

THE ARCHIVAL INTERSECTION: COOPERATION BETWEEN COLLECTING REPOSITORIES AND NONPROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT: The records of nonprofit organizations constitute a valuable but endangered species of historical documentation. Organizations frequently lack the combination of resources, perceived need, and will necessary to operate their own archival programs. If such records are to be preserved, archivists will have to intervene, either to encourage the organization to establish its own archives, or to arrange a transfer to an appropriate collecting repository. Collaboration between the organization and the collecting repository challenges some existing conceptions about the nature of archives and offers opportunities for creative interaction.

Users of archives tend to concentrate primarily on what archives contain. They are looking for a way to connect their present need with something from the past—either a piece of information or a physical embodiment of that past. Keepers of archives are trained to be conscious of where that information or artifact came from, in order to present and interpret them effectively. Both users and keepers are likely to think about where archives are *now* only as a practical matter of where they can get their information or their paycheck.

In truth, the nature and availability of archives depend on the interaction of two “wheres,” or sets of circumstances: where the records came from, i.e., the institution or individual that created them; and where they are preserved, i.e., the institution that has accepted responsibility for their continued existence. These two “wheres” are represented by the metaphor of an archival intersection. The metaphor conveys the observation that most of life’s critical decisions—and the resulting changes of direction, collisions, and near misses—occur in or near the intersections. On one level it suggests a chronological meeting place—where past meets present. In another, more specific way it calls attention to an intersection of institutional entities—the meeting point of organizations that create records and repositories that acquire them.¹

The Nature and Nurture of Archives

Although the analogy is imperfect, the combination of who creates archives and who preserves them is somewhat akin to the way that an individual is shaped by a blend of hereditary and environmental factors. Just as analysis of nature and nurture can help us to comprehend an individual's personality, so consideration of the intersection of records creation and archival care can inform our understanding of archives.

The office of origin provides the heredity that gives records their essential shape. Central to the principle of provenance is the notion that archives are an integral part of the activity that accounted for their creation. It is for that reason that records or papers from a single source are not to be intermingled with those from another; and it explains why they can be understood properly only if information is available about the individual or institutional creator.

The institution that decides to extend the life of records beyond their primary intended purpose contributes "environmental" factors that reshape the records in subtle ways. Even the conservative "honest broker" archivist inevitably makes decisions that determine what will be available, and in what context. Sometimes, when an institution maintains its own archives, creation and preservation are accomplished by the same institution. Other times an institution collects and preserves records and papers that were created by other individuals or institutions. That, in essence, is the distinction between archives and manuscripts—one is kept, the other collected.² In all likelihood, the priorities of the keepers will differ from those of the collectors, and different administrative practices will result. In either case, however, the act of preservation is intended to provide the means for a meeting of past and present.

What is an Archives?

None of this is particularly novel, but it may provide a framework for addressing the issues that are raised in situations where records created or gathered by an organization are transferred to a collecting repository. Some of these issues are revealed in the vexing, if not earthshaking, lack of consensus on the basic question of "what is an archives?" The 1974 *Glossary* sanctioned a trinity of terms to apply to accumulations of documents that have some type of whole-is-greater-than-the-sum-of-its-parts relationship: *archives* ("the noncurrent records of an organization or institution preserved because of their continuing value"); *records* ("all recorded information...made or received by an organization or institution"); and *papers* ("a natural accumulation of personal and family materials, as distinct from records").³ According to these definitions, *archives* applies to the subset of organizational records that have been selected for continued existence—and should not be applied to personal or family materials. Actual usage has been somewhat different; the tendency is to refer to the *archives* of an institution if they are maintained in-house, but to call the very same select accumulation of documents *records* if they are transferred to a manuscript repository.⁴

It would simplify our professional lives—or at least our efforts to describe what we do, and what we do it to—if we had a general term to apply to all accumulations of documents that have been deemed worthy of continued

preservation, regardless of their parentage or their current custody. The lack of such a term reflects the determination, primarily on the part of government archivists, to distinguish true archives from suspect pretenders. The classic definition insists on both hereditary and environmental purity for true archives, emphasizing three essential characteristics: the organic unity of the materials, resulting from their derivation from a common source; purposeful selection of materials for continued preservation beyond their active administrative life; and the importance of an unbroken chain of custody from creation to preservation.⁵

