ARCHIVES AND ARCHIVISTS IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY: WHAT WILL WE BECOME?

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ABSTRACT: Archivists have become more prone in the past decade to speculate on their future. This essay argues that such speculation should be grounded in the current trends of changes of organizations and the society these organizations reside in and reflect. The author uses two well-known management tomes, stressing reengineering and reinventing, as a foundation for tracking these changes and arguing what archivists should be focused on as they cope in rapidly transforming organizations and society. The author concludes that many of these changes should bring a greater opportunity for archives and archivists to meet the archival mission.

Introduction

There are any number of ways archivists can predict what will happen to their mission, programs, and profession in the next decade or two, and there are any number of ways they can be wrong. However, it is important to speculate on the future by considering current trends because any profession with a particular mission on society's behalf must make decisions which enable it to continue to carry out that mission as effectively as possible. What has to be kept in mind, of course, is what professions represent. In the best analysis of the nature of professions, Andrew Abbott suggests that "professions are somewhat exclusive groups of individuals applying somewhat abstract knowledge to particular cases."[1] The archival profession, in order to maintain whatever status or identity (and ability to perform satisfactorily) it has as a profession, must keep its focus on its knowledge base and the application of that knowledge to the realities of larger organizational shifts in self-analysis.

At least two basic reasons suggest that archivists should be able to make predictions which are relevant and helpful. First, one area in which predictions have actually fallen short of expectations—that is that the progress has been more spectacular than predicted—has been in the realm of information technology and its applications. If we consider that archivists are deeply affected by this since records have always been a product of such technology, then it is important for archivists to understand how they must contend with the technology and utilize it for their own benefits (i.e., fulfilling their mission). Archivists must understand that the office, creating the records that archivists must manage, is in a continual state of flux and, even more important, that the origins of

the archival profession's functions and techniques stem largely from an older stage of the office's evolution.[2] Electronic information technology has been the crucial factor in driving the transformation of the office, although other economic, cultural, and political dimensions mediate the ways in which that technology is utilized and the extent of its impact.

The second reason concerns the nature of professional development in the late twentieth century. Professions which have information as a fundamental aspect of their responsibility and focus are in a stronger position to flourish because information management has become integral to the competition among professions and their continuing success or failure.[3] Again, archivists, with their responsibility to identify and manage records possessing continuing value to their organizations and society should be able to compete well in the future.

Regardless of the importance of professionalism, I am not arguing that efforts to control entry into the profession, raise credentials, develop and use standards, and other such matters should be the focus of our contemplation of the future. My view is that some stress on such professional matters should help archivists to integrate their mission into institutions, governance, and society in such a way that it will help the quest for the preservation of the documentary heritage. The concern whether archivists, as a profession, will exist or not a generation or two down the road should not be the issue; instead, the focus should always be on the health of the mission. How well is the profession coping with the identification, preservation, and use of archival records on behalf of the institutions it serves and society? The archival profession in the United States has established itself and strengthened its position in the past half-century, but it is debatable whether the progress this discipline has made in managing the documentary heritage has improved as much as we should have expected. We are still falling far short of this goal, and our efforts to plan for, or at least speculate on, the future should be constructed about the issue of how the archival mission fares. Archival programs are under funded, archivists and their repositories have a low societal profile, and the prospects for gaining the needed support do not appear to be much better than they were a generation or two ago; some might argue that the prospects have lessened.

When archivists have speculated on the future, they have often tended to focus on internal professional issues, a not surprising but often irrelevant exercise.[4] We can suggest all sorts of things about archivists—their educational backgrounds, the kinds of individuals attracted to the field, their credentials, the work they will do, and even where they will work—but these kinds of predictions only make sense if they are related to the current changing nature of the organizations and the society in which they work. Earlier speculative efforts have been important in getting archivists to understand that such matters are important if they are to be successful in their work and mission, but they do not help much in archivists' contending within their work places if they go little further than internal professional debates and discussions. It is easy to either adopt a progressive viewpoint in which we see a healthy and vital profession, or a more fatalistic perspective in which we see the archivist gone from the array of professions in the twenty-first century, or not to have any viewpoint at all. Some archivists prefer to imagine that they are sailing on a placid sea rather than in the turbulent storms of change, complexity, and confusion.

My intention in this essay is to speculate on what society and its organizations might become and to consider the ramifications of these changes for the archival mission. I strongly believe that the archival mission will always remain, but I am not altogether sure about whether archivists and their allies or archival programs as we now know them will still be there, even in my lifetime (and I am in my mid-forties). We should first examine organizations (corporations, governments, cultural institutions), the front lines for archivists, and then consider other, greater societal changes. This might help us, then, to understand better what archivists should and should not be doing now and in the near future.[5]

Reengineering the Organization and the Future of Archivy

It seems as if every few years a new management scheme comes along, takes center stage in discussions about management, produces some best-sellers, and fades into the background. However, from time to time, new concepts or approaches show promise of transforming the manner in which we conceive of administering institutions and programs; these are administrative approaches archivists must pay closer attention to, both in how archivists serve their organizational parents and in how they manage their own records programs and activities. Recent writings on "reengineering" and "reinventing" institutions represent two related management schools that I believe archivists should carefully consider. These concepts provide a window for us to speculate about the future of the institution and the role of the archivist.

