ARCHIVES IN THE MIDWEST: ASSESSMENTS AND PROSPECTS

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Editor's note: The editorial board has, from time to time, grappled with the issue of the degree to which *The Midwestern Archivist* should reflect the regional status of its title and its parent organization. Over the years authors of articles appearing in the journal have been predominantly members of the Midwest Archives Conference, but the content of the articles has not been particularly regional in scope. While recognizing that most archival conditions and practices transcend regional boundaries, the editorial board agreed that it would be desirable to offer a thoughtful analysis of the overall condition of archives in the midwest. The state archival needs-assessment surveys and reports, sponsored by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, appeared to offer the baseline for such an analysis. We turned to Virginia Stewart, believing that she knew the region thoroughly but had no direct interest to protect in relation to the findings of any of the state reports. That she has given us a prescription for dealing with future prospects that transcends the region suggests to us that we asked the right question of the right person.

In the past several years the archival profession has embarked on a range of activities which both signal and contribute to a new level of maturity. Issues such as standards of practice, control over eduction and training, and improved visibility for archives are being addressed at both the national and regional levels through committees, task forces, and funded studies. Archivists have recently joined with other professionals in pursuit of avowedly political goals — notably the defeat of attempts to slash funding for important federal programs, and the successful passage of legislation to reestablish the National Archives as an independent agency.

While there may be a growing sense of parity between archivists and other professionals, archivists increasingly acknowledge widespread "ignorance by the public of the nature and purpose of archival work ... and failure on our part to eradicate that ignorance."[1] The Task Force on Archives and Society, created by the Council of the Society of American Archivists in June, 1983, is grappling with development of concepts and strategies to address this problem. The challenge to the profession is formidable: to shape and communicate an image of archives which will enhance their value to the public and break through the "cycle of poverty" that characterizes the archival universe.

It is in this context of evaluation and new initiatives that the State Historical Records Program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission can best be viewed. Created in 1981 as a crisis management tool, both the program and the agency survived to make a second round of grants to states in 1983. To date 43 grants have been made, in one of the most comprehensive vehicles ever developed for archival evaluation. The program offers participating states an opportunity to establish a solid information base as a benchmark from which planning can proceed. The grants were deliberately shaped to pull the entire archival community in a single state into a working relationship. Each state formed a State Historical Records Advisory Board to be the governing structure for the project. Each Board agreed to meet at least three times during the project period, and to hold at least one public meeting. Thus from its inception the program assumed that both improved information and a new configuration of actors were necessary to effect change.

When it became apparent that the first-round grants were not to be the terminal activity of NHPRC, planning was undertaken to strengthen the program for a second round. In June, 1983, grantees, consultants and other interested archivists met in Atlanta, Georgia, under the sponsorship of the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators (NASARA) to consider the experience of the first round. Each of the four topic areas of the program — state government records, local government records, historical records repositories, and statewide functions and services — was discussed in detail. The report of the conference, *Documenting America,* was published by NASARA and subsequently abstracted in the "SAA Newsletter."[2] An assessment of the program in three southeast states appeared in the Spring, 1984, issue of *Provenance.* There is no doubt that the state assessment projects make an important contribution to the continuing discussion of the problems and prospects of archival practice and programs in the United States. The purpose of this paper is to assess the programs in the Midwest in terms of their success in meeting the stated NHPRC objectives and to raise a number of issues which received slight attention in the reports but impact significantly on the chances of achieving progress.

All states of the area covered by the Midwest Archives Conference have received assessment grants. Reports are available for Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, all first-round grantees.[3] The methodologies used by the states varied — some employed a project archivist, others utilized staff at the state level, some employed a consultant for all or portions of the project. This variance was typical of projects throughout the United States. More importantly for the purposes of this discussion, the states showed the full range of development of archival programs, from the well-established structures in Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin, to the fledgling state archives of Iowa and South Dakota.

