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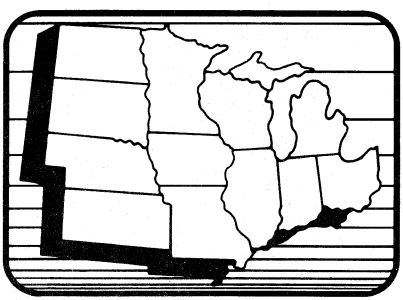

ARCHIVES WEEK AND THE POWER OF INTERSECTING RIPPLES

BY GEORGE W. BAIN

ABSTRACT: Like ripples on a pond, Archives Week offers archivists a genuinely broadscale public program for connecting with society at large. The article looks at the development of the Archives Week idea to date; focuses in more detail on the program in Ohio; explores a series of questions about the idea's potential expansion as well as structural challenges to it; and makes a general argument for more metropolitan, state, and multistate regional groups beginning their own programs.

One of the simple pleasures of life is to toss a rock into a pond and watch the ripples it creates spread across the body of water. It can be even more fascinating to toss a sequence of rocks into the pond and to observe the effects of the resultant intersecting ripples. Moving now to the archival world, let us consider the idea of Archives Week in an analogous fashion. Archives Week programs can be like the intersecting ripples in the pond if we take this idea and make it work to its full potential effect.

The challenge to have an Archives Week program was issued by the International Council on Archives (ICA) in the late 1970s.[1] The call for a national Archives Week (U.S.) was posed to archivists most significantly in 1991.[2] To date the response to the challenge has been slow although it is growing. It is the author's contention that we should be using the power of this idea for action across all of North America. And it is time that the challenge be accepted more fully.

Archives Week in Context

What is "Archives Week"? It is a fledgling form of public programming which, at its best, creates a bridge between the archival profession and society at large in an interactive and collaborative fashion. It is, unlike most other archival public programming, a large-scale one that is being conducted most characteristically at the statewide and multistate level.

This being said, it is also necessary to ask what public programs are. "Public programs," one archivist argues, "can promote archival goals to acquire and preserve valuable resources, encourage and expand the use of historical records, and raise public awareness of archives and their purpose."[3]

At the simplest level, public programming is done when an archivist opens the way to a significant donation through basically pleasant and courteous interaction with a user or visitor. But public programs can also be much more elaborate, such as the "Vanishing Georgia" photographic project of the late 1970s and early 1980s or the New England Archivists' booth at the New England Fair during the 1980s.

Reduced to their essence, public programs help explain who archivists are and what they do. Thus, while Archives Week is not the only possible venue, it nevertheless offers many forms of implementation. Yet archivists must be convinced of its efficacy if the idea is to take firmer root. Suffice it to say that Archives Week is not a matter of survival for the profession: archivists will continue to exist. But it is an important instrument for developing a posture of active advocacy for the profession and learning to become more effective in public programming.[4]

In addition, the Archives Week idea goes hand in hand with the profession's evolving growth and development of outreach theory and practice. Developing ties with the larger society—the general public—has been a clearly visible element of the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) generalized outreach efforts over the past decade and more, particularly through SAA's Task Force on Archives and Society endeavors.[5] The call for greater interaction with society was followed by specifically articulated goals and priorities in the initial report of the Committee on Goals and Priorities (C-GAP) published in 1986.[6] C-GAP's encompassing agenda has been partially fulfilled yet also somewhat narrowed to accomplish objectives of the highest priority. Even so, interaction with society at large remains a general goal with priority for SAA. Goal 1 of the Society's 1993 strategic plan calls for the organization to work, among other things, to improve "public awareness of the value of archives."[7]

Over the same period archivists have also closely examined their concerns about making positive impressions upon "resource allocators" and upon their equally important but unexplored counterparts, "funding advocates."[8] Yet archival writers have also argued more broadly for the need to reach out to and create distinctive links with the general public. The Levy study of resource allocators noted a basic challenge: that the purposes, uses, and contributions of archivists "have to be made more vivid—more explicit, more concrete, and repeated in varied ways."[9] And Elsie Finch has both spelled out at length the reasons for concerted archival advocacy and supplied case statements with examples of this advocacy. The case studies in her recent book, however, discuss only indirectly the state- or regionwide scope of Archives Week programs currently in existence.[10] So the Archives Week movement offers a new dimension of scale for outreach efforts, and the development of a number of Archives Week programs across the United States and Canada offers the means for achieving several of the profession's more general outreach objectives involving interaction with the public at a geographic level close to home. Hence, the metaphorically described pond offers a platform for basic, essential experimentation insofar as we professionals are willing to utilize the opportunity.

Archives Week in Practice

It was the state of New York that set the pace for Archives Week in North America, holding its first Week in 1989 under the leadership of State Archivist Larry Hackman. On the basis of this experience Hackman issued his 1991 call for a national Archives Week to be held in October 1992, the Columbian quincentenary. Over the half decade since then several archival groups have launched Archives Week programs. They will be discussed in general later: the immediate focus will be on the Archives Week program in Ohio.

The Society of Ohio Archivists (SOA) voted in the spring of 1991 to hold its first program in October 1992. For several reasons, however, the first "Archives Week in Ohio" did not happen until April 1993. The delay provided time for the development of a structure of five regional coordinators to do groundwork across the state. The first program, as it turned out, was linked with SOA's 25th anniversary celebration that spring. The initial theme was a very general one: "Tales from the Archives." The governor and the two houses of the legislature issued proclamations of support and there was activity during the week across the breadth of the state.

During the first year SOA became aware of and benefitted from contact with other groups. New York's example was obvious, but the experience of the Archives Week programs held in Tampa and Hillsborough County, Florida, and by the Society of Mississippi Archivists proved helpful. The Florida program provided examples of how to organize activities well. The Society of Mississippi Archivists exchanged information with SOA, including a poster it had developed for its 1993 program. But perhaps the most significant accomplishment was the fact that the Ohio group kept its resolve to hold its first Week.

Once started, Archives Week in Ohio has been able to build upon its experience and to develop additional initiatives. In the second year, the number of regional coordinators was expanded from five to seven. SOA decided to piggyback upon the attention expected for the Ken Burns documentary, *Baseball,* and used the theme "Sports and Recreation in the Archives." It also developed its first poster for the Week held in early September. The Cleveland Archival Roundtable mounted a combined exhibition in a prominent downtown store window.

In the third year the date for the Week was shifted to October, where it remains.[11] In 1995, the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II, the theme for the week was "Letters Home: Documenting World War II in the Archives." The observance coincided with a grant proposal submitted by the Ohio Historical Records Advisory Board (OHRAB) to the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) for a "Homefront and Battlefront" regrant project. The Archives Week theme provided repositories an opportunity for receiving new collections, a few of which did come as a result of the programming. An outstanding event was the film festival of World War II movies held in Youngstown. Because of the cost of developing an annual poster, SOA sought contributions from veterans' groups to help defray the printing costs. Design work for the posters has been rotated among repositories, giving different ones the chance to display their holdings while also underwriting the costs. Paper for the first three posters and for 1998 was solicited from paper mills in the state. Necessity

has thus become an engine for enterprise, forcing archivists to make strong overtures to and to seek support from the primary audience group or groups pinpointed in the year's theme.

SOA has, at the time of this writing, completed its sixth Archives Week program. Acting in concert with the State Historical Records Advisory Board's (SHRAB) plan, which points toward the bicentennial of statehood in 2003, a new wrinkle for 1996 was for SOA to set themes a few years ahead and to begin a series of "celebration" weeks. Thus the theme in 1996 was "Celebrating Family History in Ohio" and the archivists worked closely with the renowned Ohio Genealogical Society (OGS) and its many chapters. To make this collaboration work, the SOA Archives Week Committee provided county chapters with model public service announcements (PSAs) to take to local radio stations and a model text to take to governmental officials for proclamations and resolutions observing the week in their communities. A number of OGS chapters in turn made donations in support of the printing of a full-color poster.

For the fifth year in 1997 the group received support from statewide associations for local governments, those for counties, municipalities, and particularly the public librarians—around the theme "Celebrating Local Government." The County Commissioners Association of Ohio (CCAO) published an article in its quarterly magazine. Due to last minute space constraints, SOA was unable to place a pro bono advertisement in the state's leading commercially-published regional magazine but did succeed in placing one in a journalism school's lab magazine. The regional coordinator for Cleveland lined up a local judge to speak at an event in city hall and was interviewed at length on a local public radio outlet. The county recorder and other officials in Lawrence County, an area along the Ohio River that, insofar as we know, has no employed archivists, developed a video about its county government and had an elaborate open house that included live news coverage from a nearby Huntington, West Virginia, television station. The new feature in 1998, with the theme "celebrating women's history," was a series of workshops targeted toward members of local chapters and branches of women's organizations on how to organize their records of enduring value for posterity (and to consider placing them in a repository). Two national vendors supplied complimentary Hollinger boxes with sample kits (acid-free file folders, photographic sleeves, etc.) for each participant, and SAA provided its brochures on personal and organizational records for distribution.

It needs to be stated very directly that more can be done to assure the program's true effectiveness. Ohio archivists have no scientific tool to measure our claims of effectiveness although we do address many of the points covered in Kathleen Roe's discussion of public programs.[12] But we are able to claim a modest amount of informal name recognition, which we expect to increase with each year's program and poster. We are mindful of the potential danger of a onetime effort. So it is essential to compound the impact of the Archives Week whenever and wherever possible. In 1996, for instance, the Week empowered a number of local genealogical societies to go to their local radio station with a PSA, perhaps the first time ever for them.

Year by year, however, SOA believes it is making ripples and that the ripples in the Ohio pond are gradually becoming more significant. Nonarchivists associated with the repositories that design the posters gain an acquaintanceship with the program when

the archivists there undertake this work. The distributed posters may hang in a public library or historical society for months, thereby helping familiarize patrons with the program. In fact the Ohio Library Council is providing financial support in exchange for posters to be distributed to each public library and branch in the state. Additionally, there is the growing likelihood that a genealogist or an elected local official will know about it and be supportive when we celebrate education in 1999.[13]

The success of SOA's program in Ohio provides a model for use elsewhere, particularly for states with a state-level organization. But, as indicated earlier, it is not the only model. It has benefitted from other programs itself. The Tampa and Hillsborough County example has been a model for metropolitan groups, especially those situated in states without a state-level group, for example, the Twin Cities of Minnesota and the St. Louis area. New York was joined by archivists in Philadelphia for a couple of years before this combined program expanded into the larger Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference (MARAC) multistate Archives Week program. To the north in Canada, archivists in the Province of Alberta have had a program. The limited Archives Day public event program run for several years by the Society of Rocky Mountain Archivists (Colorado and Wyoming) serves as an example for archivists in more sparsely settled areas of the country. The Kansas State Historical Society has a program that in 1997—its third year—received financial support from the bistate metropolitan group, the Kansas City Area Archivists. And Utah's SHRAB has conducted a modest Archives Week program since 1995, while Arizona's SHRAB held its first Archives Day (with poster) in 1996 and expanded it to a week in 1997. This has given impetus to SHRABs as an operative player, such that the Wisconsin board provided a comprehensive sponsorship (with poster, theme, and Web page) during that state's first week in 1998. Meanwhile, archivists across Texas also started observing Archives Week informally in 1998.[14]

The practitioners have used or developed a broad range of tools and events for their programs as well. Most have developed a poster for the state or region. New York City archivists have developed a series of awards presented during Archives Week. The Kansas Historical Society printed bookmarks along with its poster in 1997. Over 60 repositories in the Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, area contributed to a combined exhibition in 1998. Many repositories hold instructional workshops for local citizens such as genealogists during the Week. Exhibits, open houses, speakers or symposia, and related outreach activities round out the myriad possibilities for programming during the Week.

The Need for Broader Implementation

So a variety of programs do exist although the geographic coverage of Archives Week programs remains limited. Still, the force of the idea gives power to the imagination if only we dare seize it.[15] Moreover, the idea has three features which, taken together, make it a noteworthy instrument. First, to be done best, it requires a broad-based cooperative effort across a defined geographic entity, be this a metropolitan area, a state, or a region (and even a country) that encompasses many repositories. Second, it allows archivists within the given area to identify nonarchival groups with which

they need to interact and collaborate in pursuing flexible objectives over time. For instance, archivists within the given boundaries may work one year with a set of organizations to hold open houses, and another set the following year to provide proper care for its records. Third, Archives Week recurs annually, offering archivists a regular platform from which to explain ourselves in a varying fashion—in short, to carry out archival advocacy in the particular region.[16] What remains, then, is for more groups to make a beginning—and to sustain the effort.

Assessing the statement above, however, presents the profession with as many questions as answers for the moment. These are questions such as, Who more specifically are the groups with which we should work? What can we learn from other professional associations about broad public programming? What are the structural obstacles within our professional associations that must be addressed? Who should be in charge of conducting the Archives Week program? How can it be funded? And what should be our agenda? It is at least worth contemplating how these questions might be answered even though it is impossible to provide full answers until we gain more experience inside the profession.

Taking these questions in sequence, there are, within our locales—communities, states or provinces, or geographic regions—and whatever the time, numerous groups with which the profession can work. The NHPRC strategic plan of 1992, for example, sought to increase support "from a broad community of beneficiary parties—archivists, documentary editors, historians, patriotic organizations, state and local government officials, lawyers, jurists, educators, genealogists, journalists, local historians, historic preservationists, museum curators, and others with responsibility for historical records or with the need to use them."[17]

This list, as should be understood, is limited to NHPRC's domain. Under the rubric of "other," however, one can expand the list to include church groups, women's groups, ethnically oriented groups, civic groups, and business and labor groups that will have importance for all archivists. Setting a priority on establishing closer connections with these groups—and closer links with the general public through them—is essential for the profession's core promotional efforts.

As archivists experiment with this large-scale public program it is important to recognize that there are countless other such promotional programs. Closer to home, Archives Week is one among several programs for professional groups against which it may be compared, two of these being National Library Week (April) for librarians and Preservation Week (May) for historic preservationists. The American Library Association (ALA) sponsors the first and the National Trust for Historic Preservation coordinates the second. Archivists are similar to librarians and preservationists as curators of cultural heritage resources. Archivists are thus in a position to learn from the National Trust and particularly from the American Library Association whose event week has been held for four decades now. Compared with archivists in the United States and Canada, librarians are much more numerous. Given the considerably smaller number in our profession, archivists cannot expect to garner the same amount of financial resources and public support as do the librarians for a parallel program. Preservation Week, for instance, is not as well known as Library Week, nor do preservationists, like archivists, have the same number of professionals. Yet the preservation community has

conducted its program for a quarter century. And both of these programs, it should be added, grew over time from modest beginnings.[18] At the same time, while archivists have not adopted an across-the-board observance of Archives Week, we are ahead of our counterparts in the museum community by virtue of having a fledgling Archives Week movement. While there is an international Museum Day observed annually in May, museum professionals have not to this point begun a Museum Week program comparable to what archivists are developing. As we learn from others we can also encourage museum professionals—in both the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) and the American Association of Museums—to begin thinking about doing so and we can share our experiences with them.

In order to make the Archives Week idea work most effectively, the archival profession needs to grapple with the imperfect structural linkages among its groups that impede a rapid movement in this direction. Our profession, when compared to librarians, for example, has no organizational body that can coordinate in a similar fashion common activities and efforts across the board. We have both the SAA and the NHPRC but, given their current structures, they do not appear at this time the most likely or best able to direct an Archives Week. Why not? For its part, SAA has no supporting regional structure of its own, whereas ALA is a national organization with subordinated, affiliated groups in every state, which then give direction to National Library Week.[19] SAA is closer to being an umbrella association than it is to being the organizational apex of a broadly-organized membership pyramid.[20] For the archival profession, unlike librarians and many other groups, there is no direct linkage between SAA headquarters and groups below.[21] For its part, the NHPRC has a more limited mission related to its support role for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). Its 1992 list of primary constituent groups noted earlier with which it wanted to interact in order to achieve its strategic plan was focused closely on these political needs. Also the NHPRC has extremely limited financial resources that must be spread thinly across a wide expanse. The author, being from the United States, is unfamiliar with any Canadian NHPRC equivalent, if such exists; SAA is international in its coverage although archival groups in Canada cover the Canadian scene more directly. Can these weaknesses be changed? They can if there is the will on a very broad basis to do so. Perhaps the more important question will be, How quickly?

This said, it must be asked who should be in charge of developing the Archives Week idea. Should this be top-down or bottom-up? Currently Archives Week is emerging and spreading in North America in a bottom-up fashion. The dynamics for the Archives Week idea are coming from experimentation by a growing number of smaller efforts. This suggests a perceived need for greater such activity. As argued above, however, no national-level group or agency has developed an appropriate structure for a top-down mechanism for putting such a program into place. Still, with a bit of determination and imagination, these linkages can be developed. If some of these bodies worked together, this development could change very rapidly. The author predicts that any new structural form that may develop will more likely be an alliance, not (certainly in the short run) a cohesively knit association such as ALA. But the shape of the structure is a lesser problem than the decision to act together.

There are grounds in the author's estimation for believing conditions behind these structural weaknesses may be changing. While the NHPRC, for instance, is severely limited in the funds it can disperse, it does have a connection to the 50 states through the SHRABs. In recent times the Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (COSHRC), the associated coordinators' group for the SHRABs, has undertaken the gathering of data by and for state boards that seeks to expand its data collection parameters beyond those for state archives and records management agencies alone. This effort flows from the assumption that such data will provide increasingly important longitudinal information over time.[22] Many of the NHPRC's constituent groups and the myriad organizations with which the state-level surveys are touching base are ones with which archival professionals can (and should) naturally interact at the state and even the local area. In some fashion or other the groups so contacted may come to serve as quintessential funding advocates. Combining the new scale of activity at the province or state level (or even larger) with a pitch toward these natural supporters provides a base for dynamic public programming. Within the professional associations, the Midwest Archives Conference (MAC) has established an ad hoc Advocacy Committee to look broadly at the potential for greater activity. At the time of this writing, there has been an initiative among SAA and a number of regional groups to begin collaboration on a more coordinated approach to continuing education.[23] In addition, SAA Council has become more publically active through efforts such as its stance on copyright legislation. These are small developments but potentially very significant ones.

An important ingredient for any such discussion is the question, What sources are available for funding Archives Week programs? Governmental support of some sort is always a possibility. The Tampa archivists have secured state humanities council support for their activities. On a broader level, during the American Revolution Bicentennial 20 years ago the nascent History Day program in Cleveland, Ohio, obtained private foundation support regionally, then secured National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) funding over a few years to expand it to a national program. Perhaps something similar could be done for Archives Week. However, given the tenor of the times in which support for the federal-level cultural programs are themselves being questioned, governmental support on this scale appears to be a remote possibility. Even so, we should consider limited sources of support, whether governmental or nongovernmental. In the latter direction, can we tap a major foundation or corporate underwriter (or both) for financial support? Insofar as the author knows, none have to date been approached to provide assistance for the development of this program yet, in the current milieu, this is arguably the best route to consider for external support.

Another parallel possibility is funding from within the profession. In the early 1990s the American Library Association proposed to its membership a dues increase with the new funds dedicated to increased activity in its Washington office. The membership approved the raise. Would SAA members accept a similar challenge? While this seems problematic, it should be considered. Goal 1 of SAA's strategic plan calls for the Society to work more closely with regional groups. Yet this must be a two-way street. The best possible course of all may be a combined approach that seeks to add incentives and leveraged economic multipliers both internally and externally. The archival

profession would undoubtedly be the stronger for becoming more enterprising. What if, for instance, SAA raised its dues and set aside the revenues from the increase for advocacy purposes, including support for Archives Week programs? What if it simultaneously challenged the multistate regional groups to participate, to make the program truly stretch from coast to coast, by matching funds dollar for dollar to provide coordination and high quality promotional support? What if the NHPRC made a modest sum available for SHRABs willing to play an active role in the respective states? SHRABs could conceivably seek matching financial support from state legislatures. This support could possibly be made conditional on the local financial support. What if all these groups—SAA, NHPRC, and allied organizations willing to participate—combined to seek matching support from private foundations or corporate funding supporters or other governmental agencies, or all in tandem, in the United States and Canada to carry the program for a three- to five-year period? Under current arrangements this would take a great deal of negotiation. Yet this is a novel goal toward which the profession can work if it so chooses.

Short of this, what are the possibilities without the support of national groups? To date, MARAC alone among the multistate regional groups has accepted the challenge fully. As the regionals move along into their second quarter century, would not an Archives Week program serve as a bold new venture? Archives Week programs can be started at the lower levels for a very modest cost.[24] Would this not serve to make an impression in the public's mind about the regionals and the value of the work conducted in these areas by archivists? Still, this is at best a short-range strategy. Even at this level, the author contends, the Archives Week idea will have its strongest impact only if and when it ultimately becomes continental in scope. Sooner or later archivists running Archives Week programs will need to give serious and meaningful consideration to this expansion. The bottom-up approach is an important first step, but the eventual need is for broad collaboration within the profession and for bold, imaginative strategies for developing funds internally and seeking additional financial support externally. Perhaps, for a starter, SAA or NHPRC or a Canadian body, or even MAC through the Advocacy Committee, can issue the call for a planning conference to explore all these possibilities.

Lastly, under whatever guise, what should be the agenda for those groups conducting this public programming? Whether a program is broad in geographic scope or like the current isolated but experimental scene, groups must be flexible in approach and must keep in mind the basic aim of conveying who archivists are and what archivists do. Lacking the rapid evolution to a national or continental program the proximate focus will vary from place to place as the sponsoring groups address the overall needs of their program planning. Ohio is in the advantageous situation now of looking toward a significant date in its history early in the new century: the bicentennial of statehood. Not every state or local area has something as significant at the moment; even so, a central focus of the Ohio program has been the development of connections. And setting a priority on establishing closer connections with supportive beneficiary parties—and closer links with the general public through them—is essential for the profession's core promotional efforts. The Archives Week program, as one of the stronger instruments available for creating such connections, provides the profession with a

concrete platform upon which to cement stronger bonds between archivists and society.

Conclusion

The archival community in North America has developed models for implementing and sustaining the Archives Week idea, as proposed by the ICA two decades ago. It is imperative that archivists have such a significant public program of their own.

Archives Week, where is it being carried out in the United States and Canada, is proving to be an effective instrument for advocacy (including collection development) and for raising general public awareness for archivists. It is a programmatic bargain that must not be allowed to go begging. Archivists can also learn from other professions, especially librarians and preservationists, about how to conduct this form of a large and comprehensive public program. So it behooves archival professionals to accelerate the development and the expansion of Archives Week activity. Will we cover more than half of the United States and Canada by the first year of the new century? The author certainly hopes this will be the case! In so doing we will be able, as individual members of our profession, to make ripples intersect or, stated another way, to experience the joy of seeing an idea with great power and potential come to life.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: George W. Bain, gbain1@ohiou.edu, is Head of Archives & Special Collections in the Ohio University Libraries. He has served as the coordinator for SOA's Archives Week Committee since its beginning—having made the motion that SOA undertake the program, it was up to him to make it happen. C'est la vie! He expresses great appreciation to Larry Hackman for developing—and sustaining—the New York State program and for challenging the rest of us in North America to bring the idea to life.

