

The Martin Harrison Archives

The Martin Harrison Archives consist of those digital and non-digital materials judged to be useful to students of Harrison's work. To navigate these, two indexes have been prepared – Selected Non-Digital (1) and Reduced Digital (2). As these names imply, the archive is the result of a selection process. The purpose of this Introduction to the Archives is to characterise the archive, to contextualise it, to indicate expectations for its use and to provide a practical user's guide.

1. Overall purpose of the Archives

Charged with the responsibility to promote Martin Harrison's literary work (in all genres), the Executors of his Will decided on a pro-active approach. Recognising the strong literary community actively interested in Martin's work, they considered it best to facilitate the easiest and most effective access to it. By undertaking to work through all the papers collected at the time of Martin's death, comprising both digital files and non-digital sheets, and organising their preservation in a way that makes future study and publication productive and practicable, they wanted to avoid the work disappearing from sight in a public library archive. Of course, in due course, the Archives will be deposited in a public collection¹; however, in the medium term, the object is to maintain the Archives in a safe place. In this way, armed with the Indexes, students, fellow writers, editors and publishers can access the Archives directly and with a minimum of bureaucratic interference.

As already indicated, the Executors' object was and is to promote Martin's literary reputation through the publication of his works. While publication refers to works already published, it chiefly refers in the present context to unpublished work that warrants future attention from publishers and others. We have paid particular attention to unpublished poems, preparing additional Non-Digital and Selected Poetry indexes – the genealogical and functional relationship between these and the Indexes already mentioned, is explained further on. Single poems, in many states of draft, are distributed throughout Martin's recovered papers, and we have been conscious of the value of preserving chronological clues as well as thematic relations.

The materials collected in late 2014 included a preponderance of personal, professional and ephemeral documentation some proportion of which is useful to students seeking biographical information. Much of this material, though, was considered to be either trivial or not pertinent to an understanding of Martin's life, interests, motivations etc. These materials were nevertheless recorded in the original Non-Digital Index (3) and the original Digital Index (5) before being jettisoned. The object throughout has been to retain a representative selection of correspondence, personal, literary and professional, together with a variety of documents (photographs, health reports, travel and conferences) that reflect the different historical and geographical epochs of Martin's life as well as the more intimate tenor of his literary and professional engagements.

2. The Archive

The archive consists of

- eight boxes of literary and biographical materials, currently held at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies, 80 Curzon Street, North Melbourne. The selected Non-Digital Index (1) identifies the contents.
- a digital folder whose contents are identified in the Reduced Digital Index (2)

Both non-digital and digital archives can be accessed by bona fide researchers through written application to Paul Carter, 374 Barkly Street, Elwood, Victoria 3184. The usual restrictions and permissions relating to publication of materials applies.

¹ The management of the Reduced Digital Archive in this context is yet to be resolved.

3. The Archive, a short history

Besides the Selected Non-Digital Index (1) and the Reduced Digital Index (2), the evolution of the Martin Harrison Archives entailed preparing a number of other indexes, some preliminary, others supplementary.

Preliminary

Non-digital Index (3)

This is a listing of all non-digital materials collected after Martin's death. These materials were held in eleven boxes. Each box contained folders packed horizontally. Some folders contained multiple items and warranted additional identification (see 3a below).

Each box was identified with a number (1-11); each folder was identified with a box number and its own number (1:1, 1:2, etc); and in some cases individual folder items were numbered individually according to their position within the folder – '1' signifying the first sheet in or on top of the sheaf of papers.

Besides providing the researcher with an absolute referencing system, the importance of this original comprehensive Non-digital Index lies in the fact that *its number system is retained in the Selected Non-Digital Archive*. Thus, where the Selected Non-Digital Archive 'jumps over' an item, this is because the item in question has been jettisoned. To find out about the items that have been jettisoned, the researcher can consult the Non-Digital Index.

Extended Non-Digital Entries Index (3a)

As already noted, some folders found in boxes 1-11 contained multiple items. The format of Microsoft Excel spreadsheet software used to compile the indexes practically limits the amount of information that can be recorded for any one item. Therefore, where the information – in this case the number of items within any physical folder – exceeded what could be comfortably recorded in Excel – it was recorded in an additional Extended Non-Digital Entries Index.

The Extended Non-Digital Entries Index is of largely historical interest, throwing more detailed light on the state and contents of the original eleven boxes. For all practical user purposes it is superseded by the Non-Digital Poetry Index (see 5 below)

Digital Index (4)

This is a listing of all material collected from three computers that Martin used between 2004 and 2014.

Supplementary

Non-digital Poetry Index (5)

This is a comprehensive listing of largely unpublished poetry items found in the Non-Digital Index (3).