Few archivists would quarrel with defining archives in terms of an intentionally selected set of organically related records, but there is a distinct lack of consensus over the third characteristic, unbroken custody. More than thirty years ago Lester Cappon noted that "numerous bodies of historical manuscripts are really archival records under an assumed name." He made the point not to quibble over terminology but to argue for the appropriateness and even the necessity of libraries, historical societies, and other similar research institutions intervening to preserve the manuscripts *qua* archives of some organizations.⁶

The point of this discussion is not that terminology must be clarified before life can go on, but that the semantic confusion reveals some continuing ambivalence about what and who are truly archival. The archives-within-archives situation is one that needs to have its implications explored more fully. Whether they are called records, archives, or something else, the materials of organizations and institutions that are transferred to collecting repositories raise important issues of responsibility, accountability, priority, constituency, and longevity that deserve consideration.⁷

The archives of nonprofit organizations are prime candidates for transfer to a collecting repository. These organizations or associations exist to bring together persons or institutions that share common purposes or interests in order to promote those interests. In comparison with government, corporations, and educational and religious institutions, they are usually less hierarchical and bureaucratic.⁸ The crucial distinction may be that, unlike institutions which tend to define and serve their own ends, organizations more often exist to further the purposes of their members or affiliates. Three points should be made about the records of nonprofit organizations:

- They represent a valuable but endangered species of historical documentation.
- Sometimes the resources of the organization must be combined with those of a collecting repository to create a critical mass for archival preservation to occur.
- There is an opportunity for creative interaction between the organization and the repository.

Endangered Species

Organizational records represent an endangered species that deserves attention. Records of organizations are critical to the understanding of America. Voluntarism is a major defining characteristic of American society, and it has long been manifested in a tendency to provide organizational structures through which similar interests can be assembled for mutual benefit. The term "organizational society" has been used to describe the American social order that

emerged in the early twentieth century.⁹ David Hammack recently provided a compelling case for the importance of nonprofit organizations and their archives, observing that Americans have traditionally relied on nonprofit organizations for purposes that most European nations assign to the state.¹⁰

New organizations emerged, embodying the optimistic assumption that no problem or condition, properly understood and analyzed, could withstand the onslaught of rationally and systematically applied resources. This kind of thinking particularly influenced the specialized associations formed by persons with a shared interest or concern. These associations, bringing together like-minded individuals from across the country on a relatively equal basis, served as an important link between the local community and the larger society.

The records of such organizations provide a unique and valuable perspective. An organization's scope is, by definition, narrow in subject but cross-sectional in geographic or institutional inclusiveness. Where institutional archives provide intensive documentation of relatively limited circumstances (although there are spectacular exceptions in the case of extraordinarily large and diverse institutions), organizational archives offer extensive and comparative documentation of similar activities in different circumstances, either complementing the internal institutional evidence or, in many cases, providing the only available substitute if the latter has not been preserved. For example, researchers have found unduplicated evidence in the archives of national organizations held in the Social Welfare History Archives to inform studies of race relations in the Philadelphia police department, corruption in the St. Louis police department, and Junior League activity in Atlanta.

If such records are valuable, they are also endangered. Archives are frequently the result of a particular moment or person. Too often the archives dies when the person leaves or the moment passes. This is especially true in the case of organizations. As a crude but telling index, consider the following: the 1990 edition of the *Encyclopedia of Associations* lists more than 30,000 national and international trade and professional associations, social welfare and public affairs organizations, labor unions, fraternal and patriotic organizations, and other types of groups consisting of voluntary members;¹¹ a search of the 1988 Society of American Archivists (SAA) *Directory of Individual Members* turned up fewer than forty individuals, out of a total membership of nearly three thousand, whose institutional affiliation could clearly be identified with such organizations.¹² Only about half the organizations identified in a similar search of the 1983 directory were still represented five years later. Lack of an SAA-affiliated employee does not, of course, prove the nonexistence of an institutional archives, but the miniscule numbers are still revealing.¹³

There are several factors that explain this small number. In some cases an external requirement provides the motivation to establish an archives. Organizations, however, are relatively free from such forces. In contrast to governmental agencies, voluntary organizations do not have the same degree of public accountability mandating that records be preserved and made accessible. Compared with businesses, there is not the same degree of regulatory or financial accountability that requires records to be retained subject to audit or review.