The emphasis on the four mandated areas varied considerably in the reports, as each state focused on the problems which seemed most compelling. The legal status of archival functions for public records — both enabling legislation and compliance — was a common feature, however. The constitutional principle of separation of powers divided the North Dakota Records

Board.[4] In South Dakota, the State Archivist is struggling to establish the most elementary control over mandated functions which have traditionally been assumed by other agencies, but even states with supposedly model legislation report problems.[5] In Illinois "legal authority [exists] in regard to public records which equals or surpasses that found in any other state." Nonetheless, the report noted that the "State Records Unit of the Archives functions in an essentially passive role," due to the lack of compliance mechanisms in the State Records Act.[6] Nebraska reported that local public records frequently "find their way into the custody of a local historical organization ... with strong proprietary feeling about 'their' records." The Archives learns of the situation after the fact and generally does not make strong efforts to retrieve records, due to the unenforceable penalties at law and the potential negative public relations.[7] Minnesota, on the other hand, is considering turning to the Attorney General as a means of enforcing the law regarding alienation of public records.[8]

Micrographics is another issue with which many states struggle. The Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota reports detail jurisdictional disputes which work to the detriment of sound archival practice. In general, microfilming has been separated from the archival function, while the existence of equipment and operators generates a momentum for filming which may not be defensible either in terms of cost-effectiveness or other criteria. Only occasionally do non-archival agencies demonstrate a thorough concern with the quality and conservation of microfilm, a cause for alarm when originals are routinely destroyed after filming.

In general the reports reflect the archival culture of the agency which took the lead in their preparation. The Illinois document reads like an internal administrative report, focused almost entirely on cost-savings achieved and statistical measures of units served and requests processed. Wisconsin's report stresses appraisal and coordination of collecting policies. It also makes a clear distinction between repositories that meet minimum standards and those that do not ("have" and "have-not" agencies) and explores the implications of this division of the archival universe in the state. The Ohio report excludes state government records (the subject of a separate NHPRC-funded project) and stresses the cooperative network of repositories and associations which characterizes the state. Taken as a whole, the Minnesota and Wisconsin reports come closest to the NHPRC goal of activating the State Historical Records Boards as advocates for statewide planning for archival resources.

What do the assessment reports collectively tell us about the archival universe in our region? First of all, they tell us about archival institutions, not about archives. Although some of the states gathered information on the content of repository holdings, not one of the reports spoke in clear terms about the historical periods, topics and issues, locales, etc. that are well or poorly documented. Not one report told a success story about significant items rescued or reclaimed. Little was said about the countless fires and floods which have ravaged the records of states, counties and municipalities. This omission was perhaps most obvious in the case of North Dakota, which used a line drawing of the Territorial and State Capitol as the cover for its report, and neglected to discuss the losses when that building burned in 1930! The reports presumed that readers already understood both the nature

and value of archives. For example, Wisconsin's report opens with a paragraph stating, "Archival records are a vital cultural resource" but provides no justification — or even examples — to support this assertion. The Ohio report devotes a section to "Nature and Value of Archives," but the bulk of the text is devoted to distinguishing archives from library materials. In short, the reports are addressed to the people of the several states, but intended for the professional community. This is not a good strategy for influencing decision-makers outside archival institutions.

The reports do not hold any surprises for professionals: Archives were found to be understaffed, underfunded, and underappreciated. Smaller agencies and major repositories report cutbacks in funding, and the gap between the "have" and the "have-not" agencies is not being bridged. In fact, several major institutions have retrenched from previous initiatives intended to raise the level of practice statewide. Nebraska, for example, has eliminated all direct on-site assistance to local agencies, while the Minnesota Historical Society withdrew from the Regional Research Centers Network in 1981. The Ohio network, according to its coordinator, has been "more or less defunct" for the last few years.[9] Agencies that have not suffered budget cuts frequently report additional responsibilities without added resources.