Reengineering is an effort to show why the management principles of the past century or more must be discarded or, at the least, radically transformed into a new set of concepts and precepts. The fundamental testament of this approach is Michael Hammer and James Champy, *Reengineering the Corporation: A Manifesto for Business Revolution*, originally published in 1993 and re-issued in an updated edition in 1994.[6] The premise of Hammer and Champy is that management has been built around "tasks" which in turn are built on the principle of the division of labor when it should be clustered around "coherent business processes."[7] While the older task-oriented managerial approach worked well for a long time, its own success bred its failures. Tasks expanded in number, production became more complicated, and managing the production process became harder and often impossible.[8] And the managing of the process further removed the corporation from the customer, threatening service, quality, responsiveness, and other aspects of producing for the customer.[9] The premise of reengineering is a recognition that the corporation's business is to have a product. The limited lifespan of a product and its market makes the processes which enable the business to change and create products all the more important. As Hammer and Champy indicate, "good products do not make winners; winners make good products."[10]

To get corporate leaders thinking about processes rather than tasks, Hammer and Champy provide reengineering as a means of starting over, as is evident in their definition of reengineering: "Reengineering...is the fundamental rethinking and radical redesign of business processes to achieve dramatic improvements in critical, contemporary measures of performance, such as cost, quality, service, and speed."[11] The authors fix on four key aspects of this definition: fun-

damental (why, how, what kinds of questions), radical (reinventing the business not improving it), dramatic ("quantum leaps in performance"), and processes (the "collection of activities that takes one or more kinds of input and creates an output that is of value to the customer").[12]

Now what are the future implications of "reengineering" for the archivist? In other words, if reengineering is likely to have a substantial influence on the manner in which organizations are evolving, what does it suggest to archivists about their future work environments? We must consider this question in two ways: the archivist working within the re-engineered corporation and the archivist reengineering his or her own program.

The archivist working in the re-engineered corporation faces some interesting challenges. Hammer and Champy contend that "Reengineering is about beginning again with a clean sheet of paper. It is about rejecting the conventional wisdom and received assumptions of the past."[13] This poses a question about the archivist arguing that his or her mission is to provide a corporate memory. The point here may be, of course, not whether this is a legitimate role but whether it is the exclusive or most important purpose of the institutional archives. Is there another role (or roles) for the archivist in the re-engineered corporation? Hammer and Champy also argue, with a full chapter on the topic, that information technology is not the solution to the problems of an organization but a means by which problems can be resolved. Full of examples, the authors stress that the technology often provides the means to invent new uses for technology and new ways of doing business. In other words, "the real power of technology is not that it can make the old processes work better, but that it enables organizations to break old rules and create new ways of working—that is, to reengineer."[14] This kind of imagining what uses can be made of information technology brings the archivist face to face with the matter of how he or she can get closer to the use of the technology and how he or she can employ the technology itself for the functioning of their own program.

There are other, more crucial, concerns for the archivist in the re-engineered institution. A major emphasis of the reengineering advocates is on the issue of who will lead and carry out reengineering. This topic is one that is rife with challenges for the organizational archivist. Hammer and Champy write that "Leadership isn't just a matter of position, but of character as well. Ambition, restlessness, and intellectual curiosity are the hallmarks of the reengineering leader. A caretaker of the *status quo* will never be able to muster the passion and enthusiasm the effort requires."[15] We have, of course, leaders. However, there is the matter of status quo and the fundamental aspect of the archivist's mission. Archivists take their mission to conserve or preserve quite seriously. Archivists must transform their natural conservativism deriving from their mission into mustering their energies to search for ways in which innovation can also enable the archival record to be preserved.

The archivist seeking to reengineer his or her own program also faces some serious issues to consider. Hammer and Champy state that "in order to meet the contemporary demands of quality, service, flexibility, and low cost, processes must be kept simple."[16] They offer that simplifying processes includes combining several jobs into one, allowing workers to make decisions, more naturally ordering the steps in a process, ending standardization to have multiple versions of a process oriented to different markets, performing work where it makes the most sense, reducing checks and controls, and other related activities.[17]

How can archivists simplify their processes? There are a number of ways, none of which might settle well among archivists. They could bring together the continuum of appraisal to arrangement and description to preservation to use into a more simplified version that enables the appraisal process to accomplish much of what constitutes arrangement and description and preservation so that records are much more quickly ready for use and processing backlogs are eliminated. A thorough appraisal could result in a thorough description; or, archivists could adapt existing descriptions produced by the creators. Hammer and Champy also believe that the re-engineered organization moves from stressing management as a way for individual advancement to stressing working.[18] This is especially important since archivists have often stressed administration as a means of personal advancement or have often found themselves in small operations where they have been forced to assume managerial responsibilities, whether qualified or interested. What archivists need to do to reengineer their programs is to provide the means for their most capable workers to stay where they have been successful, rather than moving them up and out from where they have been productive and successful.