Most obviously, many organizations have a problem of scale. They are large enough to generate and accumulate a substantial quantity of records but too small to support specialized records management or archival staff. There are no

distinct thresholds, but an organization with fewer than fifty full-time staff members can less likely afford to devote a substantial part of one of those positions to archival functions than can an institution with staff that numbers in the hundreds. As an indication of the size of a "typical" national association, an analysis of every twenty-fifth of the 1,685 entries for "social welfare organizations" in the 1990 *Encyclopedia of Associations* revealed an average staff size of 22 for organizations who reported that information. Only about one in five had a staff of 50 or more; 78 was the largest staff in the sample.¹⁴ Organizations currently represented in the Social Welfare History Archives (excluding the much larger YMCA of the USA) have an average staff size of 58, again using the *Encyclopedia* as a data source.

On a less tangible level, many organizations do not perceive the need, value, or possibility of an identifiable legacy that would support, and derive support from, an archival program. The reasons vary with specific circumstances. The ad hoc, solve-the-problem-of-the-day nature of evolutionary organizational development tends to place priority on the effectiveness of current services. Frequent reorganizations, mergers, and redefinitions of mission may lessen the sense of historic identity as can the tendency of many organizations to subordinate their own identity to that of their affiliated agencies and individual members or to the cause they exist to serve.

If most organizations have been hesitant to establish their own archives, neither have manuscript repositories been beating paths to organizational headquarters, particularly in recent years. A survey of nine repositories in 1986, conducted for the "Midwestern Inquirer" feature in the *MAC Newsletter*, suggests that archivists continue to acquire contemporary organizational records other than those of their parent institution on a case-by-case basis, but that they are proceeding cautiously, aware of the potential problems of bulk, particularly if open-ended commitments are made to continue to accept future accretions. Only one of the nine respondents reported offering records management consultation to systematize the transfer of records.¹⁵

Records of organizations, particularly national organizations, often fail to attract the interest of manuscript repositories for another reason. Relatively few repositories collect systematically on a national scale; most concentrate on a local, state, or regional area. Unless a national organization is of obvious historical prominence or the concerns that it addresses are related to an area such as labor, women, immigration, or social welfare that has a collecting repository specializing in that field, its records are unlikely to be a high-priority item in the collecting policy of any repository.¹⁶

Critical Mass

In the ideal world, organizations should assume responsibility for their own records. In considering how the archival profession could best identify and retain records of enduring value, the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities (GAP) recommended that repositories should accept institutional or organizational records only after efforts have been made to convince the institution to establish its own records program.¹⁷ In the big picture, the underlying logic of this recommendation is unassailable: archival resources are extremely limited; if collecting repositories provide an easy out by accepting transferred records, the

records creators have no incentive to commit resources to developing their own archives; this, in turn, prevents the repository from collecting something else.¹⁸

The real-world situation, however, is as Cappon recognized more than thirty years ago: that in many instances organizations simply do not possess the necessary combination of perceived need, resources, and will to develop their own archives program; and that the only chance for survival of some organizations' archives is in historical societies, university libraries, and other similar research institutions.¹⁹ The GAP Task Force's preferred approach is for archivists to urge records creators to accept responsibility for their historically important records, but it acknowledged that self-maintenance programs are not appropriate in every instance.²⁰

Proper preservation of an organization's archives requires adequate amounts of three interrelated components: a perceived need, the availability and commitment of resources, and the will to act. If neither the records-creating organization nor the collecting repository alone possesses the necessary combination of these three elements, sometimes the two, working together, can create the critical mass necessary to develop and sustain an archival program.

The most tangible component, resources, usually attracts most of the attention. Organizations, like institutions and individuals, range from affluence to something below the subsistence level. Some can clearly afford to take full responsibility for their own historical records while others can hardly afford file cabinets—let alone file clerks—for current records. Most organizations fall somewhere between those extremes. Unfortunately, the condition of an organization's balance sheet does not always correlate with the value of its records, whether that value is measured by internal administrative or external research and cultural value standards. Some financially impoverished organizations have created records of extraordinary research value, precisely because of their work in areas of society too poor to generate alternate sources of documentation.