Because archives are often administrative sub-units, "buried within other agencies," they lack public visibility and the leverage of a public constituency. Overall, archival agencies do not seem successful in intra-institutional competition for resources. The North Dakota report conveys the situation nicely in its comment that the State Archivist's top priority — an inventory and scheduling for county and city records — ranked thirty-first on a list of thirty-five State Historical Society priorities.[10] The Nebraska report echoes this frustration in noting that the "overall workload of the archives has increased, while resources have not," due to "lack of control over priorities."[11]

The NHPRC reports were intended to provide reliable information to support or refute prevailing impressions. The information-gathering tool was commonly a mail questionnaire sent to a large number of institutions, ranging from established repositories to private organizations presumed to have historical records. The response rate to these blanket mailings was dismal: 27% in Nebraska, 29% in Illinois, 30% in North Dakota, for example. High results were attained only through targeted mailings. Kansas, for example, achieved a 67% response by excluding the Secretary of State's Office from its public records sample. In any event, most of the reports commented that responses were often incomplete, revealing misunderstanding of the questions. Entire sections were sometimes left blank. Thus we cannot extrapolate reliably from the questionnaires for lack of a representative sample and because the returned data is uneven in quality and coverage. States like Minnesota and Ohio, which had conducted historic records surveys under previous NHPRC grants chose not to attempt to update their findings, even when they were two years old (Minnesota). The experience of the NHPRC grantees across the country confirms that of the Midwest: mail questionnaires are only the first step in a long process involving personal contact and/or site visits. Deviation from this labor-intensive and time-consuming process produces results that are too limited to be quantifiable. Thus at the end of the assessment information process, the data is still impressionistic and we do not know the *size* of the problem.

The question raised by this ineffective data-gathering pattern is more than how to get archivists to design better questionnaires or samples. The issue is what priority this information has in overall planning. Should states be seeking resources to accurately sample or comprehensively survey all known repositories within their borders? Is such information more or less important than making contact with private institutions — churches, businesses, civic organizations, etc. — still holding their own documents? No state report came to terms with definition of the universe of records with which archivists should be concerned. Several states acknowledged that the majority of known collections are held by a cluster of large and medium-size institutions, often in one sector of the state. Smaller organizations, typically historical societies with volunteer staffing, are said to have "significant" holdings, usually private manuscripts and photographs. By considering all those collections — plus the innumerable governmental units and material in private hands — as the archival universe, archivists fail to establish meaningful boundaries to their work. One might take the position that archivists should concentrate their efforts on known collections and those institutions with at least one professional staff member who can participate in cooperative projects. In this way the universe could be contained to manageable proportions. At a minimum, it is necessary to determine the real cost of comprehensive information and the utility of that information in light of other competing objectives. Archivists, like other administrators with limited resources, cannot maximize all objectives simultaneously.

Clearly archivists must raise their level of sophistication in dealing with quantitative data. It is not only questionnaire design that needs improvement. Presentation of results requires statistical inference measures as well as visual display in charts, graphs and tables. The Ohio report uses bar graphs to describe staffing, conservation needs and repository priorities; the message would have had more impact had the visuals been incorporated into the text rather than the appendixes. Visuals are important communication mechanisms, not mere window dressing. Most reports lack charts showing archival functions over time, with comparisons drawn at two, five, or ten year intervals. This kind of analysis is essential to measure organizational performance and project trends. The Illinois report is unusual in its effective use of tables to present information on State Archives operations over the past eight years; such data is generally lacking.

To summarize: at present there is insufficient data from reliable assessment of the universe of data and the status of repositories in any state that has not conducted a comprehensive site survey. Archivists must consider whether they need this information for planning and at what cost. Possible alternatives include surveys of segments of the universe, conducted in priority order; tacit exclusion of repositories that do not meet minimum standards; or development of a stratified sample to create numbers capable of extrapolation. The lack of specificity about the archival universe, coupled with absence of historical perspective on repository performance, leads to overgeneralized requests for more resources. Archivists are faced with two problems — a current and a retrospective deficit of resources. Whether *any* level of funding would make it possible to remedy the cumulative effect of deficient or non-existent archival programs at the state and local level has not yet been determined. What resources would be required to operate a model program at these levels is

equally vague. Since budget allocations are based on hard numbers, archivists are handicapped when they cannot supply specific projections.

In addition to developing information and assessing needs, the projects were to plan remedies. Depending on the formulation of the problem, remedies could relate to a specific agency need (creation of an equipment budget line for the State Archives of Iowa) to a systemic enhancement (creation of the position of staff administrator for the Wisconsin State Historic Records Board). Frequent recommendations included obtaining additional resources, increasing cooperation, and improving planning. The very real obstacles in each of these areas were not discussed.