Reengineering also requires "insight, creativity, and judgment."[19] There are many archivists who have a tendency to greet with suspicion innovation or risk-taking, and this certainly will not help the archivist make his or her program more effective.[20] Simplifying processes requires radical rethinking and more than just tinkering. Appraisal should be simplified from acquiring records for every conceivable use by every conceivable potential constituency to focus on organizational legal and evidence requirements. Arrangement and description should be done only for backlogged holdings when they are requested, so as to eliminate the constant complaint about the immense resources needed for such work and the appeal to this responsibility as the enduring archival priority in favor of a strategy that stresses meeting organizational and societal information and evidence needs. Preservation should eliminate any desire for conservation of individual items except when they are to be exhibited. There is an important principle here. Archivists must only do what will assist their parent agency to achieve its objectives, rather than some set of nebulous cultural objectives usually articulated by archivists which might only provide a barrier to the organization's work. This requires archivists to understand their organization's objectives in the first place and then to tailor their work to meet these objectives.

Some features of the re-engineered corporation or the re-engineered archival program actually parallel some current trends in the archival community. One is education. Hammer and Champy stress a new emphasis on education versus training that is compatible with the recent movement to develop archival education programs that do not train but provide a basic knowledge: "Traditional companies typically stress employee *training*—teaching workers how to perform a particular job or how to handle one specific situation or another. In companies that have re-engineered, the emphasis shifts from training to *education*—or to hiring the educated. Training increases skills and competence and teaches employees the 'how' of a job. Education increases their insight and understanding and teaches the 'why.'"[21] This reorientation will not be a problem for archivists, assuming that they support the continued development and expansion of graduate archival education and continuing education programs, ensure that these programs focus on education and knowledge rather than skills and atti-

tudes, and work so that the organizations and archival programs hire the graduates of these programs.

Reinventing the Organization and the Future of Archivy

Reinventing, the other new management concept capturing a lot of attention, is closely related to the concept of reengineering. As described in the book by David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government: How the Entrepreneurial Spirit is Transforming the Public Sector*, [22] the notion of reinventing is provided in the book's subtitle. It is the management effort carried out by an entrepreneur who "uses resources in new ways to maximum productivity and effectiveness."[23] Osborne and Gaebler point out that the last major effort at reinventing government occurred fifty years to a century ago, and this has created a problem because "the kind of governments that developed during the industrial era, with their sluggish, centralized, bureaucracies, their preoccupation with rules and procedures, and their hierarchical chains of command, no longer work very well."[24] While Hammer and Champy stressed a perspective on processes, Osborne and Gaebler have stressed a focus on results: In the old model we attempted control and "we became so obsessed with dictating *how* things should be done—regulating the process, controlling the inputs—that we ignored the outcomes, the results."[25] They suggest, however, that the circumstances that led to the older models have disappeared or been greatly modified: "We live in an information society, in which people get access to information almost as fast as their leaders do. We live in a knowledge-based economy, in which educated workers bridle at commands and demand autonomy."[26] How fast can these organizations get access to information found in archives? Will they tolerate needing to go through the archivist in order to get the access they need?

Osborne and Gaebler, examining example after example of government success stories, developed a set of criteria for success (this criteria constituting the re-invention of government):

- a promotion of "competition between service providers"
- an empowering of citizens by moving control from the bureaucracy to the community
- performance measures stressing outcomes rather than inputs
- motivation by their mission rather than by rules and regulations
- a redefining of their clients as customers
- a mentality to prevent problems before they occur rather than offering services after a problem emerges
- a focus on earning, not just spending, money
- an authority that is decentralized, with a stress on participatory management
- a preference for market mechanisms rather than bureaucratic mechanisms
- and, finally, a "focus not simply on providing public services, but on catalyzing all sectors—public, private, and voluntary—into action to solve their community's problems."[27]

While it is easy to dismiss, at least initially, these authors' viewpoints as being incredibly naive—especially if you have tried to work in government for any length of time—such a perspective would ignore several of their important findings. First, Osborne and Gaebler have provided numerous examples where

such principles have been used and used effectively. Like Hammer and Champy, they contend that they are not so much creating a new set of management principles as they are discovering principles that have worked and are working. Second, Osborne and Gaebler suggest that we tend to dismiss such new concepts because we tend to base our views on our personal experiences in organizations, which are quite limited in the history of such institutions. If we had worked in companies and for governments for seventy-five or one hundred years we would perceive major fluctuations in success and failure. Third, the authors argue that many tend to focus on organizations like government bureaucracies which have lasted for centuries (or so it seems) because they are needed for governance rather than because of how well they have been working.