Collecting repositories clearly do not possess the resources to accept organizational archives indiscriminately. In selected cases, however, they can and should act to preserve endangered documentation, particularly if they can combine their resources with those of the organizations whose records they accept. Increasingly, as the "Midwestern Inquirer" survey showed, repositories are negotiating to receive financial subsidies when they accept responsibility for an organization's records; organizations appear to expect to be asked to pay for archival services.

In many cases, these subsidies amount to little more than covering the costs of packing and shipping the records, but there are significant exceptions. The Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs pioneered the development of resource collaboration between the collecting repository and its donor organizations. Most notably, the United Auto Workers paid for the Walter Reuther Library, the building on the Wayne State University campus that has housed the archives since 1975. The UAW has recently committed \$3.4 million for the construction of the Leonard Woodcock Wing that will be added to the library. On another level, the archives has agreements through which several unions and other organizations provide financial support for the management of their archives. Typically these funds cover a half-time archival position and some supplies and related expenses. The archives provides formal records management consultation to some of its donor unions, although this is viewed as part of the

basic field work/acquisitions program and is not necessarily tied to financial subsidies.²¹

The University of Illinois Archives entered a contractual relationship with the American Library Association in 1973 to administer the ALA archives and has continued that relationship to the present. Since then it has entered similar agreements with several of the approximately 30 other educational and professional organizations whose archives are at the University of Illinois Archives. The agreements, which generally provide for three-year renewals, specify the services to be provided for the organizations by the archives, define terms of access, and provide for an annual financial subsidy that covers the salary of a part-time graduate student assistant (half-time in the case of the ALA, quarter-time for most others) and contributes toward related expenses such as computer hardware and software upgrades. The University of Illinois Archives has developed transfer guidelines that outline general categories for preservation or destruction, but it does not provide full records management consultation.²²

The YMCA of the USA maintained its own historical library, which included an archives/manuscripts component, for nearly one hundred years. When it moved its headquarters from New York to Chicago in 1981, it retained an archival consultant to help it assess the cost of providing appropriate internal administration of its rich and voluminous historical records and to compare that with the option of working together with a collecting repository. When the YMCA deposited its records with the University of Minnesota's Social Welfare History Archives, it initially provided an annual stipend for preservation expenses. After three years the YMCA agreed instead to pick up the salaries of two staff members who had originally been hired on grant and one-time university funds. It did so because its executives came to appreciate the benefits of a professionally managed archives for meeting legal and other informational needs and, equally important, for promoting the YMCA's heritage through conference exhibits, a pictorial history, and the like. In comparison with other social service organizations, the YMCA had more ample financial resources on which to draw, and its professional staff and lay leaders have a strong attachment to the organization's historical legacy.²³

Archivists involved in these arrangements agree that the provision of a financial subsidy fundamentally changes the relationship between the archives and the donor organization in a positive way. Maynard Brichford made the distinction between a "collecting repository" and a "contracting archives," stressing that in the latter case the contractual obligations lead to more attention being paid to issues of legal custody and levels of service by both sides. Warner Pflug pointed to stronger relationships and higher expectations. Andrea Hinding hesitated to speculate whether financial support led to, or signaled the previous existence of, the donor and repository being more engaged with each other and with the records, but she affirmed the value of using a contractual relationship to obtain the strong support of leading executives, if only to call the attention of the rest of the organization's staff to the importance attached to the archives.²⁴

There is one sense in which the resources of a shared stewardship can, in fact, exceed the sum of the parts. A carefully devised partnership can, in some cases, make a more effective appeal for third-party funding than could either partner acting alone. The organization can provide access, based on its credibility and reputation, to foundations and individuals not accustomed to supporting

archival projects, and the repository's involvement adds to the legitimacy and professional or technical competence of the project.

At least as important as the availability of tangible resources is the intangible will to act—and to continue. That will derives from a perceived need for information or for a tangible link to the past. Sometimes the will and perception reside within the organization or can be developed there through an appeal to organizational self-interest. For example, a likely candidate to establish an in-house archival program would be an organization that possesses healthy finances and enough public prominence to suggest that an archives might serve useful marketing purposes.

