaced in early 2019 by yet another refurbished unit.

Another addition (2016) was a good quality camera and copy stand (the latter provided by BHQ) with lighting for use in scanning large size documents not able to be handled on the existing equipment. However, glare in the images from the lighting was difficult to eliminate so a better solution was needed. This was achieved when the attention of the Archives was drawn to another product in 2018. Known as the CZUR



Smart Book Scanner ET16 Plus, this elegantly designed digital machine with clever software came as a self-contained unit consisting of base board, scanner and stand with effective built-in lighting and all the necessary software. It produced excellent results with a simple, flexible operating system, although the size of the objects to be scanned was still somewhat limited. Once again, BHQ provided the funding to acquire one of these which was soon producing good results.

Main operations

The main operations of the Archives had by now become quite extensive and complex. A comprehensive and detailed Archives Manual was developed (and regularly updated) to describe its activities and policies.

The top priority was material from the Baptist Union offices. This was now reduced in extent compared with earlier days when there were numerous denominational departments and committees in operation, all generating their own records. It was now mainly concentrated on the records of the two top bodies, the Board and the Administrative Services Group. Ministerial Services also produced a volume of material. Larger units like Malyon College, QCCC and Carinity, which tended to create large volumes of records and had sizeable numbers of staff and their own separate office premises, were expected to maintain their own records, although key developments in their activities were usually reflected in the top-level records. There were also papers from annual assembly (known as the QB Convention) and the regular publications, the QB Directory, the bi-monthly *Queensland Baptist* magazine and the weekly news-sheets, Network News and GSUD.

An audit of record creation and archiving practices across the denomination carried out by the Archivist in 2012 revealed a generally satisfactory situation, but pointed to many areas where improvement was needed. In subsequent years, efforts were made to work towards rectifying issues, especially critical in some cases, and setting up protocols for ongoing management of records.

By now, records were all born-digital although in key instances, such as Board, and ASG, printed copies were also made for the record. Gradually a system was developed by the Archives in conjunction with the various officers, to transfer both paper and digital records to the Archives for management. In addition, a proactive approach was taken which endeavoured to discover and obtain digital files from earlier periods, as well as other miscellaneous records, such as publications, special committee reports and promotional material. The earliest electronic Baptist Union minutes dated to 1991, while other publications were generally from about 2000.

Processing of paper records was easily carried out using standard practices, but it was also clear that digitisation of selected items in this material would be a distinct advantage. Already, the Archives had begun digitising some of its records. A start had been made with the *Queensland Baptist* magazine which began publication in 1881. An arrangement was made with the Adelaide-based firm, Archive Digital Books Australia, which eventually saw all of the issues up to 1991 digitised (and searchable) which proved to be significant boon to research. There followed also digitisation of the Annual Yearbooks (from 1907) and after 1877, both the Yearbook (later Directory) and Annual Reports. Later the gaps between these projects and born-digital records were filled, which, with the regular accession of newly issued items, gave a complete and on-going coverage. This left the matter of scanning existing historic paper records.

A general policy was adopted of gradually digitising key paper records, especially the top-level minutes of Executive, Council and Assembly (in their various names) dating from 1877. It was the hope that other Baptist Union records especially those relating to churches and pastors and key older committees such as Home Missions and the College, could be covered as well. There was no budget for this plan, so it was a matter of taking whatever opportunities presented themselves to carry out the task.

The rapid accession of many digital records created the necessity of devising a system for managing them. From mid-2012 onwards, considerable effort was expended in searching out suitable electronic record management and archiving systems. Many of these were investigated but the cost factor and the skill level for operation of them were prohibitive. In late 2015 a decision was made to install Redmap5 Cloud. Although this system was not designed primarily for archival purposes, it was economical and could be adapted to suit the purpose. It allowed for documents to be ingested into the system as they were created, saving the need for a separate digitisation process, and allowing the Archives direct access, with various levels of access to preserve integrity. Any newly digitised documents could also be easily introduced into the system.

Upon installation, it was configured to cover most of the departments of the Baptist Union with the idea that it would be gradually introduced across the whole organisation over a period of time. However, only the Archives took advantage of this system and so its potential was never realised, and nor was the opportunity taken to digitise and ingest into the system the existing historic paper records of the Baptist Union office.

To keep track of the many other digital records held elsewhere on the Archives server, a simple database index was devised while awaiting the development of a more comprehensive system and the full implementation of Redmap5 Cloud.