Archivists who may someday labor in reinvented organizations face a number of interesting issues. Osborne and Gaebler contend that "in today's world, public institutions also need the flexibility to respond to complex and rapidly changing conditions. This is difficult if policy makers can use only one method—services produced by their own bureaucracy."[28] Archives, as well as records management programs, have often functioned as if they have a large amount of time by which to respond to needs. Archivists often have slow, clunky devices by which to retrieve information from their holdings, and records managers often employ highly labor intensive devices by which to schedule, store, and retrieve records. Records management programs have often been adverse to respond to public needs, while archivists have often defined their clients as only the public, losing sight of the services they may or should provide to the records creators.[29]

The reinvented organization also requires that the archivist re-think his or her role, real and potential. Osborne and Gaebler note that "there are very few services traditionally provided by the public sector that are not today provided somewhere by the private sector—and vice versa."[30] This is not at all a new idea, but it is one which probably has far more implications today than it did even just a few years ago. Rising dissatisfaction with the services of present organizations and a growing realization of the inadequacies of such organizations has created an environment where experimentation and new competition is very probable, not just possible. Archivists, in state government for example, want to be taken seriously as providing services for the ongoing, practical administration of such government, but there is plenty of competition for the kinds of information services that state archives can provide, including state libraries, bibliographic utilities that all agencies can use, other commercial information services, and, especially, information technology and policy boards making decisions about the use of electronic information technology for record keeping purposes. Records management can be sourced out even now. This leaves the unsettling prospects that state archives might be reduced to a general cultural role, a paper museum. Even here, however, museums have tended to provide this kind of service in better and more meaningful fashion.

Archivists need, instead, to re-examine such prospects and, rather than viewing them as a threat, they need to see them as an opportunity. Osborne and Gaebler note that "when governments contract with private businesses, both conservatives and liberals often talk as if they are shifting a fundamental public responsibility to the private sector. This is nonsense: they are shifting the delivery of services, not the responsibility for services."[31] State government archives

need to reconsider their services, and then they need to determine whether they must do them or whether they can be sourced out. State archives need to reinvent themselves as regulatory agencies, and they must cease thinking that they must do everything. If they can gain the flexibility to use their funding in more creative fashions, then they probably will be able to do far more than they have with such funds in the past. Since their funding support is unlikely to increase in any appreciable manner, using some guiding principles such as offered by reinventing an organization may be the only real sensible alternative. And since governments are likely to adopt more competitive modes in the future, state archives must reconsider how they can compete in meaningful ways.

Archivists working for reinvented organizations need to consider very seriously how they measure their success. Osborne and Gaebler note that "public entrepreneurs know that when institutions are funded according to inputs, they have little reason to strive for better performance. But when they are funded according to outcomes, they become obsessive about performance."[32] If this is true for any archives, little description of such performance exists. It is inevitable that reinvented organizations will ultimately ask for their archives to suggest appropriate measures, or they will be given measures to achieve. Archivists will need to do much better than state we had x-number of researchers visit the repository, and they will, instead, have to come up with responses more along the lines of having provided information crucial to the solving of certain problems, enabled the meeting of real information needs, or achieving a full documentation of certain functions, trends, or special activities.[33] A new level of accountability will inevitably come. It is viewed by some archivists that accountability is precisely the business that archivists are meant to be performing, as suggested by the increasing array of writings about records for accountability purposes.[34] As Osborne and Gaebler note, "words like *accountability*, *performance*, and *results* have begun to ring through the halls of government. Luckily, we now have the technology needed to make such words mean something. We can generate, analyze, and communicate a thousand times more information than we could just a generation ago, for a fraction of the cost."[35] Records management for accountability, evidence, and corporate memory certainly fit with this. Archivists and their programs will be judged by their ability to support this, among other things ensuring that the information their repositories contain can be made readily available. Archivists need to stress the integrity of the record, its appropriate management, and the ongoing need for records by the organization.[36]

Perhaps the biggest challenge to archivists in the reinvented organization is the reality of how the concept of re-invention is being used. Here, we again see the proverbial, often trite, notion that in challenges come opportunities. It is no secret that the Clinton-Gore administration is a great supporter of the Osborne and Gaebler thesis. Vice President Al Gore's National Performance Review report on the federal government is a reiteration and application of the Osborne and Gaebler book.[37] This report has a dangerous message for archivists. While a significant part of the report concerns streamlining federal recordkeeping, it contains virtually no mention of the National Archives or the archival and records management functions. The irony of this is that archivists and, especially, records managers have long been in the position to make suggestions that

could streamline federal recordkeeping, but they have been more content to strive to manage the massive records being created. Is it not an irony that when the present administration wants to expand the federal government's use of electronic information technology which supports the basic reinventing of this government, that the National Archives with its Center for Electronic Records is built on an old centralized model and has resisted the expansion of the definition of electronic records to include electronic mail. Was the slow search process for a new Archivist of the United States the result of a less than spectacular Clinton appointments process or a reflection that this administration already has tagged this agency as an obstacle to its efforts?