In other cases the perception of value and the will to act exist only outside the organization, particularly when the desirable qualities in the records have mostly to do with research use and cultural value. An organization's financial condition and its public prominence are not necessarily reliable predictors of the research value of its records. Thus cases of poor organizations with historically rich records are particularly appropriate for collaboration between the organization and a collecting repository.

Even more rare than the willingness to start an archives is the ability to continue. If archival records should endure, so should archival programs. As already noted, archives are frequently the result of a particular moment or person, and they often have trouble surviving the passage of that person or set of circumstances. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission and, to a lesser extent, the National Endowment for the Humanities, have provided seed money to initiate numerous archival programs. The issue they constantly face is that of discerning the host institution's commitment to maintain the program after the expiration of outside funding.

In the experience of the Social Welfare History Archives, a number of organizations have transferred their archives after what had begun as credible in-house programs simply became too great a burden to maintain over time. Most frequently, operating costs (staff salaries in particular) were the critical factor. In one case, an organization decided that it could no longer afford to have its office staff distracted by the need to provide reference service for occasional researchers, even though its archives were quite well organized.

Collecting repositories are far from immune to retrenchment decisions but in general they enjoy one important advantage over in-house institutional archives programs. Their primary mission—the support of research—is more likely to be seen as congruent with that of the parent institution, be it a university, a historical society, or a research center. This in no way guarantees continued adequate resources in times of institutional retrenchment, but it does provide relative security against the threat of outright termination of an archival program.

Creative Interaction

When archivists in collecting repositories accept responsibility for the archives of contemporary organizations, they enter a realm that straddles the two traditional camps of manuscripts and archives without quite fitting into either one. They must deal with records that resemble the holdings of an institutional archives in volume, complexity, and impersonality, but do so in a context of serving primarily cultural and educational purposes. They find their work

shaped by the nature of the records, by their institutional mission, and by their unique relationship—or lack thereof—to the creators of the records. This archival intersection presents both problems and challenges, but most of all it offers the opportunity to view and present archives in a somewhat different light.

There is more to an archives than efficiency and effectiveness of technical operations. Beyond the realm of systematically applied retention-and-transfer schedules and comprehensive and coherent finding aids lies an opportunity to perceive, raise consciousness about, and act on, the multiple values of documentary evidence. This ability to perceive and effectively interpret the potential of the archives is enhanced by a blending of different perspectives and sets of intangible resources.

One way of illustrating this is by considering the unique status of the National Archives. It is no accident that much of American archival theory has emerged from that institution, partly due to the sheer magnitude of the operation and of the problems that it is required to address. Trudy Peterson has argued that “in most cases archival theory has grown from a body of practical experience which has later been clarified and defined in terms of general operating principles.”²⁵ An important part of the practical experience of the National Archives has been the constant need to take into account the pressures of the records creators and of diverse researchers. Interaction among those forces provides the incentive to define and analyze problems and to seek solutions. It is not necessary to demonstrate that the National Archives has consistently succeeded in satisfying its multiple constituencies in order to acknowledge that the attempt to do so has clarified professional issues and suggested possible solutions.

Most small institutional archives are unlikely to face as many extreme cross currents, because most of their dealings are with a constituency inside the institution. Understandably, policies and actions will be shaped by the needs of that constituency. Archivists and curators in collecting repositories, informed by their interaction with a wider range of researchers, may enjoy a broader (or at least a different) perspective of the varied uses to be made of archives, but they are often frustrated by their inability to interact with the creators of the records, either to understand what already exists or to advocate what should be created.

The concept of documentation strategies as it has emerged in the past few years places great emphasis on analyzing and understanding an area or topic and the available sources of information so that decisions on what to collect and preserve can be made on an informed basis. The implementation of such an analysis, according to Helen Samuels, “is carried out through the mutual efforts of many institutions and individuals influencing the creation of records and the archival retention of a portion of them.”²⁶ Although Samuels and other advocates of documentation strategies stress the need for large-scale interinstitutional planning,²⁷ one of the underlying principles may be applied to a more modest collaboration: interaction among records creators and archivists in specific cases where custody of the records has been transferred.