NOTES

1. See publications such as *International Archives Week, 23–29 October, 1979: Souvenir* (Bangalore: Department of Karanataka State Archives, 1979); *Archives Week 23rd to 29th January 1981 (at Mysore) Souvenir* (Bangalore: Department of Karanataka State Archives, 1980); and *Treasures of West Bengal Archives: An Exhibition of Historical Records* (Calcutta: State Archives of West Bengal, Calcutta Information Centre, 1980) for references to the ICA effort and event activity in India in this period. Other bibliographic investigation also reveals activity in Great Britain during this period.
2. Larry Hackman, "Archives Week in the United States?" *SAA Newsletter*, March 1991, 14–15, 20. See also Hackman's article, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs: New York as a Case Study," *American Archivist* 55:4 (1992): 578–599, with a parallel argument for an enhanced governmental and public role for state archival agencies. The articles, taken together, advocate a broader public role for archivists generally.
3. Kathleen D. Roe, "Public Programs," *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions,* ed. James Gregory Bradshar (Chicago: U. of Chicago Press, 1989): 218.
4. For general comments on the archival profession's need for advocacy, see Richard J. Cox, *American Archival Analysis* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990): 304–320, 337–338.
5. See David Gracy's incoming remarks and presidential address, which spell out his conception for the effort: "Archives and Society: The First Archival Revolution," *American Archivist* 47:1 (1984): 7–10, and "Our Future Is Now," *American Archivist* 48:1 (1985): 12–21.
6. *Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: SAA, 1986).
7. *Leadership and Service in the 1990s: A Strategic Plan for the Society of American Archivists* (Chicago: SAA, 1993): 1, with amplification on 3.
8. Sidney J. Levy and Albert G. Robles, *The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators' Perceptions* (Chicago: SAA, 1984); John Treanor, in his presentation as part of the session, "Institutional Archives: In-Reach before Outreach," at the SAA annual meeting 1992, noted in *SAA Reference, Access and Outreach Section Newsletter* 8:1 (1992): 3, used the phrase "funding advocates." The latter concept has not been plumbed to the depths the way the former has; it offers fertile ground for investigation.
9. Levy, *op. cit.*, iv.
10. Elsie Finch, *Advocating Archives: An Introduction to Public Relations for Archivists* (Metuchen, NJ: SAA and Scarecrow Press, 1994).
11. This is in conformity with the dominant U.S. pattern. For Ohio archivists, it was as much a way to assure college and university archivists a time for participating fully each year.
12. Bradshar, *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions*: 281–227.
13. For more detail on Archives Week in Ohio, particularly the Archives Week Committee's annual report to SOA Council, check the SOA Web site for Archives Week, or contact the author directly.
14. Most of the author's knowledge about the programs in other states has come through informal contacts over time plus the messages posted on the Archives and Archivists list in 1998.
15. The local historian Carol Kammen recently suggested an imaginative program of exchanges of photocopies of letters. She concluded with the rhetorical question, Why not do this every year as a part of Archives Week? A resident of upstate New York, Kammen was unaware of how limited is the geographical coverage now a half decade after Hackman's challenge. See her "On Doing Local History" column, *History News* 51:3 (1996): 3. She returned to the theme of archival appreciation and archival promotion again a year later: 52:4 (1997): 3–4.
16. The SAA Glossary entry for "public programming" gives a cross-reference to the term "outreach program." It defines the latter as "Organized activities of Archives or Manuscript Repositories intended to acquaint potential Users with their Holdings and their research and reference value." See Lewis J. Bellardo and Lynn Lady Bellardo, comp., *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* (Chicago: SAA, 1992): 24. Advocacy has not yet entered the published archival glossary. Richard Cox semi-formally defines advocacy as "the effort to effect public policy in conformity with the mission and interests of the archival community" in *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Metuchen, NJ: Scarecrow Press, 1990): 320.

17. This is Objective 3 under the Goal "To Generate Public Support for an Accessible Historical Record" in *To Protect a Priceless Legacy: The Preservation and Use of America's Historical Records* (Washington, DC: NHPRC, 1992): 36.
18. An investigation of the OCLC WorldCat database shows that National Library Week was initially fostered in the late 1950s by the National Library Week Program based in New York City and full national support grew over time. The booklet *Local Organization Handbook for the National Library Week Program* (New York: National Library Week Program, 1967) recounts the program's development over its first decade. The U.S. Congress, which passed legislation for the National Register in 1966, supported the national Historic Preservation Week effort with resolutions in the early 1970s; small handbook and event publications for states and metropolitan areas developed more fully in the late 1970s and early 1980s.
19. AASLH in its coordinated awards program parallels the ALA model.
20. The pattern that exists in the archival profession was not an inevitability. Raimund Goerler notes in his history of the Society of Ohio Archivists for its 25th anniversary that SOA asked to become an affiliate of SAA in the late 1960s but SAA turned down the opportunity. See Goerler, *From History to Pre-History: Archivists Face the Future*, ed. Raimund Goerler (Columbus: SOA, 1993): 7, 12.
21. For a discussion of the dual, albeit complementary, expectations and roles that SAA and the various regional groups developed during the 1970s, see Patrick M. Quinn, "Regional Archival Organizations and the Society of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 46:4 (1983): 433–440. Quinn's article accurately portrays the thinking that existed then, and thinking that has continued until recent times. For instance, a few years ago SAA Council (at the recommendation of the committee) abolished the Committee on Regional Archival Activity (CRAA). No doubt many archivists are very comfortable with this arrangement. It does provide latitude for experimentation and innovative endeavors. Nevertheless, down the road this structural arrangement has left the profession less able to mount concerted common front positions.
22. See the study, *Recognizing Leadership and Partnership: A Report on the Condition of Historical Records in the States and Efforts to Ensure Their Preservation and Use* (Council of State Historical Records Coordinators, 1993), prepared by Vicki Walch. COSHRC has begun releasing parts of its more recent study, which is focusing on records held by nongovernmental bodies.
23. See Mark Greene, "Final Words from the Prez," *MAC Newsletter* 24:4 (1997): 5. This is in contrast to the view of more than a decade ago express representatively by Quinn, *op. cit.* The amplification of Goal 1 in the 1993 SAA strategic plan states in part, "It is especially important for SAA to expand its advocacy efforts to reach legislators and government officials at the national and state levels, and to improve public awareness of the value of archives and archival work." *Leadership and Service in the 1990s*, 3.
24. The cost for SOA, basically the bill for printing the poster, was under $1,000 the first year and reached $2,200 in 1998; for this expenditure the group now gets 2,000 copies. After supporting this cost alone for the first poster, SOA has turned (as noted) to partner groups for support for the greater part of its poster printing costs. There was no calculation made of the cost for non-poster mailings across the state or in the seven regions, but these were minimal.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING ELECTRONIC RECORDS: A NEW ARCHIVAL PARADIGM? AN AFFIRMATION OF OUR ARCHIVAL TRADITIONS?

BY PHILIP C. BANTIN

ABSTRACT: The emergence of electronic records has initiated a spirited debate on archival methodology and practice. In this article, the author summarizes the concepts and strategies proposed by archivists, on the one hand, who advocate employing traditional archival methodologies to manage electronic records, and those, on the other hand, who recommend reengineering the management process and implementing new techniques and strategies. These concepts and strategies are reviewed in the context of three archival functions: custody, appraisal, and description. In the conclusion, the author offers some suggestions on how one might begin the quest to become an informed player in electronic records management.

Introduction

Please consider the following statements by three of the most influential and respected commentators on electronic records management.

"This change [in appraising electronic records] is not a refinement or slight tinkering to accommodate new realities, but a reorientation in what archivists do—a new archival paradigm, as Charles Dollar noted in his concluding address to the 1992 International Congress on Archives in Montreal on the impact of information technology on archival theory and practice. We must get our archival heads out of the sands of practices devised for medieval charters and papal decrees. We must realize that clinging to old practices in light of the volume of new records is *not* a noble defense of principle or archival tradition, but an act of willful neglect."[1]

"The UBC-MAS research project was undertaken to test the validity of traditional diplomatic and archival concepts in the brave new world of electronic records. The conceptual analysis of electronic records and the project's findings confirm that the

concepts continue to have resonance and, in fact, provide a powerful and internally consistent methodology for preserving the integrity of electronic records."[2]

What is a practicing archivist to make of these conflicting statements? In one case we are asked to consider adopting a new archival paradigm for managing electronic records,[3] and in the other we are advised to seek answers by rereading our Jenkinson (in the case of the UBC statement quoted above) or Schellenberg and returning to our archival roots. Where does one start in the quest to become an informed player in electronic records management?

In this article some of the critical issues and prominent strategies pertaining to electronic records management are reviewed and a conceptual framework from which to begin the quest to become an informed player is created. More specifically, the article includes summaries of the concepts and strategies proposed by those archivists, on the one hand, who advocate employing traditional archival methodologies to manage electronic records and those, on the other hand, who recommend reengineering the management process and developing and implementing new techniques and methodologies. In an attempt to make this review as pertinent and familiar as possible, these ideas are reviewed in the context of three archival functions: custody, appraisal, and description.

The goals then are to examine the broad issues and to provide a type of road map to prominent management strategies for electronic records, particularly for archivists who are just beginning this journey. In the process, however, recognize that often complex arguments are somewhat simplified and reduced but hopefully, not distorted or taken out of context. For those readers who seek to construct a fuller, more textured picture of the issues or strategies under review, numerous endnotes containing notes and citations are provided. It should also be noted at the outset that all these issues and strategies can be applied to varying degrees to paper as well as to electronic records. In fact, some of the theories and methodologies examined in this article were advanced well before the real impact of electronic records was felt or perceived. In most cases, however, it was the emergence of electronic records that has provided the impetus for a fuller and more urgent discussion of the issues.

Finally, be advised that the choices before the reader do not constitute an either-or decision-making situation. Indicative of this is the fact that the title of this paper does not include an "or" joining the two questions. It is simply not a choice between one extreme or another, but a much more complicated and rich process or dialectic of combining and joining old and new into a modified theoretical construct. As Terry Cook so eloquently writes, "Archival history is instead a rich collage of overlapping layers, of contradictory ideas existing simultaneously or even blended together, of thinkers exhibiting differences of emphasis more than of fundamental ideas, of individual thinkers changing their ideas in light of new circumstances, of old ideas appearing in new guises in new places. The pendulum of thought swings back and forth, as one generation solves its predecessor's problems, but thereby creates new problems for the next generation to address, with ideas having their day, being discarded, and then being revitalized in modified form in later work. And so it should be."[4]

Before we begin the analysis of the specific archival issues, let us first review two basic models for managing electronic records.

Models for Managing Electronic Records

Life Cycle Model

The life cycle model for managing records, as articulated by Theodore Schellenberg and others, has been the prominent model for North American archivists and records managers since at least the 1960s. However, the question being asked recently is, Does the model provide a viable strategy for managing electronic records? Before we examine archivists' responses to this question, let us briefly review the basic characteristics of the life cycle model.

This model portrays the life of a record as going through various stages or periods, much like a living organism. In stage one, the record is created, presumably for a legitimate reason and according to certain standards. In the second stage, the record goes through an active period when it has maximum primary value and is used or referred to frequently by the creating office and others involved in decision making. During this time the record is stored on-site in the active or current files of the creating office. At the end of stage two, the record may be reviewed and determined to have no further value, at which point it is destroyed, or the record can enter stage three. In stage three, the record is relegated to a semiactive status, which means it still has value, but is not needed for day-to-day decision making. Because the record need not be consulted regularly, it is often stored in an off-site storage center. At the end of stage three, another review occurs, at which point a determination is made to destroy or send the record to stage four. Stage four is reserved for inactive records with long-term, indefinite, archival value. This small percentage of records (normally estimated at approximately five percent of the total documentation) is sent to an archival repository, where specific activities are undertaken to preserve and describe the records.

The life cycle model describes not only what will happen to a record, it also defines who will manage the record during each stage. During the creation and active periods, the record creators have primary responsibility for managing the record, although records managers may well be involved to various degrees. In the semiactive stage, it is the records manager who takes center stage and assumes major responsibility for managing the records. Finally, in the inactive stage, the archivist takes the lead in preserving, describing, and providing access to the archival record.[5]

To summarize, the life cycle model has contributed, particularly in North America, to the creation of a fairly strict demarcation of responsibilities between the archives and records management professions. Among archivists it has resulted in a tendency to view the life of a record in terms of prearchival and archival, and active and inactive, and to regard the stage when the archivist intervenes in the cycle as occurring sometime towards the end of the life cycle when the record becomes inactive and archival.

The chief supporters of the life cycle model as it pertains to electronic records have come from the electronic records research project team at the Master of Archival Science Program at the University of British Columbia.[6] As was revealed in the opening quote from team leaders, testing traditional concepts, including the life cycle model, was a primary goal of the project. As the quote makes clear, these concepts, including the life cycle model, passed the test. It should be noted that the traditional concepts evaluated by Duranti and MacNeil are largely those expounded by Sir Hilary Jenkinson. Therefore, the UBC's assessment of the life cycle concept, as well as of other archival functions, must be viewed in the larger context of Jenkinson's theories on archival management and the role of the archivist.

In Jenkinson's theoretical framework, archival records are characterized by "two common features of extraordinary value and importance": *impartiality*, the principle that records are inherently truthful and are "free from the suspicion of prejudice," and *authenticity,* the principle that archives "were preserved in official custody . . . and free from the suspicion of having been tampered with."[7] According to Jenkinson, the "supreme and most difficult task" of the archivist is "to hand on the documents as nearly as possible in the state in which he received them, without adding or taking away, physically or morally, anything: to preserve unviolated, without the possibility of a suspicion, every element in them, every quality they possessed when they came to him."[8] In short, according to Jenkinson, the primary duty of the archivist is to retain the impartial and authentic qualities of the records entrusted to his/her care.

Considering the UBC-MAS team's support of the Jenkinsonian theory, it is no surprise then that Duranti and MacNeil write that what makes the life cycle model and its division of responsibilities so valuable is that it "ensures the authenticity of inactive records and makes them the impartial sources that society needs."[9] According to UBC personnel, the intellectual methods required to guarantee the integrity of active records are very much different than those required for inactive records. Hence, it is argued, there must exist a two-phase life cycle approach to the management of records, the creating body "with primary responsibility for their reliability and authenticity while they are needed for business purposes, and the preserving body with responsibility for their authenticity over the long term."[10]

Records Continuum Model

Criticisms of the life cycle model as a means of managing records have surfaced at times in the past, but it has been the emergence of electronic records that has initiated a very spirited debate. This dialogue has resulted in not only a critique of the model but in the definition of an alternate model or framework. This alternate model has come to be most commonly referred to as the "records continuum model." What is this continuum model; why did it emerge; and how does it differ from the life cycle model?

Discussions of strategies for better integrating the activities of archivists and records managers date back at least several decades.[11] However, it was not until the 1990s that a more formally constructed model emerged for viewing records management as a continuous process from the moment of creation, in which archivists and records managers are actively involved at all points in the continuum. The primary motivation in

formulating and supporting this model was a concern that lacking a strategy for active and early intervention by the archivist in the records management process, electronic records documenting vital transactions may never be created, may never be fully documented, or may never survive.[12] Perhaps the most basic difference between the continuum model and the life cycle approach is that while the life cycle model proposes a strict separation of records management responsibilities, the continuum model is based upon an integration of the responsibilities and accountabilities associated with the management of records. The new Australian records management standard, which has adopted the continuum model, defines the integrated nature of the record continuum in the following terms: the record continuum is "the whole extent of a record's existence." It "refers to a consistent and coherent regime of management processes from the time of creation of records (and before creation, in the design of recordkeeping systems) through to the preservation and use of records as archives."[13] A noted Australian archivist describes the differences between the life cycle and continuum models in the following manner: "The life cycle relates to records and information . . . records have a life cycle. . . . The continuum is not about records. It is about a regime for recordkeeping. The continuum is a model of management that relates to the recordkeeping regime," which is "continuous, dynamic and ongoing without any distinct breaks or phases."[14]

A direct result of viewing records management as a continuum is to undercut and destroy the distinction between active and inactive, and archival and nonarchival records, and to blur or wipe out the defined set of responsibilities associated with managing records at each stage. One of the consequences of this viewpoint is to propel archivists and archival functions forward in the records management process. In other words, according to the continuum model, strategies and methodologies for appraising, describing, and preserving records are implemented early in the records management process, preferably at the design stage, and not at the end of the life cycle.[15]

Let us now review how these two models actually work when applied to real archival activities, beginning with custody issues.

Custody of Electronic Records

Where are electronic records to be housed, and who will service them? Based on one's perspective, there are two very different answers to these questions. Let us first look at how an archivist employing the life cycle model and Jenkinsonian principles might solve these problems.

Luciana Duranti and other supporters of the life cycle model argue that the authenticity over time of inactive records can be ensured only when their custody is entrusted to professional archivists. In the words of the UBC project personnel, "The life cycle of the managerial activity directed to the preservation of the integrity of electronic records may be divided into two phases: one aimed at the control of the creation of reliable records and to the maintenance of authentic active and semiactive records, and the other aimed at the preservation of authentic inactive records." The position of the proponents of this argument can be characterized as a centralized archival custody approach, or "archives as a place," where there must exist an "archival threshold" or "space beyond which no alteration or permutation is possible, and where every written

act can be treated as evidence and memory."[16] More specifically, Duranti and other proponents of this position identify five reasons inactive records should be transferred to an archival repository and not left in the custody of the record creators.

1) Mission and Competencies: It is not part of the mission of the creating agency, nor does its staff possess the necessary skills to safeguard the authenticity of non-current, archival records.

2) Ability to Monitor Compliance: There are not enough trained archivists available to monitor or audit records left in full distributed custody with the creator.

3) Cost to Monitor Compliance: Costs to manage records in a distributed environment are as yet unknown and untested, but it may likely be more costly to monitor record-keeping practices than to assume custody of the records.

4) Changes in Work Environment: Changes in staffing and in departmental priorities can place records left with creating offices at great risk.

5) Vested Interests: Inactive records must be taken from those who have a vested interest in either corrupting or in neglecting the records.[17]

For all these reasons, Duranti and the UBC project staff conclude "that the routine transfer of records to a neutral third party, that is, to a competent archival body . . . is an essential requirement for ensuring their authenticity over time."[18]

As opposed to the "archives as a place" position, archivists who support the continuum model portray their strategy regarding custody and use a "post-custody" or "distributed custody" approach. In this strategy, the transfer of the inactive records to an archives may be delayed or deferred for much longer periods than in the past; in some cases, the records may actually remain indefinitely in the custody of the originating office. The basic premise supporting this position is that in the electronic environment, archival institutions can fulfill their responsibilities without assuming physical custody of the records. To achieve these goals, however, means developing new methodologies and techniques for managing records in a distributed custody environment. Proponents of this strategy identify four arguments to support their position of distributed custody and access.

1) Costs: It would be enormously expensive and a massive waste of resources to attempt to duplicate within the archival setting the technological environments already in place within the creating offices.

2) Changes in Technology: Rapid technological change and reluctance of manufacturers to support old hardware make it extremely difficult for a centralized repository to manage an institution's electronic records.

3) Skills Required: It would be difficult, if not impossible, for an archives staff to learn the skills and provide the expertise needed to access and preserve the wide variety of technologies and formats in use.

4) Loss of Records: Insisting on custody will result, in some cases, in leaving important records outside the record-keeping boundary.[19]

In the words of a team member of the University of Pittsburgh Electronic Records project, "archivists cannot afford—politically, professionally, economically, or culturally—to acquire records except as a last resort and that they needn't acquire records to achieve all their mandate. Indeed, the evidence indicates that acquisition of records and the maintenance of the archives as a repository gets in the way of achieving archival objectives and that this dysfunction will increase dramatically with the spread of electronic communications."[20]

However, in the final estimation, as some archivists have argued, the primary issue may not be custody, but rather ensuring that a viable and widely accepted system for managing electronic records is in place. This means establishing policies and procedures that ensure that no matter where the records are housed they will be managed according to well-established standards. More specifically, a distributed strategy for custody necessitates the creation of legally binding agreements with offices, of reliable means of auditing records, of an extensive network of training programs, and of other mechanisms designed to ensure that custodians of records understand their responsibilities and are living up to those expectations. An Australian archivist sums up this position when he writes, "The real issue is not custody, but the control of records and the archivist's role in this . . . What archivists should have been talking to their clients about is not custody, but good recordkeeping practices which make it possible for archivists to exercise the necessary control."[21]

Appraisal of Electronic Records

The emergence of electronic records, in conjunction with the volume of modern documentation and the changing nature of modern institutions, has initiated considerable debate on the theory and practice of archival appraisal. Much of this debate and dialogue in North America has initially focused on the merits of the appraisal theory and methodology created at the National Archives in the period from the 1940s to the 1960s, and articulated primarily in the writings of Theodore Schellenberg.[22] One way of reviewing the basic features of this dialogue and of illustrating the differences between appraisal theories is to examine the issues by means of a series of questions: Why are records appraised? What will be appraised? How will they be appraised? And when will they be appraised?

Why Are Records Appraised?

As any archivist knows, traditional appraisal theory in North America focuses on finding value in records, these values commonly expressed as primary and secondary, with secondary values divided into evidential and informational values. In this methodology, Schellenberg placed special emphasis on the archivist's responsibility for appraising records to identify secondary, research values, as his definition of archives

makes clear: "Those records of any public or private institution which are adjudged worthy of permanent preservation for reference and secondary purposes."[23]

For many archivists, the search for research value remains at the heart of the appraisal process. Increasingly, however, critics of this appraisal methodology have argued that by defining appraisal primarily in terms of secondary research value based largely on content analysis, the Schellenberg model does not provide a proper answer for why we appraise records. Critics of Schellenberg have put forward three arguments to support this judgment. In the first place, they argue that predicting or anticipating research needs or trends is not a realistic goal, and at best will mean the archivist will remain "nothing more than a weathervane moving by the changing winds of historiography."[24] Secondly, critics assert that content-oriented appraisal cannot give a true, or even representative, image of society.[25] Finally, archivists who support Jenkinson's theory on the nature of archives assert that selection by content to support research is in direct conflict with basic archival theory and the very nature of archives.[26]

So, what have archivists offered in its place? Although appraisal theories and methodologies abound, almost all major commentators agree that a principal objective or aim of archival appraisal must be the preservation of evidence[27] documenting the functions, processes, activities, and transactions[28] undertaken and completed by the institution or individual. It is important to recognize that evidence in this context refers, in the terms used by Hilary Jenkinson, to those impartial, authentic, and interrelated records that are created "naturally" in the process of conducting business or undertaking activities. It does not refer to information that is gathered, largely by examining the content of records, for the purpose of answering questions about the history, mission, and activities of the subject under review. In short, evidence is the actual record made or received in the course of undertaking and completing the activity; it is not the pieces of information or bits of data selected to document the event.[29] It is the preservation of this direct evidence of actions, decisions, and processes that has emerged as one of the primary concerns of most of the major appraisal strategies and models of the last 20 years. In the words of two prominent commentators on appraisal, archivists are "servants of evidence,"[30] and "Evidence is an aim . . . of archival appraisal."[31]

Beyond ensuring the preservation of evidence, do archivists have additional duties as interpreters and documenters of society? It is in response to this question that disagreements about the objectives of archival appraisal have occurred. At one end of the spectrum—that represented originally by Hilary Jenkinson and, in the modern era, by Luciana Duranti, and reflected in the theoretical framework and methodology of the UBC electronic records project—is the belief that evidence itself is the aim of appraisal. According to this view, the archivist's goal is not to interpret this evidence, attribute external values to the records or to the creators or functions generating the records, or to create a representative image of society. Rather, in this view, the goal is to retain intact "the internal functionality of the documents, and the documents' aggregations, with respect to one another, so that compact, meaningful, economical and impartial societal experience can be preserved for the next generations."[32] In other words, the archivist's primary contributions are to preserve authentic and impartial records and by so doing provide researchers with the evidence that will permit them to interpret events in their own way. Consequently, within this theoretical framework the

role of the archivist in the appraisal process is very limited. Archivists are not judges or interpreters: they are custodians and preservers.

