Archival Issues

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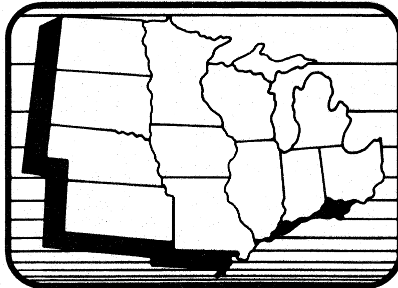

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"TO APPROXIMATE JUNE PASTURE": THE DOCUMENTATION STRATEGY IN THE REAL WORLD

BY TIMOTHY L. ERICSON

ABSTRACT: An NHPRC-funded grant allowed archival repositories in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin, metropolitan area to undertake a test of the documentation strategy framework. The two-year project attempted to better define the universe of documentation, analyze existing holdings, and outline specific areas of interest by participating institutions. Archivists, records managers, museum curators, and librarians participated along with records creators and records users. The article argues that the documentation strategy project did not fulfill any of its original goals due both to a lack of incentives for cooperation and an infrastructure that was too weak to support the work of the project. Even so, a number of positive outcomes reinforce the value of cooperation in achieving common goals.

Introduction

The years between 1910 and 1920 were an important period in the development of the American dairy industry. Farmers were interested in developing new methods and tools to improve their efficiency and to realize the greatest return on their investment of limited resources. One of the most innovative developments to sweep the country was that of the round dairy barn.

The idea had been around for years, so in a certain sense the round dairy barn was not so much a new concept as it was an innovative application of existing principles and methods.

But the round barn *was* new in its application to dairying where theorists hypothesized that the ideal structure ought to have as its goal, "to approximate June pasture." Proponents argued that the centric barn was more efficient because:

> It would be the strongest [shape] and the silo, located in the center, would be but a short distance from any of the cows; and the cows,

> arranged in a circle about the silo with their heads facing in, would have stalls peculiarly adapted to their wedge shape.[1]

Inspired by professional literature, thousands of farmers bought plans and constructed round barns. Salesmen and carpenters even specialized in round barn construction and many believed that this new design represented the future wave in agricultural technology. Others promoted designs that technically were not round barns—they actually had 13, 14, or even 16 sides. But they achieved the same result and allowed carpenters to work with familiar straight lines rather than unfamiliar arcs.

But the bubble soon burst when it became apparent that while the round barn made sense in theory, its design was based on assumptions that did not stand up in the face of practice. As one writer concluded in a 1917 article:

> I should advise anyone who is thinking of building a barn of this type to look into the matter thoroughly and determine for himself that it will be satisfactory and adapted to his business and its future growth before beginning construction.[2]

There are more than a few parallels between a round barn and a documentation strategy. Both are intriguing constructs born of a need to better use limited resources to accomplish important goals. Neither is entirely new as much as it is a new blend of ideas that have been around for years. Both have been tried in their pure sense, as well as in a number of variant forms. But perhaps most important, the actual success of each in fulfilling its promise depends upon underlying assumptions that are not necessarily valid in the real world.

More to the point, the experience of the grant-funded project, "Documenting Metropolitan Milwaukee,"[3] suggests that hypothesis and practice are not entirely in harmony with one another. The results from the Milwaukee project were ironic. Although it did not achieve any of its stated goals, the work did, in fact, yield some extremely worthwhile results that ultimately may do more to improve the documentation of metropolitan Milwaukee than the project itself. But the results do call into question the viability of the framework as we now envision it.

In particular, three underlying assumptions are crucial and were called into question during the Milwaukee project. The first has to do with the relationship between institutional goals and the broader cooperative goals of the documentation strategy. Current literature acknowledges that the two are different and that institutional priorities and goals are paramount; but ultimately most have assumed that the two can be reconciled with one another. But are the incentives for cooperation among archival institutions, records creators, and records users at once common enough and strong enough to sustain an ongoing documentation strategy? Or are there limits?

The second assumption is that archivists have the means to undertake a documentation strategy and to sustain it on an ongoing basis. Such means go beyond simply the staffing and time that must be committed to the project itself. Means are more importantly embodied in the knowledge that individual archivists bring with them as participants and the overall strength of the archival programs they represent.

The third assumption relates to the nature and the type of topics that lend themselves to a documentation strategy. The framework has been proposed as a response to contemporary documentation with the assumption that issues or topics are both

ongoing and contemporary. But can topics be so easily compartmentalized in this way? Or can they really be both contemporary as well as retrospective at the same time? And is the documentation strategy model adaptable both to topical and geographical contexts as has been proposed?

Project Summary

The Milwaukee project was funded in 1989 by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) in large part to serve as a two-year test of the documentation strategy conceptual framework. At the time the NHPRC was receiving requests to fund a growing number of projects calling themselves "documentation strategies" and it had become clear that the term was being widely interpreted within the American archival community as encompassing almost anything that included some aspect of planned, usually cooperative, acquisition. The Milwaukee project was modeled closely along the lines of the conceptual framework outlined in Helen Samuels' articles, "Who Controls the Past." The strategy included four primary activities:

(1) choosing and defining the topic to be documented
(2) selecting the advisors and establishing the site for the strategy
(3) structuring the inquiry and examining the form and substance of the available documentation, and
(4) selecting and placing the documentation.[4]

As articulated by the grant-funded project coordinator:

> The...main goal is to develop over a two-year period a documentation strategy for the metropolitan Milwaukee area. As part of the process, participating institutions will analyze...existing collections and prepare collecting policy statements setting forth the scope and responsibilities of their...program. These policy statements will form the basis for a coordinated policy for the metropolitan Milwaukee area aimed at developing priorities, filling gaps, and avoiding competition.[5]

The project was divided into four phases. The first included hiring a project coordinator and enlisting area repositories and institutions to participate in the two-year plan. All of the major archival repositories in Milwaukee agreed to participate.[6] Archivists formed the core of the group, but there was also participation from museum professionals, records managers, librarians, records creators, and records users. During the first phase the project coordinator visited all of the participating repositories in order to answer questions and provide some initial direction. A steering committee was established and began to meet on a regular basis.

Phase Two included having participants examine their institutional mission statement and the mission statement of their own archival program where these existed. This was undertaken in order to identify areas of possible duplication and possible gaps in the documentary record. But the major work of Phase Two was for participants to analyze the subject content of their collections. The mechanism used for this work was similar to that pioneered by the Minnesota Historical Society and later adapted by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the Bentley Historical Library, the New York

State Archives, and others.[7] The reasoning behind this work was twofold. First, participants felt the need to define more precisely what was meant by the term "documenting metropolitan Milwaukee." The second purpose was to distinguish between topical areas that were well-documented and those that were not. This seemed a logical approach prior to selecting priorities further along in the project. Phase Two also included two workshops. The first dealt with conducting a topical analysis on archival holdings; the second with documenting communities.

Phase Three called for each participating archival repository to share—or as it worked out in most cases, to draft—a collection development policy. These were to be used as a first step in identifying areas of competition as well as areas in which nobody was saving documentation. The collecting policies were also intended to identify repositories that might have an interest in documenting particular topical areas. Phase Three also included an opportunity to examine and discuss the results of the topical analysis by hosting a series of panel discussions that brought together participants, records creators, and records users.

The final phase of the project included drafting the actual documentation strategy and establishing the structure that would enable it to continue beyond the end of the grant funding.

There were problems almost from the outset. As the project coordinator struggled to meet deadlines, it became clear that, notwithstanding the documentation strategy's goal of enabling archival repositories to better use their limited resources, repositories with limited resources were able to participate only in a limited way. Participants in small, marginally staffed programs found it difficult both to attend project meetings and to complete the actual work required of them. After only six months into the work plan, the project coordinator reported, "The pace of this process is slow; participants seem to be having difficulty incorporating this extra work into their already tight schedules."[8]

At the heart of this difficulty was the clash of internal and external priorities. Although the project as a whole had a grant-funded coordinator, none of the participants received extra funding, or release time. The work of the documentation strategy was pitted against institutional exhibits and publications with deadlines; against requests from offices for records management service; against scheduled presentations to outside groups; against such planned events as anniversaries and homecomings sponsored by each archive's host institution; and against the daily flow of genealogical and other research requests. Because of those conflicts, and also because of inherent weaknesses that were revealed in their programs, archivists became mired in the background work of the project.

Three activities in particular exemplified this problem. These were (1) the collection analysis, (2) the drafting of acquisition policies, and (3) sponsoring a series of panel discussions with records creators and researchers.

The collection analysis proved to be a particularly nettlesome task. When archivists began, in a sense, to wear the hats of researchers by trying to find subject-based information from their own finding aids, many learned that intellectual control was less than they had previously thought. As the project director noted:

> [M]any repositories [have discovered] that their bibliographic control over material is not what they thought it was. One of the benefits of this process is that it has forced the participants to go back and reexamine their holdings as well as the information they maintain on those holdings.[9]

In many instances information was so vague as to be useless, or it was inaccurate, or it was incomplete, masking important areas of subject coverage. In still other cases the inaccuracies made certain collections promise more than they could deliver and occasionally called into question why they were ever acquired in the first place. Occasionally, finding aids and, in a few instances, collections themselves were missing altogether. But these were offset by a number of collections, previously unknown, that were discovered on the shelves! In a related problem, while participants from museums found the analysis framework to be intellectually engaging and agreed that it was important to document, for example, transportation, they found it was difficult to articulate in meaningful terms the amount of documentation inherent in a scale model of a Great Lakes ore carrier when compared to that contained in the ship's log.

Some of the problems were self-inflicted, showing a lack not only of time and resources, but also of education and training. Except for a shelf list that contained the name and possibly the general location of the documents, information on unprocessed collections was particularly inadequate; several repositories had no finding aids even to supposedly processed records.. Two of the largest repositories had never taken the time to assign control numbers to their collections—one simply arranged its holdings alphabetically on the shelves, a situation that caused others to speculate about the amount of time that would be required if such repositories accepted a collection from an office or organization beginning with the letter "A." Some archival collections were not actually records at all—one repository for example, catalogued a single sheet of corporate letterhead featuring a line drawing of the original 1880-vintage manufacturing plant as one of its manuscript collections.