At the archival intersection there is an opportunity—admittedly seldom realized—to have it both ways. The organization, through its officers and in-house historians, contributes an intimate knowledge of the provenance, i.e., an understanding of the structure and activities out of which the records emerge. From this the archivist gains an understanding of the organization’s administrative

information needs and a channel through which to address issues related to the creation, selection, and transfer of records in a systematic way.

On the other hand, the archives contributes a perspective gained through experience with records of other organizations and interaction with a wider range of users, which shapes and enriches the interpretation of the organization's records. Furthermore, the institutional setting of a university, historical society, or research center can provide ready access to persons knowledgeable in the subject or with specialized preservation and interpretation skills. The repository's institutional setting also offers access to online bibliographic utilities such as the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) and the rest of the information-sharing infrastructure.

Conclusion

Admittedly, none of the alleged virtues of creator-archivist collaboration, particularly those associated with intensive interaction, emerge as a simple matter of course. Transferring records to a collecting repository does not eliminate problems nor does it guarantee responsible administration. A transfer can easily be viewed as a one-time transaction when in fact the continuing relationship between the organization and the archives should be one of its most important results. Physical distance can easily become out-of-sight-out-of-mind, robbing the organization of access to evidence about its past and limiting the archives' understanding of the records it holds.

Real though these potential problems are, concern about them should not be allowed to paralyze archivists' efforts to deal responsibly with the need to preserve organizational records. Members of the archival profession must do more to get organizations to understand that their inactive records possess administrative value and, in some cases, are cultural assets as well. They should be encouraged to establish their own archives *or* to collaborate with a repository. The circumstances that organizations face range across a continuum, as do the decisions appropriate for those circumstances. As in most things, the extremes may be easily defined, while the more difficult choices are faced by occupants in the middle range of the spectrum. A few general statements should help to clarify the range of options.

1. An organization should operate its own archives if it possesses the necessary need, will, and resources because there are opportunities for the institutional archivist to interact, to educate, and to intervene in response to constantly changing circumstances that are not available to the off-site archivist.²⁸ If one or more of these necessary elements is only marginally inadequate, external advice and encouragement may help to develop the internal critical mass.
2. At the other extreme, we might as well recognize that the records of some organizations will be preserved only by a collecting repository, if at all. Archivists will achieve no positive purpose by assuming that every organization can be convinced to develop an internal means of systematically selecting and preserving its archives.
3. Between the two extremes lies the realm of more difficult choices, where transfer of an archives is not an absolute necessity but may, after careful evaluation, prove to be the most appropriate decision. Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young have developed a "black box" model to present the factors that

require consideration in selecting records for archival preservation.²⁹ They arrange all the factors into three categories: value of the information, cost of retention, and political and procedural implications. One could envision the construction of a much simplified version of their taxonomy to guide the determination of how and where an organization's archives are maintained, because ultimately the same issues and types of considerations are involved.

Two factors would deserve special emphasis in such a scheme. Size of operation is one, simply because it is more difficult for an organization with fewer than fifty staff members to justify the investment in a specialized archival function than it is for one with several hundred. The other critical factor involves a judgment about the principal value of the records. If the intensity of interest in their contents and the probable frequency of their use is tilted strongly toward outside users, an arrangement with a collecting repository is more appropriate than in a case where the dominance of the organization's own retrospective information needs is readily apparent.

4. As noted in *Planning for the Profession*, organizations need assistance in understanding the benefits and obligations of preserving records of enduring value, and in determining the type of archival program most appropriate for those records. Such assistance should include a means of evaluating potential collecting repositories. Although not yet available in final form, an instrument being developed by the SAA Business Archives Section, "Choosing a Repository," suggests a useful approach that blends consciousness-raising and practical advice on specific attributes to seek in a repository.³⁰
5. The instances where an organization's records are acquired by a collecting repository will not, and need not, always be characterized by the intensive involvement described here as "creative interaction." In the subset of cases where the unusual value of the archives or strong shared interests of the organization and the repository lead to a contract that includes financial subsidies, the resulting benefits will not be limited to the provision of an additional staff member or needed supplies. Such a relationship will increase the awareness of the archives and raise expectations in ways that should stimulate better service and more imaginative uses. The common wisdom that "you get what you pay for" has a self-fulfilling prophecy dimension to it, having as much to do with perception and expectation as with measurable values. There is truth mingled with a Catch-22 circularity in the notion that archivists will not earn their resource allocators' respect until they convince them to allocate some resources.