In my opinion, the failure to obtain sufficient resources relates in part to a peculiar kind of tunnel vision which afflicts archivists, namely the concept of the "life cycle of records." Control of public — and institutional — records from creation through a series of phases culminating in an archival program offers solutions to many problems archivists face, ranging from the instability of information media to the alienation of records. Obviously the logic of this position is compelling only to archivists, since most states report a division of responsibilities among a records management unit, a historical society or library, and the Archives. This type of division characterizes larger "private" organizations as well; a formal records management program may exist, but archives and archivists are conspicuously absent. One of the consequences of this situation is that appraisal is frequently ignored. Records management offices commonly allow sub-units to make their own, demonstrably inadequate, scheduling decisions. In the public sector, state archives, despite formal authority, often cannot control this behavior. Consider also the condition and status of local governmental records. Professional archivists have been describing the lamentable condition of these records for decades. Yet state after state reports that local units are apathetic toward their archival responsibilities and resistant to transferring control to a state agency. Concurrently, state archives report insufficient funds and personnel to implement a program, even if full cooperation could be expected at the local level.

If archivists are to make progress in gaining control over the life cycle of records, they will need to recognize that success in imposing a particular definition on other groups rests on something more than the inherent merit of definition. It is a power issue, involving both formal authority and informal mechanisms of implementation. Archivists may consider themselves most qualified to control records, but this claim is not widely shared. The separation of functions which characterizes most states' administrative history works to the detriment of archives, but to the general benefit of other administrative units. The burden of changing the configuration may seem overwhelming. Most reports simply state that the present arrangements, however unworkable, will have to be endured. The Iowa report is the only one that considers the available alternatives and the costs of each versus the status quo.[12] Most states conclude that cooperation is the only remedy.

Cooperation may be an easy goal to articulate; it is not easy to implement. The experience of states with formal archival networks is instructive. At the National Conference on Regional Archival Networks in 1981, representatives of nine states with archival networks (Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin) reaffirmed their

conviction that "interinstitutional cooperation ... is the right way, the most effective way, for our institutions and our profession to proceed."[13] Nonetheless, "challenging questions" were raised about networks in terms of their inability to coordinate collecting and their inaccuracy in forecasting the nature of the user community and type of services requested. Even more ominous was the finding that "Networks may be in danger because they are not living up to expectations and they are not developing in ways that will guarantee their continued existence. ... The hard truth is that archival networks do not pay for themselves and have not offered a way for members to reduce their own costs. When this is taken in conjunction with the fact that they are not perceived as essential, it becomes clear why archival networks are particularly vulnerable in hard economic times."[14] If cooperation among institutions with complementary goals and formalized interaction mechanisms is so tenuous, the obstacles in dealing with dissimilar agencies, each protecting its own turf, are truly formidable.

Powerful incentives will be needed to alter long-standing arrangements regarding recordkeeping as a social function. Mere assertion of archival axioms will be insufficient to change a dysfunctional archival structure. Recognizing that the abstract "archival interest" is embodied in an agency or department that is competing with other units for scarce resources is a necessary first step. Archivists need to assess their organizational assets and liabilities in order to formulate an effective strategy. The goal is a "win-win" outcome in which archival gains are not achieved (or perceived) as direct losses to other organizational units. Cooperation becomes a realistic goal only when all parties have a recognizable interest and benefit to be attained. Advocacy and bargaining seem more appropriate modes for archives in the near future.

Planning is a third recommendation common to most reports. This is a laudable emphasis on active rather than passive administration. However, the reports did not seem familiar with planning as a strategic decision-making activity with operational consequences, all carried out within a discrete time frame. National consultant Margaret Child pointed out that planning is more than goal setting. She advised that each state should rank its various recommendations on a single scale.[15] This was simply not done. One cannot sense what each state's top priority is, although the priorities of the constituent units are often clear. The Illinois report, for example, gives very specific recommendations for state and local records: a two-year statewide survey of all units of state government, activation of the Cook County Local Records Commissions and employment of a professional staff, and increased service to municipalities. In fact, the State Archives has subsequently received a grant (and a supplementary grant) from NHPRC to survey and schedule Chicago and Cook County records. But in regard to historical records repositories, the report merely suggests that "In order for cooperative programs to be established and maintained, they will require as much participation at the start-up stage as possible and then be followed by increased participation."[16] The priorities of the State Archives are obvious; the priorities of the State Historical Records Board are undefined. Each of the state reports would have been strengthened if the Board had grappled with the question: "If a certain level of unrestricted new monies became available, what should be