By the time the analysis was completed, Phase Two was more than six months behind schedule. Before all of the information was loaded into a database and analyzed (there were problems here as well), the deadline had passed by more than a year—a significant setback in a two-year project. Even at that, one repository with critically important holdings simply declined to do an analysis because of the time commitment involved. Because of a cumbersome record group-based numbering system, one of the largest academic archives had done little more than to simply lump several hundred "collections" under the general topic of "education." Because this work came in so far behind schedule, subsequent activities needed to be hurried. As a result, opportunities were missed and work was done without appropriate care.

Two of the most potentially useful projects to suffer from the overdue analysis were the collection development policies and the panel sessions. The policies were drafted at the same time that archivists were struggling to complete the analysis. The finished documents were supposed to resemble a three-part collection development policy completed by the State Historical Society of Wisconsin several years earlier.[10] Part One of the policy was designed to provide background into the archive's mission and the emphasis of its program. The second part was to use the analysis framework to articulate both the present strengths and weaknesses of the repository's current archival holdings

and to further define the types of documentation that would be acquired. The third part was to articulate institutional priorities for future emphasis in collecting.

That Parts Two and Three would be difficult to complete without a completed analysis should be obvious. In addition, one major repository was reluctant to express priorities because it was "in a state of flux." Another major repository, even after all the talk of cooperation, shared responsibility, and established priorities, stated simply that it was its policy to "solicit and accept" related materials in all topical areas. As a result, the supposed "combined collecting policy" never moved beyond a collective statement of what individual repositories were doing at the present time. None of the newly written individual statements were approved by the governing bodies of individual institutions, and when the time arrived to begin more serious discussion of a cooperative structure, the grant funding ended and participants lost their enthusiasm for continuing the project.

The discussion sessions, held to begin a dialogue with records creators and records users, also were accompanied by stress. Although in the end participants were universally enthusiastic about having been involved, at the beginning many were reluctant to deal with their assigned topic on a conceptual level in a group situation. Much of this stress seems to have been caused by a lack of subject knowledge, minimal education about archival issues, and inexperience dealing with records creators and researchers.

Even so, the time was well spent and all three groups—curators, researchers, and creators—learned from one another. But archivists probably learned the most. Again and again researchers drove home how, especially in a local setting, it was much more important to know where collections were housed rather than having all documentation on a given topic brought together into one repository. Because of this, they strongly supported the idea of a documentation strategy. Researchers also gave many excellent suggestions about types of records (frequently unrepresented in current archival holdings) that were useful in conducting research on given topics. Some researchers were particularly generous in offering constructive criticism relating to local archival repositories they had used. The primary disappointment with this aspect of the project was that there was insufficient time to follow up and conduct additional sessions with these and other researchers and creators.

Follow-Up Survey

A follow-up survey distributed to participants at the end of the project also was revealing. Representatives from each institution were asked to rate on a scale from 1 (low) to 5 (high) the various aspects of the documentation strategy and the overall effectiveness of the project. The single, most striking finding was that participants consistently rated the value of the individual activities in which they had been involved significantly higher than either the project itself or the prospect of continuing the documentation strategy on an ongoing basis. In a similar way, respondents consistently judged that the overall benefits to them personally were greater (4.0) than the benefits to their institution (3.7).[11]

Overwhelmingly, the series of workshops was rated (4.3) as the most useful aspect of the project.[12] Interestingly, those on appraisal, the MARC AMC format, and subject

cataloging—not initially planned as a part of the project, but added largely in response to questions and problems that arose during it—received the most numerous block of favorable comments. As one participant later reflected, "Learning how to create MARC AMC records following the APPM cataloging rules gave project participants something they could use for their own benefit."[13] Even the one person who rated the workshops lower than anyone else (3.0) praised them with faint damns, noting only that the "material was so extensive that, for anyone new to the field of Archives, together with the work of one's own archives, there was insufficient time to put into practice what we learned." The reaction to the workshops validated the project coordinator's early sense that some participants had become involved less because of any altruistic desire to improve the documentation of metropolitan Milwaukee than for the opportunity for continuing education!

For several small repositories the chance to load archival holdings into the national OCLC bibliographic utility through a group LCOMM membership also was highly rated (4.2).[14] The reason was simple: it afforded them the opportunity to receive for the first time catalog cards for their archival collections without having to manually type them.

The panel sessions with records creators and users, even though they were the cause of considerable stress to some, were highly acclaimed (3.8) as a good way to learn more, particularly about the needs of researchers and to make useful contacts with journalists, former mayors, bankers, and other movers and shakers in the community.[15] In regretting that there was no time to follow up on these meetings, many participants suggested strongly that area archivists do so whether or not the strategy itself was continued.

Although some lamented that the newly written institutional collecting policies were never effectively used during the project, most rated the exercise as being quite useful (3.7) because, in the words of one, it "encouraged us to develop, for the first time, a detailed written collecting policy covering all phases of our collecting program." Others noted that it forced them to take the time to do something they should have done long ago.[16]

Even the collection analysis, which had been so difficult for many to complete, was rated relatively well (3.3).[17] Most agreed that, although it took an enormous amount of time to complete, the analysis had revealed to those who conducted it a good deal about the content and nature of their holdings. Several commented that it also improved their reference skills by revealing aspects of their holdings about which they were hitherto unaware. Most agreed that the exercise had caused them to look at their descriptive practices with a newly critical eye and appreciate some of the difficulties and frustrations that researchers using archival collections faced.

A sharp contrast existed in the level of enthusiasm relating directly to the ultimate goal of the project: the improved documentation of Milwaukee. *"Should the LCOMM Archives Committee continue the project on an ongoing basis?"* The Richter scale of public opinion registered only a modest 2.5 average.[18] *"Would you like to participate in a continuing cooperative project to document one particular aspect of Milwaukee?"* To this prospect respondents managed only a tepid 2.2 level of support, most citing staff shortages or other, more important short-term priorities.[19] Finally, when asked

about their reaction to a short-term documentation study of religious education that had been undertaken near the close of the project, the needle of enthusiasm registered a bare 2.0. As one response noted, it "appeared that we were no closer to working together on a documentation project after the project than before it."[20]

Implications of the Project

So what does all of this mean? Evidence suggests that the documentation strategy framework may not be useful in the way that some thought it would be, but possibly some of its individual activities are useful in ways that had not been considered.

The first assumption that must be called into question concerns internal institutional versus inter-institutional cooperative goals. Although the documentation strategy framework acknowledges that the former are more important, it may have underestimated the gulf that divides the two. Already short of time and resources, participants found that the demands of their daily work were of a higher priority than the external demands of the documentation strategy. The two were never effectively resolved, and the project always took the back seat.

This conflict between internal versus external missions and goals was both more fundamental and complex than was previously thought. It is not simply a matter of time and resources. In many respects it is a conflict between the goals of "archivists" and those of "manuscript curators"; the first seeking to preserve the records of the host organization and the second to document the broad scope and range of history of the Milwaukee metropolitan area. The Milwaukee participants included repositories in both camps. The mission of some was primarily institutional, while with others it was more broadly based; with a few there were elements of both. Institutional archivists with highly specialized collections were only marginally interested, marginally involved, and marginally open to a long-term commitment to broader documentary goals. In a similar way, those with broader documentary goals were loathe to cede territory to competitors in the name of cooperation. These attitudes suggest that archivists may need to consider more carefully the conflicts associated with inter-institutional cooperation as a strategy to achieve their own documentary goals and inter-institutional cooperation as a strategy to achieve goals of others. The two are similar, but not identical.

There were other limits to inter-institutional cooperation as well. Ultimately, everyone was willing to cooperate by relinquishing topical areas that did not interest them. Acting magnanimously was more difficult when two or more repositories were interested in the same topic. In the end several important topical areas such as "science and technology," which had been identified as having serious documentary gaps, remained orphaned. Knowing that patronage was the life's blood of the archives' existence and that similar immediate measures of usefulness to their parent institution were crucial for survival, none of the participants had any interest in making these "low-use" topics a priority because it was not in their immediate self-interest to do so.

Regarding the second assumption, even if archivists do have common interests sufficient to support an ongoing documentation strategy, this does not mean they have the resources necessary to do so. Such resources include not only time, staffing, and other forms of institutional support, but also the educational background of the participants.

The documentation strategy framework is built upon existing archival method and practice—in particular, appraisal and collection development. But what if some of these building blocks are absent or flawed due to lack of time or know-how? The result is a substandard foundation on which to build such a complex and demanding framework.

The Milwaukee project revealed significant fault lines in the infrastructure of the local archival community. It was clear that participating programs did not have sufficient support to absorb the additional work of the project. In part this was due to a long history of meager support by host institutions that resulted in archivists having to employ hurried appraisal techniques. This led to the accumulation of marginal collections that added unnecessarily to an already heavy workload. The problem was exacerbated by existing descriptive systems, cobbled together as time permitted and inadequate to provide sufficient information about internal holdings. The project needed to take time to develop acquisition development policies that should have been in place already. The cumulative effect of these flaws was sufficient to call into question whether the collective local archival community rested on a foundation firm enough to support such a project in the first place. The result was that archivists in Milwaukee spent more time collecting information than using it. Assuming that Milwaukee is fairly typical of a local American archival community, will the results elsewhere be much different if no prior preparation is undertaken?

Other problems existed with the foundation as well. Although the implementation of an ongoing documentation strategy would have been in the best interests of the local archival community, the effort to achieve this goal was blunted by the need for greater skill on the part of participants. The local archival community was the inevitable product of the haphazard and frequently inadequate American archival education network, and its ability to successfully undertake an intensive and demanding documentation strategy was adversely affected by this fact.