As the narrator said at the beginning of Walt Disney's film version of *Peter Pan*, "All this has happened before. And it will all happen again." Long ago historical societies and university libraries began to accept responsibility for the records of contemporary organizations. They applied their professional archival skills to preserve important parts of our recorded memory. Both the motivation and the action retain their validity today. The challenge is to select the appropriate circumstances and to apply the available resources as effectively as possible.

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papers that he presented at annual meetings of the Organization of American Historians in Los Angeles in April 1984 and the Society of American Archivists in New York City in September 1988. He acknowledges the helpful, if sometimes dissenting, insights of Maynard Brichford, Linda Henry, and Linda Edgerly, who also participated in the 1988 SAA session.

NOTES

1. My phrase is an unashamed play on Jerry Ham's "archival edge," although I have no illusions of rivalling the enduring quality of his metaphor. For those who have forgotten the derivation of the phrase, he paraphrased Kurt Vonnegut by calling for archivists to break out of established molds, to "get out on the edge where they can see things first." F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 13.
2. To follow the human analogy, in one case children care for their aging parents in the home while in another case that responsibility is shifted to professional care-givers in a nursing home.
3. Frank B. Evans, Donald F. Harrison, and Edwin A. Thompson, comps., "A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers," *American Archivist* 37 (July 1974): 414-432. A new glossary is under development and is scheduled for publication in 1990.
4. An example of this usage appears in a forthcoming manual on arrangement and description: "Strictly speaking, archives are the noncurrent but still useful records of an organization or institution *preserved by that organization or institution*.... In contrast, manuscript collections are the records created or gathered by an organization or individual but transferred from the original custodian to a collecting repository, such as a local historical society or university library." Frederic Miller, *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1990), introduction.
5. For example, Sir Hilary Jenkinson provided this definition: "A document which may be said to belong to the class of Archives is one which was drawn up or used in the course of an administrative or executive transaction (whether public or private) of which itself formed a part; and subsequently preserved in their own custody for their own information by the person or persons responsible for that transaction and their legitimate successors." Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration*, rev. ed. (London: Percy Lund, Humphries, 1937), 11.
6. Lester Cappon, "Historical Manuscripts as Archives: Some Definitions and Their Applications," *American Archivist* 19 (April 1956): 109-110. See also Robert L. Brubaker, "Archival Principles and the Curator of Manuscripts," *American Archivist* 29 (October 1966): 507.
7. My personal preference on terminology would be to emphasize the distinction between the totality of documentation (records) *created* by institutions or individuals and the subset that is *selected* for preservation (archives). This is consistent with the definitions in the 1974 glossary, although the distinction is not as explicit as it could be. I am much less interested in using distinct terms to differentiate between types of creators (personal papers/institutional records or archives) or to differentiate on the basis of current custody (in-house archives/transferred records) although there is a need to recognize the legislatively declared distinction between government records and personal papers (personal archives?) of government officials. For the most part, our current distinctions between archives, papers, and records only amuse or confuse the various constituencies whose understanding, support, and use we seek. The definition of archives proposed by David B. Gracy II in "Archivists, You Are What People Think You Keep," *American Archivist* 52 (Winter 1989): 72-78, could be worded more gracefully, but it includes the proper elements.
8. The absence of hierarchy and bureaucracy is only relative. As much as thirty years ago studies of voluntary associations showed them becoming increasingly complex and bureaucratic. See Stuart Chapin and John Tsouderos, "Formalization Observed in Ten Voluntary Associations: Concepts, Morphology, and Process," *Social Forces* 34 (1956): 306-309.
9. The term and the following summary of the role of organizations in twentieth century America is derived from Samuel P. Hays, "The New Organizational Society," first appearing as the introduction to Jerry Israel, ed., *Building the Organizational Society: Essays on Associational Activities in Modern America* (New York: Free Press, 1972), and reprinted in Hays, *American Political History as Social Analysis* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1980), 244-263.