Meanwhile the Archives was making a start on digitising earlier records of Assembly and Executive. These were mostly in hand-writing (at least the earliest batches) so they could not be made searchable. However, to have digital copies would at least serve the purpose of providing a back-up version of the otherwise sole paper copies and also to have PDF copies would make usage of these documents easier – they could be used on any computer rather than requiring a researcher to spend long hours working through the paper originals at the Archives.

In earlier years, about the first 50 years of Baptist Union records had been microfilmed. These were now digitised by a Melbourne-based commercial firm at Baptist Union expense in 2012. Then using the CZUR scanner, paper records from the 1920s began to be scanned, the later ones of which were typescript allowing them to be searchable.

So by about the end of 2019, first 60 years of Baptist Union records and the last 30 years had been digitised (or were available as born-digital files), indexed, and available for research. In addition, all of the Yearbooks, Assembly Reports and QB magazines were available in digital form. To supplement the gaps in the *Queensland Baptist* magazine, the *Australian Baptist* (1913-1991) and the *National Baptist* (1988-2002) were also available. Careful arrangements were made for adequate back-up copies of these files.

As well as this, it was the policy to search out digital versions of any reports and publications which came to the notice of the Archives. This resulted in the acquisition of many items, some of them only available in digital form and scavenged from sometimes out of date computers and servers. All of this added valuable data to the growing Digital Archive. Furthermore, during 2020, an indication was received that further Baptist Union paper and freshly digitised files would become available.

The ultimate aim was to have all the key records available in digital form to provide security in case of any kind of damage to the paper records, for ease of searching records and for convenience in sharing them. Protocols for the management, handling and access of these documents (as well as the traditional paper records) were under continual review with the intention of developing suitable and manageable systems.

Many of the records were not suitable for publication on any kind of web platform, as was the case with many other digital repositories. It was clear that consideration would need to be given in due course to making public documents such as the *Queensland Baptist* magazine available on-line. In the meantime, researchers were advised that some of these materials were already available commercially.

A major consideration was developing relations with Baptist Union and church personnel so that the system worked smoothly and effectively in capturing all relevant documents and transferring them in a timely fashion to the Archives. There were few local church records to be considered but it was a clear policy that this area would need to be explored more intentionally in the future due to the rapid transition of churches to digital records and, in many cases, the consequent neglect of their historic paper documents.

Archives - basis and promotion

Since the commencement of the Archives in the 1980s, it had operated on a consensus basis, with the common understanding that any organisation such as the BUQ and its member churches would retain and manage its records in an orderly fashion. Up until 1980, it was commonly accepted as an unwritten rule that the BUQ General Secretary would have overall responsibility for the records. When the Archives was commenced as a separate entity, the top-level denominational committee (Council, and then Executive

Committee and later the Board) named the Archives Officer as part of its set of annual appointments on the (assumed) recommendation of the General Secretary.

By 2012 it was clear that this ought to be formalised and at the suggestion of the Archivist, a new By-Law (Number 22 – changed to Number 23 in 2020) was introduced clarifying the role of the Archives as part of the Baptist Union and also making it clear that records of defunct churches should also be housed in the Archives. It was stated that active local churches were to be responsible for their own records although the BUQ Archives could also accept them for safe storage. Over the years a number of mainly older churches did lodge their early records (say, their first 100 years) with the Archives.

From time to time, explanatory notices were issued through the denominational mailing system to inform churches of these arrangements. Also there were ad hoc efforts to inform denominational staff as well. One such occasion was at the relocation of the BUQ offices to Gaythorne when some of the departments, in preparing for the move, decided to transfer records, some newly discovered, to the Archives. Another similar occasion was the re-organisation of the office spaces in 2016. In each case, a few interesting and valuable



documents were unearthed and transferred to the Archives.

Occasional articles had been published in the *Queensland Baptist* magazine over the years, covering both Archives and Historical Society activities. In time this grew into a regular page (with photographs) prepared for each issue by the Archives. Over following years a large range of topics was covered and many readers of the magazine reported that the Archives page was the first item they read! Topics covered current research

projects such as a history of churches on the Darling Downs and the Baptist Union, Archives activities such as displays, photograph scanning and new services, or items from the collection.