The early conclusion of the project coordinator that participants were drawn to the Milwaukee project primarily because of the workshops, and the subsequent high rating of the workshops, seems to support the notion that local archivists saw the project as much a means to further their own education as it was to improve the documentation of metropolitan Milwaukee. Perhaps the naive sense was that it was possible to brush up on addition and subtraction while attempting to learn calculus.

As with some of those who attempted to build round barns, archivists in Milwaukee had to change the blueprint to make it compatible with their learned skills. The extra time required to complete the work of the project took away from its ultimate benefit and, in the end, it was necessary to stop short of the goal. As a result, although the improved documentation of metropolitan Milwaukee is still a likely outcome, the route will be more circuitous, and when it does come, improved documentation will more likely be the byproduct of a more highly skilled archival community rather than the direct result of the project itself.

Regarding the third assumption, evidence exists to suggest that archivists also may need to think more carefully about the nature of the topics they propose to document, whether they be event-, subject-, or geographically based. Just as individual archivists in the privacy of their own stack areas frequently tend to keep too much, so it seems

that a group of archivists, left to its own devices, has a tendency to carve out too large a piece of the pie. The Milwaukee project seems to have confirmed, in a local context, what Richard Cox concluded was true in a statewide context: that documenting a limited geographical area is as complex and difficult conceptually as documenting the entire country.[21] There is simply less acreage. The fact that the same essential topical framework has been used in statewide, regional, and local contexts supports this idea. As with their collecting policies, archivists need to find ways to narrow the scope of any documentation strategy they undertake in order to make it more manageable. Perhaps one way to accomplish this would have been to pre-select a few of the topical areas and concentrate on these rather than the list in its entirety.

In addition, although the intent of the documentation strategy is to deal with voluminous contemporary records, selecting a topic may not permit such a neat distinction between what is contemporary and what is retrospective. Just as "[i]ndividuals and institutions do not exist independently"[22] neither does modern documentation. Certain topics like a moon-shot or the computer industry may be relatively easier to define in a contemporary sense. Likewise topics such as the fur trade, the gold rush, or the ice harvesting industry lend themselves to neat retrospective packaging. But most of the geographically based topics employed during the Milwaukee project were both contemporary and retrospective. In order to achieve improved documentation, it is necessary, in a geographical context such as Milwaukee, to deal with both the contemporary and retrospective dimensions of a given topic. Given that the documentation strategy is predicated on the abundance of contemporary records, and that this universe of contemporary documentation is too large and too complex for any single repository to deal with alone, abundance and complexity become incentives for cooperation. As archivists move into the area of retrospective documentation, in which the quantity and the complexity diminish, so do the incentives for cooperation.

Conclusion

Perhaps the best way to express a conclusion is in terms of good news and bad news. First the bad news. After all the time archivists have spent debating it, evidence from Milwaukee suggests that the documentation strategy framework may not be as useful as participants hoped it would be, at least in the way they thought it would be.

Those looking to undertake a documentation strategy should first check to ensure that certain preconditions exist. First, participants should be sure that their incentives for cooperation are based upon benefits to their own institution and their own program. Altruism is a worthy notion, but it is too often vaguely defined and difficult to justify to resource allocators especially when one has difficulty in meeting core responsibilities. This was clearly the case in Milwaukee when other priorities continued to take precedence over the work of the documentation strategy project.

Second, prospective participants should ask whether, given all of the demands on their time and resources, the adequate documentation of a particular topic is really the first priority? Is such a project essential to achieving the archive's individual institutional mission and goals? Or could one's time be better spent with other activities? In Milwaukee it was clear that repositories to whom the project was marginally important

participated marginally. The result suggests that the goal of achieving the improved documentation of a geographic area was analogous to the goal of achieving world peace. Everyone agrees in principal that world peace is a worthy goal, but ultimately nobody is willing to actually do what it takes to achieve it when such action is deemed inconsistent with individual self-interests.

Third, the success of a documentation strategy builds upon the strength of present archival practice as a foundation. The building blocks of this foundation are not simply appraisal and acquisition development, but other archival skills as well—in particular, description and reference. A documentation strategy means added work. The success of the project depends upon the ability to complete in a timely way the individual activities that are required. If the foundation is not in place, the resulting structure can never be strong. If a documentation strategy is to be undertaken, perhaps it should be preceded by an effort to ensure that essential building blocks, such as appraisal, arrangement, and description, are sufficiently strong to support the work of the strategy.

Fourth, if a documentation strategy is to have any chance of success, it should be conceived as narrowly as possible. Geographical constructs probably should be disregarded altogether because they are too complex and they do not provide sufficient incentives for cooperation. In the case of the Milwaukee project, to have selected a few topical areas with widespread appeal would have resulted in both a more manageable workload and better tested the nature and depth of cooperative impulses.

But in the bad news there also is good news. The framework—or, more properly, some of the individual activities of the framework—may be surprisingly useful in ways that have not been considered in archival literature. Perhaps the most significant result of the Milwaukee project came not because of how well the documentation strategy framework worked or did not work, but from what happened because of trying it out in the first place. During the course of the project, local archival repositories established the basis for more extensive and effective cooperation by better understanding not only their own mission and priorities, but also by learning about the missions and priorities of others as well. As the project coordinator observed early on, the project "energized the Milwaukee archival community."[23] This result, however worthy, does not argue for undertaking a documentation strategy project to achieve these other ends as much as it reminds us of John Fleckner's perspective in "Cooperation as a Strategy for Archival Institutions," articulated 20 years ago—that archivists have a great deal to gain by approaching problems cooperatively whenever it is possible to do so.[24]

Although it failed in its documentary goals, the act of undertaking the project helped archivists to improve their skills at appraisal, description, and reference. In some instances, it brought to light marginal collections, long invisible on the shelves, that were subjected to a closer, more critical appraisal. In the same way, it "resurrected" quality materials that had been forgotten due to poor description or, in some cases, no description at all. It helped to build bridges to records creators and records users. It helped the local archival community to establish relationships that have nurtured cooperation and spawned a number of ongoing projects. In other words, the project helped to lay a foundation upon which archivists have been able to build stronger programs that serve their own institutions and the interests of the greater Milwaukee area more effectively—even if not through an ongoing, formal, documentation strategy.

Although it did not achieve the intended result, the project did suggest other ways that archivists could cooperate with one another and, in so doing, reaffirmed the belief in cooperation as a strategy for achieving goals. For example, although the documentation strategy framework preaches that it is not necessary for all documentation on a given topic be under the same roof, perhaps the most important symbolic move in Milwaukee has come with uniting collections that had been split between several institutions, proving that archivists can cooperate as well as compete. The series of continuing education workshops launched during the project has been continued on a regular basis. Acting on researchers, comments about the importance of knowing the location of resources, the LCOMM Archives Committee compiled and published a cooperative 13-repository *Guide to Genealogical Collections in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area*. The goals of the *Guide* may not be as lofty as achieving improved documentation of the Milwaukee metropolitan area, but it does improve the efficiency and speed with which archivists can provide reference service to researchers.[25] Individual repositories have established the beginnings of cooperative reference service by temporarily transferring collections to various LCOMM archives for the convenience of researchers.[26] At individual repositories, the documentation strategy project also resulted in several ongoing MARC cataloging programs, and several significant reappraisal projects.

Finally, Milwaukee archivists learned that one of the most striking aspects of the documentation strategy experiment was its peculiar attractiveness to a variety of different groups, including not only archivists, museum curators and librarians, but also newspaper reporters, labor union executives, airport managers, former mayors, and others. Some participants suggested that the concept was simply wrongly named: that it is actually an "outreach strategy" that may also be of some incidental help with improved documentation.

In Milwaukee, such unanticipated results were the most significant outcomes of the documentation strategy project. Could these same results have been achieved in a different way—without having to undertake a formal documentation strategy beforehand? It is impossible to say, although there would have had to have been some method to engender a spirit of cooperation, inter-institutional rapport, as well as a better sense of the mission, the priorities, and the problems faced by other local repositories. The documentation strategy project provided this structure.

Archivists who believe that the documentation strategy framework may be applicable to their own situation may wish to consider several factors before embarking on their journey.

If it is to be a viable approach, the documentation strategy should be able to stand on its own, without large amounts of grant funding. As one commentator later noted:

> The [Milwaukee] project points out very clearly that the development of a formal documentation strategy requires much more than outside funding; it also requires a foundation of what might be broadly described as communication, education and standardization. To succeed, a documentation strategy requires a commitment from all participating repositories. Archivists must bring to the project...the necessary resources.[27]

If outside funding is needed, it should be to underwrite the cost of specific, finite activities rather than the cost of a crucial element, such as the documentation strategy project coordinator. The strategy is an ongoing effort and the effect of suddenly losing the support for an ongoing need, such as the project coordinator, would be devastating.

Before beginning, ensure that the "infrastructure" of participants is in place and strong. For many, "the requirements of a documentation strategy perhaps render such a project too complicated to serve as an initial venture into cooperative activities."[28] Preliminary work should include a critical analysis of appraisal and descriptive practices, collection development priorities, and mission, as well as considerations of how much time will be required and institutional support that will be needed. Participants should look ahead to upcoming anniversaries, exhibitions, or other time commitments that will demand their attention. Prospective participants should consider dividing the project into two distinct phases. Begin with a "pre-documentation strategy," during which time matters such as a collection analysis and workshops may be undertaken and the scope of the strategy can be more closely considered.

Those considering a documentation strategy should also take care to reconcile institutional priorities and goals with cooperative goals. It is important to move beyond the "world peace" level of generalization and articulate how the broader cooperative goals will have an impact on and benefit individual institutions.

Finally, it would be wise to discuss the project and develop it in broader terms than simply improving documentation. Recognizing the potential of this consideration individual activities undertaken during the project will make it easier to take advantage of opportunities rather than being forced to rush ahead to meet another deadline.