Selected Digital Poetry Index (6)

This is a listing of poetry items from the Digital Index (4) not found in the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5).

Non-Digital Prose Index (7)

This is a more detailed index of prose items listed in the Non-Digital Index (3)

In addition, there is a

Non-digital Poetry Chronology (simplified) (8)

This is an attempt at a chronology of Martin's poetry, informed by entries found in the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5) and the Selected Digital Poetry Archive (6).

4. The Archive, a longer history

When Martin Harrison died in September 2014, his literary executors (Paul Carter and Rosamunda Droescher) recognised that the promotion of Martin's literary legacy not only involved the management of past and in-press publications: it depended on locating, collating and indexing unpublished materials, non-digital and digital, judged significant either for their literary values or for their biographical information. In 2014, it was assumed that these materials would be deposited in a public collection²; now, in 2017, the ultimate destination of the archive remains an open question, one that will be decided in favour of the location that offers students of Harrison's work the most convenient access to the archive and the richest context for its interpretation.

By 'richest context' is meant Harrison's own library of poets, classical, European, American and contemporary. In deciding what to do with Harrison's books, our criterion was the light they cast on all or any aspect of Harrison's literary or, more broadly and selectively, cultural production. We secured his entire poetry collection, a reasonably comprehensive set of philosophical titles and selected works of aesthetics, politics and art. These are held at the Institute of Postcolonial Studies, Melbourne by generous arrangement with the Institute's Director and Council.

The materials from which the archive is derived were of three kinds: non-digital, that is hard copy, typescripts and handwritings; digital, that is files salvaged from three laptop computers; and sound, a miscellany of commercial recordings, ABC productions in which Harrison was involved as producer, and a small personal library of sound cassettes that reflect Harrison's sound interests and were used in his teaching program. These materials were collected from Martin's home (Wollombi), from his UTS office and from computers.

The indexing of the non-digital archiving went through a number of stages. The first Non-Digital Index numbered items by BOX. This index is number 3 above. Thirteen boxes of materials contained the materials collected at Wollombi and UTS. Of these thirteen boxes two contained various sound materials and were set to one side for further examination (and where necessary transcription). To a large extent, materials in the remaining 11 boxes were grouped as they had been found in Martin's various filing cabinets. While individual files or folders were organised topically or thematically, we did not discern any obvious regional organisation: the contents of any one filing cabinet shelf juxtaposed a miscellany of items. Nevertheless, our object was to preserve as far as possible the spatial order (if it existed) of the archive in case it furnished an indexing principle.

It should be noted that, at the time of his death, Martin had prepared a number of boxes of literary materials with a view to depositing them in the Mitchell Library (Sydney). The contents of these boxes were indexed separately before they were reabsorbed into the general archive and given new box numbers.³ In our view, the Mitchell selection was either made in haste or ill thought out: it included materials that needed contextualisation to make sense of them, as well as a good deal of duplication.

When all items in the 11 boxes had been assigned a box reference and individual number, we were in a position to make some strategic decisions about prioritising further identification tools. The primary objective of the archive is to provide a reliable data base for future publication; in this way it is possible to ensure that future publications reflect the history of earlier publication, as well as allowing issues of originality, repetition and context to be securely established. The publication of Martin's PhD thesis 'On Composition' illustrated the importance of establishing this database; without the database it would be impossible to ascertain 'On Composition's' relationship to another important manuscript, 'Ancient Noise.'

² The challenge of maintaining the Digital Archive in this context remains to be resolved.

³ The index is a series of notebook entries obtainable from Paul Carter.

The non-digital general archive enabled us to identify all significant non-digitally preserved poetry and prose. A significant portion of the poetry has already been published in book form; less of the prose has been published. Nevertheless, we decided to prioritise the preparation of a second, more detailed poetry index. (Index 5 in the listing above.) The function of this special index was twofold: to capture, as far as possible, all unpublished poems and their variants and where possible to organise them chronologically (see 8 above). This strategy has diminishing returns as one approaches the present; however, it has brought to light a significant body of work from c.1970-c.1990 that has not hitherto been published.

We approached the digital archiving process in the same way that we handled the non-digital materials. A Digital Index was prepared (4). This discovered an enormous amount of duplication. A Selected Digital Poetry Index was also completed (6). The yield of new material from the digital sources is limited: most of the material dates from post-2004 and, as far as we can judge, what is significant there is usually draft material that was later published.

Some transcription work has been done on the sound collection. This established that Martin's sound archive contained little material that he had either produced or recorded. We therefore scaled down our attention to these materials. Instead, we contacted colleagues and friends to find out whether or not they held significant recordings. This process of retrieval and archiving is incomplete.