On the other end of the spectrum are those archivists who support an appraisal model that advocates a more active role for the archivist in shaping the documentary record. Two prominent strategies in this category are those that locate value 1) in the provenance of the records and 2) in the assessment of use of the records. Supporters of the provenance-based appraisal model argue that the essence of appraisal is the "articulation of the most important societal structures, functions, record creators, and records creating processes, and their interaction, which together form a comprehensive reflection of human experience."[33] Terry Cook has labeled this strategy "macroappraisal," which he defines as an approach "that focuses research instead on records creators rather than directly on society, on the assumption that those creators, and those citizens and organizations with whom they interact, indirectly represent the collective functioning of society."[34] It is an appraisal methodology, Cook writes, that is built on "a context-based, provenance-centred framework rather than in a content-based, historical-documentalist one."[35]

The other appraisal model, which advocates a more active role for archivists, identifies "the means of documenting the precise form and substance of past interactions between and among people in society" in the "analysis of the use to which they [records] are put by the society that created them, all along the continuum of their existence."[36] In other words, in this model appraisal decisions mirror or reflect the values a wide variety of users assigned to the records, resulting in the selection of archival records that are most cherished or frequently consulted by the society that created and used the records.[37]

To summarize, recently there has been no shortage of writings on the proper role of appraisal in archival theory and methodology. However, as yet, no one theory has been embraced by the profession or taken root and flourished to the degree that Schellenberg's methodology has in the United States. This is not to say, however, that some significant rethinking of the way archivists appraise records has not occurred. Certainly, one of the most significant and widespread changes has been the growing recognition that the first and primary goal of appraisal must be the preservation and accessibility of the evidence of the functions and activities of the subjects documented by archivists. This recognition has caused the archival profession to begin reassessing what is appraised, and how and when the process occurs, particularly in an automated environment.

What Will Be Appraised?

Schellenberg's methodology employs a content-oriented, "pertinence"[38] approach to determining value. It is a strategy that focuses largely on record content and on the structure of the organization to determine evidential and informational values. Critics of the Schellenberg appraisal methodology argue these are not the best or right sources upon which to construct an appraisal model. For those archivists like Luciana Duranti who advocate that maintaining accurate and authentic evidence is the primary role of the archivist, the question of what to appraise is primarily addressed by means of

"carefully defining archival jurisdictions and acquisitions policies and plans" and "not by attributing externally imposed values."[39]

Archivists, like Terry Cook and Helen Samuels, who advocate a functional appraisal model, point to three basic reasons to support the argument that content and structure are not the best sources for determining value. In the first place, they argue that in a business environment characterized by a flattening of the organizational structure and a more decentralized approach, structure and setting will have much less relevance in understanding the nature and significance of records than they did in the more traditional, hierarchical business environment. Ultimately, they argue, it is business functions and not organizational structure that will define provenance and will guide appraisal decisions. Secondly, in the modern world of high-volume documentation and of electronic records that exist as logical and not as physical entities, archivists can no longer hope to focus on the record and appraisal by content. Finally they assert that, in the search for evidence, the most accurate and complete documentation will be provided by examining the function, activity, and transaction that generated the record, rather than the record itself. In short, supporters of functional appraisal argue that the context and not the content of the record must be the starting point in the search for evidence.[40]

For supporters of an appraisal theory based on patterns of use, "the appraiser must be especially attentive to demonstrations of contemporary usefulness . . . All past and present uses of archives provide the 'data' on the basis of which the appraiser attempts to induce a sense of future usefulness on behalf of society. Research use of archives is one, but only one, of the uses to be assessed."[41]

How Will Records Be Appraised to Uncover This Evidence?

Naturally, by changing the focus of the appraisal, many critics of Schellenberg's methodology also advocate a new definition of how the appraisal process should be undertaken. The traditional model, critics assert, employs a "bottom-up" approach to appraisal, that is, value is established by moving upwards from analysis of the record to the examination of the transactions and activities, and finally to identification of the functions and administrative structure. This appraisal process, critics contend, is a flawed and essentially backward approach. Supporters of a new model maintain that a more rational and productive appraisal process would employ a "top-down" approach. For proponents of this functional appraisal model, the process begins with an analysis of business functions and structure or of the archival fonds,[42] of the interaction between function and structure, then moves downward to an analysis of the activities and transactional processes, and finally arrives at an examination of the record, if necessary. During this process two appraisal assessments would be made: one, of the most important record-creating entities, and the other, of the critical functions and transactions. These units and these functions then become the targets of record-collecting activities by the archives.[43]

When Will Records Be Appraised?

Finally, some critics of appraisal theory and practice based on Schellenberg's principles call for a reassessment of when archival appraisal occurs. In accordance with the tenets of the continuum model, proponents of a new appraisal model advocate conducting the appraisal much earlier in the process, again preferably at the design stage. Advocates of this position warn that if procedures for early identification and maintenance are not established, records—particularly electronic records—may never survive or even be created.[44] However, advocates of Jenkinsonian principles and of the life cycle model argue that archival intervention on the scale advocated by the proponents of the continuum theory may have adverse effects on the integrity of records. This is not to say that Duranti and others who support this position do not believe archivists have a role in the early stages of the life cycle. However, ultimately this role is limited, and it certainly does not envision archivists actively appraising records.[45]

To summarize, many appraisal theories generated in the last 10 to 15 years differ from the traditional appraisal model based on Schellenberg's principles. Overall, there is general agreement that, in the modern world of high-volume documentation and electronic records, archivists must focus on the concept of preserving evidence of functions and activities. Beyond that role, some archivists advocate an appraisal strategy designed to identify and rank the functions and creators that generated the records. Others seek to locate the value of records in patterns of use. In addition, some archivists who support the continuum model argue that archivists must intervene early in the records management process if records are to be created and preserved. Others who support a life cycle model and Jenkinsonian principles warn that involvement early in the life cycle of records may have very harmful effects on the integrity of the record.

Description of Electronic Records

Will traditional methods for describing archival records (descriptive inventories, guides and other finding aids created after the records are transferred to the archives) be adequate and useful for electronic records? Again, there are two quite different responses to this question based on one's perspective. This time, let us first examine the arguments of those archivists who support the continuum model and argue for alternate strategies for describing electronic records.

Critics of employing traditional strategies for describing electronic records identify four major reasons for adopting other methods. In the first place, they argue that documentation of business processes cannot be postponed until the point when records become inactive: to be effective, description must take place over the life of the record. Only in this way, it is argued, can archivists hope to document business transactions throughout their life cycle. So in this context we again encounter a basic premise of the continuum model: the archivist must be involved much earlier in the management process, preferably at the design stage.

Secondly, it is argued that traditional prose narratives and descriptions of data structures cannot possibly describe the multitude of record linkages or reflect the relationships among transactions in automated systems. To properly describe these complex

record systems, it is recommended that much more dynamic and interactive documentation strategies be employed.

In a related argument, critics claim that traditional descriptive methodologies that depend upon physically reviewing records, files, and series to identify content and context are not viable in the world of electronic records. Unlike paper documents where content and physical form are united in a medium that provides the record of the transaction, and where relationships among documents can be observed, electronic records are not physical but are logically constructed and often "virtual" entities. Therefore, it is argued, efforts to document business transactions based on an examination of "views" or of automated forms will fail to reveal the nature of the business transactions. Consequently, methods other than direct observation and review must be employed to properly document automated systems.

Finally, proponents of this position of change argue that a viable system of documenting business processes already exists in the form of record system metadata. It is routine for systems designers and programmers to generate documentation on the content and structure of the systems and programs they create. Why not, it is suggested, make this metadata system the basis for describing electronic records? Why not consider a shift from creating descriptive information to capturing, managing, and adding value to system metadata? As the reference to adding value suggests, proponents of this strategy do not recommend adopting metadata systems as is. System metadata typically do not contain all the information archivists need to describe electronic records; in particular, all the necessary contextual data required to understand the context of the transaction are not present. Therefore, it is suggested that archivists will need to know which metadata elements are required to fully describe these records and must be in a position to add these descriptive elements to the system, preferably at the design stage.[46]

To summarize, critics of employing traditional methodologies to describe electronic records argue that methods based on direct observation and review will not work, and that the finding aids produced will not adequately describe these complex systems. As an alternative strategy they recommend a shift to the management of system metadata, but they caution that this strategy will work only if archivists define and articulate the required metadata elements and are involved at or near the beginning of the design process.

Naturally, not all archivists agree with the strategy described above. In particular, members of the UBC-MAS project team have expressed serious misgivings. Their arguments focus on the themes of the authenticating role and the unique and vital contributions of traditional archival description. Luciana Duranti argues that the "verification of the authenticity of electronic records over the long term will have to rely on one thing and one thing only: their *archival description.*" [47] Traditional arrangement and description verify authenticity, according to Duranti, by preserving the network of administrative and documentary relationships. "Administrative relationships are revealed and preserved through the writing of the administrative history of the archival fonds and its parts, including its preservation and custodial history. Documentary relationships are revealed and preserved through the identification of the levels of arrangement of the fonds and their representation in structured descriptions."[48]

Heather MacNeil, another member of the UBC-MAS team, focuses on the concepts of authenticity and impartiality from another perspective. She warns that by introducing metadata requirements designed to satisfy the needs of future users, archivists compromise the impartiality of the records. And if "the impartiality of the metadata is compromised, their value as evidence will be compromised, which means, ultimately, that the underlying objective of metadata strategies—the preservation of evidence—will be defeated."[49] In short, she asserts, "archival participation in the design and maintenance of metadata systems must be driven by the need to preserve them as archival documents, that is, as evidence of actions and transactions, not as descriptive tools."[50]

Another argument MacNeil puts forward in defense of traditional archival description is that it performs a vital function that system metadata cannot. She argues that because the scope and context of system metadata are "comparatively narrow, metadata circumscribe and atomize these various contexts. Archival description, on the other hand, enlarges and integrates them. In so doing it reveals continuities and discontinuities in the matrix of function, structure, and record-keeping *over time*."[51]

To summarize, the UBC-MAS position on this issue of description of electronic records asserts that, because of the unique and vital role of archival description in maintaining authenticity and in describing the context of records over time, metadata systems cannot replace traditional archival description. The answers, they claim, will be found by following "the dictates of archival science" and by building strategies "on the foundation of descriptive principles and practices that have already been established."[52]

Conclusion

Let us return to the questions posed at the beginning of this paper: What is the practicing archivist to make of these quite different, often conflicting strategies? Where does one start in the quest to become an informed player in electronic records management?

First and foremost, do not become a true believer and irrevocably commit at this point to any one model for managing electronic records. The problem with the Pitt or UBC models—or any other strategy—is that they have not been properly tested in the field.[53] As Margaret Hedstrom reminds us, "What we lack is an evaluation of the usefulness of these findings from the perspective of organizations that are responsible in some way for preserving and providing access to electronic records. We need assessments from the administrators of archival and records management programs about the feasibility of putting the proposed policies and models into practice."[54] In short, there are no clear-cut answers available yet, but there are plenty of very good ideas and emerging strategies out there. The existence of electronic records strategies leads to the next suggestion.

Get started immediately in exploring the issues and the various options. Do not sit back and wait for some ready-made product to present itself, because it is very unlikely that such a product will appear. Any model or strategy will require a great deal of knowledge, judgment, and good common sense from those who are asked to implement it. Moreover, you may be faced with the task of determining which strategy or

combination of strategies best suits you and your institution, and this decision requires you to be informed and knowledgeable.

A related piece of advice would be to begin learning some new skills. One of the conclusions arrived at by most archivists involved in electronic records management is that the archival profession needs to add some new skills to its "tool kit" in order to be effective in this world of automated records. Skills that immediately come to mind are: a basic knowledge of how automated systems are created and work; a more detailed knowledge of data and information management principles and techniques; experience implementing functional decomposition and business process modeling methodologies; and knowledge of computer-based information systems, particularly metadata systems, such as data dictionaries and information resource dictionary systems. The goal here is not to become a programmer or systems analyst, but rather an archivist who can speak the language of the technologist, who understands the role of metadata in documenting systems, and who can perform some basic tasks related to the modeling and description of business processes.

Begin by identifying the key players at your institution in the area of data and information management. Who are the people who manage the central databases in your institution? Who is involved in decision support? Is there a group of individuals who meet regularly to discuss data and information management issues? Who is involved in risk assessment and management? Who are the individuals auditing the institution's information systems?

Once you have identified these people, begin the process of forming partnerships. Data and information managers, auditors, and decision support personnel often do not know how the archivist fits into the whole process of managing electronic records. It is important for archivists to educate these people about the archival mission, to learn more about technologists' particular needs and methodologies, and eventually begin to develop with them an overall strategy for managing electronic records. Designing a program for managing electronic records requires the skills and expertise of many people; it demands a real team effort.

Finally, it is important to remain flexible and open to new ways of doing things. Most archivists working with electronic records agree that managing this material will require some changes in the way we do business. Whether this results in a new archival paradigm or merely in some adjustments to traditional practices is not known. Most likely, however, those archivists who are willing to explore and consider new ideas, new techniques, and new methodologies will be ahead of the game. Dogmatism and a rigid allegiance to strongly held notions of the past on how to manage records seem counterproductive in the present environment characterized by rapid changes in many aspects of our professional life.

What is needed at this point in time are archivists who are willing to experiment with creative combinations of ideas, old and new; who are courageous enough to seek out and form partnerships with information specialists, auditors, and risk managers whose language and methodologies are presently foreign to them; who are motivated to learn new skills; and, ultimately, who are committed to developing realistic strategies for managing electronic records, no matter where this journey may lead them.

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NOTES

1. Terry Cook, "Building an Archives: Appraisal Theory for Architectural Records," *American Archivist* 59 (spring 1996): 141.
2. Luciana Duranti and Heather MacNeil, "The Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records: An Overview of the UBC-MAS Research Project," *Archivaria* 42 (fall 1996): 64.
3. For extended discussions of this concept of a new archival paradigm, see Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22:2 (November 1994): 300–328; Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas Since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift," *Archivaria* 43 (spring 1997): 17–63; Greg O'Shea and David Roberts, "Living in a Digital World: Reorganizing the Electronic and Post-Custodial Realities," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24:2 (November 1996): 286–311; and Frank Upward and Sue McKemmish, "Somewhere Beyond Custody," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22:1 (May 1994): 136–149.
4. Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 47.
5. For a summary of the life cycle concept, see Ira A. Penn, Gail Pennix, and Jim Coulson, *Records Management Handbook*, 2nd edition (Hampshire, England: Gower Publishing Limited, 1994): 12–17.
6. For overview descriptions of the UBC-MAS Project, see Duranti and MacNeil, 46–67; and the project's homepage at http://www.slais.ubc.ca/users/duranti.
7. Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration* (London: Percy Lund, Humphries & Co. Ltd., 1965): 12–13.
8. Hilary Jenkinson, "Reflections of an Archivist," in *A Modern Archives Reader* (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1984): 20. For a more extensive discussion of the archivist's primary duties according to Jenkinson, see his description of the "moral defence of archives" in *A Manual of Archive Administration*, 83–123.
9. Duranti and MacNeil, 62.
10. Duranti and MacNeil, 60. For an extensive discussion of the concepts of reliability and authenticity, see Duranti's article, "Reliability and Authenticity: The Concepts and Their Implications," *Archivaria* 39 (spring 1995): 5–10.
11. For discussions of a records continuum that predate the archival dialogue on electronic records, see Frank Upward, "In Search of the Continuum: Ian Maclean's 'Australian Experience' Essays on Recordkeeping" in *The Records Continuum, Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years*, ed. Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott (Clayton, Victoria: Ancora Press, 1994): 110–130; and Jay Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum: Some Thoughts on the Records Management-Archives Relationship," *Archivaria* 21 (winter 1985–1986): 43–51.
12. The primary proponents of the continuum model have been archivists in the Australian archival community. The research project that most embodies the premises of the continuum model is the University of Pittsburgh Functional Requirements project. For descriptions of the records continuum model, see Frank Upward, "Structuring the Records Continuum, Part One: Post-custodial principles and properties," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24:2 (November 1996): 268–285; O'Shea and Roberts, "Living in a Digital World," 286–311; Adrian Cunningham, "Journey to the End of the Night: Custody and the Dawning of a New Era on the Archival Threshold–A Commentary," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24:2 (November 1996): 312–321; and David Bearman, "Item Level Control and Electronic Recordkeeping," *Archives and Museum Informatics, Cultural Heritage Informatics Quarterly* 10:3 (1996): 242–245.
13. Australian Standards 4390.1–1996F: General, Clause 4.6.

14. Ann Pederson in an E-mail message to the Australian Archivists Listserv, February 17, 1999.
15. Another model or framework for conceptualizing electronic records management has come to be known as the "steering rather than rowing" approach to managing archives. The main features of this strategy are a greater emphasis on archival monitoring and oversight activities, on empowering others to solve their record problems and, finally, on developing a decentralized or distributed approach to archival management. It is a strategy that has much in common with the records continuum model. The "steering rather than rowing" strategy for archives was introduced by David Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom in "Reinventing Archives for Electronic Records: Alternate Service Delivery Options," in *Electronic Records Management Program Strategies* (*Archives and Informatics Technical Report* 18), ed. Margaret Hedstrom (Pittsburgh, PA: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1993): 82–98.
16. Luciana Duranti, "Archives as a Place," *Archives and Manuscripts* 24:2 (November 1996): 252.
17. For articulation of these arguments, see Duranti and MacNeil, "The Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records," 46–67; Duranti, "Archives as a Place," 242–256; Terry Eastwood, "Should Creating Agencies Keep Electronic Records Indefinitely?" *Archives and Manuscripts* 24:2 (November 1996): 268–285; Ken Thibodeau, "To be or not to be: Archives for Electronic Records" in *Archival Management of Electronic Records*, ed. David Bearman, *Archives and Museum Informatic Technical Report* 13 (Pittsburgh, PA: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1991): 1–13; and Edward Higgs, "Information Superhighways or Quiet Country Lanes: Accessing Electronic Archives in the United Kingdom," in *Playing for Keeps: the Proceedings of an Electronic Records Management Conference Hosted by the Australian Archives, Canberra, Australia, 8–10 November 1994*, on-line version at http://www.aa.gov.au/AA_WWW/AA_Publications/P4K/Higgs.htm.
18. Duranti and MacNeil, "The Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records," 60.
19. For descriptions of the "distributed custody" approach and articulation of arguments for implementing this strategy, see David Bearman, "An Indefensible Bastion: Archives Repositories in the Electronic Age," in *Archival Management of Electronic Records*, ed. David Bearman, *Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report* 13 (Pittsburgh, PA: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1991): 14–24; O'Shea and Roberts, "Living in a Digital World," 286–311; Upward, "Structuring the Records Continuum: Part One, Post-custodial principles and properties," 268–285; Cunningham, "Journey to the End of Night," 312–321; Charles Dollar, *The Impact of Information Technologies on Archival Principles and Methods* (Macerata, Italy: University of Macerata, 1992): 53–55, 75; Hans Hofman, "Off the Beaten Track: the Archivist Exploring the Outback of Electronic Records," in *Playing for Keeps: the Proceedings of an Electronic Records Management Conference Hosted by the Australian Archives, Canberra, Australia, 8–10 November 1994*, on-line version at http://www.aa.gov.au/AA_WWW/AA_Publications/P4K/Hofman.htm; and statements on electronic records management on the Australian Archives homepage at http://www.aa.gov.au/AA_WWW/AA_Issues.html.
20. David Bearman, "An Indefensible Bastion," in *Archival Management of Electronic Records*, 14.
21. Adrian Cunningham, "Ensuring Essential Evidence," paper for the *National Library of Australia News*, November 1996, on-line version at http://www.nla.gov.au/nla/staffpaper/acunning5.html.
22. For a detailed discussion of Schellenberg's appraisal methodology, see T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives, Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Midway reprint, 1975): 133–160.
23. T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives*, 16.
24. F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38:1 (January 1975): 8.
25. Angelika Menne-Haritz, "Appraisal or Documentation: Can We Appraise Archives by Selecting Con tent?" *American Archivist* 57 (summer 1994): 528–542.
26. Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Appraisal Theory," *American Archivist* 57 (spring 1994): 328–344.
27. Perhaps the most widely quoted definition of evidence is provided by David Bearman. For a good discussion of evidence, see David Bearman, "Archival Principles and the Electronic Office," in *Electronic Evidence, Strategies for Managing Records in Contemporary Organizations* (Pittsburgh, PA: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1994): 147–149.
28. Slowly, the archival profession is working towards providing more precise definitions of these concepts. In particular, see the working definitions of "functions" and "transactions" created for the Indiana University Electronic Records project described in Philip C. Bantin, "The Indiana University Electronic Records Management Project Revisited," *American Archivist* 62 (spring 1998): 153–156. See also Chris Hurley, "What, If Anything, Is a Function?" *Archives and Manuscripts* 21:2 (1993): 208–220.

29. For a description of Jenkinson's concept of records and evidence, see Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," 334–337. There is some disagreement as to whether Schellenberg's concept of evidential value is or is not roughly equivalent to Jenkinson's concept of evidence. Terry Cook and Timothy Ericson argue that the two concepts are quite different. Cook writes: "Schellenberg explicitly denied that his 'evidential value' was linked to Jenkinson's sense of archives as 'evidence.'" Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 27. Tim Ericson writes: "The fact that Schellenberg and others chose the word 'value' is unfortunate, because they were really talking about evidential and informational content." Timothy Ericson, "'At the Rim of Creative Dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development," *Archivaria* 33 (winter 1991–92): 67. On the other hand, Angelika Menne-Haritz claims that Schellenberg's concept of evidential value has been misunderstood to mean a content-based search for evidence. In fact, she claims Schellenberg's concept of evidential value was based on preserving evidence in the Jenkinsonian sense: Schellenberg's "distinction between primary and secondary values makes clear that evidence is needed as a basis for an accurate understanding of what happened." Angelika Menne-Haritz, "Appraisal or Documentation," 538. My reading of Schellenberg's definition and examples of evidential value lead me to support Cook's and Ericson's view that what he had in mind was content analysis and secondary uses to support research on the history, evolution, and mission of an institution.
30. Terry Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992): 74.
31. Angelika Menne-Haritz, "Appraisal or Documentation," 541.
32. Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," 341.
33. Terry Cook, "Mind over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992): 41.
34. Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 31.
35. Cook, 31. For other discussions of the functional appraisal model, see Helen Willa Samuels, *Varsity Letters, Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, N.J.: The Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, 1992); Helen Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition: Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 33 (winter 1991–92): 125–140; Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds," 300–328; Margaret Hedstrom, "Electronic Archives: Integrity and Access in the Network Environment," *American Archivist* 58 (summer 1995): 312–324; Hans Booms, "Uberlieferungsbildung: Keeping Archives as a Social and Political Activity," *Archivaria* 33 (winter 1991–92): 25–33; Greg O'Shea, "The Medium is NOT the Message: Appraisal of Electronic Records by the Australian Archives," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22:1 (May 1994): 68–93; David Bearman, "Diplomatics, Weberian Bureaucracy, and the Management of Electronic Records in Europe and America," in David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence, Strategies for Managing Records in Contemporary Organizations*, 261–266; Charles Dollar, *Archival Theory and Information Technologies*, 55–60, 76–77; Hans Hofman, "Off the Beaten Track," on-line version; and the Australian Archives homepage, "Keeping Electronic Records," at http://www.aa.gov.au/AA_WWW/AA_Issues/KER/KER4.html/. For applications of the functional model, see Catherine Bailey, "From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-Appraisal," *Archivaria* 43 (spring 1997): 89–128, and Jim Suderman "Appraising Records of the Expenditure Management Function: An Exercise in Functional Analysis," *Archivaria* 43 (spring 1997): 129–142.
36. Terry Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," in *The Archival Imagination*, 80, 83.
37. Use of records as a primary factor in defining archival methodology has been a source of constant debate in the profession. Much of this discussion has focused on the need for more and better public programming and outreach programs; for arrangement and description methodologies that better reflect the way researchers use collections; and for the creation of data that better identify the needs of users. However, there are some who suggest user needs and usage of records should guide and ultimately determine all decisions regarding archival theory and practice, including appraisal. Eastwood's article is certainly one of the most well-defined, focused articles linking usage and appraisal. A more recent endorsement of use as the primary appraisal criterion can be found in Mark Greene's article, "'The Surest Proof': A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal," *Archivaria* 45 (spring 1998): 127–169. For other discussions on use, see Elsie T. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," *American Archivist* 47 (spring 1984): 111–123; Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the

Availability of Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51 (winter/spring 1988): 74–86; Timothy Ericson, "'Preoccupied with our own gardens': Outreach and Archivists," *Archivaria* 31 (winter 1990–91): 114–122. For articles arguing against the designation of use as the primary factor in the development of archival theory and practice, see Terry Cook, "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 31 (winter 1990–91): 123–134; and Barbara Craig, "What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in Perspective," *Archivaria* 31 (winter 1990–91): 135–141.