How is the documentation strategy remarkably similar to a round barn? In the short term, round barns frequently did not achieve the goals that their builders had set. Even so, many continue to be used today because of how the original idea has evolved. Many round barns achieved their success when adapted for use as antique shops, recreational facilities, churches, and restaurants rather than for the needs they were originally intended to serve. In other words, their application was broader than the original context that the designers had envisioned. Perhaps the documentation strategy concept will evolve as well. The structure archivists tried to build in Milwaukee did not turn out as the blueprint suggested it would. But although the work was hard, the result was worthwhile—if unexpected. The outcome argues not to go out and undertake a documentation strategy. But it does argue that we need to be continually reminded of the value of cooperation as a means to achieve institutional goals.

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NOTES

1. Robert H. Smith, "Hole in the Doughnut: Some Arguments Against the Round Barn," *The Country Gentleman* (February 24, 1917): 36–37.
2. Ibid., 37.
3. The two-year grant was awarded to the Library Council of Metropolitan Milwaukee (LCOMM) by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), an agency of the National Archives and Records Administration based in Washington, D.C.
4. Helen W. Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist*, 49:2 (Spring 1986): 116.
5. Susan E. Davis, "Documenting Metropolitan Milwaukee NHPRC Grant #89-060, Semiannual Report, June–December 1989," p. 1.
6. Institutional participants included Alverno College, the "Founding Industries of Wisconsin" business history documentation project, Marquette University, the Milwaukee County Historical Society, Milwaukee County Information Management, the Milwaukee Public Library, the Milwaukee Public Museum, the School Sisters of St. Francis, the Sisters of the Divine Savior, the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and WTMJ television station.
7. As it was adapted for the Milwaukee project, the analysis framework was divided into 17 primary topical areas that were intended to provide a cross-section of life in the area. These topical areas included: Art & Architecture, Agriculture, Business & Industry, Communications, Education, Labor, Medicine & Health, Military, Natural Resources, Politics & Government, Population Groups, Religion, Recreation & Leisure, Settlement, Social Organization & Activity, Science & Technology, and Transportation. Each of these topical areas was subdivided into a number of categories that further defined aspects of the topic.
8. NHPRC Grant #89-060, Semiannual Report, June–December 1989, p. 2.
9. Minutes of the Documenting Metropolitan Milwaukee Task Force meeting, 4 April 1990, p. 1.
10. "State Historical Society of Wisconsin Collection Development Policy for Wisconsin Manuscripts." Adopted by the Board of Curators of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin June 12, 1987.
11. To the survey question, *How much have you benefitted from your participation in the documentation strategy project?,* selected comments included: "learned a great deal about archival theory and practice from the workshops and from exchanges with colleagues; getting to know colleagues was a great benefit; acquired new skills (MARC AMC & Collecting Policies); established closer relationship with other archivists; learned about programs of other local archives; learned some useful information about topical analysis; refresher on cataloging; opportunity to get to know local colleagues better; learned a lot about the complexity of documentation; learned a great deal about local archival programs; project encouraged me to find a volunteer to help establish better intellectual control of collections; increased my desire to place certain manuscript collections at another, more appropriate repository; gave me an opportunity to get to know archivists at other repositories better; improved my cataloging skills and gave me a better understanding of archival work that I wouldn't have had otherwise; gave me new insights into archival work—such as uses of records, ways to use computer technology, and importance of long-range planning of acquisitions—that I wouldn't otherwise have had." In response to another question, *To what extent do you think your institution benefitted from the program?,* comments

included: "achieved a better understanding of the extent and nature of our holdings; provided the structure and incentive for us to undertake certain basic activities which had been neglected, particularly (1) the development of a detailed, written collecting policy statement and (2) the acquisition by staff of requisite skills to undertake MARC AMC cataloging; we now have an inventory of our holdings and a draft collection policy; free workshop instruction for staff; good preparation for automation planning; got to know archivists and programs at other repositories; institution benefitted in four ways: (1) analyzed and learned more about our holdings, (2) wrote a collecting policy, (3) revealed gaps in the documentary record, and (4) allowed us to enter some records into OCLC; cooperative cataloging results were beneficial; time devoted to this project was time taken away from other projects."

12. To another question, *In your view, which of the following elements of the program worked best or were most useful to you?,* selected comments included: Workshops: "for the most part all drew good audiences and all were well received; MARC AMC and cataloging especially; staff learned the basics of MARC-AMC cataloging; LCSH, descriptive cataloging, MARC AMC—good refreshers; well done, informational, pleasantly informal; especially appraisal, cataloging, LCSH, MARC AMC; especially MARC AMC and APPM; collection analysis workshop was good lead in; excellent, but material was so extensive that for anyone new in the field of Archives, together with the work of one's own local archives, there was insufficient time to absorb and put into practice what we learned."
13. Judith Campbell Turner to Richard J. Cox, June 1, 1992. Copy of a letter provided to the author by Turner following a Midwest Archives Conference session that focused on the Milwaukee Documentation Strategy Project.
14. To the survey question, *How useful was the Cooperative OCLC Membership?,* selected comments included: "very helpful because we had no previous access to OCLC; encouraged smaller (and some larger) repositories to complete MARC AMC cataloging; an interesting experience to learn about this database and how it could be used to make our holdings more well known; absorbed a lot of energy that might have been spent on other aspects of the project, but useful for individual repositories; extremely useful for those who were not members."
15. To the survey question, *How useful were the panel sessions with community members?,* selected comments included: "one of the most valuable aspects of the project, an important exchange between researchers and archivists; results uneven but process was important & revealing; archivists learned from creators & users; should continue these contacts on regular basis; useful for making community contacts; interesting to learn different perspectives; enjoyable, but the goal was unclear so difficult to evaluate; worked well from perspective of the project and a good way to learn more about user needs; rather difficult; hard time attracting panelists; useful feedback from researchers—gave me some new ideas about how to document particular topics; useful, but no time for follow-up."
16. To the survey question, *How useful was the writing of collecting policies?,* selected comments included: "Forced us to define or re-define collecting goals; was useful in initiating discussions with library director regarding collecting; gave us a better sense of direction; we have a broad collecting policy that is difficult to narrow; made me do something I needed to do anyway; unsatisfactory from the standpoint of the project because it never came together as a comprehensive plan; personally not very useful because the topical framework is not useful for the type of collecting we do; developing a policy was useful; very helpful to me and my repository to write policy for our collection; may have benefitted individuals, but were of little use to the project; group policy was not a policy at all—simply a listing of what everyone collected."
17. To the survey question, *How useful was the collection analysis?,* selected comments included: "a double edged sword—necessary for project and a good chance to look at collections with a more critical eye; on the other hand, a tremendous drain on staff time; somewhat useful results never really used into overall goals of project; allowed me to learn a great deal more about the content of my holdings; didn't really get a chance to use the data collected; provided good overall picture of holdings; useful, but lacked the time to complete it; helped me to understand more thoroughly the nature of the information in my collection; should have included more analysis of the information that was gathered; useful exercise to learn more about my archival collection."
18. The average rating for this question was 2.5 on a 5.0 scale. Comments by respondents included: "should continue because Milwaukee's documentary heritage is important; at least two major repositories (UWM and MCHS) should begin discussions to clarify their collecting areas, eliminate competition and fill gaps—LCOMM Archives Committee should facilitate this; only if sufficient staff can be found; should adopt some of the final recommendations but not continue the project as such unless additional

grant-funding could be obtained; not continue as such, but pursue some off-shoots of project (such as genealogy guide); too labor intensive for small shops; possibly keep cooperative collection document up to date (although only worthwhile if everyone agrees to cooperate); continue only in the sense of keeping alive the spirit of cooperation; do not continue in terms of 1, 2, and 3 year recommendations and plan; only with a topic in which there was competition and in which participants were committed to cooperate; Milwaukee archivists do not have the time to continue on an ongoing basis; project needs to be re-thought and re-organized; individuals need to articulate specific goals and reasons for cooperating; only worth continuing if all pertinent players are really willing to cooperate."

19. The actual question was: *"Is participating in an ongoing cooperative project to document a particular aspect of Milwaukee history...a high priority or a low priority for you at this time?"* Selected comments included: "staff demands and institutional priorities make continued grant-connected project a low priority; we would be able to participate again if another project was grant supported; On the one hand there is the professional obligation on the part of all Milwaukee area archivists to insure that Milwaukee's history will be 'adequately documented.' On the other hand, most repositories have narrowly defined mandates to collect their own institutional records only and, accordingly, can have little impact in addressing the 'big picture;' most archivists do not appear interested to further commitment to this project—this "softens" our own commitment; good idea, but our participation will be limited by staffing; priority for now is to get archives automated; it is enough of a struggle to keep up with daily demands of job in single person shop; would participate only if topic was closely related to my core mission; depending on the topic; documenting metropolitan Milwaukee is important, but it is impractical and unrealistic for small repositories to participate on an ongoing basis; as professional archivists we should attack this problem."
20. Selected comments on the religious education documentation project included: "failed because group would not agree on a definition of topic; illustrative of problems putting Doc Strat into practice; never got off the ground; helped to illustrate how complex 'specific' topics actually were and how vague our collection analysis results were; a frustrating exercise; good example of the general failure of achieving better documentation; useful in that it demonstrated the need for an institutional commitment to collecting in a particular topical area; asked wrong questions; topic was not selected for the right reasons; not interested in participating."
21. Richard J. Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist*, 50:1 (Winter 1987): 199.
22. "Who Controls the Past," op. cit., 111.
23. "Documenting Metropolitan Milwaukee NHPRC Grant #89-060," Semiannual Report, December 1989–June 1990, p. 3.
24. John A. Fleckner, "Cooperation as a Strategy for Archival Institutions." *American Archivist*, 39:4 (October 1976): 447–459.
25. Mark A. Vargas, ed. *Guide to Genealogical Collections in the Milwaukee Metropolitan Area.* (Milwaukee: Library Council of Metropolitan Milwaukee, 1995). The *Guide* includes a number of archival repositories that chose not to participate in the documentation strategy but elected to cooperate in this project.
26. In one recent instance an instructor at one university was completing a dissertation that involved using a collection of organizational records housed in one repository and personal papers housed at another. Rather than require the researcher to continually travel back and forth between repositories, the personal papers were temporarily transferred to the university where the instructor taught. Such temporary transfers are the centerpiece of Wisconsin's Area Research Center network, although this particular transfer extended the idea outside the ARC network. In another instance a repository was called upon to provide extended access to a large unprocessed collection. The archives making the request had neither the staff to process the collection nor the services of a supervised reading room. The collection was transferred permanently to another repository that processed the records and provided the supervised access required.
27. Christopher Hives, "Assessing Inter-Institutional Acquisition/Documentation Strategies: Putting the Cart Before the Horse." Unpublished commentary delivered on an earlier version of this article at the Association of Canadian Archivists annual meeting in St. John's, Newfoundland, July 24, 1993, p. 3.
28. Ibid., 5.