done first — and by whom?" Collectively the reports resemble the interim document, "Planning for the Archival Profession," produced by the Goals and Priorities Task Force of the Society of American Archivists.[17] Goals, strategies, and activities are prescribed without reference to resource allocation. The GAP document explicitly disclaims responsibility for such planning, calling for a new structure in the Society of American Archivists to undertake this function. The assessment projects, however, envisioned the records advisory boards as the appropriate vehicle for statewide planning. Whether they can function in this way, making hard choices among different constituencies and pressing needs, remains to be seen.

Novus order rerum

How will archivists break out of the cycle of low visibility, inadequate resources and lack of control over their institutional missions? Change will be required in both internal and external strategies. The archivist must simultaneously become a more skilled administrator and a more effective cultural advocate.

Consultant Edwin C. Bridges, Director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History, wrote in *Documenting America:*

> In looking at these reports as evidence of the condition of state archives, rather than as a source of information about them, another deficiency becomes apparent — the shortcomings of archivists as administrators. The textbook responsibilities of a manager are to plan, organize, lead and control. State archivists, however, are often so deeply engaged in activity that they fail to carry out these basic managerial responsibilities.[18]

Recognition of the general applicability of Bridges' statement is widespread. Archival administration has not yet emerged as a recognizable professional specialty; it is too often confused with performance of functions such as appraisal at a high level of competence. Administration is qualitatively different, involving management of the total resources of the organization toward its articulated goals. The collections themselves are only one element in a complicated equation involving money, personnel, facilities, and relationships with institutional constituencies. A disproportionate emphasis on the needs of the collections at the expense of the functioning organization imperils both the organization and the collections.

Much of what is needed to strengthen archival administration has already been discussed. Archivists need to learn to quantify, to develop performance measures, to track their organizations over time and forecast their futures. Not only must archivists make choices in allocating limited resources; we must also become more aware of the choices represented in maintaining the status quo. In this effort preparation of a program budget can be invaluable. When all costs are assigned by agency function, the operating, as opposed to the formal, priorities become clear. It is then possible to consider alternative ways of dividing total resources in order to maximize the higher priorities. Too often administrators feel locked in. Adjustments in programs are dictated by positive or negative increments to the operating budget — most often by reductions. With a program budget, it may be possible to totally redesign resource allocation.

Archival administrators must also learn to recognize the stages of growth that characterize agencies and to assign their institution to its proper place. A taxonomy of archival repositories would prove useful in the consideration of certification or accreditation of institutions. When is a repository ready to expand its role in the community? What is an excellent institution, as opposed to one which meets minimum standards? At what point should a repository consider a shift in technology to computer formats? Is the repository's strategy basically forward or retrospective? Is acquisition emphasized over conservation? Is state-of-the-art control over description more important than disposing of the processing backlog? The tendency is to avoid such choices, holding all functions equally important, no matter what the size of the agency or its level of development. This is similar to a financial planner attempting to maximize both long-term gain and short-term income simultaneously; it is simply not possible. The administrator, in consultation with staff members and the governing structure of the repository, takes stock of the organization's assets and the nature of the environment. A strategy is formulated, based on institutional goals. No two repositories will have the same strategy, nor should the strategy remain fixed forever. But it should be possible to distinguish archival institutions by their strategies and the organizational "cultures" which derive from them. The size of the agency is not the critical factor; small and medium size institutions might well be at the frontier in the area of their particular interest. In fact, since our society values pluralism, we might expect that professional leadership might well emerge from institutions at different stages of growth. Differentiation among agencies should mark a vital archival community.