38. Terry Eastwood uses this term in his article "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," 81–82.
39. Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," 343.
40. Terry Cook, "Mind over Matter," 38–52; Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 40–49; Helen Samuels, "Improving Our Disposition," 125–139.
41. Terry Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," 83–84.
42. The nature of the archival fonds has been widely debated. For discussions of the nature of the fonds, see Michel Duchein, "Theoretical Problems and Practical Problems of 'Respect des Fonds' in Archival Science," *Archivaria* 16 (summer 1983): 64–82; and Terry Cook, "The Concept of the Archival Fonds in the Post-Custodial Era: Theory, Problems and Solutions," *Archivaria* 35 (spring 1993): 24–37.
43. For discussions of the "top-down" and "bottom-up" approaches, see Terry Cook, "What is Past is Prologue," 36–37, and "Building an Archives," 140–143.
44. In particular, see the articles written by the Australian archivists in *Archives and Manuscripts* listed in endnote number 12.
45. Duranti and MacNeil, "The Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records," 60–62.
46. For discussions of this strategy for documenting electronic records, see David A. Wallace, "Managing the Present: Metadata as Archival Description," *Archivaria* 36 (spring 1995): 11–21; Margaret Hedstrom, "Descriptive Practices for Electronic Records: Deciding What is Essential and Imagining What is Possible," *Archivaria* 36 (autumn 1993): 53–63; David Bearman, "Item Level Control and Electronic Recordkeeping," 195–245, and "Documenting Documentation," *Archivaria* 34 (summer 1992): 33–49; Charles Dollar, *Archival Theory and Information Technologies*, 60–62, 77–78.
47. Duranti, "The Protection of the Integrity of Electronic Records," 57.
48. Duranti, 57.
49. Heather MacNeil, "Metadata Strategies and Archival Description: Comparing Apples to Oranges," *Archivaria* 36 (spring 1995): 28.
50. MacNeil, 30.
51. MacNeil, 25.
52. MacNeil, 30.
53. In the period from 1991 to the present, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) has funded over 30 projects designed to address the electronic records management agenda and to begin testing various models. For a list and description of these projects, see the NHPRC's Web site at http://www.nara.gov/nara/nhprc/ergrants.html.
54. Margaret Hedstrom, *Electronic Records Research and Development, Final Report of the 1996 Ann Arbor Conference* (Ann Arbor, MI), 37.

REAPPRAISAL OF CONGRESSIONAL RECORDS AT THE MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY: A CASE STUDY

BY TODD DANIELS-HOWELL

ABSTRACT: In 1994 the Minnesota Historical Society developed a Congressional Papers Appraisal Policy in order to improve the content and reduce the size of the extremely large and complex collections of papers of U.S. Senators and Representatives. A 1994 *Archival Issues* article by Mark Greene detailed the development of that policy and its use by the Historical Society with incoming collections of papers. But the Appraisal Policy was meant to serve as a reappraisal tool as well, and this article serves as a follow-up case study of the Historical Society's successful reappraisal efforts over the last few years.

In 1994 Mark Greene published an article in *Archival Issues* that discussed the Minnesota Historical Society's recently completed Congressional Papers Appraisal Policy. In the intervening years the Society has successfully put that policy to use in evaluating incoming collections of congressional papers. Just as importantly, though, the Society has been able to successfully reappraise several of its existing collections of congressional papers using the same appraisal policy. This article will serve, then, as a follow-up case study showing how the Minnesota Historical Society put policy into practice.

"The Minnesota Historical Society's interest in documenting public affairs has a long history," noted Greene, "beginning with its organization in 1849 by men who were themselves active participants in politics and government. . . . [T]hey and their successors on the Society's governing board, the staff, the state legislature, and the public at large collaborated in bringing together a rich store of information. Among its holdings are the papers of many of the state's Representatives and nearly all of its Senators. These collections have brought the Society prestige, research use, strong documentation of individuals and issues in greater Minnesota, and (not unimportantly) relationships with politically powerful elected officials."[1] They also have brought the Society extraordinary amounts of paper. By 1993 the Society's congressional collections amounted to 6,200 cubic feet (not including the Vice Presidential portions of the

papers of Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale). Ninety-five percent of this total documented congressional activity since World War II.[2]

Within this setting, then, the Society created appraisal guidelines that sought "to balance the Society's resources against the increasing bulk of congressional collections, and to define the most stringent appraisal criteria possible consistent with preserving collections which serve the long-term historical objectives of historians and other researchers."[3] It is important to note in this regard that the Minnesota Historical Society manuscripts section has obligations far beyond documenting politics and public affairs. It is charged with documenting the whole range of human activity in the state. And while politics is an important component of Minnesota history, it is at least arguable that its importance is not so great as the resources that the Society has devoted to documenting it. Neither the stack space nor the staff time is sufficient to swallow Congressional collections whole and still be able to document business, recreation, family life, etc. appropriately for Minnesota. We had to ask "Do we really need 116 feet of material to document Congressman Tom Hagedorn's eight years in office when we keep 110 feet for nearly seventy years of the St. Paul Area United Way?"[4]

To pare these congressional collections down the Society's guidelines specifically relied on the Society's accomplishments in documenting the state's entire congressional delegation. A principal reason that the Society views the state's Representatives and Senators as a delegation is that the institution is interested in them as representatives of Minnesota, not as representatives of congress or necessarily as important people in their own right. Hence, the Society is more concerned about using their records to document politics in the state than in documenting congress, documenting VIPs, or documenting the national political process *per se*. In view of this collecting mission, wrote Greene, "and because there is much redundancy and duplication . . .among members of the delegation in terms of the issues and projects dealt with, as well as with the constituents helped or heard from, the guidelines [sought] to reduce this overlap by treating the collections of Senators differently than the collections of Representatives."[5] "By choosing to more thoroughly document the activities of Senators," as Frank Mackaman argued in 1986, "a repository has the assurance of receiving materials documenting concerns of importance from all corners of the state. The papers of Representatives, therefore, can be reduced further (especially such series as constituent correspondence), and focused to provide better documentation of those activities unique to the particular legislator and/or to his/her district."[6]

The most controversial component of these appraisal guidelines by far—though only within the archival community and not to the Society's donors or (at least so far) its users—has been the decision not to retain any constituent correspondence for any of the state's Representatives. In addition to the remark quoted in the 1993 report from a congressional staffer to the effect that most letters from constituents were inane and most answers from the office were equally inane, a further piece of evidence has surfaced to support the decision to take a hard line on issue mail. After reviewing the Society's guidelines, then Representative Tim Penny's office assigned an intern to study the role of constituent mail in the evolution of policy and voting decisions. What he found, through talking to Penny's staff and to the congressman himself, as well as by doing a detailed analysis of his constituent mail over a 10-year period, was that issue

mail was of little consequence in formulating policy or influencing Penny's vote. Rather, "Penny often relied on personal interaction with constituents (including town hall meetings and office meetings) in determining constituent sentiment on legislative issues. . . . In fact, Penny voted on the 'wrong' side of his constituent mail on five of the top ten legislative issues" over an eight-year period.[7] In other words, we found that congressional offices consider issue mail mundane, routine, and uninteresting. This certainly does not obligate archivists to view it the same way. However, without strong evidence that issue mail is used heavily by researchers, and considering that, for Minnesota at least, expression of opinions by citizens will be preserved in the papers of U.S. Senators, we remain completely comfortable with the decision to reject constituent correspondence from the papers of Representatives.

Since 1993 the Society has been applying these guidelines to new congressional collections with real success. Incoming collections have been significantly smaller because of the prior removal of large series, such as case files, and because they contain many fewer extraneous files, such as flag and yearbook requests, thereby reducing the appraisal and organizational work that must be done on the collections once they have arrived. Just as importantly, perhaps, the congressional offices are pleased, and even grateful, to have clear guidance from the Minnesota Historical Society about what has historical value, and even happier that they don't have to worry about keeping track of case files and issue mail any longer than is strictly necessary for their offices to function.

However, it was not until 1995 that the Society was able to begin applying these guidelines to collections already held by the Society. Though it remains a controversial notion, the Society believes—within limits—in applying appraisal criteria retroactively. The most important limit is that the collections being reappraised should be comparable in terms of chronology, content, and provenance as the collections for which the appraisal criteria were developed. Thus the Society's reappraisal included only Representatives serving from the late 1960s to the present. With the assistance of NHPRC Mellon Fellow Sushan Chin, Mark Greene and I began a project to test the applicability of the guidelines on two collections, those of Representatives Arlen Erdahl (who served for eight years) and Albert Quie (who served for 20 years). For reappraisal to make any sense in terms of expenditure of resources, we sought to maximize the space savings at the least cost in staff time. In order to do this we aimed to weed material only at the series level, rather than at the folder level.

Our first discovery in the testing phase was that the filing systems used by Representatives Erdahl and Quie were fairly amorphous and did not match up well with the series outlined in the appraisal guidelines, and found in most congressional offices today. Although there were fairly distinct series, such as newsletters, academy appointments, case files, invitations, speeches, and press releases, the largest portion of both collections consisted of subject files (variously labeled "general," "departmental," "legislative," and "subject"). Upon close examination of representative boxes, these subject files were found to be constituent correspondence on a myriad of issues; a letter or memo with staff or colleagues about policy formulation or legislation would occasionally appear, but represented less than one percent of the items. Generally, it appeared that there was more internal material, and more useful background material, on issues

or projects closely related to the Representative's district or to national issues in which the Representative invested a great deal of his (or his staff's) time. Therefore, in both sets of papers we chose to identify those folders in the subject series that related to the representative's district or to areas of particular concern and expertise. In Quie's case these files related to poverty, education, and agricultural issues in addition to his district concerns. Erdahl, on the other hand, did not particularly distinguish himself on any specific issues and, therefore, his subject files related only to district issues were deemed worth saving.

However, for the reappraisal to be practical in terms of staff time invested versus results obtained, it was not feasible for us to examine the contents of each of the folders in these broad constituent subject files. The alternative was to select files based on the folder titles alone. In order to test the feasibility of this approach we selected 10 random boxes of subject files from each Representative, marked the folders in the box inventories that we believed reflected the choices noted above, then examined the contents of every folder in the 10 boxes. In our examination of the folder contents we did not find any folders that contained materials we wished to save and had not also been selected from our perusal of folder titles. In fact, the opposite was true. There were a significant number of folders that did not merit retention based on their contents, even though we had selected them based on their folder titles. We were content, though, to live with this. The final selection and disposition of the subject files was therefore done by folder title review.

Based on this approach, and the weeding of such series as academy appointments, invitations, unidentified photographs, and the like, we reduced the Arlen Erdahl Papers from 120 to 20 cubic feet, and the Albert Quie Papers from 462 to 176 cubic feet.

Due to the success of this project, the Society's Division of Library and Archives allocated money to hire a project archivist in 1996 to implement further reappraisal. In the first four months the project archivist, Rob Teigrob, was able to reappraise four additional collections resulting in the removal of nearly six hundred cubic feet of material. The collections reappraised by both Chin and Teigrob represent a total of 70 years of congressional service. Before the reappraisal project the collections totaled 1,536 cubic feet. After applying the appraisal guidelines 982 cubic feet—64 percent—of that total was removed and destroyed. For four of the six collections, whose Representatives served an average of eight years, the destruction rate was close to 80 percent; for the two other Representatives, who each served nearly 20 years, the destruction rate was only 50 percent. This difference in percentage of destruction represents, we think, the difference in the stature, clout, and activity of the longer-tenured officeholders.

Although this gain in stack space is significant, one may be tempted to ask what has been lost as a result of our reappraisal. Have relationships with donors been damaged? Has the quality of the collections been compromised? Experience so far tells us that we can safely answer "no" to both of these questions.

Of the six collections that have been reappraised, the two largest did not have donor agreements allowing the Society to dispose of unwanted material. Before we could proceed, therefore, we had to contact the two former congressmen (one of whom was also a former governor and the other a former mayor of Minneapolis) to inform them of

our intentions and to seek permission to destroy the material weeded from their collections. In both cases we sent copies of our appraisal guidelines and told them of our belief that this process would make their collections more accessible to researchers. Both men quickly gave consent to the destruction of unwanted materials and indicated that they completely trusted our judgment in these matters. The thoroughness of the appraisal guidelines conveys competence and thoughtfulness to donors, both past and present.

Although we believe strongly that the Minnesota Historical Society appraisal guidelines and, in particular, our reappraisal of collections using them, have made these collections stronger because of their greater accessibility and higher concentration of historically valuable materials, in the end only researchers will be able to judge this. There are those on the Society's staff who worry about researchers from the past returning to collections to find that what they once used or cited in a publication no longer exists. But, at this admittedly early date, there have been no complaints whatsoever about the new shape of these collections nor has there been any evidence that historians or other researchers depend on having constituent correspondence for every district in Minnesota.

One may be tempted to ask yet a third question: Is the Society undermining the overall documentation of Congress by applying and publishing its guidelines? This can be answered in two ways. First, while the Society believes documenting Congress is important, it does not—and cannot—see it as its principal priority. As stated earlier, there are many other documentary priorities in line ahead of Congress as an institution. Second, I would argue that it is quite possible that the appraisal guidelines—or the even more draconian ones employed by our colleagues at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin—may actually assist in documenting Congress. After all, when a congressional collection is conceived as 20 boxes of political, speech, clippings, and district project files rather than 120 boxes of mostly constituent correspondence, preserving and making the collection publicly accessible become possible for many more repositories. Surely there is some benefit in that.

With all of this "success" under our belts am I then advocating the reappraisal of others' congressional collections too? Well, yes and no. Just as with the guidelines themselves, I do not expect that other repositories will accept without question the Minnesota Historical Society's reappraisal approach. After all, the approach was originally formulated to work solely for the Society. However, the size and depth of its collections, and the fact that its staff has to worry about far more than documenting politics and politicians, offered us an opportunity to thoughtfully explore a process that may be adaptable in other settings as well. The staff at the Society has had contact with several smaller repositories grappling with their first congressional collections. While the first thing said to them is that they may want to make different decisions than the Society made based on their own repository's mission and clientele, generally they have accepted the Society's guidelines if for no other reason than that they did not have the space or other resources to do otherwise. So I do not for a minute presume or assert that the Society's guidelines are "standards" or universally applicable, but I do think they are logical and defensible within certain fairly broad contexts.

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NOTES

1. Mark A. Greene, "Appraisal of Congressional Records at the Minnesota Historical Society: A Case Study," *Archival Issues* 19:1 (1994): 31–32.
2. Greene, 32.
3. Greene, 34.
4. Todd J. Daniels-Howell, "Appraisal of Congressional Papers," unpublished paper presented at the May 1991 Midwest Archives Conference.
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FROM VILLAGE SMITHY TO SUPERIOR VACUUM TECHNOLOGY: MODERN SMALL-BUSINESS RECORDS AND THE COLLECTING REPOSITORY

BY MARK A. GREENE

ABSTRACT: Documenting modern business in the United States is a complicated matter for archivists, and has been the subject of much recent attention in the professional literature. The Minnesota Historical Society (MHS) has undertaken a major initiative to redefine its collecting approach to modern business records, based both on new conceptual approaches such as macroappraisal and on studies of actual records usage. Documenting modern *small* business adds to these complications three problems: 1) there is no agreed-upon definition of what a small business is; 2) small business has become invested, like "the family farm," with as much myth as reality; 3) small businesses do not operate like large businesses and therefore do not generate the same archival records. In this essay, an appraisal archivist uses the experience of MHS to argue for a nontraditional approach to documenting modern small business.

Introduction

What should our acquisition and appraisal policies be toward modern small business? This is a simple question with only the most complicated of answers. In order to arrive at an answer, archivists must first confront a related set of difficult questions. In the United States, at least, the most intractable of these questions is the most basic one: Just what is a "small business"? Trying to answer this question from a purely econometric standpoint turns out to be hard enough, but we must deal with the fact that in America "small business" is also a social construct of no small importance. The small-business "myth"—as much as the undeniable fact that small-business collections pose less of a physical and organizational challenge to hard-pressed repositories than do the records of large corporations—helps to explain why certain smaller firms are actually much better documented than large corporations.

Against this background, this article will present an abbreviated version of how one collecting repository decided to manage the documentation of small business within

an overall documentation approach to modern business and the rest of modern society. When defining this approach we asked, What is our purpose or goal in documenting business in general, and how does small business relate to that goal? What practical limitations exist on our ability to acquire and preserve records of small business? And are archival collections the best method of documenting small business? All of these questions are entirely relevant to the question of acquisition and appraisal policies for big business—indeed, for almost any form of organized human activity—but they are not asked (much less answered) very often.

Defining "Small Business"

Let's begin, then, with the deceptively simple question of defining "small business."[1] This is a question whose answer is as varied as are the answerers. One economic historian has proposed as a definition for "small business," one in which the owner "maintains direct and firm lines of communication with his operating managers, and keeps personal ties with a large proportion of his work force."[2] This may come closest to capturing what many people would intuitively consider a small business, but has the major disadvantage of being unquantifiable. Most economic historians instead generally seem to define modern small businesses (in the post-1880s economic era in the United States) as those with fewer than one hundred employees.[3] The U.S. Census tends implicitly to define small businesses as those employing fewer than 20 people. By this measure, there are roughly 140,000 small businesses in Minnesota alone, 85 percent of the total number of businesses. This 85 percent of enterprises employs only 25 percent of the state's business workforce. Small businesses are represented in every one of 80 major categories (and most of the approximately five hundred subcategories) of business types listed by the census.[4]

However, the United States Small Business Administration (USSBA), the government agency most concerned with small businesses, states flatly that "there is no standard size definition of a small business. . . . The definition used may depend on the policy issue or question being analyzed, or the industry being studied." The only requirement is that a small business cannot be "dominant" in its industry; small, therefore, is relative to the industry giants. Moreover, depending upon the industry, dominance is measured either by gross revenue or by number of employees.[5] For example, as far as the USSBA is concerned, a "small" manufacturer could have up to fifteen hundred employees, depending upon what is being manufactured; a "small" retailer can have annual receipts of up to $13.5 million, depending upon what is being sold. To make matters worse, in its annual state-by-state reports, the USSBA adopts "independent businesses with fewer than 500 workers" as its definition of "small businesses," presumably so as not to have to explain to a broader public just how complex the situation really is. By this last definition, 98.1 percent of nonfarm businesses in Minnesota are small.[6] The USSBA summed up by stating that "the definitional issues concerning [small] business owners are . . . confused."[7] Certainly quite an understatement.

Moreover, none of these definitions of small business include those people who are self-employed. The USSBA reckons there are more than 170,000 Minnesotans who fall into this category, which is almost 10 percent of the total number of people

employed in the state. Nor do most of the federal government definitions include farms as businesses, which is to say that the roughly 88,000 farms in Minnesota—all of which have fewer than five hundred employees and which together employ 130,000 workers[8]—could reasonably be added to the figures supposedly counting small business. To complicate matters further, by defining small businesses as independent, most definitions overlook not only franchises of major retail and service chains, but also fail to adequately account for the "neither fish nor fowl" status of voluntary associations (such as the Independent Grocers Association) and cooperatives (such as True Value Hardware) through which independent retailers have sought to counter the purchasing power of large chains.[9]

Other familiar attempts to categorize small business also fail. All family businesses are not small, but it is equally true that all small businesses are not family owned. Indeed, a small business is not necessarily *privately* owned. A small business can issue stock, even have it trade publicly, and still be small. On the other hand, a small corporation may still be a family business, as enunciated by one archivist relative to documenting family farms. He noted that "archivists may encounter what amounts to disinformation in the guise of accepted knowledge: articles in the press, for instance, which dramatize the entry of corporations into farming while ignoring the fact that in over ninety per cent of these corporations the stockholders are members of the same family."[10] So, is there an answer to the question of just what we are talking about when we talk about small business? No. Clearly, small businesses exist; we just don't know what they are.

If providing an econometric definition is difficult, there is the additional difficulty of the social connotations long associated with small business in the U.S. Small business has evolved into the capitalist equivalent of Thomas Jefferson's agrarian freehold, the epitome of American values. To quote one historian:

> Like the agrarian myth, which held that moral degeneration could be the only consequence of an increasingly urban society, the small business ethic in U.S. history asserts the simplistic view that the only thing the matter with business is bigness. So long as business is small, it provides an opportunity, and for many the only opportunity, to acquire, if not a fortune, at least a competence.[11]

Horatio Alger popularized and cemented this image of small business from the 1870s through the 1920s. It has been a staple of popular culture and political discourse ever since. President Richard Nixon articulated it in 1973: "Small business is proudly emblematic of the freedom of opportunity which is our national creed. It expresses the freedom of every American to achieve something in his own way. . . . It is also the lifeblood of America."[12] Nearly a quarter century later a California Congressman said, on the House floor, about the National Federation of Independent Businesses that "They represent Main Street, not Wall Street. They represent the kind of mom-and-pop businesses and the small-business owners who in fact really are the economic backbone of the communities that we are fortunate enough to represent here in the Congress." He concluded that "small business ownership is a part of the American dream."[13]

Mention "small business" to most people, even to most archivists, and they think of the mom-and-pop grocery, the village smithy renowned by Longfellow, or perhaps the local car dealership. This image of small business as a family-owned-and-operated grocery store, the kind that still extends credit to regular customers and employs delivery boys, is charming and comforting, but also portentous; it carries a host of implications regarding just what a small business is and, therefore, why and how archivists should preserve evidence of its existence. The trouble is, the icon of the mom-and-pop corner retail establishment bears something of the same relationship to the actual universe of small businesses as does the image of the sod-busting pioneer farmer to the actual universe of commercial agriculture. The family store has existed in various forms in the U.S. for three hundred years or so and continues to exist today; it is, however, hardly a representative sample of a small business. And it cannot, therefore, provide a sound basis upon which to think about documentation goals.

To be sure, small businesses are economically as well as socially important in the modern U.S. economy. In President Clinton's 1995 "Report on the State of Small Business," we are reminded that small businesses (using the "less than five hundred employees" definition) "are a critical part of [the U.S.] economy. They employ almost 60 percent of the work force, contribute 54 percent of sales, account for roughly 40 percent of gross domestic product, and are responsible for 50 percent of private sector output."[14] Generally speaking, then, small business accounts for about half the U.S. economy; the continuing importance of small businesses to policy makers and to the economy as a whole is attested to by the very existence of the USSBA and by the Bureau of Census's continuing efforts to document the tiniest of enterprises.[15]

Still, one must note three things. First, small business is not properly characterized by the retail stores on Main Street. In Minnesota there are businesses with *fewer than 20 employees* in industries as diverse as mining, forestry, carpet manufacturing, corrugated box production, steel milling, manufacturing of construction machinery, chemical wholesalers, and banking, to name a very few. Moreover, many women- and minority-owned small businesses are found not in the traditional small retail trades, but in fields such as electronics assembling, electronics manufacturing, engineering, and information processing, printing, and other service industries.[16] The state's largest small-business employers are restaurants, health services, business services, wholesalers of durable goods, and membership organizations; the fastest growing small businesses by employment are insurance carriers, educational services, motion pictures, and chemicals and allied products.[17]

Second, the nontraditional small businesses are the change agents in the economy. Some economists have recently maintained that large corporations are too unwieldy and inflexible to remain competitive in the global economy, and that the "flexible specialization" possible in smaller firms is the best avenue for economic growth. The exact extent of this superiority of small firms is subject to debate, and the varying studies use (not surprisingly) varying definitions of "small" business.[18] Still, when the USSBA gives grants to small companies it considers to be on the cutting edge of the economy, these grants go to companies such as Superior Vacuum Technology for development of "TeraHertz Oscillators based upon Resonant Tunnel Diodes," not to Seven Corners Hardware or the Day by Day Café.[19]

Third, while small businesses account for half the U.S. economy, the other half of the economy is accounted for by the two percent of firms with five hundred or more employees. Small business *as a whole* has an important economic role, but individual small businesses generally do not.