Another avenue for making the Archives activity known to the denomination was a display at the annual assembly, usually shared with the BHSQ, and a place in the program when there was a new initiative such as a book launch. These displays were quite effective at first, and sometimes generated considerable interest and beneficial personal contacts. However as the Assembly program became shortened and the venue reduced in size, there was increasingly less space and opportunity available for an effective display. So the displays were discontinued from 2015. Alternate means to promote the work of the Archives were sought, but with only very limited success.

One particularly effective venture took place in May 2014 to mark the 30th anniversary of the formation of the BHSQ. It was an open day at the Archives, held on a Saturday. The program consisted of a seminar with a number of senior Baptist personnel sharing historical reflections, and an inspection of the specially mounted displays at the Archives. Later, the BUQ Marketing department produced a banner for use on such occasions as well as logo and poster (photo).

Another open day was held in 2018 in association with an outside body which was conducting a 2-day seminar at the QB Centre. There was considerable interest from patrons of that event but an invitation for Baptist Union staff and churches to Archives met with nil response.

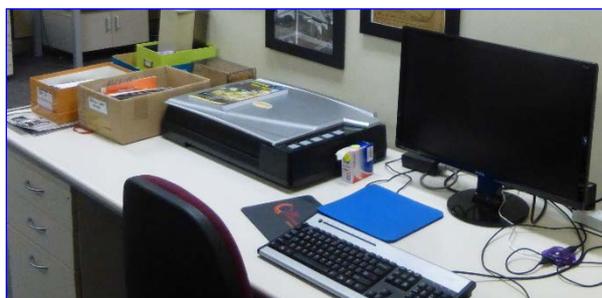
The BUQ website included a page devoted to the Archives, featuring a basic outline of services and operations, with links to the BHSQ website where a major section presented more detailed information. Of particular interest was a page containing a number of Guide Sheets on Archives operations which had been prepared by Archives' staff. Some related to the Baptist Archives while others were focused on local church archives and in particular the preparation of church histories. This section was a convenient source to which enquirers seeking advice could be pointed.

Relations with churches

While the Archives was primarily the repository for the records of the Baptist Union and it operated within the Baptist Union administration, it contained many records from elsewhere. Some of the most important of those were the records of churches, including those of defunct churches and mainly earlier records of older functioning churches. Frequent requests were received from churches seeking advice on how to handle their current and historical records, especially as digital records became more common. In contrast with some other state Baptist Archives, it was not the policy of the Archives to encourage the transfer of church records for reasons of polity and also because the Archives was only a volunteer operation with limited capacity. However, as time progressed, it was becoming more evident that local churches were not able to handle their traditional paper records well, and were struggling to develop a decent system for the now almost ubiquitous digital records. Many queries were received from churches seeking advice on handling paper and digital records, but few ever took matters any further with the Archives. There was clearly a need for serious development in this area to prevent the wholesale loss of records. The general transition to digital records meant that the physical space in the Archives had not been used as much as anticipated, leaving plenty of room for local church records. The Redmap5 system also provided unlimited space for digital records which were becoming more common at the local church level, including both born digital and digitised paper records.

Queries and services

As well as making satisfactory arrangements for the collection and management of Baptist denominational and local church records, the Archives was also busy with sharing the information it contained. There was a regular stream of queries from Baptist Union officials, usually focusing on details of past administrative decisions, policy and staffing matters, along with financial and property matters. Enquiries seeking personal information about prominent Baptists for a tribute at their funeral were matters of urgency.



One important area which came to focus from 2017 was the process and results of previous denominational reviews, which were needed for the latest major review taking place at the time. Sometimes queries came with legal implications, such as when, in 2019, the Baptist Union joined the federal government's National Redress Scheme for victims of institutional sexual abuse. This led to an increase of enquiries, but while the numbers were small, the situation highlighted the inadequacies of much local church record keeping. Privacy of personal details was also a consideration in some enquiries, as was the level of access permitted to official records. A few students also made use of the Archives for academic projects.

Local churches also turned to the Archives for information, especially when a significant anniversary was being held. While extensive collections of records did not exist for most churches, there was usually quite a lot to be found in the denominational records, especially in the case of former Home Mission churches. These queries could involve the Archives staff in a lot of extra work. Families also sought help, but the amount of information available was limited. Exceptions occurred in the cases of people who had been prominent in Baptist Union circles and had attracted many reports during their lifetimes. Sometimes people from other denominations sought baptismal information not realising that infant baptism was not practiced, and in any case, records of "believer's" baptisms were practically non-existent. One such query was surprisingly answered when it was discovered that the long since defunct church in question had kept a weekly service register which covered the right dates and did include a specific reference to the infant dedication of the child – this is the only such register in the Archives, a rarity among Baptists, but of course common practice in other denominations.