THE GIVENNESS OF KIN: LEGAL AND ETHICAL ISSUES IN ACCESSING ADOPTION RECORDS[1]

R. JACKSON ARMSTRONG-INGRAM

ABSTRACT: In the United States, legal adoption was originally a means of establishing heirship and thus required an open record. Later, it became primarily a matter of establishing fictive parenthood, and records became closed to foster that illusion. As a result of this change, current practice in relation to records associated with adoption is often in conflict with general archival principles. The three central issues that have developed regarding adoption—the "sealed record," "as if," and "in the best interests of the child"—have been applied beyond their original intent. More recent concepts, such as "wrongful adoption" and the implementation of registries, raise further access issues. Archivists need to have an understanding of the contexts of the creation and use of records associated with adoption in order to administer access to them in a legal and ethical way, and to enable them to contribute to the public debate on access to adoption records.

In the United States, legal adoption was originally a means of establishing heirship and thus required an open record. Later, it became primarily a matter of establishing fictive parenthood, and records became closed to foster that illusion. As a result of this change, much current practice in relation to the records associated with adoption flies in the face of two widely held principles of public records: (1) that the record should be "true," and altering or falsifying it is unacceptable; (2) that the subject of a record should have the right of inspection even if the record is otherwise restricted.

As it is the archivists' charge to preserve an authentic record of transactions and make it available, it should be very much a concern of archivists to look closely at any situation where not only is access by the subject restricted but where part of the record itself may be falsified. It is equally a part of the charge of public archives to preserve and make available documentation that safeguards rights. As we shall see, there is also often a conflict between this goal and established practices in relation to adoption records.

It may seem that only archivists involved with public records are likely to be directly concerned with the issues raised by administering access to records associated with adoptions. However, the records related to adoption encompass not only the court records of the adoption process as such but also hospital records, lawyer's case files, social agency records, church records, and others. Thus, almost any type of archival repository may have to deal with administering records related to adoptions. Indeed, the importance of some of these other forms of documentation for preserving the rights of adopted people could itself induce an increased demand for archival involvement in their preservation and the administration of access to them.

Although there are many researchers who are attempting to close disjunctions in family history caused by divorce, abandonment, criminal activity, and adoption through access to records related to themselves and their parents, grandparents, or even great-grandparents, the area in which the issues raised by this general demand for access to family history information are most particularly foregrounded is that of adoption. This is one of the most fraught areas in which archivists have to administer access to records related to identifiable individuals and one in which both demand for access, and dissatisfaction with the lack of it, is growing and will continue to grow.

In order to administer access to such records legally and ethically, it is vital for archivists to be acquainted with the basic premises on which adoption is based and how these have changed over time; the records the process itself generates; and the ways in which other types of records may be related to it.

It is especially important for archivists to be familiar with these premises as certain concepts related to adoption have often been generalized beyond the records to which they were intended to apply. Archivists need to know what the concepts actually are to resist such inappropriate expansion of their control over access.

Archivists claim a particular skill in understanding the contexts of the creation and use of records. This needs to be exercised in administering access to records related to adoption and in informing the public debate on the issues involved. On a broader level, too, archivists need to consider how attitudes toward adoption have contributed to its being an aspect of American society that impacts millions of people and yet remains inadequately documented and studied.

Adoption as It Developed in the United States

Adoption and its consequences, as they came to be understood at the time when the form of modern adoption was coalescing, were succinctly defined in a Children's Bureau report in 1925:

> Adoption is a means of creating the legal relation of parent and child between a child deprived of the care and protection of his own parents and the person wishing to take the child into his own home. It involves the severance of relationships existing between blood kindred and the voluntary assumption of parental obligation through a legal process. ... There are certain results of this relation. One is the right to bear the name of the adopting parent. Another is the right of the adopting parent to the custody of the child and to the enjoyment of his services and

> earnings. A third is the corresponding right of the child to support and care. Lastly appear the reciprocal rights of inheritance.[2]

It had taken some time to reach such a clear definition. The clarity of what the process was intended to do, however, has not always meant that it was experienced by those involved in it as satisfactory, as this impassioned statement from an adult adoptee in the 1970s demonstrates:

> As an adoptee I am expected to respect a contract made over my body when I was too young to give my consent. Am I to respect this contract while my past is buried? So long as this inhuman practice continues, adoption can only be regarded as slavery. We damn sure have been bought and sold on the open market.[3]

There is no general history of adoption in the United States, and the variations from state to state have been considerable. However, it is possible to describe a general line of national development that has manifested itself to a greater or lesser extent at different time periods in each state.[4]

Adoption in the United States is conceptually closely related to indenture, apprenticeship, binding out, and, indeed, slavery. It was sometimes held that the distinction between binding out, etc, and adoption was simply that in the former case a minor was taken in for the value of his services whereas the latter also established him as heir-at-law. It was a matter of the intent of the person taking in the child.

Adoption is not a concept that exists in common law and it was somewhat problematic how it could be accomplished without leaving the heirship open to challenge. In some states this was done by recording a deed of transfer regarding the child, just as in any transfer of property. This method was still valid in a number of states at least as recently as the 1920s. In other states, adoptions were attempted by making a declaration before a judge or even by passing a private bill in the legislature.[5]

In the mid-nineteenth century, there was a concern to make adoption more readily achievable, and Roman law was drawn on to permit the framing of adoption statutes. This sets adoption law apart from much other U.S. law and places the former in potential conflict with the latter. Roman family law is based on the concept of the pater familias. This concept was also reflected in slave law, and it associated with adoption the ideas of social dependency and permanent minority.

The new state adoption laws were not always in agreement on the issue of heirship, however, and some statutes specifically excluded adopted children as heirs-at-law on the premise that, in order to inherit, someone not related by "blood" should be specifically provided for in a will. This came to be seen generally as unjust in that a child brought up at a certain social level could be left adrift by the accident of parental intestacy.[6]

Although it became the usual situation that an adopted child became the adoptive parents' heir-at-law, the child was not considered equivalent to an heir-of-the-body and could not inherit on those terms. Also, the child generally only established rights of reciprocal inheritance with the adoptive parents, not their kin, and often retained rights to inherit from his own kin even if not the birth parents, although he would often have the right to inherit from them, too.[7]

Modern adoption law is usually considered to begin with revisions made to the adoption law in Minnesota in 1917.[8] Allowing for variations and idiosyncrasies, similar laws were soon enacted in other states, and by 1929 all then-existing states had some type of adoption law. These laws have subsequently been further revised and tinkered with, but one can pick out certain general themes.

These adoption laws came about in an environment of active social engineering legislation, much of which would no longer be acceptable. This package included laws on marriage restrictions, institutionalization of the "unfit," involuntary sterilization, and, at the federal level, ethnoracial quotas in immigration. This legislation drew on ideas of ranking the "value" of individuals and basing decisions as to life chances on their social utility. It is uncomfortable to view adoption in the context of such legislation as, unlike the other cases, we still see it as directed toward a worthwhile end. However, these adoption statutes were heavily invested with the same ideology and the practice based on them depended on the manipulation of similar stereotypes.

This round of adoption statutes often encompassed three separate issues: (1) adoption as such; (2) the involuntary termination of the parental rights of unfit parents; and (3) preventing baby farming. It is in the second area that we clearly hear the echoes of the rest of the agenda. The list of socially undesirable characteristics that should lead to the deprivation of parental privileges is the same list that appears in the sterilization and immigration debates. Further, as the predominant view of genetics at the time was simple Mendelianism and such characteristics as alcoholism, prostitution, pauperism, feeblemindedness, and criminality were believed to be genetically heritable, children of such parents would not have been considered candidates for adoption into a "refined home" by the standards of enlightened social thinking but candidates for institutional training and possible sterilization.[9]

A catalog issued by a private maternity care and adoption service in 1923 well characterizes the spirit of adoption in the United States through most of this century.[10] The catalog claims that The Willows offers "an exceptionally high grade of babies for adoption." These children "are practically all 'Accidents of Fate,' being children of unfortunate parentage." They are "some of Nature's choicest products" born "from clean American stock, mostly from the rural districts of the Central West." And thus they will "make far more creditable members of a family than the legitimate child born in the poverty and vice of a congested city."

The catalog goes on to list a sampling of the occupational and educational backgrounds of its babies' parents and states, "A complete list would include practically all the better vocations, both commercial and professional." Having established the quality of the pedigree of their offerings, it becomes necessary to deal with the thorny issue of why such paragons are now in the position of needing the services of The Willows:

> It is our experience,...that the mothers of these babies are good girls... simple, unsophisticated young girls, lacking knowledge of their sexual self, who either through love or ignorance make their first misstep...and the security of The Willows is the only course left to protect themselves and their unborn babe from a life of shame and disgrace.

By the time it closed in the late 1960s, The Willows had placed around 35,000 children for adoption. Despite the obvious commercialism of its catalog, it does fairly

represent two essential aspects of American adoption: (1) its racist social engineering roots, and (2) its use of the stereotype of the young "good girl" birth mother who made a "misstep."

