



**TASA** The Australian  
Sociological Association

Greeting everyone.

I have just published what is perhaps a new kind of publication. I do research for the local regional museum and one of its collections was the "Occurrence Books", i.e. Log Books, of the local fire brigade from its inception in 1912 to 1965 when it change from a volunteer to a professional brigade. One problem museums have is they want to give people access to the material in their collection but they cannot allow people to constantly finger the material. The old solution was to provide cotton gloves, this has given way, to some extent, to the digitalisation of their collections. There is still much that has to be copied.

How you tackle this problem, depends on the kind of material to be made available. My solution, after assessing these log books, was that most people would use them for one or more items of particular information. These were where the fires were, who the firemen were, what fire engines they used and other historical information which was not directly related to fire brigade, but provided general historical information.

I extracted from these log books the information under these headings and this is now available in print at the museum, the local library, the local fire station and the NSW Fire Service Museum in Sydney and the State and National Libraries. The next stage is to put this information on the internet. Which I hope will be completed in the next month or so. People looking for information recorded by the Fire Brigade will have it available to them, without the need for them to have access to the original books.

One question I have raised with myself is, have I been doing sociology, social history, just history or some other academic classification? My conclusion is that I am a Sociologist, I have been doing applied sociology, because I have not provided a theoretical base for the information, I have not tried to interpret the information. What I have done is put the information contained in the material into an easily accessible form that safeguard's the original. I believe I was able to do this because of my applied sociological background. The objective of applied sociology is to enable the community to look at itself, its objectives, and concerns and make informed decisions about the issues it faces. What I have done is give easy access to the information so that others may use it as they tackle issues in the society.

My contact email is shorter this month, in part because I have been away for half the month, then caught a virus and am only now feeling I have got over it. Besides which today is the last day of the month.

*Alan Scott,*

Continuing Education Officer & Acting Convenor