Archivists who seek to reinvent their own programs can draw many suggestions from *Reinventing Government*. At one point its authors provide this description of the government worker: "Many employees in bureaucratic governments feel trapped. Tied down by rules and regulations, numbed by monotonous tasks, assigned jobs they know could be accomplished in half the time if they were only allowed to use their minds, they live lives of quiet desperation."[38] I contend that this description fits many archivists today, and I also submit that much of this is the doing of archivists themselves. Archivists have often tended to define their jobs by only the most routine and time-consuming of work—arrangement and description—while they have often done less about the more important and intellectually stimulating of their functions, especially appraisal. We need to ask ourselves if we are hiring bright individuals, but assigning them virtually clerical duties, or hiring individuals who exhibit more interest in clerical responsibilities. Some of this attitude may be that archivists often reflect thinking more in tune with the older industrial era office, stressing tasks and division of labor, out of which the earliest archives and records management programs emerged.[39]

Osborne and Gaebler argue that "Most public organizations are driven not by their missions, but by their rules and their budgets. They have a rule for everything that could conceivably go wrong and a line item for every subcategory of spending in every unit of every department. The glue that holds public bureaucracies together, in other words, is like epoxy: it comes in two separate tubes. One holds rules, the other line items. Mix them together and you get cement."[40] Apart from the fact that many archival programs in government reflect this problem, many archival programs in other kinds of organizations also show such characteristics. Monitoring discussions on the various listserves which feature discussion about archival arrangement and description reflect this to a certain extent. For the past decade we have developed a basic bibliographic standard and related rules to support this standard, but we have also seen such rules and standards applied in ways that reflect a deeper misunderstanding of what archival arrangement and description ought to be doing. A recent discussion about using the MARC AMC format to item-catalog photographs is but one of many such examples; item-cataloging any archival records defies logic unless the archives parent organization needs it done or if the archives has run out of any other tasks needed to be done (which is very unlikely). Many of our archival programs are waist-deep in concrete which they have mixed and poured themselves, and the professional staff of such programs need to rethink what they are doing, which means rethinking their mission. Will item-cataloging photographs really fulfill any repository's mission? Or, is it really the

result of some individual archivist's personal, scholarly interests? Osborne and Gaebler argue that in order to develop mission-ruled organizations we first "scrape off the dead weight of accumulated rules, regulations, and obsolete activities."[41]

Re-evaluating an archives' mission has become a major activity of many such programs in the United States in the past decade or so. It may be, however, that we have tended to go about such work in the wrong fashion. Osborne and Gaebler state that "clarity of mission may be the single most important asset for a government organization."[42] But how clear can archival missions be when it is obvious that archives tend to be low-profile, often misunderstood organizations? The authors note that "public organizations work best when they have one clear mission."[43] But archival programs often possess an ungainly mix of cultural mission and service orientation, along with a confused sense of who they are serving. Part of the source of this problem derives from the fact that archivists have often seemed unable to change their mission, layering one old mission and traditional function or activity after another even as the larger organizational context of their operations has changed. Reinvented organizations are run by entrepreneurs and "entrepreneurs are people who fail many times,"[44] and archivists often either lack the entrepreneurial spirit or the opportunities to display it.

Osborne and Gaebler spend an entire chapter on their sense that government has lost sight of its customers. While we are a society that expects "products and services customized to our styles and tastes," it is nevertheless true that "traditional public institutions still offer one-size-fits-all services."[45] Archivists have been in a similar quandary. They do not really have a full understanding of their users' needs, yet they continue to expend *great* efforts and resources on designing systems for access to their holdings. How can this be? Is it, perhaps, that in their race to standardize archival arrangement and description, archivists are in fact offering such one-size-fits-all services? The eventual outcomes might be disturbing. Osborne and Gaebler write that "in a world in which cable television systems have 50 channels, banks let their customers do business by phone, and even department stores have begun to customize their services for the individual, bureaucratic, unresponsive, one-size-fits-all government cannot last."[46] And, do I need to add, this government might take its archives with it?

Perhaps the most important issues for archivists presented in the *Reinventing Government* treatise are the ideas of "anticipatory" and "decentralized" government. Osborne and Gaebler describe the original orientation of government to coping with problems. They argue for anticipatory governments which do two things: "they use an ounce of prevention, rather than a pound of cure; and they do everything possible to build foresight into their decision making."[47] I have argued already that archivists spend too much time when they do appraisal, thinking about future use, and I am sure this will strike some as seeming to be contrary to the notion of anticipatory government. I do not think it is, at all. When archivists speak of appraising for future use or when they discuss working for future users, it is most commonly utilized as a poor rationale for their appraisal decisions. They do not understand enough about their present users to be able to build a foundation for predicting what will happen. In fact, archivists tend to be notorious reactors to problems. Their institutions and

their functions, even in the light of massive uses of electronic information technology, seem not to have changed very much over the past century.

Decentralization of programs is also discussed by the authors of *Reinventing Government* as an essential aspect for future government agencies. The notion of decentralization probably sends shivers up the spines of archivists. Archivists have spent most of their careers building programs that centralize record keeping functions. Osborne and Gaebler paint a different future for government and organizations on their canvas. They write that "fifty years ago centralized institutions were indispensable," especially as "there was plenty of time for information to flow up the chain of command and decisions to flow back down."[48] Now, because of better information systems, better-educated staff, and other factors, we see decisions being made at all different levels and by many different types of employees. We also see new kinds of team work and different roles or the elimination of middle managers in order to allow organizations to become more innovative and entrepreneurial and, as well, closer to the customer. If archivists do not participate in making their functions more decentralized, then they may become obstacles, and obstacles in the reinvented organization are more apt to be eliminated than they are to be tolerated.