5. Features of the Archives

No global intent was discovered in the archiving 'system'. Materials are indexed by title and topic and were held in no discernible relation to one another, except where the topic exceeded a single folder (PhD supervisions, for example). While University of Technology, Sydney, materials were kept at UTS, other UTS materials were held in Martin's writing room at Wollombi. Nor did we discern any compelling ordering device for the boxes that had been prepared for the Mitchell Library. This is not to say that the selected materials were not important, but they were neither representative nor logically ordered (or indexed).

The question of chronological ordering was a philosophical as well as a research one. It had to be considered in the context of other clusterings or groupings across genres. In identifying a creative centre or emergent idea, it might be more important to be able to maintain a juxtaposition of materials of different types but from roughly the same period. A generically-determined chronological organisation might obscure this creative structuring. Even a general chronological index courted this danger as, especially in the older material, the date when the item was generated was impossible to determine except approximately.

In the event, a mixed ordering approach has been adopted: topical relationships have been respected where they can be identified, but in the case of the poetry index we have also attempted to order it chronologically. Attempts to order the poems in this way run into some typical problems, and others that may be less common. Typically, manuscript collections of poems 'bleed across' from one country to the next and from one year to the next; they accumulate, are revised, weeded out and added to. Generally, in the period 1975-1980, for example, work generated in New Zealand is published in the UK; and, in this period, it is often difficult to know which work predates Martin's move to New Zealand.

The question of the final draft is, of course, perennially fascinating. In Martin's case it is complicated by the fact that a number of his own copies of his published poems contain marginal annotations suggesting that, in the event of a new edition, further changes might have been introduced. As regards the voluminous body of poetic variants that have been indexed, these present all manner of editorial conundrums. What authority, for example, comes from the mere fact that one variant survives scarcely changed across different iterations of an unpublished collection? Does it have more significance than a poem that exists in only one manuscript? At the other extreme a poetic theme can unwind from one poem and migrate to another: neither of these evolutions looks finished and short of publishing a variorum it is hard to know how best to index the material

The prose archive appears to be less problematic in terms of establishing authoritative texts. 'On Composition' has been mentioned. Now that we can see that it is clearly differentiated from the

various versions of 'Ancient Noise', we can publish it confidently. 'Ancient Noise' is clearly a significant work and should also be published. A collection of shorter pieces for publication can now be made. Finally, as a secondary product of the index and archive, we now have the raw materials that can underpin publications about Martin's work.

Besides what may be regarded as the main components of the archive, the archive preserves a range of professional, biographical and epistolary materials. A small number of personal items have been preserved in addition that will not be made accessible to the general researcher. The professional and biographical items enable the biographer to establish the bare bones of the chronology: Martin did not keep diaries, and apart from exceptional fragments, preserved nothing of his personal feelings in the form of notebooks, memoranda or other pages. Therefore, the professional and biographical inventory is short. It features, however, a pleasing selection of photographs – and, when the sound collection is fully transcribed, archive users will also be able to hear Martin reading his poems.

The epistolary or letter section of the archive is various in character. It can be further subdivided into three types: personal, professional, literary. Personal correspondence refers to correspondence with friends. Most letters in this category are old and involve correspondence with friends in the UK. Professional correspondence refers to all kinds of practical organisation associated with Martin's literary and academic engagements. It is rarely of much depth. Literary refers to letter exchanges with other writers. The most important of these dates from 1982-1995 and could be called the Harrison-Carter correspondence. It is the most sustained epistolary exchange and preserves important information not only about Harrison's creative projects but about the cultural politics of the time.

These characterisations apply to the digital archive as well where professional, biographical and literary data follow the same pattern. In addition, the digital archive does contain some more personal epistolary data, as well as visual materials. These refer to Martin's relationship with Nizar Bouheni (1984-2010) and should naturally be treated with discretion and respect. There are, besides, notes concerning Martin's late illness, as well as a few medical documents of potential interest to the biographer.

6. Using the Indexes

The Archive indexes are compiled using Microsoft Excel 2010. In the language of Excel, each index is a *workbook*. A workbook consists of a series of spreadsheets. For instance, the Selected Non-Digital Index (1) is a workbook consisting of eight spreadsheets. Each sheet corresponds to the contents of one of the eight boxes in the archive. The number of spreadsheets in any index workbook is naturally determined by the volume of the materials listed. For instance, the Reduced Digital Index (2) has only one sheet. To facilitate directed research, colour coded column descriptors designate the beginning of each index. To help the user, headers are used throughout each index to facilitate its identification; where relevant, the sheet within the workbook (index) is also identified.

As one object of the Non-Digital Index (3) was to report the existence and relevant location of all items considered of potential interest, the Non-Digital Index occasionally records 'empty' items, that is, folders without content. For instance, Item 2:38 of the Non-Digital Index (3) is listed, but was an empty folder that has since been jettisoned.