Archivists must adopt new models for their collections and their social function if we are to succeed in shifting the public's attitude to our benefit. Generally speaking, recordkeeping is not a highly valued activity. The public does not make nice distinctions between records management and archival activity; the persistent linkage of records functions with low-level support and procurement indicates the relative status of the activity. Archives are cultural property, not merely sources of information. This concept must be articulated to the public if they are to perceive the community's stake in the survival and use of records. Archivists know that the original documents can be compelling, but they have not used that knowledge effectively. So long as the public acknowledges, grudgingly, that *something* must be done about old records, we may expect a minimum level of funding, comparable to a diet just barely above the starvation level. New resources and initiatives can emerge only if some higher value is engaged. The appeal of unique documents and the human interest stories which surround archival work are assets which archivists can use to build bridges between their activities and the public. In this effort archivists can learn from the museum profession, which considers archives a two-dimensional category of artifact. For the past two years the American Association of Museums has been conducting a nation-wide inquiry into the values museums represent and the contribution they make to the collective human experience. The report of the Commission on Museums for a New Century has agreed on sixteen recommendations to guide planning in the next decade. The report distinguishes between museums' institutional role as society's collective memory and museums as organizations which embody that role.[19]

Museums stress the direct encounter visitors have with artifacts, which results in learning. Thus the process of museum-going (visiting, attending a lecture, participating in an activity) leads to a product (enriching one's life through learning). This perspective is worth incorporating into our own work, which tends to overemphasize the process of research. Consider the formulation of the SAA Task Force on Archives and Society published in the May, 1984, *SAA Newsletter:* four out of five categories of use involved information retrieval for administrative, legal, or research purposes, with "Education and Enrichment" a distant last. Research, retrieval of information and documentation need to be translated into a more concrete product. Despite our preoccupation with historical researchers at the graduate and postgraduate level, they comprise a small fraction of our users and a miniscule segment of the population. So long as archivists continue to assign these individuals the highest ranking on our informal scale of desirable "consumers" of our collections, we may expect the public to know little and care less about archives and archival institutions.

Archivists need new constituencies and new ways of interacting with the public. Since by all accounts archival institutions are struggling for needed resources, we need to adopt a model which offers hope of attracting new support. Archivists can learn from the successful adaptation of marketing models in other not-for-profit organizations.[20] Briefly, marketing focuses on the exchange between sellers and buyers. Four elements — product, price, place and promotion — affect the success of this exchange. Archivists tend to see only their product — the collections — with occasional ventures into small-scale "outreach" activities. However, archival institutions have distinct disadvantages in competing for societal resources. We need to know how to match our unique offerings to interests and needs to present and potential audiences. One can only afford to ignore the preferences of buyers if one does not need their money. Archivists must reexamine our presuppositions about the community we serve and utilize the techniques of market research to learn about our audiences. What obstacles prevent or hinder participation? If we consider the physical location of archival institutions, often housed in a basement or a service building, it is not surprising that individuals do not happen upon our facilities. One must have a purpose — and some determination — to find many archives! If archives have a blank or a negative image in the public mind, we will have to take remedial action to provide contrary or re-orienting experiences. What about establishment of a "friends of the archives" group, with a major component devoted to positive personal interaction with archives staff in a congenial setting? Would most institutions feel such an effort was misallocation of limited resources? The findings of market research need to be integrated into our planning if we are to see results from "going public."

Just what kind of results would we like to see? The first is development of a constituency with ability to influence decisions regarding archival matters, whether that be in a president's or dean's office, at the board of trustees level, or in the legislature. It is never as easy to reduce or eliminate programs with public supporters — they may make noise. Equally important, a public constituency is a potential source of financial support that ought to be cultivated. Most archives rely almost exclusively on their parent organization for

funding, supplemented by state or federal funding through grants. An occasional repository may succeed in securing private foundation funding or a corporate gift, but the whole complicated world of development is *terra incognita* for most archivists. Yet the existence of an endowment, a trust fund, an annual giving program, might provide the needed flexibility for archivists to embark on programs that are necessary or desirable, but not high priority for the parent organization. Getting into the business of raising money in the private sector will put archives into direct competition with other cultural and educational organizations. I believe that we are already in such competition, without realizing it, and coming off a very poor last.