Occasionally queries were received from the general public. One person wanted details about Baptist church buildings for a proposed coffee-table book (which never eventuated). Perhaps the strangest of all was a query from a film maker wanting photographs of the distinctive dress of Baptists in the 1930s! The Archives was always pleased that people sought information from its collection of documents, but the volunteer day-a-week staffing arrangements created problems when the queries turned out to be complex, detailed and extensive.

Relations with other states and other Archives

Compared with earlier times when there was an active Church Archivists' Society operating in Queensland, there were by now very few contacts with local denominational archives. One brief exception occurred in 2013 when the Churches of Christ sought advice when setting up their new facility nearby. .

But it was a different situation with interstate Baptist Archives, Historical Societies and researchers. Advice on archiving, information about queries and results of research were often shared on an ad hoc personal basis, indicating the value of these relationships. This led to an important new development in 2013. For years, staff of various state Baptist Unions had been meeting regularly under the banner of the Baptist Union of Australia (later Australian Baptist Ministries ABM) with considerable benefit to the work of evangelism, church planting, youth, theological education, and denominational administration. Dr David Parker raised with the Baptist Union of Queensland the possibility of the Archivists meeting in the same manner. The idea was endorsed by ABM and the first meeting was held on 19-20 November 2013 at Collins Street Baptist Church, Melbourne with 6 attending from all states except NT.

The gathering was called the "National Australian Baptist Archivists' Conference" (NABAC). ABM provided funds to cover over-night accommodation and hire of the meeting venue while other expenses were covered by the states. There was immediate appreciation of the value of meeting face to face which enabled sharing information about Archives' operations, discussion of common problems, working out strategies for future development and gaining practical insights through excursions to local Archives and lectures from experts in the field. The annual meetings also enhanced the value and frequency of informal contacts through the year.

Variations in archival standards, practice and procedures across the country and at Union and local church levels were immediately apparent, especially in the digital area. Therefore the first effort of the new meeting was to draw up a set of Protocols which set out common objectives and standards applicable to all levels of Australian Baptist life. These were presented to state administrators and adopted in 2014. Later, at the suggestion of ABM a promotional leaflet was produced for wide distribution across the country. Efforts to



have the *Australian Baptist* newspaper digitised which had begun earlier were also quickly advanced and the project was soon under way. More than enough funds for this project had been raised from the various states, so further national Baptist publications were added to the project, resulting in a complete coverage. With Dr David Parker as convener, NABAC continued to meet in Melbourne in November each year with evident benefits registered in several states. In 2017 Mr Bill Hughes took over as the Queensland representative and the Archivist of Western Australia became Convener.

Big changes - 2019-2020

During 2019 and into 2020, after several years of steady development and productive activity, several developments occurred which seriously disturbed the work of the Archives, threatening the momentum that had built up over nearly 40 years of operation.

IT troubles

First of all, mid-2019 there were sudden and unwelcome changes to IT arrangements when the Baptist Union switched from a local server-based system to the Microsoft Cloud. The Archives was not notified in advance of this change and so without any forewarning or training, found the new arrangement surprising and confusing. It was soon apparent that, despite the supposed advantages of the new system, it was not at all suitable for the common procedures and requirements of the Archives. The existing main computer with very small storage was unable to cope and soon became inoperable, emphasising calls for its upgrade or replacement which had first been made a couple of years earlier. A further coincidental problem arose with the new copier/printer. This matter proved in the end to be very simple to solve, but it took several months to identify.

Then it was noticed that humidity and temperature readings in main Archives room were suddenly unstable, after years of successful management. Review of the conditions and advice from experts did little to solve this issue which threatened the safety of the paper records, the earliest of which went back more than 160 years.

Staffing

Also during 2019, Bill Hughes advised that after 12 years of service he would not be continuing after the end of the year in his volunteer role on a regular basis, although he hoped to be available for work on specific research projects. By now he had digitised the entire photographic collection amounting to about 1750 items,



and updated to the Bio-Database to include about 1100 entries. He also advised that he would not be available for re-election to the position of secretary of Baptist Heritage Qld, which he had occupied for 5 years.