Has there been any response by the archival community in the United States to such ideas as re-inventing and reengineering the organization? Not surprisingly the one response has come from archivists involved in managing electronic record keeping systems. In a recent and stimulating essay by David Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom, these authors take the concept of reinventing and examine it from the perspective of electronic archives management. They initially consider the reasons why current, conventional archival methods have failed in the management of such record keeping systems, and then they present what the reinvented archives must look like. It is worth summarizing their latter discussion. Some of their suggestions are as follows:

- archival agencies monitor and provide oversight "while assigning responsibility to agencies for achieving adequately documented functions and programs"
- archival agencies "engage their communities in solving archival problems, then they can rely more on their communities to achieve mutually desired ends"
- archival agencies become more enterprising and "endorse strategies that turn the profit motive to public use, raise money by charging fees for some services, and spend money to save money in the long run through investments that pay a return"
- archival agencies develop "more relevant and responsive services that are oriented to the needs of customers"
- archival agencies become "more effective and more productive" by decentralizing their operations.[49]

What is important to understand from the Bearman and Hedstrom argument is not that they are stressing ideas just to make archival programs better but, that in the case of electronic records, they are describing changes that must occur *if* they are to be successful.

Whether you buy into such notions popularized by these best-selling books or not or adopt and use some other schemes, I believe they reflect one fundamental truth about corporations and government—the two most dominant institu-

tions in modern society: they *are* changing, they *will* change, and they *will continue* changing for quite a while. This means that archivists must also adopt and adapt in order to play an effective role in such institutions. Moreover, society is also changing.

Society, Changes, and Archivy: Some Speculations

We must also look to society for the manner in which the archivist will appear in the next century. Historian Warren Sussman noted that "since culture shapes experience, it obviously shapes the way we respond to new technologies and new media [major issues for the archivist]; it shapes the anticipations we have of them and of the world in which we live."[50] This is certainly not a new idea, but it is one archivists must always keep in mind as they consider the future of archival work. The books on reinventing and reengineering—both sets of authors arguing that they discovered and did not formulate the principles they describe—are reflections of a new late twentieth century society. There are other factors worth considering. What I have described below is merely one preliminary checklist of factors that will affect the future of the archival profession and, more importantly, the archival mission.

The increasing use of electronic information technology will bring a greater awareness about fundamental archival issues and concerns. As organizations and society make the transition from traditional paper-oriented record keeping systems to electronic systems, concern will be heightened about the continuing management of such records, access and privacy, the notion of a record, and other such basic issues that have long been the province and interest of archivists. For the past two decades we have seen a cascade of books raising concern about computer use, ethics, and misuse, and we can now see a flow of interest to more basic issues about the management of electronic records, including a shift from a stress on information to a stress on the record. Will an individual's social security records be secure and preserved as long as needed? Will an individual's personal credit history be open and easily tampered? Will electronic mail transmissions be scrutinized by unknown parties? There is no question that such issues will continue to stimulate interest in archival matters, but there is a question whether archivists will be the ones managing such issues in the future. There will be an increased development of institutional archives, although they will look different than the ones we now have, in a wider array of organizational types than we have ever had in the United States. And archives will be thought less of as curiosities and quaint distractions and more of as essential sources for the administration of organizations and the well-being of society. An added result will be that archivists will have a more prominent role in their organizations, holding posts on important work and management teams.

Archivists will be hired because of what they know (their educational backgrounds), not because of what they have done (where they have worked). I firmly believe that the great debate about education that has persisted for so long will be over, or at least so transformed as to be barely recognizable, not long into the twenty-first century. The major programs hiring archivists will look for knowledge as their primary consideration, and they might even dismiss experience as meaningful at all because they will see the experience as largely irrelevant to their needs (this, too, will obviously change). This means that the nature

of people who constitute the archival profession will also change. They will probably be less oriented to the humanities perspective, possess more degrees in basic management and technical sciences, and be less concerned with "collecting" and more involved in the orderly accumulation of evidence. This means there will be a fundamental break between manuscript curator types and organizational archivists; the curatorial types will become more a part of the museum community and play a lesser role in the issues of documenting society or any particular kinds of organizations. This will be a painful process, but in the end the *archival* profession will be strengthened.