Extant Documentation of Small Business

Yet the (admittedly scanty) evidence that exists indicates that it is the myth of small business—of the Main Street hardware stores and banks—rather than the twentieth-century reality that is being most aggressively and successfully documented by archivists in the U.S. Limited surveys conducted in 1980 and in 1996 suggest that it is small nineteenth-century retail and resource extraction companies that account for most of the business collections in U.S. repositories. Most respondents to the 1980 survey of college and university special collections "indicated that their records reflected small companies—those with fewer than 100 employees," and only a few represented "companies whose records extend into the twentieth century."[20] While this survey indicated that small textile and lumber firms were somewhat better represented than banks, department stores, and grocery stores, the *later* survey—including not only university special collections but state and county historical societies as well—indicated clearly that the type of business most represented in collections was "general stores." When asked to compare the evolution of dominant industries in their state or region to the evolution of their collections, virtually all repositories reported that their collections much more accurately reflected the economy of the nineteenth century (and to some extent the early twentieth century) than that of the mid- to late-twentieth century. Only four of the repositories held collections from more than two active firms.[21]

What all of this means is that it is likely that small businesses, especially nineteenth-century small businesses, are better documented in the U.S. than are their modern big business cousins. Certainly the aura of small business as the "pure" form of enterprise is not alone in explaining this. Two other factors are important as well. In addition to the lay mythology of small business there is a certain academic mythology. In the 1940s historian Thomas D. Clark argued that "One of the best single sources for American *social* and economic history is the records of small-town or rural businesses." They provide crucial information about the dietary habits, clothing, agricultural practices, and medicinal use of typical American families, Clark argued, as well as about "distribution of goods, of prices and of the intersectional relationships of the national economy."[22] Clark was speaking, generally, about the financial accounts kept by nineteenth- and eighteenth-century firms, and it is indisputable that these records represent often unparalleled information about the tastes and activities of the inhabitants of their respective communities. What was true at a time when small retailers were the social as well as economic hubs of their communities, and when little if any economic data existed apart from the records of individual firms, has continued to dominate scholarly and archival approaches to business records well into the late twentieth century.

Second, since at least the 1940s, historians and archivists have bemoaned the fact that the records generated by large corporations were so enormous and so complex as to be beyond the resources of most repositories to collect.[23] The biggest corporations

in the United States, after all, have gross revenues, "populations" (employees), and documentary output larger than many entire nations. There are a mind-numbing number and variety of business firms.[24] Furthermore, the increasing decentralization of large business organizations, combined with increased fear of liability grounded on information found in retained documents, plus the vicissitudes of mergers and hostile takeovers, have undermined efforts to preserve substantial and significant documentation of major corporations.[25] As Francis X. Blouin has noted, "Due partly to the unavailability of modern business records and partly to the bulk of those record groups that are available, research-oriented repositories find that they have neither the budget nor the space to continue to document the workings of U.S. business enterprises in the twentieth century in the way they documented enterprises in the nineteenth and earlier centuries."[26]

Documentation Approach to Small Business at the Minnesota Historical Society

The approach taken by one historical repository interested in documenting business to develop a pragmatic approach to the selection of twentieth-century business records can be set against this background. The Minnesota Historical Society is the state's largest historical repository and one of the two largest repositories in the nation for the records of business: it holds 21,000 cubic feet of business records, covering 520 separate collections. The business landscape in Minnesota is diverse. Minnesota boasts more Fortune 500 companies per capita than any state save Illinois. It was the seat of milling, lumber, and railroad empires in the nineteenth century and is home to major concentrations of banking, supercomputing, and medical technology firms in the twentieth century. Currently, there are about 120,000 business establishments in the state[27] and untold numbers of business leaders and trade associations. To face this documentary universe—and the documentation of all other aspects of human culture in Minnesota—MHS employs two manuscripts acquisition curators.[28] The choices we face, therefore, are those of most collecting repositories: balancing the documentation of business against all other documentary areas, and then deciding which businesses can and/or should be documented and to what degree. As we set about to define an approach for ourselves, we wound up defining an approach that may have value for other repositories as well. This approach, dubbed the "Minnesota Method," is the topic of a chapter in the book, *Records of American Business*.

To summarize a 70-page chapter[29] in a few paragraphs, MHS decided that priorities exist and choices get made either implicitly or explicitly. Ultimately, the collecting of papers of one business necessarily means that some other business will not be solicited or acquired—or that the papers of an equally important social service organization will be forfeited to the trash bin. If thoughtful, conscious priorities are not set, the priorities dictated by chance (which business went bankrupt this week; which business has its CEO sitting on the repository's board) become completely determinative. But trying to make choices only amidst the mass of records of a business—microappraisal—was not going to address the question of improving documentation of business sectors now

dominating the state's economy. So following to some extent the Canadian concept of macroappraisal we decided that appraising records themselves should *follow* an appraisal of the records' creators.[30]

Our appraisal of records creators occurred only after extensively analyzing our current holdings, studying the twentieth-century evolution of the state's economy, and consulting with scholars in several disciplines interested in business and its history. But we also did our best to consider our extant and predicted resources—of both staff and space—the needs of our nonacademic users (who are the vast majority), and our other documentary and program goals and priorities. In the end we wound up grouping Minnesota businesses by industry, and then grouping the industries into 18 sectors,[31] which we sorted into four tiers based on economic impact (which were broken down into number of employees in the state and revenue), extant documentation, and identification with or uniqueness to Minnesota.[32] Still, each sector contained many more businesses (with far more records) than we could realistically acquire. So we identified and defined 11 factors that reflected a number of institutional concerns and priorities that should exert, along with its tier, an influence on whether we would seek documentation from an individual business and, if so, which documentation (these factors are discussed in the next section).

The next necessary step was defining what the priorities mean in a practical sense—how these priorities translate into the actual "stuff" that would be acquired. To do this we created five documentation levels (Do Not Collect,[33] and levels D through A) in ascending order of comprehensiveness. Level D is an attempt to preserve minimal evidence of the existence and purpose of a company (through such few documents as annual reports, some product information, such as catalogs, and printed, film, or video company histories), and no business defined as a level D would be actively solicited. Basically, this level is designed to give us a way of responding to companies that we might otherwise choose not to document at all, but for which mitigating circumstances (including political pressure from board members) exist.[34] The highest level of documentation, Level A, seeks to thoroughly document both the internal and external facets—or, to use the more contemporary terminology, functions—of a company. The in-depth documentation of internal communication, typically found in such documents as correspondence and memoranda, is one of the most important distinctions between Level A and Level B. Businesses at Level A will be actively solicited by Society staff, as resources permit.

This summary does not fully explain the MHS documentation approach, but should provide necessary context to further remarks on how small business fits into this scheme. A few commentators have already expressed concern that this documentation approach focuses exclusively on large business. While we think that the state's largest employers are, as individual businesses, more important than an equal number (or even five times the number) of small businesses, our model does not ignore or even undervalue small firms. Rather, we have tried to construct an approach that a) shifts the focus away from individual firms and onto whole business sectors; b) consciously turns our attention toward certain characteristics of a business that often adhere to nontraditional small businesses; c) rejects the notion that the only acceptable way to document a business is by acquiring all (or nearly all) of its extant records; d) mitigates the natural

tendency to "rescue" records of companies that are closing or celebrating chronological milestones; and e) steps back from the myth of small business and from the nostalgia occasioned by local retailers with whom the repository staff has a personal relationship.

While the Minnesota Method assumes that Minnesota's largest businesses are—firm for firm—far more important to the economic, social, and political history of the state (not to mention the nation) than any small businesses, in our model the number of employees *by firm* is less significant than three attributes—economic impact, extant documentation, and identification with and/or uniqueness to Minnesota—of a business *sector*. For example, our priority-one sectors are Agriculture, Medical Technology, and Health Care, but only one of Minnesota's top 30 employers is a medical-technology company and two are agricultural, while eight are health-care companies. When a sector becomes a top priority *all* businesses within that sector, regardless of size, become more attractive candidates for extensive (Levels A or B) documentation than all but the largest (top 25) employers in lower priority sectors. As we discovered fifty years ago when the records of virtually every lumber company in Minnesota were sought and (if possible) acquired, there is a definite value to documenting an entire industry—both large firms and small—that exceeds the value of the sum of its parts. While there are no sectors in the modern economy that have so few firms that we could hope to be that comprehensive, we do see a value to identifying a small number of sectors to document in breadth as well as depth. For those sectors, smaller as well as the largest companies would be targeted to give an overall picture of the sector.

"Capturing Small Businesses within the Sector" Approach

Moreover, within all the priority rankings of sectors, as we move toward considering individual firms within the sector, the size of the company—while important—is certainly not the sole criterion of our interest. Proceeding from the first question we ask about a firm to the last, the "decision points" are: 1) Is it one of the state's top 25 employers? 2) Is it one of the five largest employers in its geographic region of the state? 3) Is it considered a leader in its particular industry (an industry being a subset of a sector; for example, both health insurers and hospitals are industries within the Health Care sector)? 4) Does it have a high degree of state or regional identification (an obvious example would be the late, lamented Hamm's brewery)? 5) Can the particular firm serve as an illustrative example of a genre of businesses that we otherwise would not want to document fully? 6) Is the business "politically" important (for example, does its owner sit on the Society's executive board, or is she the sister of the chair of the state senate's appropriation committee)? In addition, at the level of any one of these decision points, our interest increases if the company is minority owned or has a particularly good set of records.

Regional economic impact, industry leadership, and minority ownership are all factors that weigh heavily to the advantage of small businesses. Thirty-four of the 135 largest employers outside the seven-county metropolitan area of Minneapolis-St. Paul employ fewer than 500 people. Depending upon how finely one defines an industry, leading businesses in some industries are apt to be relatively small. For example, of the

35 largest Minnesota med-tech companies by revenue, only 10 (and not the top 10) have more than five hundred employees.[35] To put this in perspective, there are approximately five hundred med-tech firms in Minnesota.[36] We define med-tech as a sector, rather than an industry, so the chances of seeking Level A documentation of a smaller firm is that much better. Similarly, small businesses predominate among minority-owned firms. To take one example, of the sixteen hundred Latino-owned businesses in Minnesota, 1,375 represent self-employed individuals (that is, no employees); of the 225 with employees, the average number of people on the payroll is less than one hundred.[37]

Documentation by Nontraditional Means

But if we can defend our approach to documenting business by showing that some small businesses are indeed candidates for extensive documentation, we are also more than willing to argue that accumulating business records is not the only—or even necessarily the best—means of documenting business, especially small business. There are at least three important sources for documenting business in addition to business records per se. There are archival collections of third parties, that is, records of government regulatory agencies, labor unions, and industry trade associations, and papers of business leaders, elected officials, political activists, and employees. There are oral history and oral interviews, which are increasingly used as a central resource for documenting those aspects of modern business that are not sufficiently documented in written form. And there are nonarchival resources, ranging from artifacts to newspapers, from ephemera to trade publications, from annual reports to monographs. Kenneth E. Foote reminds us that not just archives, but museums, libraries, and other institutions "may sustain a *representation* of the past quite specific to its institutional mandate, but these representations can be interrelated. The value of such a point is that it guards against assuming that collective memory is invested in any single type of human institution, such as the archives."[38] All of these sources have long been accepted as *supplements* to traditional business records. What we are prepared to do at the Minnesota Historical Society is to frequently seek and/or accept these sources—or collections of corporate publications such as annual reports and employee newsletters—as *substitutes* for collections of minutes, ledgers, and payrolls.

There are essentially two reasons relying on nontraditional documentation makes sense, particularly for small business. One is that when we pay attention to what researchers actually use to study modern business, we find that traditional company records are far down the list. The other is that modern small businesses typically do not generate much in the way of records, and the records they do generate do not contain either the evidence or the information of their nineteenth-century counterparts. At MHS our documentation levels attempt to strike a balance between the demonstrable needs of a relatively few scholars for fairly detailed documentation across a broad range of functions at certain companies, and the increasingly well-documented use by the majority of academics and amateur historians of well-organized summary data.

As part of the National Endowment for the Humanities grant that funded part of the Records of American Business project, the Hagley Museum and Library oversaw a

citation analysis to provide substantive information about the types of records used and types of businesses studied in scholarly articles over the past 25 years. The Hagley study found a clear indication that archival sources are not used very heavily by business historians compared to internal and external publications. Of the 67,000 footnotes studied, 36 percent of citations were to "primary source publications" (annual reports, newsletters, trade journals, catalogs, government documents, newspapers); 28 percent of citations were to secondary source publications (monographs and journal articles); and 21.5 percent of citations were to unpublished primary source business records, mostly correspondence files. Less than one percent were to financial records and less than two percent to company minutes.[39] This is not exactly a revelation. Distinguished historian Arthur Cole asked 50 years ago whether it really made sense for the Baker Library to devote 324 feet of stack space to records of the Slater textile company that had been used nine times in 14 years, as opposed to filling that space with books or other types of sources that would undoubtedly be used more frequently.[40] Unfortunately, in the intervening years, neither historians nor archivists have been willing to pursue this question.

What is true for academic historians is equally true for others. In a limited study of call slips conducted at MHS, researchers (everybody from genealogists to citizen historians working on a history of their town or county to high school students) using business-related material made the most use (in order) of secondary monographs, executive correspondence in business archives, audiovisual material, and personal papers. Maynard Brichford made a similar observation 40 years ago: "In selecting business records for preservation, the potential users should be considered. . . . In many instances, they are likely to be amateur historians more accustomed to newspaper accounts than piles of correspondence, legalistic documents, books of entry with vague column headings and streamlined forms."[41]

Indeed, such evidence as exists suggests that an analogous valuation of sources is made by the internal and external clients at corporate archives as well. Forty-seven corporate archives responded to a survey created by MHS and distributed under the auspices of the Society and the Hagley as part of the Records of American Business Project. Respondents were asked to select from a list of 39 record types and rank those used most heavily by both internal clients and external researchers. Far and away the most heavily used material by *internal* clients were photos, annual reports, and employee publications. Print advertising and biographical files also made respectable showings. It should be noted that there were some variations by type of business, but not at the level of these five most heavily used record series. It is also worth noting that the same five series were the most heavily used by external researchers as well.[42]

If the lack of utility of most series of traditional business records is true for all businesses, it is especially true for small businesses, because the quantity and quality of the records they create is generally lower than their larger counterparts. As noted previously, one historian's definition of a small business is a company in which the owner "maintains direct and firm lines of communication with his operating managers, and keeps personal ties with a large proportion of his work force." This conception underlies the argument put forth by communication scholar JoAnne Yates suggesting that

the one unifying characteristic of small businesses is the paucity of records they generate. In Yates' words:

> The small, owner-managed company (usually with fewer than 100 employees) was the standard form of American business enterprise before 1880 and still exists today. In this traditional firm, the owner(s) managed all of the firm's workings. . . . In a small company of this type, almost all internal communication was handled orally. The owner or foreman collected operating information (such as the production schedule and problems with machinery), made decisions, and gave orders in person. . . . The accounting records in these small companies served less as communications between individuals than as documentation of financial transactions for future reference. They were simple, descriptive records of monetary transactions. . . .

"Internal communication in small firms has changed somewhat in recent times," she continues, noting that telephones reduced correspondence while government regulations increased certain other forms of record keeping. She concludes: "Communication and records, however, fulfill a relatively limited role in the small, traditional business. . . ."[43] To varying degrees, this will be true whether the small business is a corner grocery or a manufacturer of specialized steel products. The fewer employees the less need for detailed written records outside of those necessary for financial accounting and reports to government or to shareholders.

And what of those accounting records eulogized by Thomas Clark and cramming the shelves of so many archives? In the nineteenth century the corner hardware store would have kept a credit ledger recording accounts for all its customers and what each person purchased. That these accounts are important for social and economic history is indisputable, but they do not exist in modern stores. Not only do stores seldom extend credit, even the most sophisticated inventory control systems would have much less value today than in 1897. Why? Because in 1897 it was certain that virtually all sales from a neighborhood store went to residents of that neighborhood, and using census information a scholar could at least draw inferences about what goods were popular or useful for the socioeconomic or ethnic composition of that neighborhood. Today, there is no telling how many of a store's customers are from the immediate vicinity: the automobile has seen to that. Moreover, the census bureau, USSBA, and various trade associations are gathering and publishing financial and demographic information on small businesses unheard of even 60 years ago. Mom-and-pop retail establishments may continue to have an important social role in their communities, but generally this will not be documented well in their business records.[44] A television documentary, a newspaper photo-essay, or a set of oral history interviews is much more likely to capture the cultural identity of such stores than a whole warehouse full of financial records or even minutes.

Other types of small businesses—foundries, medical device manufacturers, diversity consultants, building contractors—may or may not have records that provide documentation sufficiently useful to be worth preserving. Even if the records are "worthwhile," however, the question of whether to preserve them depends upon the priorities

and resources of the repository rather than on the records themselves. Within the context of seeking extensive documentation of the med-tech sector at MHS, the research and development files, Federal Food and Drug Administration files, and financial records (particularly relating to securing financing) of a particular small firm probably would be "worth" keeping. But because architecture, construction, and heavy manufacturing are not deemed important collecting goals for our repository, even a one hundred-year run of minutes, ledgers, journals, customer correspondence, and job specifications for a small foundry may not be important enough to preserve.[45]

Fighting the Reflex to Save

Yet there remains a tendency to respond reflexively every time a business closes or celebrates a chronological milestone. "Our instinct is still to see ourselves in the role of a twentieth-century Horatius-at-the-Bridge: the last line of defence between preservation and oblivion. This causes us to make utterly ludicrous decisions regarding acquisition by cloaking ourselves in the role of maintaining culture: If I don't save it, who will?"[46] But there is more than an instinct to be the rescuer of endangered "culture" involved in the reactive approach to appraisal taken by many archives. There can also be an emotional involvement in appraisal decisions that cannot be dismissed lightly, particularly when the firm in question is not only of the mythic mom-and-pop variety but is a personal favorite of the repository staff. As members of society, archivists can be touched by issues and events, such as the closing of a favorite business that is important to one's community. In this we fully agree with Terry Cook that "archivists are agents, conscious or unconscious, willing or unwilling, of the historical process in which they find themselves."[47]

Nevertheless, we believe that archivists can transcend their emotional attachments, at least to some degree, and work toward making rational and thoughtful (though not scientific and objective) choices. Although we agree with F. Gerald Ham that appraisal is thus ultimately more an art than a science, we heartily support Virginia Stewart's statement that "Even an art form demands rigor, attention to detail, and some rationale for the technique."[48] In the end it is rationale for the technique that we sought at MHS in constructing an approach to documenting business in general and small business in particular.

To do so we had to ask ourselves some hard questions and give difficult and sometimes controversial answers. This essay began with one set of questions and it will close with another. "How much will journals and ledgers reveal about corporate culture? Will any of the records series traditionally regarded as permanent deal with the dynamics of organizational structure and adaptation in human terms? Will they even capture the most salient realities of corporate culture and decision making as they evolve in the present and the future?"[49] For small businesses even more than large ones, the answer to these questions is usually "no." Let it be clear that the point is not that seeking or acquiring traditional sets of business records is outmoded or useless, but that—if we are to document business according to a rational plan (rather than haphazardly) and if we are to have resources left to document the rest of society—

soliciting and preserving traditional sets of business records, particularly of small businesses, must be done selectively rather than compulsively.

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NOTES

1. Much of the discussion of defining small business that follows was first presented in Mark A. Greene, "Store Wars: Some Thoughts on the Strategy and Tactics of Documenting Small Business," *Midwestern Archivist* 16 (1991): 97–98. That article was solely a "thought piece" (not least because when first written the author had virtually no experience actually appraising business records).
2. Ross M. Robertson, "The Small Business Ethic in America," *The Vital Majority: Small Business in the American Economy*, ed. Deane Carson (Washington, DC, 1973): 29.
3. Following Harvard economic historian Alfred Chandler, the following two archival articles use the "less than one hundred employees" definition of a small business: Nicholas C. Burckel, "Business Archives in a University Setting: Status and Prospect," *College and Research Libraries* 41 (May 1980): 229, and Joanna Yates, "Internal Communications Systems in American Business Structures: A Framework to Aid Appraisal," *American Archivist* 48 (spring 1985): 144.
4. Bureau of the Census, "The State—Employees, Payroll, and Establishments by Industry," *County Business Patterns: Minnesota* (1986): 3–14; *Minnesota Pocket Data Book, 1985–86,* ed. Vic Spadaccini (St. Paul, 1985): 84.
5. The Code of Federal Regulations, Title 13, Section 121.102 (Revised as of January 1, 1997), U.S. Government Printing Office via GPO Access (wais.access.gpo.gov) states:

   How does SBA establish size standards?

   (a) SBA considers economic characteristics comprising the structure of an industry, including degree of competition, average firm size, start-up costs and entry barriers, and distribution of firms by size. It also considers technological changes, competition from other industries, growth trends, historical activity within an industry, unique factors occurring in the industry which may distinguish small firms from other firms, and the objectives of its programs and the impact on those programs of different size standard levels.

   (b) As part of its review of a size standard, SBA will investigate if any concern at or below a particular standard would be dominant in the industry. SBA will take into consideration market share of a concern and other appropriate factors which may allow a concern to exercise a major controlling influence on a national basis in which a number of business concerns are engaged. Size standards seek to ensure that a concern that meets a specific size standard is not dominant in its field of operation.
6. Hence, the USSBA and the Bureau of the Census have a difference of 13 percent in their figures because of their definitions. U.S. Small Business Administration, Office of Advocacy, *1995 Small Business Profile: Minnesota* (Washington, DC, 1995): 1. My copy of this document was printed locally from the World Wide Web, off the USSBA's Web site (www.sbaonline.sba.gov).