Apart from the legislation itself, the most significant aspect of adoption as it developed was the involvement of social workers. In the mid-nineteenth century, before approving an adoption a judge considered whether the proposed adopter had sufficient means to provide properly for the child. By the late 1800s this was becoming expanded into the "social investigation"; this would become the determining factor in whether an adoption was granted.

At first, these investigations were carried out by probation officers or a court-appointed "next friend," but they were soon taken over by the developing child welfare agencies and their professionalizing social worker staff. The early investigations were simple, and their reports tended to be limited to merely expressing approval or disapproval. The social workers' reports were detailed, and they were as concerned with ranking potential homes as with ranking babies. Adoption placing was often delayed many months at this time in order to be able to adequately assess the baby's rank.

During the 1920s and 1930s, adoption came largely under the control of social workers, and their agenda affected the process at least as much as the legal basis. Indeed, they became the major force driving the evolution of adoption legislation.

Under the influence of the social workers, a veil of secrecy was drawn over adoption that has rendered study difficult. There are not even good figures on how many adoptees there are in the United States. In 1994, Modell commented that "adoption has a surprisingly small archive, [and is] less well documented than virtually any other 'life change' in American society."[11] However, published dissatisfaction with the practice of adoption began in the 1950s and grew considerably in the 1970s and thereafter.[12]

The impossibility of drawing statistical samples has meant that general studies of adoption have been based on self-selected and snowball samples. However, the considerable concurrence among studies done in the 1970s to 1990s suggests that they present a reasonably accurate picture of at least part of the affected population. The one study that has used a statistical sample was done in a province of Canada in the late 1980s and it reached conclusions that are very similar to those of the more anecdotal studies.[13]

There are a number of types of records associated with the adoption process in the United States. These include court records of the termination of parental rights and of the adoption; the original and "amended" birth records; agency records, which may be those of a private or public organization[14]; lawyers' case files[15]; and medical records related to the adoptee's birth and infancy.[16] I will discuss primarily the core issues related to the court and birth records as the concepts that have developed in relation to these records have become the dominant ones in considering access to any records related to adoption.

Three Central Issues

In the cases of court records and birth records, there are three central issues: (1) "the sealed record"; (2) "as if"; and (3) "the best interests of the child."

1: "The Sealed Record"

The "sealed record" proper is the original birth record. The late nineteenth and early twentieth century statutes permitted, but did not require, the child to take the adoptive parents' name. Some also provided for the notification of local and state boards of welfare that such-and-such a child had been adopted and was now known as so-and-so. Later, the social workers developed the concept of "matching" the child to the adoptive parents in the hope that the adoptee could pass as their biological child. It would seem that in the later 1920s or 1930s, they developed the idea of a fictive birth certificate and sequestered original birth registration to bolster this pretense.[17]

The court record may also be restricted, although this was originally primarily applied to the social investigation, and even then, the earlier modern statutes only provided for that at the judge's discretion in cases of the adoption of foundlings or illegitimate children. Again, the growth in how much of the record was sealed, the extension of sealing to all cases, and the obligation to seal the records all reflect a concern to obscure the ficticity or constructedness of the adoptive parents' relationship to the child.

At the heart of the "sealed record" issue is a lack of recognition of the distinction between secrecy and privacy. The ethicist Sissela Bok distinguishes between secrecy as "intentional concealment" and privacy as "being protected from unwanted access by others."[18] In the 1917 revision of the Minnesota adoption law, access to the records of a case was restricted to the parties in interest (the birth parents, the adoptee, and the adoptive parents), their attorneys, and the state board of control. The records were private.

The original intent of restrictions on access to records was to protect them from intrusion by uninvolved persons. As the process developed, the restriction that was once directed at outsiders became directed at the participants themselves. Those who were once "in" on private knowledge became outsiders to secret knowledge about themselves. This was exacerbated as the participation of social agencies in the adoption process split what had once been a unified proceeding in which a court transferred a child from one set of parents to another, with all as parties to the action, into atomized proceedings of voluntary (or involuntary) termination of parental rights, wardship, and adoption all under the aegis of the social agency itself.

The existence of ***the*** sealed record has tended to be extrapolated to a prohibition of access to ***any*** record associated with an adopted individual before their adoption. This extrapolation is highly questionable and in conflict with other explicit rights. Indeed, it is even reported that there can be as much difficulty accessing records related to adoption in the few states where they are not restricted as in the states where they are due to a generalized American presumption that if something is related to adoption, it must be secret.[19]

2: "As If"

At the core of the adoption controversy is the issue of "as if." The adoptee is to become the child of the adoptive parents "as if" born to them. The "as if" originally resulted in a set of reciprocal rights and obligations as spelled out in the 1925 definition quoted above. It did not imply any pretense that the child was born to the adoptive parents. As the ideology of modern adoption developed, the idea of establishing the fictive "natural" parenthood of the adoptive parents was grafted onto the earlier term.

Generally, adoption laws are framed to provide that adoption can take place at any age, thus they make provision for the consent of the proposed adoptee after a certain age. However, in practice, the fears that led to including anti-baby farming provisions in the early twentieth century statutes were to the point, as adoption became conceptually and in fact primarily a matter of infant adoption. The implication of the "as if" is, of course, vastly different when adoption concerns infants without a sense of self-identity as opposed to a wide range of ages, many of whom are a knowing party to the legal fiction and aware of its limits.

Furthermore, the "as if" principle originally developed in a context in which the birth parents, or mother at least, were party to the adoption proceedings and records were private, not secret. Later, the development of termination of parental rights as a distinct procedure in the context of agency adoption dissociated birth parents from the adoption process and its records. What had been a process to which birth and adoptive parents were all parties became one where a third party acted as "escrow" holder of the child between birth and adoptive parents, resulting in a break that was not inherent in the "as if" assumption originally.

Termination of parental rights had taken place in the context of adoption; now termination took place prior to ***possible*** adoption. This break between the families of origin and adoption, combined with the development and emphasis of "matching," enabled the "as if born" to be transposed from its context of legal relationship to one of "blood" relationship. As this was palpably fictive, unlike the essentially contractual nature of the earlier "as if," establishing secrecy around the adoption process was a way to handle the resulting cognitive dissonance.

3: "The Best Interests of the Child"

The third notable aspect of American adoption is that the process is supposed to proceed based on "the best interests of the child." As the adopted population ages and attempts to get access to records, this can lead to the absurdity of court hearings in which the "child" is the oldest person in the room.

"Best interest" has been very narrowly related to matters of immediate childhood care without considering longer term issues. In infant adoption, an individual is made the object of a process. However well-intentioned this may have been, and however successful for the child's immediate welfare, it is ethically questionable that something done without consent is not undoable or renegotiable when the individual is of age. There are many possible ways to restructure the situation that acknowledge what has taken place but do not also involve a denial of "birthright."

Among the problems that result currently are that adoptees can retain rights to inherit from birth relatives, but be denied knowledge of who those relatives are, at the same time as they have no right to inherit from adoptive relatives other than the actual adoptive parents. There is also the problem that adoption leaves adoptees related to an unknown number of unknown persons within the prohibited degrees for marriage. Melodramatic as it may seem, given the local nature of much adoption and such cases as are documented, it is not hysterical for adoptees to be concerned with unknowing incest.

The basic problem is that the intent of the broader body of law often cannot be carried out given the secrecy imposed by a particular law. The projection of a childhood provision into adult life produces legal disabilities and interferes with legal rights.

In addition to the legal disabilities, the biggest practical problem and the one that has driven much of the recent revision of adoption law is that adoptees are cut off from an evolving genealogical health perspective, a gap that is not filled by medical histories gathered at the time of adoption.

The extension of "the best interests of the child" concept beyond the parameters of childhood also leads to a denial of competency on the part of adults who happened to have been adopted as children. Other adults are not only presumed to be able to judge their own best interest (unless they have been specifically found incompetent), but are also free to act ***not*** in their best interest if they so choose.

All rhetoric of "the best interests of the child" notwithstanding, the evidence suggests that the adoption system has worked primarily in the interest of a certain type of married couple and it is notable that the strongest opposition to changing the system (especially withdrawing the veil of secrecy) comes from adoptive parents:

> Many critics of the adoptees' movement...try to portray proponents of open records as opponents of adoption and, by extension, as unconcerned with child welfare. They ignore the fact that adoption has never been a solution to the problem of huge numbers of unwanted children. Standards of adoptability are set by those who want to adopt, not by the needs of the greatest numbers of available children.[20]

Wrongful Adoption

The extent to which the system has favored the adoptive parents can be seen in its tendency to give them rights beyond those of natural parents despite the "as if" presumption. The most obvious example of this is the provision of a pre-existing conditions warranty in some statutes that gives adoptive parents the right to petition to annul the adoption if the child turns out to be afflicted with one of a number of undesirable conditions such as feeblemindedness, insanity, epilepsy, or venereal disease and this was unknown to the adopting parents at the time of adoption. This warranty might extend for as long as five years after the adoption, or even under one law until the child was 14.[21] But the most comprehensive warranty by far was under a New York statute that allowed the adoptive parent to apply "for the abrogation of such adoption on the ground of the willful desertion of such child from such foster parent, or of any misdemeanor or ill behavior of such child."[22]

A modern version of such proceedings is the tort of "wrongful adoption." This is distinct from the previous case in that the adoptive parent is not asking for annulment of the adoption but compensation for excess expenses. However, it is similar in concept as it is based on a claim that the adoption agency "failed to disclose or misrepresented the health status or background of an adopted child at the time the child was placed." [23]

In a recent discussion of the implications of this new basis for bringing suit, DeWoody suggests that :

> Agencies will be liable if, prior to or at the time of the adoptive placement, they engage in: (1) intentional misrepresentation, that is, a deliberate misrepresentation regarding a child's health or background; (2) deliberate concealment, that is, intentional failure to communicate a known material fact about the child's health or background; or (3) negligent disclosure of information, that is, a voluntary offer of inaccurate information about a child's heath or background. It is also likely that agencies can be held liable if they negligently fail to communicate genetic or medical background information when undertaking to disclose some, but not all of such information.[24]

The concept of "wrongful adoption" was validated in 1986 in an Ohio case in which a couple had adopted a 17-month-old boy and had been told he was a "nice big, healthy baby boy" born to an unmarried 18-year-old in the local hospital. As the girl lived with her parents and they were "mean" to the child, she had decided to move away and give the child up. After adoption, the child showed significant physical and mental problems and when in highschool was diagnosed as having Huntington's Chorea, a degenerative inherited condition. At this point the adoptive parents got a court order to open the sealed adoption records. The boy had actually been born to a 31-year-old woman at the state mental institution. All the information the parents had been given, except the child's sex and age, was fictitious. They also discovered from the records that the boy had had medical problems from birth and there had been an expectation that he could have developmental problems. The parents were awarded $125,000.[25]

The development of the tort of wrongful adoption gives a new importance to records of adoptions in their implications for liability and is of importance for all repositories having records connected, however obliquely, with adoption. It is quite possible that a considerable number of adoptions are at risk for such a suit due to the widespread tendency of social workers to invoke the basic myth rather than relate the facts of the specific case. Another possibility that has yet to be explored is whether an adopted adult whose health was impacted by information not being available to his adoptive parents during his childhood might be able to personally bring suit.