Archivists will possess a legitimate research literature supporting their knowledge. When archivists in the twenty-first century encounter a problem they will be able to turn to a more substantial research literature which will provide some answers or, at the least, suggestions for what they need to do. And this will not occur because archivists want more respect, like to do research (which it appears they do not), have extra time on their hands, or believe this is important to their image; they will do it because their employers and society expect it to be done. Most of this research will relate to the administration of archives, assisting the archivist to become more accountable to their organizations and to society. We will know what it costs to preserve an archival record and, just as significant, we will know what it costs an institution or society when an archival record and its evidence is lost. When they cannot find relevant research they will develop research on their own or commission research projects to be done. This will be the result of a better educated archival community (better educated in the sense that they will be more strongly grounded in archival principles and methodology) and a stronger synergy between archival programs and archival educational venues. Research will enable the archivists to make stronger cases in their own organizations, as well as to testify before federal regulatory bodies and in legal cases. Research will also assist archivists to contribute to scholarship in a manner in which they have not in the past. They will be more interdisciplinary in scope, and the work of archivists will be of appeal to other disciplines (especially librarians, information scientists, communications researchers, and historians, to name a few). The breadth of archival reading will expand, while the number of people who read what archivists write will also expand because archivists will have more to say.

Archivists will have a stronger international orientation. This has already happened in certain aspects of the archival profession, and it will continue to happen because we are becoming a more international rather than national society. Whereas in the past the archival profession tended to attend international meetings mostly to describe what was going on in their respective countries, in the future we will see archivists from many nations working together to resolve joint problems and to meet common challenges. This will not be unlike what has long characterized the sciences. It has already happened in the realm of electronic records management, where the common issues have brought together archivists from all over the world to labor on solutions and approaches. We will see more of this, spurred on by the ease of communication via electronic highways and the closing gap in the differences between the nature of archival education in the various nations, as well as the complete acceptance of standardized ways of doing archival functions.

Archivists will have a more prominent role in the constellation of information professions. The information professions are trendy occupations, but organizations and society deem them to be important to their well-being. Library schools want to make sure that they include "information" in their titles. Professional associations want to make sure that their names reflect that they are involved with information. We have the information highways. We have researchers who are information-literate. There are the information haves and have-nots. We even have a presidential administration which seeks to use the information networks. Now, define, precisely and concisely, what "information" means to these different professions and institutions, and you will generally get either fuzzy responses or such a mixed bag of responses that the composite meaning will be rather fuzzy. Still, archivists will have a more precise role because they have a more logical focus—the evidence of organizational and individual activity. Because the organization will struggle to make sense out of all the information it will receive, the archivist's sharper focus will assist the organization to have a better focus—and the archivist will have a better and more prominent role in the discussions about information and its management.

Researchers using archival sources will expect and receive speedy access to archival holdings. Again, this is a societal change; all of society has sped up and those segments that cannot, or will not, will be transformed or eliminated. While archival bibliographic standards have not been constructed with the ease of the researcher in mind, the pioneering work of the past thirty years, particularly the last fifteen, has provided a foundation for the archivist to be more receptive to researchers' needs and demands. We have one clear study of the changing expectations of researchers in the electronic world,[51] and even if we suspect for a moment that the innovative uses of archival sources represent a very minor portion of all current research, there is still no reason why this will not become the norm. Archivists will provide remote access to their holdings, even quickly scanning in documents requested from long distances. The only limitations will be the equipment of the researchers on the receiving end, and given the rapidly falling prices of such equipment even this will not be that significant a factor in the near future. Archivists may cease counting the number of requests as a measure of the value of their holdings and, instead, they might use speed of meeting requests or the geographic spread of their research clientele as the basis for effectiveness measures.

Is there a linchpin in these characteristics? What will be the most important element for archivists to have in place as the new century approaches? In my estimation it is education, or, what archivists know. Much of what archivists will face in the years ahead will require new strategies, ideas, methods, and a healthy dose of imagination and risk-taking. Educated archivists are the key to this. They need to be well-versed in archival theory and methodology, with some orientation to practice. The Society of American Archivists (SAA) Committee on Education and Professional Development's (CEPD) new education guidelines calling for a Master of Archival Studies degree start us in the right direction. Depending on how quickly the American archival community embraces the MAS degree concept, creating degree programs, supporting individuals attending such programs, and hiring them will be major factors in how well prepared the archival profession will be to grapple with the demands of the twenty-first century. As I have commented in a previous essay,[52] the MAS

degree guidelines will enable archivists to accomplish a number of important activities, including the development of a full and coherent plan for archival education on all levels, fostering its own knowledge base, enabling a better initial preparation of entry-level archivists into the increasingly standardized work of the archivist, and setting our sights on the proper credential for entry into and advancement in the archival profession. It is, after all, in such education programs (and the better continuing education venues that will naturally follow), that prospective and practicing archivists will be introduced to works such as those by Osborne and Gaebler and Hammer and Champy as means of rethinking how the archival mission can be kept current in our ever-changing world.