7. *The State of Small Business: A Report of the President, Transmitted to Congress 1989* (Washington, 1989): 17, 19, 20; telephone conversation, April 9, 1990, with George Saumweber, Minneapolis office of the U.S. Small Business Administration. Not to be outdone in confusion, the Policy Analysis Division of the Minnesota Department of Energy (later Trade) and Economic Development changed its criteria for a "very small" business by a factor of 10 between 1986 (*1986 Economic Profile of Minnesota*, 10) and 1988 (*Compare Minnesota: An Economic and Statistical Fact Book*, 26). In the former year very small companies were those earning less than $1,000 in gross sales, while in the latter year the same company could earn up to $10,000 in gross sales. Not surprisingly, the percentage of very small companies in the state jumped from 19.6 to 41.0 in two years.
8. *Compare Minnesota,* 43, 66.
9. Mansel G. Blackford, *A History of Small Business in America* (New York, 1991): 93–94.
10. Gould P. Coleman, "Documenting Agriculture and Rural Life," *Midwestern Archivist* 12:22 (1987).
11. Robertson, 28.
12. Richard M. Nixon, "Message from the President," *The Vital Majority: Small Business in the American Economy*, xi.
13. "NFIB, SMALL BUSINESS AGENDA," *Congressional Record* [on-line], January 25, 1995 (House), H661–H662, via GPO Access (wais.access.gpo.gov).
14. William Jefferson Clinton, "Report on the State of Small Business—Message from the President," *Congressional Record* [on-line], May 25, 1995 (Senate), S7495–S7496, via GPO Access (wais.access.gpo.gov).
15. Bureau of the Census, "The State—Employees, Payroll, and Establishments by Industry," *County Business Patterns: Minnesota* (1986): 3–14; *The State of Small Business: A Report of the President, Transmitted to Congress 1989.* The spread of percentages is due to the problem of definition.
16. *County Business Patterns: Minnesota*, 3–14; National Minority Business Campaign, *Try Us '88: National Minority Business Directory* (Minneapolis, 1988).
17. *Minnesota 1995 Small Business Profile*, 4.
18. See Blackford, *A History of Small Business in America,* 107–16, 123–35; Michael Nash, "Small Business, Manufacturing, and Flexible Specialization: Implications for the Archivist," *American Archivist* 58 (summer 1995): 285.
19. From list of Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program awards, 1995, for Minnesota, at www.sbaonline.sba.gov. This was award number 30021.
20. Burckel, 229.
21. The 1996 survey, prepared jointly by MHS and the Hagley, was mailed to every 10th member of SAA's Manuscripts Repository Section (section membership was 580), and 25 were returned: Michael Kohl, Clemson University Libraries Special Collections; Kermit J. Pike, Western Reserve Historical Society Library; Nancy Boothe, Rice University Special Collections; Harold L. Miller, State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Rick Stattler, Rhode Island Historical Society Library; Elizabeth Knowlton, Georgia Department of Archives and History; Rob Spindler, Arizona State University Department of Archives and Manuscripts; William Myers, Ohio Historical Society; Nancy Bartlett, University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library; Karyl Winn, University of Washington Libraries; Peter Blodgett, Huntington Library; Saundra Taylor, Indiana University Lilly Library; Mark Shelstad, University of Wyoming American Heritage Center; Terry Abraham, University of Idaho Special Collections; Phyllis Danner, University of Illinois; Patricia Hamilton, McLean County Historical Society; Paul Anderson, Washington University School of Medicine; Fred Reenstjerna, Douglas County Museum; Leon Miller, Tulane University; Paul Eisloffel, Nebraska State Historical Society; Johanna Harden, Douglas Public Library; Marylin Wurzburger, Arizona State University; Julia Marks Young, Georgia State University; Everett Wilkie, Connecticut Historical Society; and Kiana Lachantanere, Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture.
22. Thomas D. Clark, "The Archives of Small Business," *American Archivist* 12:1 (January 1948): 27 (emphasis added); T.D. Clark, "Records of Little Businesses as Sources of Social and Economic History," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 19: 151.
23. Few companies, apparently, bother to keep track of how many records they create in a year. Even those with records management departments actually see only a fraction of the records created, since many records are destroyed on the basis of general schedules. It is instructive to note, however, that the Great Northern and Northern Pacific railroads, which could afford to store unusually large percentages of their total documentary record, had accumulated roughly 750,000 cubic feet of records in a little less

than a century of operation. The quantity judged to have enduring value was a still staggering 15,000 cubic feet. The records center at 3M, a Fortune 500 company headquartered in St. Paul, Minnesota, holds 20,000 cubic feet of records, most of which turn over every three to 10 years.

24. There were 13,695,500 businesses of all sizes in the U.S. in 1987, and the Standard Industrial Code (SIC) alone has over 1,000 categories of business firms. Using the Census Bureau's definitions, over two million of these businesses are *not* small. Bureau of the Census, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 111th Edition* (Washington, 1991): 533.
25. Nor should it be imagined that large businesses are being thoroughly documented by in-house archives. The most recent edition of SAA's *Directory of Business Archives* (1990) lists only 160 "archives." I place the word in quotes because the *Directory* lists only 64 archivists, and many corporate archives (such as Kraft Foods and CIGNA insurance company) employ two or more professional archivists. Therefore, many of these "archives" are historical collections administered by public relations departments. In a recently published paper, Elizabeth Adkins, formerly archivist of Kraft and now archivist at Ford, lists 38 "major" corporate archives in the U.S., all of which are staffed by professional archivists. See Elizabeth Adkins, "The Development of Business Archives in the United States: An Overview and Personal Perspective," *American Archivist* 60 (winter 1997): 8–33. For further information on corporate archives, see Douglas A. Bakken, "Corporate Archives Today," *American Archivist* 45 (summer 1982): 279–281; Philip F. Mooney, "Commentary I," *American Archivist* 45 (summer 1982): 291–293; Eldon Frost, "A Weak Link in the Chain: Records Scheduling as a Source of Archival Acquisition," *Archivaria* 33 (winter 1991–92): 80–83; Duncan McDowall, "'Wonderful Things': History, Business, and Archives Look to the Future," *American Archivist* 56 (spring 1993): 350–354.
26. Francis X. Blouin, Jr., "An Agenda for the Appraisal of Business Records," *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance,* ed. Nancy E. Peace (Lexington, MA, 1985): 69.
27. Bureau of the Census, "Minnesota," *County Business Patterns* (Washington, 1992): 3.
28. One of the two curators is the author of this essay. They are two of seven professionals who staff the Society's Acquisition and Curatorial Department. Of the other five, only the Sound and Visual Curator (Bonnie Wilson) and the department head (James Fogerty) are involved in any way with business records or any other major manuscript collections. (The other curators are responsible for art, maps, and books.) In addition, the staff of five curators in the Society's Museum Collections Department are involved in appraising three-dimensional artifacts of all types, including business products, packaging, and advertising. MHS also employs four manuscript processors.
29. Most of what follows is drawn directly or indirectly from Mark A. Greene and Todd J. Daniels-Howell, "Appraisal with an Attitude: A Pragmatist's Guide to the Selection and Acquisition of Modern Business Records," *Records of American Business*, ed. James M. O'Toole (Chicago, 1997): 161–229.
30. Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Toward a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour Of Hugh Taylor*, ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa, 1992): 53. On the other hand, macroappraisal presumes that a deep analysis of all individual records-creating entities will occur before setting priorities. In our method such creator-by-creator analysis—of the hundreds, thousands, and tens of thousands of businesses in a county, state, or region—before setting priorities is impossible. More plausible would be an intense analysis of every business sector or subsector but this probably is a practical possibility only for special-subject repositories. A repository dedicated to documenting the history of computing, for instance, could and probably would be able to insist that its staff develop a formidable understanding of the computer industry. But most regional, state, and local repositories, charged with documenting most or all social/political/economic/cultural facets of their geographic region will not have staff who are expert in any facet of business history. These are repositories with staff who are jacks-of-all-trades, masters of none. This is not to say that a certain level of research and understanding are not absolutely necessary, only that the level of research and understanding envisioned by macroappraisal is not assumed by our method.
31. We consulted several internal and external sources, including the Standard Industrial Code (SIC), and finally settled on a hybrid based in large part on the SIC. We could not adopt the SIC sectors directly, because many sectors prominent in the Minnesota economy get grouped together in ways that are not meaningful to MHS, such as health care, hospitality/tourism, entertainment, and advertising being grouped under the Services sector. Therefore, we chose to break out and rearrange some of these sectors to more appropriately define the Minnesota economy as we understood it from our sources. The internal sources included 1980 and 1993 MHS collection analyses and an early 1993 Manuscript

section draft list of business collection priorities. External sources included the St. Paul *Pioneer Press* BTC (Business Twin Cities) 100 from 1994, and *Corporate Report Minnesota* from 1993, as well as the Standard Industrial Code. The final breakdown into 18 sectors—each one further broken down into its various subparts as indicated by the SIC—does not claim to be scientific and made little or no reference to economic theory, but was tailored to the practical problems we faced in our state at this time.

32. The top priority sectors (what we now call "tier 1 sectors") are Agriculture/Food Products, Health Care, and Medical Technology. Not only the particular results, but the very basis of the setting of priorities itself was (and should be understood to be) peculiar to MHS. Many different specific approaches to this same goal of setting priorities are not only possible but sensible. Florence Lathrop, "Toward a National Collecting Policy for Business History: The View From Baker Library," *Business History Review* 62 (spring 1988): 142, has stated quite presciently that: "A number of criteria can be used to select industries [as the focus for a repository's collecting]: the centrality of an industry to the local or national economy in a particular time period; the size of an industry, measured in a variety of ways—its contribution to gross national (or regional) product, the number of firms involved, or the number of employees; the significance of an industry with respect to organizational structure, labor relations, technological innovation or transfer; the extent of an industry's impact on other components of American social and political history, such as ethnicity, family structure, or foreign relations."
33. "Do Not Collect" means just what it says: no records relating to the company would be accepted by the Manuscripts section of the Society. This decision would not necessarily bind other collecting units, such as Sound and Visual or Museum.
34. Documentation levels C and D, where the Society would seek and accept only fairly minimal levels of material from a particular business, may seem contrary to traditional archival assumptions about acquiring the best documentation possible of any entity documented or accepting none at all. Such an attitude is impractical for an institution with a broad mandate and a very diverse user base. In our experience, citizen historians working on a history of their town or county seem to make more extensive use of company publications, such as annual reports and employee newsletters, than of most other business records series. Indeed, according to such evidence as exists the same is often true of academic researchers and of internal clients at corporate archives as well. Conversely, our experience with modern minutes and correspondence (not to mention ledgers and journals) has led us to question the assumption that they are "must haves" for every company or organization. Most minutes provide less useful information than an annual report; unless the company is one for which a generally detailed and comprehensive set of records is desired, minutes are probably less valuable (cubic foot per cubic foot) for most researchers than company publications.
35. Carla Solberg, "The Med-Tech 35," *Corporate Report Minnesota* (October 1996): 53–70.
36. *The Medical Alley Directory, 1994–95: A Guide to the Quality and Innovation of Minnesota's Healthcare Industry* (St. Louis Park, MN, 1994): 6.
37. Dee DePass, "Bienvenidos Business: Hispanic-Owned Companies Fighting for Market Share," *Star Tribune* (Minneapolis, June 15, 1997): D1, D4. The figures are from 1992, the latest year available.
38. Kenneth E. Foote, "To Remember and Forget: Archives, Memory, and Culture," *American Archivist* 53 (summer 1990): 380 (emphasis in original). This point was reemphasized and extended by Richard J. Cox, "The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective," *Archivaria* 38 (fall 1994): 26–29. See also Timothy L. Ericson, "Beyond Business: External Documentation and Corporate Records," 297–326; James E. Fogerty, "Facing Reality: Oral History, Corporate Culture, and the Documentation of Business," 251–274; Ernest J. Dick, "Corporate Memory in Sound and Visual Records," 275–296; John A. Fleckner, "Reaching the Mass Audience: Business History as Popular History," 327–348; all in *The Records of American Business,* ed. James M. O'Toole (Chicago, 1997).
39. The remaining 15 percent of citations were split among court records, oral histories, family papers, and trade association records. The only unpublished primary source to crack double digits was executive correspondence. The citation analysis is summarized in Michael Nash, "Business History and Archival Practice: Shifts in Sources and Paradigms," *Records of American Business*, 34–36. The Hagley was gracious enough to share the raw data from the study—done by Julie Kimmel and Christopher McKenna—with MHS. For a much more in-depth analysis of the figures, see Mark Greene, "'The Surest Proof': A Utilitarian Approach to Appraisal," *Archivaria* 45 (spring 1998): 135–139. For additional evidence of the extensive use made of nontraditional sources by scholars, see Martha Lightwood,

"Corporation Documents–Sources of Business History." *Special Libraries* (May–June 1966): 336–337.

40. Arthur H. Cole, "Business Manuscripts: A Pressing Problem," *Journal of Economic History* 5 (May 1945): 50.
41. The order of the sources used was slightly different for those researchers interested in railroad history than in other forms of business. Ironically, in general, nonacademic historians make somewhat *greater* use of unpublished primary source material than do scholars, based on this limited study. Again, these data are analyzed and presented in more detail in Greene, "'The Surest Proof,'" 135–139. Maynard J. Brichford, "Preservation of Business Records," *History News* II, No. 10 (August 1956): 77. Fleckner, "Reaching the Mass Audience," makes a similar point about nonacademic users and uses of history, though he adds the important caution that it is often the unpublished primary source materials that provide meaning and context for the more nontraditional sources.
42. Greene, "'The Surest Proof,'" 135–139.
43. Yates, "Internal Communications," 144–145. See also Francis X. Blouin, "A New Perspective on the Appraisal of Business Records: A Review," *American Archivist* 42 (July 1979): 316–317. Clark would take some issue with the argument that small businesses documentation is minimal and routine. He points out that some small businessmen became the "official confidants for their communities" and received intimate letters from customers detailing their lives. In addition, he argues that the account books themselves, if read properly, are "socio-economic journal[s] of trade" ("Records of Little Businesses," 157), though this is probably less true for modern small businesses. But he does not contravene the general point that small businesses create fewer evidential records, even in proportion to their activity, than do larger firms.
44. An important exception tends to be cooperative stores (so-called "new-age co-ops"), which sprang up in many U.S. cities in the early 1970s. These establishments often encourage both their employee-owners and their customers to record observations, feelings, complaints, praise, and suggestions in free-form logbooks that can become wonderful social history sources.
45. It is important to note here, however, that decisions to take records from a business may legitimately be made for reasons *other* than the desire to document the business itself. For example, a bank that would normally be documented at level D—or not at all—might have commissioned, for a promotion campaign, excellent photos of the business districts of the towns in which it had branches. In this instance, documentation of the business itself would not normally include photos (except possibly for one or two of the bank itself), but the promotion photos in this case might be acquired on their own merits as excellent documentation of the community. Another example: the CEO of a firm maintained, as part of the company records, the files of a statewide industry trade group he founded and led for many years; regardless of what, if any, records might be acquired to document the business itself, the trade group files may be acquired. The point at which an awareness of the social history potential of business records gives way to appraising records created by business purely for their social history (or other) value is admittedly a murky one.
46. Timothy L. Ericson, "At the 'rim of creative dissatisfaction': Archivists and Acquisition Development," *Archivaria* 33 (winter 1991–92): 69. Horatius, for anyone who—like me—is rusty on their Greek history, was a hero from the sixth century BCE who single-handedly held off a large Etruscan army at a bridge on the Tiber River. Horatius was brave but doomed, and I think that unless we continue to look for more realistic and pragmatic approaches to acquisition and appraisal, we will fare little better than Horatius.
47. Cook, "'Another Brick in the Wall': Terry Eastwood's Masonry and Archival Walls, History, and Archival Appraisal," *Archivaria* 37 (spring 1994): 102.
48. Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1995): 72; Stewart, "A Primer on Manuscript Field Work," *Midwestern Archivist* 1 (1976): 4.
49. Fogerty, "Facing Reality," 261.

DOCUMENTATION STRATEGIES IN THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY?: RETHINKING INSTITUTIONAL PRIORITIES AND PROFESSIONAL LIMITATIONS

BY JENNIFER A. MARSHALL

Since its introduction into archival theory nearly fifteen years ago, the documentation strategy approach has generated considerable debate within the archival community, garnering both advocates and critics. This discussion has been so widespread that Terry Cook has called documentation strategy "the single most important North American contribution to a growing debate on appraisal theory, strategy and methodology."[1] This paper will utilize a review of the professional literature to trace the evolution of the documentation strategy, consider the arguments that have been raised for and against it, and analyze several experiments with the concept to date. In addition, this overview will argue for the importance of documentation strategy as an appraisal tool, and will examine its relationship with functional analysis and macroappraisal. Finally, the paper will include the results of interviews conducted by the author to assess the impact that these three techniques, particularly documentation strategy, are having on North American archival practice.

Defining "Documentation Strategy"

The archival documentation strategy concept was first introduced in papers presented by Helen Samuels, Larry Hackman, and Patricia Aronsson at a session of the 1984 Society of American Archivists annual meeting.[2] The pioneering work in the archival literature, Helen Samuels's "Who Controls the Past," was published in 1986, and defined the documentation strategy as follows:

> A documentation strategy is a plan formulated to assure the documentation of an ongoing issue, activity, or geographic area (e.g., the operation of the government of the state of New York, labor unions in the United States, the impact of technology on the environment). The strategy is ordinarily designed, promoted, and in part implemented by an ongoing mechanism involving records creators, administrators (including archivists), and users. The documentation strategy is carried out through the mutual efforts of many institutions and individuals influencing both the creation of the records and the archival retention of a

> portion of them. The strategy is refined in response to changing conditions and viewpoints.[3]

This initial definition has five salient characteristics. First, the documentation strategy defines a particular scope of documentation. Second, the plan involves not only archivists, but also records creators, other administrators, and records users as well. Third, the strategy is multi-institutional. Fourth, it seeks to influence the creation of records, rather than deal only with existing documentation. Finally, the documentation strategy is an ongoing process and can be revised as circumstances change. It is important to note that Samuels distinguishes the documentation strategy from two familiar concepts, the collecting/acquisitions policy and the collecting project. The former focuses on the holdings and collecting priorities of individual repositories, although its implementation can be accomplished through interinstitutional cooperation and documentation strategies; the latter concentrates on the accumulation of existing documentation of a specific issue, and is not an ongoing process.

The concept of the documentation strategy has evolved during a decade of dialogue in the archival literature. Richard Cox cites the most recent definition of the documentation strategy as that offered in the Society of American Archivists' 1992 glossary:

> An ongoing, analytic, cooperative approach designed, promoted, and implemented by creators, administrators (including archivists), and users to ensure the archival retention of appropriate documentation in some area of human endeavor through the application of archival techniques, the creation of institutional archives and refined acquisition policies, and the development of sufficient resources. The key elements in this approach are an analysis of the universe to be documented, an understanding of the inherent documentary problems, and the formulation of a plan to assure the adequate documentation of an issue, activity, or geographic area.[4]

This statement retains the essential elements of earlier definitions, while advocating more clearly the creation of institutional archives as part of the documentation strategy process. Based on this model, Cox suggests that the documentation strategy has four basic elements: it is an analytical tool that provides a framework for addressing "some aspect of the documentary universe;" it is an interdisciplinary process that brings the expertise of a number of parties to the analysis of the documentary area under consideration; it involves a recognition of inherent documentary problems, such as the increasing quantity of modern documentation and the changing forms of contemporary records; and, finally, it requires the formulation of a plan to define what constitutes appropriate documentation for the area analyzed.[5] While the definitions in the glossary and by Cox are not as explicit about interinstitutional cooperation and archival intervention in the records creation process as Samuels's original definition, this might be considered a difference in emphasis rather than in substance. The glossary definition describes documentation strategy as cooperative, and Cox discusses it as an interdisciplinary process. Regarding archival intervention, the latter definition's focus on "the creation of institutional archives and refined acquisition policies" and "the

formulation of a plan to assure . . . the adequate documentation" necessarily involves steps to identify and fill gaps in existing documentation.

Purpose and Goals

One of the driving forces behind the inception of a documentation strategy approach was a professional perception that archivists were failing in their mission to adequately document society, because current appraisal practices had resulted in overabundant or inadequate documentation in some areas, while leaving complete gaps in the documentary record for others.[6] The watershed expression of this concern about appraisal practice was written by F. Gerald Ham: "Our most important and intellectually demanding task as archivists is to make an informed selection of information that will provide the future with a representative record of human experience in our time. But why must we do it so badly?"[7]

Another important factor in the development of the documentation strategy was a sense that contemporary records were changing, and that this evolution required archivists to adapt old techniques and adopt new ones in order to effectively manage modern documentation. While there is not a professional consensus that present documentary realities have altered the fundamental issues involved in archival functions, a number of archivists have argued that emerging documentary forms and evolving organizational structures mean that the modern documentary universe differs from that of the past in at least three ways.[8]

First, the emergence of new technologies has sparked an explosion in the sheer abundance of records. Second, the increasingly complex relationships among modern institutions have rendered consideration of the records of isolated institutions unfeasible. Because of increased multi-institutional collaboration, today's records often can be understood only in conjunction with each other. Moreover, this complex web of relationships has resulted in large-scale duplication of documentation. Thus, informed appraisal decisions must be made in the context of the available range of documentation, with the knowledge that related or better documentation might be held by another institution. Finally, documentary forms themselves are changing. In addition to the issues posed by the proliferation of electronic records, there is an increasing number of non-textual documentary materials to be considered. According to proponents of the documentation strategy, these changes in the nature of documentation itself require that archivists develop new methods of approaching the documentary record to supplement traditional practices.

Advocates of documentation strategies have argued that this approach holds a number of promises for contemporary archival practice. For example, through interinstitutional cooperation to avoid duplication in collecting and careful planning to determine in advance which records archivists should appraise, the strategy would appear to provide the means for conserving scarce archival resources in the long run. In addition, the broad definition of the documentation strategy allows it to be adapted to a wide variety of documentary needs, and its formulation as an ongoing process provides the flexibility for revision as the nature of documentation changes.

Another potential benefit of the documentation strategy is that, because it involves records creators, users, and area specialists in its work, it affords archivists the opportunity to educate other sectors of society about the importance of archival work. In addition, it offers archivists an opportunity to enhance the quality of documentation by drawing on the different experiences and perspectives that each of these groups brings to the table.[9] In designing and promoting documentation strategies, archivists should place special emphasis on building alliances with related information and historical professionals, because documentation strategies have potential significance and application for these fields as well. Libraries, manuscript repositories, museums, and historical societies share the interest that archives have in ensuring the adequate documentation of society. Moreover, other information professionals often have more experience than archivists in collecting and preserving non-textual materials.[10]

The chief recommendation of the documentation strategy, however, is that it is a powerful tool to assist the archival profession with its appraisal responsibilities. In recent years, some archivists have begun to advocate research-based techniques as the only viable solution to the numerous appraisal dilemmas posed by the modern documentary universe. The premise behind these methodologies is that careful planning and analysis must precede any examination of actual records. The documentation strategy is one such approach that has been advanced in the archival literature; other techniques that offer considerable promise are functional analysis and macroappraisal.

Other Techniques

The seminal work in functional analysis is Helen Samuels's consideration of the documentation produced by modern colleges and universities.[11] Samuels's ideas of functional analysis grew out of prior efforts to consider the process involved in improving the documentation of science and technology.[12] The focus of functional analysis, unlike that of the documentation strategy with its collaborative emphasis, is the single institution. The premise of this approach is that

> . . .archivists must start their selection activities not with a consideration of specific sets of records, but with an understanding of the context in which records are created. A functional approach provides the means to achieve a comprehensive understanding of an institution and its documentation: a knowledge of what is to be documented and the problems of gathering the desired documentation.[13]

Functional analysis involves the identification of an institution's primary functions, and the breakdown of each function into its component activities. In this exercise, the archivist examines what sorts of documentation are necessary to document each function and activity fully. This analysis enables the archivist to pinpoint which units within the organization are most likely to produce the required documentation, and also to determine what types of documentation might not be produced at all because of the nature of a particular function or activity. Having completed a functional analysis, an archivist is then able to target particular functions and activities for priority attention, based on the mission and goals of the institution.

Canadian archivists have been the primary advocates of a third approach: macroappraisal. This technique grew out of the "total archives" concept in which public archives seek out both public records and private papers.[14] Terry Cook, a proponent of macroappraisal, has offered a comprehensive explanation of this model, and has outlined how the National Archives of Canada is utilizing it.[15] In a macroappraisal model, the focus is on records creators and records-creating processes, rather than on the records themselves. The objective of this approach is to create an image of society that will represent its most significant features. This image is achieved by integrating function, which Cook equates with the purpose or intent of the records creator, with structure, which represents the actual records creator. Cook points out that records are produced through the interaction of function and structure with clients and argues that "It is at these points of sharpest *interaction* that the best documentary evidence will be found."[16] Thus, selection within the macroappraisal model involves a process of identifying society's most important records-creating structures and then developing methods to evaluate the importance of the client's interaction with these structures.