Dr David Parker also advised that he would be stepping down from the role of Archivist, after nearly 40 years in the post. He said that he would be available to help orient his replacement, and continue to assist on an ad hoc basis. Anne Cameron, completing 10 years, indicated that she was happy to continue on in her role, circumstances permitting.

These impending staffing changes were notified to the Baptist Union on 9 October 2019, with a recommendation that the operations of the Archives now indicated that the replacement Archivist should be a part-time paid position of about 2 days a week, with ability to respond to important matters outside those hours. (Two days was approximately the amount of time given by the volunteers.) This advice was received by the Director of QB Services and the Director of Administration who appeared to be sympathetic to the recommendations as presented. Filling of the position of Archivist was a Board responsibility and it was anticipated that action could easily be taken in time for new arrangements to be in place at the beginning of the following year.

However, there was no action before the usual Christmas closure of the Archives, leaving the existing staff uncertain about arrangements for the new year. There was no further action over the holiday period, despite queries to the Board and administration, which meant that David Parker and Anne Cameron were left in a difficult situation regarding reopening. Eventually they decided to open a week later than usual and to provide restricted services until the Board acted to fill the position of Archivist. By now, it was clear that the recommendation about a part-time paid position had been rejected, and that another volunteer was being sought.

The Board identified Dr Pam Condie, OAM, as a possible candidate. She had recently completed Doctor Ministry studies through Maleny Theological College and had made extensive use of the Archives for her

research, a co-supervisor of which was Dr David Parker. Dr Condie was interested but definitely not available to take up any such position for several months. Because of the confusion and uncertainty surrounding the position, and for fear that the rhythm of the Archives' services and operations built up over many years would be lost, Dr Parker retracted his resignation until an appointment of a replacement had been made. Finally, it was decided that Dr Condie would accept the position and take up duties from 1 October 2020 and that Dr Parker would continue in the position until that time. However, not even that arrangement stood.

Dr Condie had recently completed 8 years as Board member of the Baptist Union, and was a long-time leader in her various local churches – especially in Girls' Brigade including extensive service in senior positions with the state organisation. She had earlier served in the WRAAF and had been a board member and chair of MAF Australia.

The Denominational Review

Another significant development taking place at the time was the re-structuring of the Baptist Union of Queensland organisation and a rather extensive change of personnel. Regular reviews of the operation of the Baptist Union had been stipulated in its constitution, but they had been neglected for some years. Eventually, an extensive review process was begun in 2017, with the results being adopted at the Assembly of 2019. The review called for significant changes to the Baptist Union organisation, including changes to many of the positions which meant that many staff left the organisation, to be replaced by new people in newly created positions (although there were some transfers of existing staff to new positions). The changes began in mid-2019 and continued over following months, not being complete until the end of 2020. There were many ancillary staff changes (redundancies and new appointments) as well, including clerical office staff with whom the Archives often worked mostly closely.



All these structural and personnel changes had two major consequences for the Archives – the first was that the lines of accountability (including day by day activities) and personnel responsible for various functions changed, with lots of accompanying uncertainty. The second was that the old system for the creation of documents and the transfer of relevant ones to the Archives was disturbed, meaning that the Archives would have to learn about the new systems and adjust its procedures accordingly. It would also have to re-train office and administrative staff

regarding Archiving protocols and the newly devised arrangements.

Another consequence was that there were some new entities created and changes to others. These new and adjusted organisations would need to be brought into the system of archiving protocols. A further side effect was the enormous number of documents produced as part of the review and the subsequent implementation of its findings. All of these would need to be carefully tracked and processed.

Covid-19

2019 was a busy period, and as the year drew to an end, it was understood that changes were not over, and there were many uncertainties. As 2020 dawned some of those uncertainties were managed, at least in a pro tem fashion. However, before the year had progressed beyond its first quarter, another totally unexpected set of circumstances severely impacted its operations and work, as it did the whole of the Baptist denomination and the community.