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NOTES

1. Andrew Abbott, *The System of Professions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1988), p. 318.
2. See Vincent E. Giuliano, "The Mechanization of Office Work," *Scientific American* 247 (September 1982): 149-164 for some discussion of various stages of the office. The author identifies traits of the preindustrial, industrial, and information age office. The basic precepts of American archival practice were developed during the heyday of the industrial age office, with a focus on the organization of people "to serve the needs of a rigid production system and its machines" (p. 158).
3. This is an essential argument of Andrew Abbott in his *The System of Professions.*
4. In fact, we can find few examples of speculations about the future work of the archivist in the literature of the profession. Frank G. Burke, "The Future Course of Archival Theory in the United States." *American Archivist* 44 (Winter 1981): 40-46 is the more typical of what sorts of speculation we have, but it is really a call to develop a new theoretical base. The essay generated extensive response, but these responses became even more inwardly focused on professional knowledge, the identity and image of the archivist, and the validity of theory versus practice. Another type of prediction has been the essays written about the impact of information technology on the archivist and archival profession, such as Richard M. Kesner, "Automated Information Management: Is There A Role for the Archivist in the Office of the Future?" *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984/85): 162-72. While these essays have drawn more on external trends, they too have been more inward-focused in their content.
5. In this essay I have not provided extensive citations to the relevant archival literature in an effort to focus on several important books outside this professional literature that possess significant implications for the profession. I am also assuming that this literature is sufficiently known. My own best summary of recent archival literature concerned with such matters can be found in my *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990).
6. (New York: Harper Business, 1994).
7. *Reengineering,* p. 2.
8. *Reengineering,* p. 16.
9. *Reengineering,* p. 18.
10. *Reengineering,* p. 25.

11. *Reengineering,* p. 32.
12. *Reengineering,* pp. 33-35.
13. *Reengineering,* p. 49.
14. *Reengineering,* p. 90.
15. *Reengineering,* p. 105.
16. *Reengineering,* p. 51.
17. *Reengineering,* pp. 51-64.
18. *Reengineering,* p. 77.
19. *Reengineering,* p. 64.
20. My observation about this is based on my more than twenty years in the profession, a paucity of literature that has such an edge (beyond writings of individuals such as David Bearman, Terry Cook, Timothy Ericson, Margaret Hedstrom, and Helen Samuels), consulting experiences, and attendance at institutes, workshops, and conferences. The real evidence for this may be in the Society of American Archivists' recently published Archival Fundamental Series (1990-1994). While this series aims to build consensus about common principles and practices, it fails to provide any sense of change or the need for change.
21. *Reengineering,* p. 71.
22. (New York: Plume Books, 1992).
23. *Reinventing,* p. xix.
24. *Reinventing,* pp. 11-12.
25. *Reinventing,* p. 14.
26. *Reinventing,* p. 15.
27. *Reinventing,* pp. 19-20.
28. *Reinventing,* p. 34.
29. By this, I mean that records managers tend to identify most with meeting the needs of the records creators, such as stressing only scheduling records based on legal requirements (and even out of the fear of being implicated in litigation because certain records had been retained). Archivists, on the other hand, have mostly stressed the cultural or historical values of their records and of their broader mission. I have explored this issue in two of my recent essays, "The Record: Is It Evolving?" *Records & Retrieval Report* 10 (March 1994) and "What's In A Name? Archives As a Multi-Faceted Term in the Information Professions," *Records & Retrieval Report* 11 (March 1995).
30. *Reinventing,* p. 43.
31. *Reinventing,* p. 47.
32. *Reinventing,* p. 139.
33. This is not a new or radical suggestion. One can find in Bruce W. Dearstyne's "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 76-87 some of the same issues. However, as a profession, we have either not done this type of information gathering about the use of our records or we have done a poor job of reporting it (both to society and to our own profession).
34. The most convenient summary of this is David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence* (Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1994).
35. *Reinventing,* p. 141.
36. See, for example, David Bearman, "Archival Data Management to Achieve Organizational Accountability for Electronic Records," *Archives and Manuscripts* 21, no. 1 (1993): 14-28, the best introduction to this and an essay raising many of the kinds of issues discussed by the authors of the re-inventing and reengineering texts.
37. Al Gore, *From Red Tape to Results: Creating a Government That Works Better & Costs Less: Report of the National Performance Review* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, September 1993).
38. *Reinventing,* p. 38.
39. The continued dependence by many archivists conducting appraisal on organizational charts suggests this. The best recent example of this traditional approach is William Maher, *The Management of College and University Archives* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1992).
40. *Reinventing,* p. 110.
41. *Reinventing,* p. 114.
42. *Reinventing,* p. 130.
43. *Reinventing,* p. 131.
44. *Reinventing,* p. 135.

45. *Reinventing,* p. 168.
46. *Reinventing,* p. 194.
47. *Reinventing,* p. 222.
48. *Reinventing,* p. 250.
49. "Reinventing Archives for Electronic Records: Alternative Service Delivery Options," in Margaret Hedstrom, ed., *Electronic Records Management Program Strategies* (Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1993), pp. 82-98.
50. *Culture as History: The Transformation of American Society in the Twentieth Century* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), p. 256.
51. Avra Michelson and Jeff Rothenberg, "Scholarly Communication and Information Technology: Exploring the Impact of Changes in the Research Process on Archives," *American Archivist* 55 (Spring 1992): 236-315.
52. "The Master of Archival Studies and American Education Standards: An Argument for the Continued Development of Graduate Archival Education in the United States," *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 221-31.