Finally, archivists must learn to deal with risk if we are to move our institutions and programs into more visible and successful roles. Our present low-profile approach has not reduced our organizational vulnerability, and it has made us nearly invisible to the general public. Archival politicians must no longer be legendary figures; they must be found at every level — advocating, bargaining, and representing the archival interest. We will need to sacrifice elements of our programs at times in order to achieve others. This is one reason why the ability to track the performance of an institution over time — in hard numbers — is essential. We need to know what has been sacrificed, and how long that trade-off can be sustained. In the political arena the stakes are real, and the risks sometimes frightening. The rewards, however, can be substantial. If we are committed to preserving and transmitting our culture's documentary heritage, we can no longer avoid the give and take which characterizes decision-making in a democratic society. It is long past time for archivists to enter the mainstream.

FOOTNOTES

1. David B. Gracy II, "Archives and Society: The First Archival Revolution," *American Archivist* 47 (Winter, 1984): 7.
2. *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the States.* Lisa B. Weber, ed. (Albany, NY: NASARA, 1984). Abstract in May, 1984, *SAA Newsletter.*
3. Illinois Historical Records Advisory Board, *Statewide Historical Records Needs Survey and Assessment Project, Final Report 1982* (Springfield, 1982).
   Iowa State Historical Department, *Iowa's Historical Records* (Des Moines, 1984).
   Kansas State Records Advisory Board, "Needs Assessment and Reporting Grant #81-116, Final Report," (Topeka, 1982).
   Minnesota State Historical Advisory Board, *Historical Records in Minnesota, Final Report of the Records Assessment and Reporting Project* (St. Paul, 1983).
   Nebraska State Historical Records Advisory Board, *Final Report, Needs Assessment and Reporting Grant* (Lincoln, 1982).
   North Dakota State Historical Records Advisory Board, *North Dakota's Forgotten Heritage: Public and Private Records as Historic Documents* (Bismarck, 1983).
   Ohio Historical Records Preservation Advisory Board, *Preserving Ohio's Heritage: An Assessment of Archives and Manuscript Programs* (Columbus, 1983).
   South Dakota Historical Records Advisory Board, *Assessment and Planning for Archives and Historical Records in South Dakota* (Pierre, 1983).
   Wisconsin Historical Records Advisory Board, *Planning to Preserve Wisconsin's History: The Archival Perspective* (Madison, 1983).
   Hereinafter cited as, e.g., *Illinois Report.*

4. George W. Bain, "State Archival Law: A Content Analysis," *American Archivist* 46 (Spring, 1983): 158-174. Bain notes that "The best current solution [to separation of powers issue] ... is one that is found in a dozen states or more. Here the law provides for the archival records management agenc[ies] to render services to these two branches [legislative and judiciary] upon an invitation for this assistance. (p. 171). Cf. statutes in Arizona, Maine, Missouri and Tennessee.
5. Bain assigns numerical scores to states based on a content analysis of the state law regarding records. On a national ranking, Illinois, Nebraska, and Ohio fall in the first (top) quartile, Minnesota and Wisconsin in the second, Iowa and South Dakota in the third, and Kansas and North Dakota in the last, with scores ranging from a high of 40 for Illinois to a low of 20 for Kansas, out of a possible 54 points. (Ibid., pp. 166-170).
6. *Illinois Report,* p.3.
7. *Nebraska Report,* p. 21.
8. *Minnesota Report,* p. 15.
9. Anne R. Kenney reporting in "Archival Cooperation: A Critical Look at Statewide Archival Networks," *American Archivist* 46 (Fall, 1983): 428.
10. *North Dakota Report,* p. 19.
11. *Nebraska Report,* pp. 2-4.
12. *Iowa Report,* pp. 17-19.
13. John A. Fleckner, *Midwestern Archivist* 6, no. 2 (1982): 95.
14. Kenney, "Archival Cooperation," p. 429.
15. *Documenting America,* p. 55.
16. *Illinois Report,* pp. 4,5,7.
17. Issued by the Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 1984.
18. *Documenting America,* p. 12.
19. *Museums for a New Century,* Washington, D. C., 1984.
20. For a brief bibliography, see *SAA Newsletter,* September, 1984, p. 9.