A shared goal of documentation strategy, functional analysis, and macroappraisal is to improve the quality of documentation through more effective selection. Each of these techniques, however, approaches appraisal in a slightly different manner. Documentation strategies seek to achieve better documentation through the careful consideration of a specific issue, activity, or geographic area in a multi-institutional venture. Functional analysis advances more comprehensive documentation of a single institution by analyzing the institution's primary functions and activities. Macroappraisal focuses on providing a more representative image of society by considering the interaction of function, structure, and client as represented in an institution's records.

How do functional analysis and macroappraisal interact with documentation strategy? Richard Cox writes that the relationship of these techniques, "whether as three related concepts . . . or even an evolution from one primitive concept to another more sophisticated one or—even—similar ideas emerging in a parallel manner, remains to be worked out over time . . . ."[17] In fact, proponents of these approaches have begun to envision the form that this interaction might take. Both Samuels and Cook indicate that documentation strategies, if they are to be implemented, must be preceded by appropriate groundwork at the institutional level.

Helen Samuels believes that the success of documentation strategies rests on strong institutional archives. Therefore, she advocates functional analysis as a necessary step to precede the implementation of documentation strategies. By gaining a firm understanding of the nature of their own institutional documentation, and by establishing their particular institutional priorities, archivists will be able to better understand what areas their institutions are able to document on their own. This process will also suggest, however, that there are certain areas that institutions would be able to better document as part of a multi-institutional, collaborative effort. Thus, Samuels feels that the greatest success of documentation strategies will follow the widespread application of institutional functional analysis.[18]

Cook also suggests that these techniques can complement each other. Once the structural-functional approach of macroappraisal has been applied at the institutional level, Cook suggests that "the image should certainly be further supplemented by personal,

private records in all media by use of the documentation strategy to identify who or what has fallen through the cracks."[19] In addition to the arguments advanced by Samuels and Cook, which advocate the application of functional analysis or macroappraisal to precede documentation strategies, the experiences of the Milwaukee project (discussed in more detail below) lend credence to the notion that effective institutional archives and collecting repositories are a prerequisite for the implementation of documentation strategies.

Proponents of each of these techniques have repeatedly emphasized that such approaches are not intended to supplant traditional microappraisal methods. Richard Cox argues that "the documentation strategy is intended to supplement rather than replace traditional methods of archival appraisal. Documentation strategy is not a synonym for all archival appraisal . . . ."[20] In addition, Cox has argued at length that the documentation strategy approach is consistent with traditional principles of archival appraisal.[21] In her work on the institutional functional analysis of colleges and universities, Helen Samuels writes, "*Varsity Letters* builds upon traditional archival practice and is intended to supplement it....Archival practice stresses the need to understand institutions and has used an examination of functions as a method to achieve this goal."[22] Terry Cook calls for the application of traditional appraisal methods to follow the application of macroappraisal criteria: "Traditional or micro-appraisal criteria applied series by series, system by system, once the most important of these series and systems have been identified in the macro-appraisal model . . . must all be considered."[23]

Documentation Strategy in Practice

In little more than a decade, proponents of the documentation strategy have published several examples of how the concept might be translated from theory into practice. Recent archival literature has offered several models for documentation strategies, described experimental documentation strategy projects, and suggested areas in which a documentation strategy approach might prove useful.[24] Projects detailing the application of the documentation strategy to topical, functional, and geographic areas have been described. This discussion within the professional literature has suggested a number of common concerns and underscored several lessons that have emerged from documentation strategy projects to date.

Over the course of the past 30 years, the American Institute of Physics (AIP) has spearheaded a program that has had notable success in improving the documentation of modern physics. It has served as a model for other disciplines, resulting in the creation of a number of new discipline history centers to document various areas of science and technology. The success of the AIP project is largely due to its sustainability, to its recognition of the importance of institutional archives, and to its approach to the documentation of physics as an evolving process. It was from the outline of the purpose, method, and practice of this project that the broader concept of documentation strategy evolved. It was no coincidence, therefore, that an extended description of the AIP project became one of the first published accounts of documentation strategy implementation.[25]

In 1959, a committee of physicists was established to assess the existing documentation of physics in American academia, industry, and government from 1890 to 1940. Based on the results of this analysis, AIP requested a grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) in 1961. This grant enabled the AIP group to identify important individual and institutional contributors to modern physics. Following this process, AIP began work with records creators to ensure the placement of their papers at appropriate repositories, and to occasionally encourage the creation of documentation to fill existing gaps. The program was considerably strengthened in 1965 when AIP established the Center for the History of Physics and the project was no longer dependent on NSF funding. Since then, the Center for the History of Physics has extended its documentary work into subfields of physics and into post-World War II physics.

The AIP program incorporated elements considered essential by later documentation strategists. For example, the documentation group worked to achieve a thorough understanding of its intended field of documentation. In addition, it educated records creators about the importance of their source materials and encouraged them to place these materials in appropriate repositories. Most importantly, the project continued to evolve and redefine its role as it recognized potential areas requiring better documentation. Recently, AIP has examined large-scale "collaboratories" and identified which to document.

In other ways, however, the AIP program diverges from the broader model outlined by documentation strategy theorists. For example, the documentation group is largely composed of records creators—members of the physics community—rather than a broad mix of records creators, administrators, and users. In addition, its efforts to fill gaps in existing documentation have been limited. The AIP project has, however, recognized the importance of fostering institutional archives; its efforts have resulted in the establishment of fine collections at such institutions as Harvard University, the California Institute of Technology, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In the late 1980s, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) funded a two-year project in Western New York to test the archival documentation strategy concept. This experiment, consciously modeled on a documentation strategy framework, sought to improve the documentation of six counties in Western New York. This regional documentation strategy project was intended to serve as a model to suggest approaches to improve documentation statewide.[26] A documentation group, composed of members such as archivists, librarians, and historians, was assembled.[27] A framework was developed within which to assess existing documentation. This model incorporated 15 topics that were considered to cover the whole range of human activity, and designated periods of past, present, and future documentation.

The objective of the Western New York Project was to produce and implement a written strategy to enhance the region's documentation. While the documentation group did not meet this goal, the project served as a valuable learning experience, underscoring the challenges involved in planning for adequate documentation and raising questions about the general applicability of the documentation strategy approach. Cox summarizes the project's successes as follows: ". . . the process of examining documentation helped to evaluate the acquisitions of historical records repositories, open channels of communication, and build bridges of cooperation between historical records

repositories and users."[28] In addition, the project helped participants identify the acquisition of records of the twentieth century, especially those of the post-World War II era, as a collecting priority. The Western New York experience highlights the difficulty of narrowing a geographic area sufficiently to allow for a meaningful study; the challenges of finding resources to support a documentation strategy; the concern of whether a long-term strategy can ultimately be cost-effective and result in better documentation decisions; and the issue of what alternatives to the documentation strategy model might yield better results in terms of improving the documentation of society.[29]

Another two-year NHPRC-funded project attempted to enhance the documentation of Milwaukee, Wisconsin.[30] Perhaps drawing on the lessons from the Western New York experience, the Milwaukee project focused on a smaller geographic area and involved a wider range of participants, including records creators as well as administrators and records users. Participating institutions were asked to assess the subject content of their collections in order to facilitate analysis of existing documentation. The goals of the project were to produce a written documentation strategy and implement a framework to allow the project to continue beyond the initial grant period.

Interestingly, the outcome of the Milwaukee project was significantly like that of the Western New York experience: although many good things came out of the process, most of them had nothing to do with the immediate improvement of the region's documentation. The project taught the archival community many valuable lessons, pointing to a pervasive weakness in organizational policies and practices. Most of the institutions, for example, did not have previously existing collection policies. Many found that they did not have adequate intellectual control over their collections. In addition, the study suggested a widespread lack of professional expertise and training in such basic areas of archival theory and practice as appraisal, description, and reference.[31]

What were the lessons of the Milwaukee project? Ericson points to three issues that might seem to call the viability of the documentation strategy framework, as presently articulated, into question. First, there is more tension involved in reconciling the goals and priorities of the individual participating institutions and the interinstitutional cooperative goals necessary to the successful implementation of a documentation strategy than has thus far been acknowledged by documentation strategists.[32] Second, institutions should not embark on a documentation strategy if they do not have the resources to sustain it on an ongoing basis. These resources include adequate staffing and time to dedicate to the project, as well as the professional expertise to participate actively in the plan. Finally, the Milwaukee experience, coupled with that in Western New York, suggests that documentation strategies may not lend themselves as readily to geographic areas as originally thought.[33]

The effort initiated at the 1988 Evangelical Archives Conference to ensure better documentation of the evangelical movement does not illustrate a full-scale process such as the other examples cited, but it demonstrates how the documentation strategy can combine a functional approach with a subject area.[34] The objective of this effort was "The identification and preservation of an adequate record to document the activities and significance of the evangelical movement, and the provision for full access to this information."[35]

With this objective in mind, the group identified seven activities that describe the evangelical movement and its functions, such as denominations/fellowships/communities, media, and political/social action groups. For each area, the working group outlined the functions that describe how the activities were carried out, such as "convey knowledge" or "evangelize." By defining the evangelical movement in terms of functions and activities, the working group concluded that adequate documentation must include records from each of these activities. Moreover, analysis of these functions could indicate what types of documentation each activity generates.[36]

The documentation group summarized the status of documentation for each activity, identified documentary problems, pinpointed available mechanisms to remedy these shortcomings, and recommended what might be done to improve documentation of the area. The working group's report was intended to be a first step in the development of a documentation strategy for the evangelical movement. While the working group established a sound framework for a documentation strategy and sparked much discussion, this effort does not appear to have produced any concrete results in the evangelical community.[37]

Interviews with Practitioners

In order to assess the extent to which these emerging methodologies, particularly documentation strategies, are being translated from theory into practice, the author interviewed 16 archivists. An original pool of 13 college and university archivists was selected for inclusion in the survey, based on their extensive appraisal experience and on their presumed familiarity with the recent appraisal literature. Of the original group, two declined to be interviewed. The additional five interviewees included three college and university archivists; a government archivist; and an archivist from a religious organization, whom the initial participants identified as knowledgeable about appraisal. Based on the composition of this group of respondents, it should be noted that the results of the interviews may be more representative of the views of college and university archivists than of the attitudes of archivists in other institutions. The archival experience of the respondents ranges from 11 years to 25 years, with a rough average of 20 years in practice. Thirteen of the interviews were conducted by telephone; the following discussion is based on notes of those conversations. The remaining three interviews were conducted by E-mail.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a basic sense of whether documentation strategies, functional analysis, and macroappraisal are affecting archival appraisal practice. Additionally, the process was intended to provide a general understanding of the perceptions that practitioners have of these approaches following several years of discussion in the professional literature. Thus, this exercise was neither designed as, nor intended to be, a scientific survey; therefore, its results should not be considered to have statistical validity. Questions were designed to elicit specific information about appraisal practice and policy at each respondent's institution, as well as to allow participants to offer their own impressions about the impact of documentation strategy, functional analysis, and macroappraisal on actual archival practice.[38] In order to facilitate an open dialogue, the names and institutions of survey participants have been kept

confidential, with interviewees identified generically as Respondent A, Respondent B, and so on. The following discussion will summarize the results of these interviews, focusing first on documentation strategies and then on functional analysis and macroappraisal.

The several recurring themes that emerged in response to questions about the usefulness of documentation strategies parallel the discussion of the methodology that has appeared in the archival literature of the past decade. Without exception, the documentation strategy approach was recognized, even by its critics, as a valuable conceptual framework. Interviewees felt that documentation strategy had gotten the profession thinking and talking about how best to approach its appraisal function, had raised awareness of the importance of cooperation in archival practice, and had opened channels of communication with nonarchivists. Respondent D commented, "The documentation strategy is an engaging framework that has gotten archivists rethinking how they do things and has been especially useful with its ability to engage nonarchivists." Respondent A felt that one of the primary recommendations of the documentation strategy is that it encourages archivists to think cooperatively, and thus "eliminates some of the traditional competition mentality."

There was also agreement, however, that in spite of these positive results, the documentation strategy is not viable within the context of present archival reality. Respondent F stated, "Documentation strategies are valuable as a conceptual framework, but in terms of reality, archives have more urgent priorities, such as delivering services to clients. Documentation strategies do not work because archivists are not in a steering position." Respondent A reinforced this argument, also citing the issue of limited resources: "Politics is a big reason that documentation strategies do not work. In the absence of a centralized political and funding mechanism to pass out responsibilities and resources, such an approach is ineffective."

While these interviews confirm that documentation strategies are not being adopted on a wide-scale basis, they also indicate that archivists are applying what they perceive as the most positive aspects of the documentation strategy concept at the level of their individual repositories.[39] For example, Respondents D and E thought that the documentation strategy had been instrumental in helping the profession more clearly articulate what is involved in documenting particular topical, functional, or geographic areas. In fact, archivists do seem to have found this framework useful for more clearly defining their institutional collecting priorities. Four respondents indicated that their institutions had either drafted or refined collecting policies, partially in response to the documentation strategy approach.[40]

The documentation strategy's most notable impact on the archival profession appears to be that it has promoted the value of cooperation. Twelve of the 16 interviewees indicated that their institutions had become more aware of the importance of interinstitutional cooperation as a result of the discussion of documentation strategy in the archival literature. While archivists have become more aware of the need to cooperate rather than compete with other institutions, however, cooperative efforts on the whole seem to be limited to respecting other repositories' collecting areas and referring potential donors to more appropriate institutions. Most interviewees indicated that their institutions had not been involved in cooperative projects; the cooperative ventures

that had been undertaken tended to be short-lived and ill-fated because of issues of institutional priorities and limited funding.[41]

The strongest reservations that interviewees voiced about documentation strategy reinforce the major objections raised in the archival literature: institutional priorities and limited resources. Terry Abraham, for example, argues that documentation strategies are unworkable because archivists are "already burdened with too many things to do" at the institutional level. Frank Boles asserts that documentation strategies assume archival prosperity. Additionally, Ericson's recent description of the Milwaukee experiment seconds these objections. Not surprisingly then, these same concerns have emerged as the major stumbling blocks in the implementation of documentation strategies.[42]

The results of the interviews also indicate several general trends regarding the impact of macroappraisal and functional analysis on the American archival community. For example, despite the effectiveness with which macroappraisal is being implemented at the National Archives of Canada, it has not begun to significantly affect archival practice in the United States.[43] It appears that functional analysis, on the other hand, is being implemented by an increasing number of colleges and universities.[44] Ten of the archivists surveyed indicated that this technique had affected appraisal practice at their institutions. In fact, Respondent H credited functional analysis with leading to a "renaissance of institutional archives."

Thus, these interviews suggest that documentation strategy, functional analysis, and macroappraisal—with the possible exception of functional analysis—are currently having a very limited effect on North American selection practice. Many of the archivists indicated that they did not have the latitude to fully implement such techniques because institutional or state mandates largely determine what records they must retain. Several respondents felt that while these approaches have not had a widespread impact on archival practice as a whole, they are increasingly applied by individual archivists within their own institutions and repositories. Respondent M expressed the opinion that these strategies are, ". . . having an impact on archival practice, but so far only on a micro-level."

Impact of Documentation Strategy

Though the archival literature and the interviews described above confirm that the profession as a whole has not embraced documentation strategy, the consensus of the respondents to this limited survey—that documentation strategy provides a useful framework for discussing selection issues—suggests that Cook's observation that the concept has played a significant role in the North American dialogue about appraisal is particularly apt. While even the best of frameworks can be improved, however, experiments with documentation strategies have not revealed fundamental flaws in the original construct. What these projects have perhaps done is underscore a number of challenges long faced by the archival community. Foremost among these are conflicting institutional priorities, scarce archival resources, and a lack of standards for the education and training of archivists. Before documentation strategies can achieve success, the archival community must take steps towards overcoming these obstacles.

What the experience of documentation strategy projects thus far might in fact argue is that archivists need to become more effective advocates for their profession, and that the archival community must focus on finding solutions to the above problems. Heightened advocacy efforts, targeting organizational administrators, granting agencies, other information professionals, and the larger society are needed to underscore the significance of strong institutional archives and collecting repositories. While institutional priorities will always be a reality for any organization, successful advocacy could serve as a first step towards putting archivists in a better position to redefine their priorities and to establish additional goals for their archival programs. In addition, effective advocacy is a prerequisite for increased funding, whether from a parent organization or from a granting agency. Greater resources would permit higher levels of training for archivists, thereby facilitating and enabling participation in cooperative ventures.

The need for archivists to find solutions to the difficulties inherent in archival practice is hardly new. Advocates of documentation strategies have called for archivists to become innovators and risk takers: "Archivists should feel freer to experiment, evaluate, develop, and refine their . . . theory, principles, and practices—something that archivists have done too little of . . . ."[45] A scan of the existing professional landscape indicates that this is a challenge that archivists should welcome. The nature of documentation continues to change at a rapid pace. Current methods of approaching this new documentary reality are inadequate even today. Clearly, new frameworks are needed to supplement traditional practices. Documentation strategies, functional analysis, and macroappraisal provide constructs for productive dialogue about how to most effectively solve the selection dilemmas posed by contemporary records.

Will documentation strategies have a place in the archival practice of the twenty-first century? In a recent review of Richard Cox's *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators*, Frank Boles states, "The simple fact is that a decade or more after it was first proposed as a theory, there have been no successful applications of the documentation strategy in practice." He then characterizes Cox's continued advocacy of documentation strategy as ". . . a tactic used to accomplish a broader agenda, rather than simply a stubborn refusal to see the obvious."[46] The fact that documentation strategies as originally conceived have not worked to date, or the question of whether they can be made to work in the future, is ultimately of less significance than the professional dialogue that this approach has generated. If documentation strategies advance a broader agenda that spurs the archival profession to rethink and broaden institutional priorities, reallocate resources to reflect these new priorities, and provide its members with the training they will require to meet the challenges of dealing with contemporary records, then it would seem that this tactic is certainly one worth adopting.

This is true not only of documentation strategies, but of functional analysis and macroappraisal as well. Proponents of these techniques must continue to experiment with them and to present the results of their efforts to the archival community. Critics of these strategies have a professional responsibility to offer more viable frameworks for meeting the challenges posed by modern documentation. All archivists have an obligation to follow this emerging debate, the answers to which will, for better or for worse, surely shape the future of the archival profession and ultimately determine the

effectiveness with which archivists are able to fulfill the foremost of their professional responsibilities.

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Appendix A: Survey Questions

Purpose

To evaluate how the documentation strategy has affected appraisal practice, and to determine if this approach is being implemented, particularly in relation to functional analysis and macroappraisal.

Background questions

1) How long have you been in practice?

2) What is your background in appraisal and acquisitions?

3) How long have you been in your current position?

4) How long has your program been established?

Survey questions

1) Please describe your institution's appraisal policy and/or practice.

2) Has the introduction of the documentation strategy approach, and techniques such as functional analysis and macroappraisal, led to any changes in or formal redrafting of, your institution's appraisal policy and/or practice, or to the establishment of records management programs? If yes, please describe the changes.

3) Do you know of any other organizations that have adapted their appraisal policy/practice in response to the documentation strategy, functional analysis, or macroappraisal? If so, please describe how these modifications have affected their practice.

4) Has your institution been involved in, or can you identify other organizations that have participated in cooperative efforts such as those advocated by a documentation strategy approach? If so, what was the outcome of the effort?

5) Based on your professional experience, do you feel that the documentation strategy, functional analysis, and macroappraisal are having an influence on appraisal practice? If so, how would you characterize the impact? If not, why do you think such methods are not being applied?

Follow-up questions

1) Can you suggest anybody to contact who might be involved with the implementation of documentation strategies, functional analysis, or macroappraisal?

2) Do you know of any materials that are not readily available that might help in assessing the degree of impact that the documentation strategy approach has had on appraisal practice (for example, unpublished articles or Web sites)?

NOTES

1. Terry Cook, "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (summer 1992): 181.
2. Richard J. Cox, *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1990): 293.
3. Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist* 49 (spring 1986): 115.
4. Cited in Richard J. Cox, "The Archival Documentation Strategy and Its Implications for the Appraisal of Architectural Records," *American Archivist* 59 (spring 1996): 145–146.
5. Cox, "The Archival Documentation Strategy and Its Implications for the Appraisal of Architectural Records," 146–148.
6. Cox, *American Archival Analysis*, 293–294.
7. F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 5.
8. Discussion about the changing nature of documentation is derived from several sources: Richard J. Cox, "The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective," *Archivaria* 38 (fall 1994): 11–37; F. Gerald Ham, "Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance," *American Archivist* 47 (winter 1984): 11–22; and Helen Samuels, "Who Controls the Past" and *Varsity Letters, Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, NJ: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. and the Society of American Archivists, 1992).
9. Cox, "The Archival Documentation Strategy and Its Implications for the Appraisal of Architectural Records," 154. Cox labels this aspect of the process as "synergetic," citing Joseph Nitecki's idea that synergy is the "process in which an aggregated, combined action of different elements together produces more effective or efficient results than each could produce by itself."

10. Richard Cox has discussed the implications of the documentation strategy for related information and historical professionals. Cox, *American Archival Analysis*, 300–303.
11. See Helen Samuels, *Varsity Letters, Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities.*
12. See Joan K. Haas, Helen Willa Samuels, and Barbara Trippel Simmons, *Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide* (Cambridge, MA: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985). Since the release of *Varsity Letters*, Joan Krizack has edited a volume to help improve the documentation of the U.S. health care system, also based on a functional approach. See *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System,* ed. Joan D. Krizack (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).
13. Samuels, *Varsity Letters*, 1.
14. Richard J. Cox, "Archival Documentation Strategy: A Brief Intellectual History 1984–1994 and Practical Description," *Janus* (1995): 79–81.
15. See, for example, his essay, "Mind over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal, *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor,* ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992): 38–70. This discussion of macroappraisal strategy draws heavily on his work.
16. Cook, "Mind over Matter," 50.
17. Cox, "Archival Documentation Strategy: A Brief Intellectual History," 79.
18. Based on a conversation with Helen Samuels, June 1, 1998.
19. Cook, "Mind over Matter," 51. It is important to note that Cook has been a critic of the documentation strategy model on the basis that it gives function greater primacy than structure, and that it is not well suited for application at institutional archives. See also his "Documentation Strategy."
20. Richard J. Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist* 52 (spring 1989): 193.
21. Richard J. Cox, "The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles: A Different Perspective," *Archivaria* 38 (fall 1994): 11–36.
22. Samuels, *Varsity Letters*, 3.
23. Cook, "Mind over Matter," 58.
24. For documentation strategy models, see Philip N. Alexander and Helen W. Samuels, The Roots of 128: A Hypothetical Documentation Strategy," *American Archivist* 50 (fall 1987): 518–531, and Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," in *American Archivist* 50 (winter 1987): 12–47. For analyses of experimental documentation strategies, see Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study," 192–200; *A Heritage at Risk: The Proceedings of the Evangelical Archives Conference*, July 13–15, 1988 (Wheaton, IL: Billy Graham Center, Wheaton College, 1988); Timothy L. Ericson, "To Approximate June Pasture: The Documentation Strategy in the Real World," Archival Issues 22:1 (1997): 5–20; and Jack Wertheimer, Debra Bernhardt, and Julie Miller, "Toward the Documentation of Conservative Judaism," *American Archivist* 57 (spring 1994): 374–379. In addition, the following articles describe hypothetical applications for a documentation strategy: T. D. Seymour Bassett, "Documenting Recreation and Tourism in New England," *American Archivist* (fall 1987): 550–569, and Maureen A. Jung, "Documenting Nineteenth-Century Quartz Mining in Northern California," *American Archivist* 53 (summer 1990): 406–418.
25. See Hackman and Warnow-Blewett.
26. Discussion of this experiment is based on Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study."
27. Cox notes the absence of records creators from the documentation group. See Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study," 199. This provides an interesting contrast with the AIP team.
28. Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study," 195.
29. In a 1992 article, Larry Hackman criticized Cox's assessment of the Western New York project as premature, characterizing the project as a ". . . preliminary effort, barely begun when the grant project ended," and ". . . far too brief, modest, and informal to support a formal evaluation or published article." See Larry Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs: New York as a Case Study," *American Archivist* 55 (fall 1992): 592. This implication that the effectiveness of documentation strategies can be accurately assessed only over a period much longer than this two-year pilot project is important. AIP, for example, has had 30 years to develop its documentation strategy, but how would it have characterized the success or failure of its efforts in 1963 or 1967? While Hackman's point is well taken, however, articles such as Cox's assessment of the Western New York experiment and Ericson's recent analysis of the Milwaukee project are essential for helping the archival community test and refine the documentation strategy model.