This is an area where the obligation of a repository to protect the rights of individual records subjects and the obligation to manage liability risk for the parent institution (or the donor) could easily come into conflict. And one which raises the issue of the general social responsibility of archivists as professionals and how this relates to their responsibility as an employee. Such issues have not yet been adequately discussed as part of the process of asserting a professional identity for archivists.

Ehrlich suggested two decades ago that:

> Sealed adoption records have impeded the correction of abuses by all kinds of adoption agencies, social workers, lawyers, and other independent adoption agents. If law and social pressure had not prevented adoptees from investigating the circumstances of their own adoptions, the inadequacies of the system and the people who operate within it might have come to light long ago, and the publicity might have led to reform. Indeed, this secrecy doesn't guard anyone's rights as much as it hides the caprices of a generally uninformed class of people.[26]

It might be possible to argue that in some jurisdictions there can be a reasonable presumption of inaccurate information having been given to adoptive parents. And it might be further possible to assert that institutional resistance to opening adoption records constitutes a compounding of the original injury.

Stereotypes of Birth Parents

It would also be easier to deal with opening records if there was less investing in the stereotypes about adoption in general so that the range and frequencies of possibilities were known before people began to look at a specific case. By definition, if an infant adoption took place, there was something "wrong" with the circumstances of birth or early life. However, whatever the facts, worse can usually be imagined in their absence.

In looking at the studies and those records that are open, one actually finds a number of possible scenarios for the birth situation:

1. The mother is unmarried whether teen or older.
2. The mother is married but her husband is not the father.
3. The parents are getting divorced and neither wants and/or can take care of the child.
4. The parents are married with children and cannot cope with more.
5. There are illicit circumstances, e.g. rape, incest, an institutionalized mother.

It is not only the birth mother who has been portrayed largely in stereotypes. The birth father has, when not ignored, tended to be portrayed as a bounder from a melodrama who got the "good girl" mother "in trouble" and then dumped her. In fact, if the mother is unmarried, there are a number of possibilities for the status of the birth father:

1. The father deserts.
2. The father does not know.
3. The father is not given any choice in the situation, which may be especially likely if the father is under age.
4. The father later marries the mother and they establish a family.
5. The adoptive father is the actual father.
6. The father became such through illicit circumstances.

Neither of these lists of possibilities is exhaustive, but they suffice to demonstrate the total inadequacy of the "good girl" who misstepped myth as an element in any useful discussion of adoption or access to adoption records. Resistance to increased access is frequently framed in terms of preserving the "reputation" of "girls" who "made

a mistake." It is one of the problems of restricted access that there are no sound statistics on the actual parental circumstances of children who are later adopted.

Some Other Access Issues

Another area in which it has been suggested that adoptive parents should get special status is in various proposals and provisions that would either give them a veto over, or notification of, adult adoptees' access to records. A requirement to notify adoptive parents of an adoptee's access to records where these are administered by an archival repository would constitute a breach of patron confidentiality (ethically at least, and legally in many states) as well as another instance of special privileges for adoptive parents.

The issue of whether it would upset adoptive parents if their "children" have access to the adoption records is a non-issue. Adults do lots of things that upset their parents: get married, move, raise their children, etc. The fact that something may upset their parents is part of an interpersonal relationship; it has nothing to do with the right to act. That it is suggested, or even fact, that adoptive parents have a right to determine adult children's actions in relation to record searches is a manifestation of the perpetual minority aspect of adoption's underlying ideology.

The argument is also made that the adoptees' wish to access their own past is a threat to their natural parents' privacy. Here again, the idea of protecting birth parents through limiting access to birth records creates a special protection category offering something to those who give up children that is not available to those who keep them.

That the process of adoption absolves the birth parent from legal responsibility toward the child does not settle the issue of whether there is still a moral responsibility. And, indeed, the studies suggest that many, probably most, birth parents retain a profound sense of concern about the child.

In a 1989 study, several birth mothers who were interviewed encouraged the researchers to use their real names on the grounds "that guarantees of anonymity only perpetuate shame and stigma for birth mothers as a group."[27] And all studies have shown birth parents to be overwhelmingly in favor of opening birth and adoption records to adoptees. Indeed, in his review of previous studies on adoption, Sachdev states that: "Many birth mothers say they were not aware of the contractual arrangement assuring them of permanent confidentiality and contend that such contract was the mental construct of social workers who assumed they wanted to be anonymous."[28] He also states that it was noted that some birth mothers commented that they were not given the option of ***not*** being anonymous.

It should further be noted that although birth parents often want to be found by their children, they tend to feel that the initiative should come from the child as for them to search would be intrusive. Thus, although researchers using records related to adoption are most likely to be adoptees, it should not be forgotten that the basic issue of access is also of vital concern to many birth parents.

By now, the majority of states permit some access to adoption records by adoptees although this may be limited to "nonidentifying" information with an emphasis on

medical details. Some states have initiated registry systems that permit the release of all available information if a particular combination of parties independently registers.

Some registries require "counseling" at some point in the process, an added interference with their autonomy as adults that is rejected by many adoptees and can also be seen as reflective of a continued social workers' hegemony over adoption. It has also been suggested that the opening of relatively ineffectual passive registries is an excuse to avoid a more profound reconsideration of the basic issues, in particular the status of the "sealed" birth record.[29]

A few states have implemented active registries that seek to contact other parties, when one registers, to request consent to opening the records. However, although this option goes much further toward meeting the needs of researchers, it still sidesteps dealing with the issue of "rights" in personal data.

Most adoptees trying to penetrate the veil of secrecy want information about their heritage, a genealogical connection, rather than actual contact with their birth family, a relationship. They have not always faired well with record keepers:

> In my dealings with ... social worker[s] and clerks and record keepers all along the line, I learned to be suspicious of everything they said. They never hesitated to tell a lie that might put me off. More often than not, they would fabricate laws and policies of which they were ignorant just to save themselves the trouble of finding out the truth.[30]

In many instances the records wanted by adoptees are not in the custody of archives but in functioning offices. This leads to the problem of current agency staff applying current access standards retroactively even if they are not actually pertinent. Staff ***have*** even been known to "fabricate" rules or to be less than fully aware of what information they do have available. A more specific problem with vital records operations is that they may be set up not so much to ***provide*** information as to confirm or certify information that is already known and thereby generate fee revenue.

Conclusions

Archivists need to be prepared and sufficiently knowledgeable of the actual laws and regulations applicable in the jurisdiction in which they work to act as brokers and educators when necessary. They may have to ease tensions by explaining to both agency staff and researchers the actual provisions governing access to the specific records being requested. It can also be necessary to suggest other routes to the information.

Someone looking for records related to an adoption may have a considerable emotional investment in the search and the archivist may have to be prepared for a less than objective approach by such researchers. Also, by the time an adoptee first speaks to an archivist they may have built up considerable suspicion about anyone who stands between them and the records they seek. There may even be a reluctance to actually say what they are trying to find. Many adoptees have learned the hard way that simply saying the word "adoption" can close off access to records that should be available. It is very important that archivists seem concerned to meet the needs of such researchers in a non-judgmental way, and seem sufficiently informed about the relevant records

and provisions for access that researchers feel confidence in their professional competence and neutrality.

The problems that arise with access to records related to adoption in functioning offices point up once more the need for informed, professional custody of noncurrent records of continuing value so that access can be appropriately rather than arbitrarily administered. Unfortunately, there is a presumption in most access discussion and legislation that records related to adoption are with the originating agencies and will remain there. There has been little, if any, consideration of the implications of the transfer of such records to archival repositories, or the need to do so given their continuing value. Archivists need to become involved in the debates that result in such legislation to ensure an awareness that there are options for dealing with sensitive records of continuing value beyond the functional possibilities of the originating agency and professionals competent to administer access to them.

It is important that archivists, while acknowledging that they are restrained by current law, neither go beyond the restrictions imposed by that law or refrain from a duty to inform the debate on the issues regarding the general principles involved rather than allow it to be fueled by sentimental stereotypes. Records are not simply neutral witnesses. They incorporate the ideology that infused the processes that resulted in their creation. The status of records needs to be reconsidered periodically as social ideology changes.