The appearance overseas of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) early in the year did not immediately impact Australia but by the end of March, it had struck the country, resulting in many restrictions being imposed by the government. These affected churches and the Baptist Union, including the Baptist Archives which had

to close its operations on 18 March 2020. There followed a long period of varied restrictions to the movement of people, operation of workplaces and church services, commuting and travel arrangements, and even daily life such as shopping, sport and family contacts. Most churches had to curtail and cancel ordinary activities involving physical presence at church properties, including services, weddings, funerals and other functions. Services were transferred to the internet with some kind of streaming or recorded videos. The Baptist Union issued many notices concerning rules for the operation of churches as required by the government. It also set up various on-line seminars and, on a continuing basis, provided numerous other resources to guide pastors and leaders on how to conduct the affairs of the churches under the health orders operating at particular times. Some Baptist Union operations were affected severely by these restrictions, including Carinity, the aged care department, and especially QCCC, the camping division. There were health procedures imposed and various limits on visitors to aged care facilities; camping operations were immediately shut down completely and did not resume for several months. The additional swathe of documents circulated from the Baptist Union about Covid-19 conditions, coupled with the existing regular issues, all of which were electronic, put further pressure on the Archives to develop an effective system for managing digital records. It was not until the third quarter of the year that some of these restrictions began to be eased gradually, and some degree of normality began to return.

The Archives staff were able to continue some services from home using electronic resources and communications but the Archives itself was not staffed until May 2020. It was not open to the public until November 2020, when it came under the Covid-safe regime of the Baptist Union offices. There was no NABAC meeting in 2020.

Queensland Baptist Magazine

One of the immediate effects of the Covid-19 situation was the cessation of the publication of the print version of the *Queensland Baptist* – with no physical church services being held, its main means of circulation disappeared in an instant! Instead, some content was made available on-line via its Facebook page and the Baptist Union website. This development was of serious concern to the Archives for two reasons. The first was that the Archives and BHQ were deprived of their best means of publicity. The Archives' pages in each issue had become an important means of communicating with the general Baptist membership in the state about archival and historical matters, but the electronic version which replaced it was flakey to say the least. However, one Archives article that did appear on it described Baptist reactions to the 1919 Influenza epidemic in Queensland, some of which were rather surprising in the light of the experience with Covid-19 a century later.

The second reason was that ever since its inception in 1881, the *Queensland Baptist* had been a vital record of denominational activity and thinking, although there were a couple of long gaps (1914-1921 when it was not published, and 1931-1951 where copies are missing), and since about 2000, its newsworthiness had diminished significantly as it became a promotional magazine rather than a newspaper. With past copies of the magazine readily available in the Archives to researchers (either in paper or electronically), the *Queensland Baptist* had been one of the most used and fruitful sources of historical information. With the cancellation of the magazine and uncertainty about its future, the Archives feared for the future when such a resource would not be available. It was learned late in 2020 that a decision had still not been made about the future of a publication, but it was revealed that the editor would be on reduced hours in 2021.

Also during the latter part of the year, it was announced that the two regular electronic newsletters issued by the Baptist Union, Network News (an email) from the Director of Administration, and QB Services Rundown (previously GSUD and DOS RunDown) (emailed in web format) from the Director of QB Services would be modified and streamlined. These two publications were important to the Archives because, with the change of the QB magazine over the years to a glossy promotional publication, they were usually the only source of up to date news and information about Baptist Union appointments, decisions and events. Accessing and managing these publications was an important role of the Archives, although processing them was always complex. The first issue of the new streamlined communication medium, QB Hub, appeared in

December 2020. It was web-based, making it difficult to archive but a separate PDF version was promised for archival purposes.

New era

As the Covid-19 situation continued throughout the year, the closure of the Archives gave the opportunity for the outgoing Archivist to assist Dr Pam Condie learn about the operation of the Archives, especially by working through the Archives Manual. Dr Condie's situation also changed and she was ready to take on the new position earlier than had been originally anticipated. Dr Parker concluded on 30 June and transferred responsibility to Dr Condie. A farewell function was held at the Baptist Union centre on 24 June 2020 under Covid-safe conditions attended by members of BHQ, the Archives staff and some members of the Baptist Union Board and administration.

Under new leadership, the Archives was well placed to tackle the future, although it was considered a missed opportunity not to make this a paid appointment. Bill Hughes began attending again regularly to work on various historical projects. A new computer was installed, although the transfer of IT services associated with the changeover of leadership was complex and confusing. One of the biggest issues was setting up protocols for archiving with all of the new structures and appointees – and making sure that nothing was lost as experienced and knowledgeable Baptist Union staff disappeared. Dr Parker continued to provide support and to work on a back-log of projects. For the time being, he took responsibility for digital archiving.

END