30. See Ericson.
31. For a very different analysis of the Milwaukee project, see Judith Campbell Turner. Letter to the Editor. *Archival Issues* 22:2 (1997): 99–101. Turner argues in part that such difficulties ". . . were known going into the project, not revealed by it."
32. Critics of the documentation strategy have long pointed to this difficulty and argued that it is insurmountable. See Frank Boles, "Mix Two Parts Interest to One Part Information and Appraise Until Done: Understanding Contemporary Record Selection Processes," *American Archivist* 50 (summer 1987): 364.
33. Richard Cox, however, has discussed localities, whether geographic or ideological, as ideally suited for the application of documentation strategies. See Richard J. Cox, *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, Inc. and the Society of American Archivists, 1996).
34. Consideration of the Evangelical Conference's approach is based on *A Heritage at Risk* and Richard J. Cox, "Evangelical Religious Institutions Consider Their Archival Needs: A Review of the 1988 Evangelical Archives Conference Proceedings," *Provenance* 7 (spring 1989): 66–79.
35. *A Heritage at Risk*, 21–22.
36. This heavy functional emphasis, which foreshadows Helen Samuels's *Varsity Letters*, might be attributable to her work with the group.
37. Based on an E-mail message from Bob Schuster, September 23, 1998. Moreover, it appears that the working group's experience with producing a detailed documentation strategy that has not been put into action is not unique. A 1992 effort to define congressional functions and to identify what records are required to adequately document Congress also does not seem to have made a noticeable impact on congressional archivists. For descriptions of this project, see Karen Dawley Paul, *The Documentation of Congress: Report of the Congressional Archivists Roundtable Task Force on Congressional Documentation*, S. Pub. 102–120 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Senate, 1992) and Faye Phillips, "Congressional Papers: Collection Development Policies," *American Archivist* 58 (summer 1995): 258–269.
38. See Appendix A for survey questions.
39. There are, however, a few documentation strategy projects under way. Respondent J pointed to several projects in New York that are attempting to document the arts in the greater Capital system, local business and industry, and vacation industries in the Adirondacks. Respondent E indicated the existence of a virtual archives created by the American Jewish Historical Society to document the history of Jewish women.
40. These responses indicate in part that some members of the archival community do not draw the appropriate distinction between collection policies and documentation strategies. See Terry Abraham, "Collecting Policy or Documentation Strategy: Theory and Practice," *American Archivist* 54 (winter 1991): 44–52.
41. For another perspective on cooperation and documentation strategies, see Turner's previously cited Letter to the Editor, in which she suggests, "Far from expecting a documentation strategy to generate cooperative activities, I'd recommend undertaking one only in the presence of a solid history of cooperation that was strong enough to survive some serious fraying."
42. See Abraham's unpublished paper, "Documentation Strategies: A Decade (or More) Later," at http://www.uidaho.edu/special-collections/docstr10.htm; Boles, "Mix Two Parts"; and Ericson.
43. For discussions about how the National Archives of Canada is using macroappraisal, see Cook, "Mind Over Matter," and Catherine Bailey, "From the Top Down: The Practice of Macro-Appraisal," *Archivaria* 43 (fall 1997): 89–128.
44. Because these interviews focused on college and university archivists, who constitute the primary audience for Samuels's *Varsity Letters*, the prevalence of functional analysis within the American archival community as a whole remains difficult to measure.
45. Cox, "The Documentation Strategy and Archival Appraisal Principles," 18.
46. Frank Boles, Review of *Documenting Localities: A Practical Model for American Archivists and Manuscript Curators*, *American Archivist* (fall 1997): 460–463.

PUBLICATION REVIEWS

Digital Image Access & Retrieval: Papers Presented at the 1996 Clinic on Library Applications of Data Processing. Edited by P. Bryan Heidorn and Beth Sandore. Urbana–Champaign: University of Illinois, 1997. 191 pp. References and index. ISBN 0-87845-100-5.

Digital Image Access & Retrieval is a slice in time—a summary of the state of research in one narrow but critically important aspect of digital library development. The term "digital image" in the title refers to the digital representation of visual sources, especially those with photographic and video content. The book is a collection of papers presented at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science's Thirty-Third Annual Clinic on Library Applications of Data Processing at the University of Illinois. The world was a very different place in 1963, when the Clinic first met; data processing experts and librarians were just beginning to forge an alliance. It also seems that the digital world of 1996 is a long time ago—near the beginning of a wave of developments that has yet to crest, much less break. Yesterday's data processors are today's systems engineers.

The book contains 11 contributions penned by 21 authors and a very useful introduction by the editors that draws out the key themes and ties the whole volume together. Given the Clinic's cross-disciplinary nature, it is not surprising that many of the participants are not well known in library science circles, even though their research places them on the frontier of information technology research. The 16 participants from the computer and information science communities are clearly part of a network of researchers. Their six articles contain numerous cross-references to their own work and to the work of colleagues. The balance of the participants are part of the community of professionals engaged in digital library project development, administration, or collaborative programs. For the most part, each chapter includes references, although the quantity and quality of the sources vary dramatically from chapter to chapter. The volume could have benefited from an overview of the relevant literature.

The 1996 Clinic encompassed three important areas of digital image research and development: systems planning, automatic and semiautomatic indexing, and preservation, although the predominant focus of the volume is on indexing and retrieval. The editors justified this strong emphasis on the debatable premise that retrieval is the area that has the strongest need to foster cross-disciplinary interaction. In the intervening years it has become clear that system design and preservation of digital resources are intractable issues as much in need of creative insight as the retrieval of visual information.

The three contributions on systems planning provide a solid overview of the issues that underlie the development of large-scale digital libraries. The points made by the authors transcend the narrower focus of visual image retrieval, but are important nonetheless. Howard Besser lays the groundwork that is necessary for any cross-disciplinary discussion. At one point he identifies the crucial distinction between the development of digital libraries and the evolution of the Internet. "We must move from constructing a collection of discrete images to building a library of material that interrelates and inter-operates. The digital library of the future will not simply be a collection of discrete objects but will also provide the tools for analyzing, combining, and repurposing the objects" (p. 26). Jennifer Trant gives a status report on the important Museum Education Site License (MESL) project, promising findings and conclusions that in the hindsight of four years have fallen victim to the challenges of implementation. Lois Lunin's contribution is a handy overview of the suite of issues involving digital library development, but it provides no new insight. To a certain extent, all three papers are outdated to varying degrees, as the progress of digital library development has outstripped the snapshots that they provide.

Two-thirds of the volume is taken up by six papers on indexing and retrieval of visual images in digital form. The authors of the six articles are united in their recognition of the intellectual limitations of text-based indexes of visual resources. The articles cover a suite of possibilities for retrieving visual content from large-scale image databases based on identifying patterns, visual elements, color, shape, structure, and textures in the image data themselves rather than on external indexes that must be built laboriously and often subjectively. Many of the retrieval techniques described in the volume depend upon iterative processing routines in which the end user provides feedback on the relative accuracy of retrieved sets of images. One prototype system makes extensive use of natural-language annotations of visual content that resemble elaborate captions. All in all, the participants in the Clinic report on cutting-edge research that is still working its way through technology laboratories to this day.

The two contributions on preservation are the weakest parts of the book, especially in light of progress that has been made since the Clinic met to define the key challenges of preserving digital information. Meg Bellinger's article (which is omitted from the table of contents) is relatively thin in comparison with the technical research on retrieval methodologies. Her emphasis on image quality and capturing content from original sources—though laudable—feels out of place in a volume largely concerned with retrieval. Donald Luman's case study makes the significant connection between the preservation of original sources and high-resolution scanning. His article is one of the few examples in the book where specific technical recommendations and a general theory of the digital product are effectively intertwined. Unfortunately, he does not reference the sources of his approach, technical specifications, or overall philosophy.

The Thirty-Third Annual Clinic continues the long tradition at the University of Illinois of fostering communication between technical specialists and the library community. From today's vantage point, the published messages are simultaneously cutting-edge and quaint. The editors hewed so closely to the structure of the Clinic that they missed opportunities to generalize the presentations for a broader audience and to place the lessons of the Clinic in a larger framework of literature, best practices, and

theoretical context. Overall, this book will be most valuable for the visual image specialist interested in machine-assisted retrieval. It provides exposure to the thinking and to the research of a community of technical researchers who continue to push the boundaries of information technologies.

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Society of American Archivists Case Study Series including *The APB Bank: Managing Electronic Records as an Authoritative Resource.* By Barbara Reed and Frank Upward. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1997. 15 pp. $6. Teaching Notes. 30 pp. $12. *Developing Collaborative Structures for Expanding the Use of University Collections in Teaching and Research.* By Elaine D. Angst and H. Thomas Hickerson. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1997. 22 pp. $6. Teaching Notes. 10 pp. $12.

As a fairly recent graduate of the master's program at the School of Information, University of Michigan, I was introduced to the Society of American Archivists' case study series in Professor Margaret Hedstrom's course, "The Management of Electronic Records," during winter term, 1997. Thus, in reviewing the two case studies my perspective naturally reflects viewpoints both as a student and as an electronic records archivist. While I enjoyed working with the SAA cases in class, I believe that I was not fully cognizant of the value of the case study method until I graduated and began my professional career.

In the review of four of the SAA case studies in *Archival Issues* (Vol. 21, No. 2., 1996), reviewer Frank Boles states that a review of the case study project calls for analysis on two levels. The higher level concerns the conceptual framework of the project itself. At the lower and more detailed level, the individual cases themselves are considered. Boles found the case studies series fair to middling because the cases did not provide solid "outcomes." While I agree with Boles on the division of analysis, I disagree with his assessment of the structure of the cases. Boles writes in his review, "Consistently lacking, however, is information regarding the ultimate outcome of the events. Readers never discover if, as result of the actions taken, the desired results occurred. Without knowing the outcomes it is difficult to reach any useful conclusions about the overall merits of the activities described."[1] In my view, this statement disregards the strengths the case study method provides as a learning tool.

The SAA case study series grew out of an acute awareness in the early 1990s that new technologies were rapidly changing the information landscape. Technology was viewed as a force that would ultimately affect both the creation and use of information and as such, technology would pose significant challenges to the archivist in the digital

environment. The development of a funding source for the case study series was just one objective of the Society of American Archivists' strategic plan. A plan was adopted in 1993 to ensure the goal of aiming to " . . . position SAA to lead the archival profession in advancing electronic records issues and represent the interests of the profession in shaping policies and accepted practices for identifying, preserving, and using electronic records." As well, the strategic plan addressed the need to "provide opportunities for continuing professional growth and promote high quality in archival education programs offered by SAA and other organizations and institutions."[2] Thus, the plan essentially addressed the need to "reengineer" graduate archival education due to the challenges and changes introduced by new technology.

The case study method offers students a conceptual framework to learn about the new environment. The framework for the case study is built on some factual information, some purposeful ambiguity, and some supplementary information. The student's "assignment" then is to sort through the information provided in the quest to identify the problem, to analyze the situation, and to make recommendations for the organization. In my view, one of the main strengths of the case study method is its interactive nature. Depending on how the assignment is given, teams of students could be formed to analyze a case. In the Electronic Records class, several teams were formed and each team was given a series of questions to discuss and answer. The teams were given about three weeks to analyze the case and the assignment concluded by having each team formally present its recommendations to the class. Looking back on the use of the case studies in class, I believe that much of the learning occurred in the dialogue among students during group meeting sessions. The process of meeting group members outside of class to discuss a case mimics some of the challenges the student will face upon graduating. This process provides the students with experience in group problem solving, decision making, and time management. In addition, due to the design of the cases the student also learns how a variety of other issues affect the organization, such as organizational politics, staffing and personnel issues, and financial resources.

The structure of both *The APB Bank: Managing Electronic Records as an Authoritative Resource* and *Developing Collaborative Structures for Expanding the Use of University Collections in Teaching and Research* follow the characteristic case study format. Both cases begin with an introduction of the main actors and organization and then proceed to an "Opening Vignette." The opening vignette acts to set the nature of the problem for the organization. In the vignette, quotes from main actors are used to show how they (as insiders) view the problem at hand. The vignette is then followed by a discussion of the environmental context of the organization. For the APB Bank case study, the context includes an overview of the banking industry, of technology in banking, and of the company itself. Similarly, the Developing Collaborative Structures case study provides an illustration of the institutional context (Cornell University), the archival program at Cornell, and other strategic collaborations the archival program has fostered. The studies then proceed to a discussion of the current state of the institution and conclusion. Both studies include an Organizational Chart in the Appendix and *Developing Collaborative Structures* includes a bibliography within the case study itself.

While *The APB Bank: Managing Electronic Records as an Authoritative Resource* is a case based on a small regional bank, the issues presented echo the same issues organizations of all types are facing today. The case highlights common problems faced in office automation, such as the installation of a personal computer on every desktop, electronic mail, and local-and-wide area networks. The challenges presented by the changes include poor record keeping systems, the lack of evidence of business decisions, and current mistrust the staff has in the systems. The case also presents a view of how new technology changes patterns of work. This is best illustrated in this case in the statements "individual staff decide what transactions to record," "individuals manage their electronic documents on hard disk according to their own preferences," and "no instructions on how to manage electronic mail have been issued."

The Teaching Notes to the APB Bank case provide three detailed strategies to explore the issues presented. The strategies focus on the themes of Business Analysis, Corporate and Collective Memory, and Technologies and Record keeping. The strategies provide a framework for the instructor and each strategy includes several questions that can be used in class discussion or in assignments. The Teaching Notes include an extensive list of student project suggestions that also can be used for class discussion, presentations, and written assignments. Many of the projects suggested include not only analysis of the case but research outside of the material presented in the case that can provide a more "real life" scenario. For example, project suggestions include: "Compile a list of legislation, relevant to banking, that contains specific references to record keeping" and "Compare and contrast the concepts of corporate memory and organizational memory as expressed in the works cited in the reading list by John McDonald, the Australian Council of Archives, and E.W. Stein." The Teaching Notes include a select bibliography that contains sources for videotapes, text items, research project Web sites, and addresses for contacts discussed in the readings. As well, the Appendix of the Teaching Notes contains a list of business functions, activities, and organizational units responsible to aid the instructor in project planning. Overall, the strength of *The APB Bank: Managing Electronic Records as An Authoritative Resource* case study is its broad applicability and timeliness.

The *Developing Collaborative Structures for Expanding the Use of University Collections in Teaching and Research* case study focuses on the type of collaboration as a strategy that many archival institutions have supported in recent years. This study specifically focuses on the strategic collaborations stemming from the Division of Rare Books and Manuscript Collections at Cornell University. While digital technology raises issues of accountability and organizational memory in organizations like the APB Bank, technology is raising additional issues in the university setting. As this case states, digital imaging is transforming "the use of image and information resources in the classroom, the dormitory, the library, and the laboratory." This case presents the challenges archival institutions have in meeting the changing user model. As the title of the study suggests, a strategy to meet new demands in the digital environment includes fostering collaborations within one's institution. The study illustrates the challenges Cornell has encountered in the digital environment including establishing a financial base for digital projects, organizational commitment from top administrators to new programs and services, project management issues, and working with a variety

of organizational cultures present within the university community. These are challenges that will seemingly parallel the same issues other archival institutions will face in the new environment.

Like the APB Bank case study, the *Developing Collaborative Structures* case provides several teaching strategies, discussion questions, and project suggestions in the Teaching Notes section. The teaching strategies include Archival Leadership Issues, Managing Change, and Developing Collaborative Links. As indicated in this review, both case studies reflect the challenges the digital environment presents to archivists working in small and large institutions. Both case studies are highly recommended as tools for exploring the numerous issues introduced by changes in digital technology.

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NOTES

1. Frank Boles, Publication Review, *Archival Issues* 21: 2 (1996): 170.
2. *Leadership and Service in the 1990s: A Strategic Plan for the Society of American Archivists,* August 31, 1993. (Available on-line: http://www.archivists.org/vision/strateg.html#obj, October 20, 1998.)

A Culture of Secrecy: The Government Versus the People's Right to Know. Edited by Athan G. Theoharis. Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1998. 245 pp. Index and footnotes. Hardcover.

This collection of nine articles, written specifically for this book, concerns attempts to gain access to records that have been classified or withheld by federal government agencies. All of the 10 authors, which include five historians and three attorneys, were active participants in the events they describe. Many of the stories are unfinished, continuing even now.

In his introduction, editor Athan G. Theoharis describes the context for a "culture of secrecy" in the Cold War years following World War II. He locates the basis for restricted access to recent records in two developments. Beginning with Truman, presidents have issued executive orders classifying information in the interests of "national security"; they have also enhanced the powers of intelligence agencies abroad and authorized the FBI to monitor the activities of certain groups of suspect U.S. citizens. The resulting increase in concern for maintaining secrecy has hampered contemporary public discourse and decision making and impoverished the modern historical record.

From the point of view of a key set of interests, this volume illuminates the post-Watergate chapter of the struggle over government information. The 1974 amendments strengthening the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA), which is the main vehicle used to challenge restrictions on information, were passed by Congress as a result of uses

made by the Nixon White House of the "national security" exemption in that law. In addition the erosion of confidence in government following Watergate encouraged the kinds of challenges to restrictions on information access that are chronicled here.

In the opening essay, "The Freedom of Information Act Versus the FBI," Theoharis chronicles his attempts to secure FBI files, particularly the office files of J. Edgar Hoover, under FOIA, including an account of the means used by the FBI in attempting to block or limit access. This article includes the most detailed description of FOIA, originally enacted in 1966, and its amendment of 1974, which has allowed historians to pursue a number of research initiatives. The most significant drawbacks to FOIA are the expense to researchers in fees for searching and copying massive files and legal costs for appeals when access is denied; and the ability of the agency to redact (or withhold) certain information in documents that are released.

"The CIA and Secrecy," by James X. Dempsey, reflects well the theme of the book, concluding that "the end of the Cold War has not yet produced a coherent realignment of the balance between openness and secrecy" (pg. 38). Dempsey echoes Theoharis' analysis of FOIA, using the CIA as the agency example and giving specific instances of absurd procedural barriers to FOIA requests. Since 1990 there have been a number of notable occasions of official disclosure by CIA suggesting that the agency has abandoned its former stance of the need for absolute secrecy. Nonetheless, the releases have been highly selective and the process has not been formalized.

Matthew M. Aid, in "'Not So Anonymous': Parting the Veil of Secrecy About the National Security Agency," focuses on the largest but least known agency in the U.S. intelligence community. Here Aid recounts a now familiar story of access problems under FOIA. In addition, two other laws specifically affect the NSA. A federal criminal statute, the "COMINT Law" of 1950, restricts access to information on codes, ciphers, and cryptographic and communication intelligence. The National Security Agency Act of 1959 has effectively exempted NSA from disclosures under FOIA.

In "'National Security' and Freedom of Information: The John Lennon FBI Files," Jon Wiener discusses the idea that reluctance or refusal to release information is a characteristic of all bureaucracies, not simply of the U.S. government in the Cold War era. Although the topic of this article is the most specific of any in the volume, it is framed in the broadest of any of the interpretations. The sequence of events began in 1971 when the FBI opened its file on John Lennon. Ten years later under an FOIA request, Wiener received copies of two hundred pages that had been withheld from that file, but the FBI continued to restrict parts of an additional one hundred pages under the "national security" exemption. In 1983 the ACLU filed suit on Wiener's behalf. Under a settlement in 1997, the government paid legal fees and released all but 10 of the documents. The newly released records contained little new information. Wiener argues that the national security exemption is difficult to refute and provides a means for abuse by government officials who may have something to hide or who simply want to demonstrate power.

Alexander Charns's and Paul M. Green's "Playing the Information Game: How It Took Thirteen Years and Two Lawsuits to Get J. Edgar Hoover's Secret Supreme Court Sex Files" is a cleverly written piece about lengthy litigation under FOIA. Likening

the seeking of these files to the television game show *Wheel of Fortune*, the authors use satire as a means of describing the bureaucratic blocks to securing requested files.

As an enjoyable read, Joan Hoff's "The Endless Saga of the Nixon Tapes" is disadvantaged in following that of Charns and Green. Hers is a sprawling story, not yet concluded, with a large cast of characters acting from a variety of motives. Blame can be (and is) spread widely for the delay in opening these tapes. Receiving their share are the National Archives in general, various named individuals working for NARA, and the presidential library system. This article fits least well into the overall theme of the book. Although the Cold War culture of secrecy does play a part in the inaccessibility of this material, arguably more significant are the motives and actions of members of the Nixon administration and the Nixon family and of certain NARA officials, as well as the substantial practical difficulties presented by the volume, complexity, and poor sound quality of the tapes.

The subject of Scott Armstrong's "The War over Secrecy: Democracy's Most Important Low-Intensity Conflict" is the attempt to save from destruction the National Security Council interoffice E-mail that was managed in the White House on a system named "PROFS" notes. Of specific interest were messages from the mid-1980s relating to the so-called Iran-Contra affair, exchanged by NSC advisors Robert McFarlane and John M. Poindexter and their aide Oliver North. Here, in addition to the issue of motives for secrecy and nondisclosure of records, we add the questions of distinguishing between presidential records and federal agency records, as well as whether information in electronic form is a government record. NARA takes several hits in this essay as in the preceding one. Following his account of the PROFS notes events, Armstrong presents a general discussion of the bureaucracy's implementation of its "prerogatives of secrecy." In doing so, he describes Hazel O'Leary's tenure from 1993 to 1997 at the Department of Energy as an exemplary instance of an official who sped the declassification process and genuinely sought the input of public interest groups.

Page Putnam Miller's "We Can't Yet Read Our Own Mail: Access to the Records of the Department of State" focuses on the State Department's Advisory Committee on Historical Diplomatic Documentation, established in 1957 as the Advisory Committee on Foreign Relations to deal with increasing delays in the publication of volumes in the *Foreign Relations of the United States* series. Composed of documents selected by historian-employees of the State Department, a volume traditionally appeared upon the transfer of the records from that period to the National Archives. Problems with declassification brought calls for change from researchers, led by representatives of professional organizations of historians. In 1991, a new law reconstituted the advisory committee and gave it some powers to monitor and promote speedier declassification of records.

Anna Kasten Nelson's "The John F. Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board" is an account by a Board member of this group's work, still in progress when the article was written. Established by Congress in 1992, the Board was to see to the release of still-classified documents in an effort to counter the many popular theories that included some form of government participation in a conspiracy or a cover-up of the assassination. The Board, which had broad powers to order the release of classified information, focused on the CIA and FBI and secondarily on the Secret Service and the

NSA. The final report is now available from several sources, including the Society of American Archivists' Web site.

Archivists, who have paid even scant attention to developments in their profession over the past decade, will be familiar with the events upon which these articles are based, though certainly not in such detail. They will recognize the names of many of the authors and will have considered the issues discussed. Nonetheless, it is useful to have such a well-written set of accounts by key participants. This book succeeds very well in what it sets out to do.

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