10. David C. Hammack, "Private Organizations, Public Purposes: Nonprofits and Their Archives," *Journal of American History* 76 (June 1989): 181-191. His definition is broader than the one employed here. It includes nonprofit institutions such as hospitals, universities, religious bodies, and museums.
11. *Encyclopedia of Associations*, 1990 ed. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1989).
12. Society of American Archivists, *1988 Directory of Individual Members* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1988). I went through the list of employing institutions (pp. 91-115) and counted all that I could subjectively categorize as private sector, nonprofit organizations, both local and national (excluding those devoted primarily to preservation of historical records, objects, and sites).
13. David Hammack's impressionistic analysis, based on his own research use of archives (primarily in New York, Houston, and Cleveland), paints a similar picture. He notes that churches, schools, libraries, museums, performing arts groups, and hospitals have often retained their own records, although—except in the case of universities—they are usually very limited and frequently inaccessible. The records of various associations are, if preserved at all, more likely to find their way into collecting repositories, where the accessibility is greater. Hammack, "Nonprofits and Their Archives," 183. The author's understandable focus on New York, Houston, and Cleveland has the unfortunate and unintended effect of appearing to discount or ignore at least equally substantial and valuable accumulations of similar records in cities such as Philadelphia, Chicago, Boston, Detroit, and Minneapolis-St. Paul.
14. *Encyclopedia of Organizations*, 1990 ed., 1101-1287. Thirty-six of sixty-eight organizations in the sample did not report staff size and were not included in the calculation. Most of them were clearly small operations and may well have reduced the average even further, had they reported.
15. David Klaassen, "The Midwestern Inquirer: Collecting Policy and Recent Organizational Records," *Midwest Archives Conference Newsletter* 14 (January 1987): 25-26.
16. The Library of Congress Manuscripts Division and the State Historical Society of Wisconsin were two of the prominent early leaders in soliciting records of national organizations in a wide range of subject areas, but both have been more cautious in recent years. The nationally oriented theme collections that feature national organizational records alluded to are the Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University; the Sophia Smith Collection, Smith College; and the Immigration History Research Center and the Social Welfare History Archives, both of the University of Minnesota.
17. *Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1986), 12.
18. Linda Henry, "Records of Organizations: What is the Responsibility of the Archival Profession?" unpublished paper presented at the fifty-first annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, New York, 4 September 1987.
19. Cappon, "Historical Manuscripts as Archives," 109.
20. *Planning for the Archival Profession*, 11-12.
21. Warner Pflug, telephone conversation with author, 14 December 1989.
22. Maynard Brichford, telephone conversation with author, 14 December 1989; and William J. Maher, letter to author, 21 October 1986.
23. Andrea Hinding, telephone conversation with author, 12 December 1989.
24. Telephone conversations with Warner Pflug (14 December 1989), Maynard Brichford (14 December 1989), and Andrea Hinding (12 December 1989).
25. Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "The National Archives and the Archival Theorist Revisited, 1954-84," *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 126.
26. Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 115.
27. See, for example, Larry Hackman's letter to the editor, *American Archivist* 52 (Winter 1989): 8-9.
28. Mary Hedge drew on the experience of a number of institutional archivists to describe these kinds of opportunities in her paper, "Are Archivists Becoming Institutionalized? The Current Situation," (unpublished paper presented at the fifty-first annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, New York City, 5 September 1987). Regrettably, the more current reality is that since the paper was presented, a number of the institutional archives referred to have been terminated or substantially curtailed.
29. Frank Boles and Julia Marks Young, "Exploring the Black Box: The Appraisal of University Administrative Records," *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985): 121-140. The model will be developed more fully in Boles and Young, *Ultimate Choices: Selecting Material for Archives and Libraries* (New York: Neal-Schumann, forthcoming).

30. Consult the Society of American Archivists office (600 South Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60605) for the current chair of the Business Archives Section. Paul H. McCarthy, ed., *Archives Assessment and Planning Workbook* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1989) provides a checklist of the fundamental areas of archival work that would also be a useful resource in helping organizations to evaluate repositories.