The spatialisation principle used for non-digital item numbering obviously does not apply to the non-digital indexes, which are therefore referenced differently. The non-digital indexes preserve the trace of the original 11 box archive. Each item is numbered according to its original placing in a box. Where an item consists of multiple sheets and/or contains individual sheets of significance, individual sheets may be numbered and identified. For instance, box 1 of the original archive, item 17 was originally indexed as 1:17 'Poems I never got back to.' This listing (see Index 3) is carried over to the Selected Non-Digital Index (1); and this principle applies generally – whatever is preserved in Index 1 carries over the reference it acquired in the original index (3). Then, in the case of 1:17 a further identification occurs in the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5), each item within that folder receiving its own number. The first poem in 1:17, "The day was beyond me ..." is listed as 1:17:1 and so on.

In the Reduced Digital index, digital folders replace boxes. Three original folders, corresponding to

the contents removed from three separate computers, provide three original digital locations – see Index 4. These original locations are preserved in the Selected Non-Digital Index (1).

Some words about nomenclature may be helpful. Key terms used to further characterise items include: author, title, notes. In the Selected Non-Digital Index (1), Non-Digital Index (3), Non-Digital Poetry Index (5), and Prose Index (7), the ‘Author’ descriptor corresponds to ‘various’ when there are more than four authors listed (for instance in a magazine publication). Despite this designation, Harrison is always listed as an author (by the identifier ‘MH’) when his input to the publication is apparent.

The ‘Title’ descriptor picks out the title/heading/first-line of a folder, article, correspondence, or poem etc. In some cases, no obvious title descriptor was found. In this case the item is either listed as “untitled”, or, where any useful clue to its character was found, referred to by its clearest ‘title-like’ feature. Where these secondary title features include dates, these dates are usually approximate, and arrived at contextually.

‘Notes’ are important in the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5) and the Selected Digital Poetry Index (6) where they refer to the status of draft poems. The notes refer throughout to typewritten drafts unless otherwise stated. The ‘Advise for scan?’ descriptor refers to the ongoing project of creating a hard copy archive of all unpublished poems. Where additional comments are made, these locate the drafts within a spectrum between unfinished and finished: such characterisations do not imply an editorial *parti pris*; they are merely for organisational convenience.

Across all indexes of the Archives, wherever an entry has an empty section, it simply means no significant information is available.

One final point should be made about using the Indexes. It refers to the ‘Find’ feature available when accessing the Archives on-line. Obviously, the hard copy version of the Indexes, which is located with the physical archive at Institute for Postcolonial Studies, works like any conventional, pre-digital catalogue. However, the Excel program has a ‘Find’ feature that allows for more directed word-based searches when the Archives are accessed digitally. To access this tool, press ‘ctrl-F’ on your keyboard, or click the ‘Find and Select’ feature in the Home tab of the program. A small window appears. Enter the advanced options (Options>>), the section ‘Within:’ will appear and, next to it, ‘Sheet’ the default option on the dropdown menu. This option will narrow the search criteria to the currently opened sheet. To search across *all* the sheets of the current workbook, click the dropdown menu next to ‘Within:’, and select ‘Workbook’. From here, it is possible to search for selected, inter-related items, rapidly narrowing the search in the direction of the user’s interests.

Suppose that the topic is the poetry collection ‘Wild Bees’, and you want to search through the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5): the ‘Find What:’ section is where you will enter your search term: ‘Wild Bees’. Selecting ‘Workbook’ in the ‘Within:’ section will intend your search for *all* entries corresponding to ‘Wild Bees’ in the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5). The ‘Find Next’ option will cycle through the options one by one; the ‘Find All’ option lists *all* entries relevant to the search term. An item found in this way can be examined in more detail by double clicking on it. Of course, this approach is not foolproof: some substantially similar entries may have quite different titles, notably in the Non-Digital Poetry Index (5); where this might cause a relevant item to be overlooked, a cross-reference in the item’s notes identifies related entries.

7. Additions

The indexed Archives do not cover Martin’s sound archive. As indicated, the sound materials collected from Wollombi and UTS proved to be relatively sparse. We have begun to collect recordings of his broadcast work, his readings and other directly relevant materials. We have also transcribed a number of reel-to-reel recordings etc. More recent recordings are in the hands of Martin’s friends, and the expectation is that recordings in private hands will, over the course of time, be made publicly available through the Archives.

The Martin Harrison Archives and their Indexes represent a responsibility and an ambition. User feedback is therefore welcomed as we are naturally committed to ensuring that the Archives are as complete as possible, and that they are easily navigated.

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14/7/17