The principles behind adoption laws were ideologically rooted in early twentieth century social engineering. Records custodians who have to implement access under such laws are placed in the position of reinforcing certain social goals that derive from a particular time, place, and social circumstances, and that may be based on outmoded premises. The case of adoption turns the spotlight on the link between records issues and social policy, but such links also exist in many other records areas. Archivists need to be prepared to participate in debates on records issues in an informed manner, especially as they will have to administer their holdings in terms of the outcome.[31]

Let me conclude by noting an issue MacNeil raises in her discussion of whether privacy should extend beyond an individual's death, that it may be necessary to take into account the "extension of self" or how a person's identity intersects with and participates in that of their kin.[32] It is precisely the right to their extended self for which adoptees are arguing. It is one of the illusions of closed adoption that one can choose ones relatives; piercing the veil of adoption secrecy restores the givenness of kin.

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NOTES

1. An abridged version of this paper was given at the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators' annual meeting in Raleigh, North Carolina, on July 28, 1995.
2. Emelyn Foster Peck, *Adoption Laws in the United States: A Summary of the Development of Adoption Legislation and Significant Features of Adoption Statutes, with the Text of Selected Laws* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1925): 1–3.
3. Adult adoptee quoted in Arthur D. Sorosky, Annette Baran, and Reuben Pannor, *The Adoption Triangle: The Effects of the Sealed Record on Adoptees, Birth Parents, and Adoptive Parents* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1978): 136.
4. Brief histories of legal adoption in the United States may be found in Peck, Sorosky et al., and Henry Ehrlich, *A Time to Search* (New York: Paddington Press, 1977). A somewhat fuller account is given in Judith S. Modell, *Kinship with Strangers: Adoption and Interpretations of Kinship in American Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994): 19–56. We should note, however, that most adoption in the history of the United States has been *de facto* rather than *de jure* adoption. A child was simply taken in and raised as a family member. *De facto* adoption was, and possibly still is, particularly significant in minority and ethnic communities and among the less socioeconomically advantaged. Penetrating the obscurities in family history arising from *de facto* adoptions raises its own set of issues.
5. On transfer by deed, see Peck: op. cit., 2; on adoption by private legislative act, see Modell, op. cit., 22.
6. Modell, op. cit., 24–26.
7. See the inheritance provisions of the selected laws in Peck, op. cit., 27–48.
8. The 1917 Minnesota statutory provisions are given in Peck, op. cit., 27–28.
9. The popular view of Mendelian genetics held that complex behaviors were associated with single genes. Thus, pauperism or prostitution were considered heritable in the same way as eye color. This was often reinforced by a Lamarckian belief in the inheritability of acquired characteristics.
10. Quoted in Ehrlich, op. cit., 12–14.
11. Modell, op. cit., 11.
12. The public expression of dissatisfaction with closed adoptio[illegible] usually considered to have begun with the various books of Jean Paton and Betty Jean Lifton.
13. Paul Sachdev, *Unlocking the Adoption Files* (Lexington, Massachusetts: D. C. Heath and Company, 1989).
14. These include adoption agencies per se, agencies that acted *in loco parentis* prior to adoption, and boards of public welfare required to be notified of adoptions. The welfare board notifications may be as important as the agency records because they can include considerable detail. The long-term survival of the records of private organizations seems particularly problematic. Where are the records of the 35,000 cases handled by The Willows?
15. This is another highly problematic category, which is complicated by the issue of privilege. Such files are especially crucial for independent adoptions, where they may be the only detailed documentation of the case.
16. Here, a major issue is where the dividing line comes between the record of the mother giving birth and the record of the child being born. Generally, there is a right of access to one's own medical records (although not necessarily any requirement for them to be kept long term). A normal individual medical record would contain next-of-kin information. The presence of this data element in a birth medical record does not make it a special kind of record. It would seem unlikely that an adoption impacts the status of previously existing medical records. Data such as birth weight, length, result of medical exam, any treatment or tests given in the hospital, and footprints are surely personal data. Further, infants have often been held in hospital some weeks until legal wardship was established, increasing the likelihood that there was a significant personal medical record apart from that of the mother. However, if an adoptee approaches a hospital and makes the mistake of using the dire word "adoption," this tends to induce a secrecy attack. The case of medical records points out the need for record keepers to approach access as access. Why access is wanted and the use to be made of the information are irrelevant if access is legally available.
17. Peck's 1925 discussion of the legal aspects of adoption, op. cit., does not raise the issue of amending birth records and the statutes she includes treat the taking of the adoptive parents' name by the child simply as a legal name change effective from the date of the order. However, Sorosky et al., op. cit., quote a 1940 discussion to suggest that a sealed original birth record was taken-for-granted then.

18. Sissela Bok, *Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982): 10
19. It should be noted that the use of the amended birth record can be quite naive. As a birth certificate usually includes the date of reporting the information, the distance between birth and reporting dates on an amended certificate undermines its credibility as testament to the "real" parenthood of the adopters.
20. Ehrlich, op. cit., 21.
21. Peck, op. cit., 27–48.
22. Peck, op. cit., 43.
23. Madelyn DeWoody, *Adoption and Disclosure: A Review of the Law* (Washington, D.C.: Child Welfare League of America, 1993): 1.
24. DeWoody, op. cit., 2.
25. DeWoody, op. cit., 2–5.
26. Ehrlich, op. cit.,15. Bok, op. cit., 122–123; 131–135 discusses how client confidentiality can also function to limit the social accountability of such professions as doctors, lawyers, and social workers.
27. Judith S. Gediman and Linda P. Brown, *BirthBond: Reunions Between Birthparents and Adoptees—What Happens After...* (Far Hills, New Jersey: New Horizon Press, 1989): xviii.
28. Sachdev, op. cit., 10.
29. Gediman and Brown, op. cit., 251–252.
30. Adult adoptee quoted in Ehrlich, op. cit., 182.
31. One social aspect related to arriving at that outcome that should be mentioned is the issue of the gender composition of legislatures. There is a significant gender dimension to attitudes about access to adoption records with adoptive fathers and male adoptees being much more inclined to restriction than adoptive mothers and female adoptees. Men are also more likely to have hostile feelings toward birth mothers. This gender discrepancy in attitudes would suggest that it is going to be difficult to get legislation to satisfy the group most wanting access, female adoptees.
32. Heather MacNeil, *Without Consent: The Ethics of Disclosing Personal Information in Public Archives* (Metuchen, New Jersey: The Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, 1992): 116–117.

THE PERSONALITY OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS: THE IMPACT OF NEW INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY ON PERSONAL PAPERS

TOM HYRY AND RACHEL ONUF

ABSTRACT: This essay considers the changing nature of personal materials in the digital age by examining changes in "personal" means of expression and "paper" formats. Much recent research in the profession has focused on electronic records, but the vast majority of it has dealt only with organizational records. The authors argue that new communications media offer increased opportunities to document the lives of individuals as we exist outside of organizational functions, but that archivists will need to consider broader societal implications of these innovations before collecting these materials. They analyze some possible strategies for archival retention of personal electronic records, and urge archivists to engage in further thought and discussion about how best to identify and preserve these materials.

Technological and social changes of the late 20th century have created new concerns for archivists. The impact of these changes is visible in many areas of archival theory and practice, particularly in the abundance of literature about electronic records. The vast majority of the archival research that addresses the impact of these forces investigates how changes in technology have resulted in shifts in business and organizational practices. We have seen many theories emerge, and archivists and records managers have effectively articulated many new problems caused by the shift to digital media.

Startlingly, though, almost none of the literature on electronic records explores the effect new information technologies are having on personal papers. Only Australian researchers, such as Adrian Cunningham, have written specifically on the changes currently happening in the way individuals create documentation of their lives outside of the provenance of the organizations in which they act. We perceive a gap in archival research that needs to be addressed, for practicing archivists are already beginning to be confronted with personal records in electronic form. New digital media provide opportunities to document the lives of individuals who use them, but archivists will need to come to an understanding of the changes in personal materials to effectively actualize these possibilities. We also must engage in further thought, discourse, and

experimentation on these issues and, perhaps more importantly, consider the broader societal implications that accompany the new technologies.

Before starting, however, any discussion of personal papers should contain some sort of understanding of what comprises this artificially constructed category. Traditionally, an individual's papers have included items such as correspondence, diaries, manuscript drafts, other writings, and ephemeral materials either created or collected by the person. Researchers often find personal papers to be among the most valuable resources in archival repositories. In more recent times, collections of personal papers have been expanded to include sound and video recordings as well as materials produced in other analog formats. Perhaps the crucial issues in defining papers that are personal can be found by considering the nature of their creation. Personal papers are documents created for personal reasons, be they communication, artistic endeavor, or other activities not necessarily linked to the production of commodities and services.

As we have moved into the digital age, we must now begin to incorporate materials created in electronic formats as personal papers. New electronic mediums provide possibilities for archivists to preserve new types of material and information. Individuals with access to the technology use it, and in doing so create a significant amount of documentation about themselves. Some of the theoretical work being done concerning electronic records in organizational settings can be helpful here, but the nature of personal papers necessitates somewhat different strategies.

The proliferation of electronic mail has substantially increased personal documentation, partially supplanting telephone communication. Although it would be false to assume that the content and method of e-mail communication mirrors speaking on the telephone, its convenience and relatively low cost allow people to supplement and often substitute it for telephone communiqué. The impact of the telephone replacing the letter as the primary method of distanced communication has long been a source of lamentation for archivists, who have been forced to acknowledge that much reflective information about an individual's personal life now takes place over an unpreserved medium. The relative ease with which one can save e-mail messages provides an opportunity to regain documentation of perhaps intimate exchanges, if archivists can find a way to preserve them.[1]

Electronic mail also preserves contextual information better than paper mail. Metadata, automatically embedded in electronic mail messages, describe the author, receiver, delivery path, date, time, and even rudimentary subjects. Also, in an analog world personal letters are usually sent without retaining a copy. It becomes a tedious, if not impossible, process to retrieve the sent letters if one wishes to collect the writer's correspondence. When an e-mail message is sent, however, a copy of the message is automatically saved in the sender's files in addition to being sent to the receiver. Furthermore, with the "reply" function, it becomes possible to trace responses to original messages. In short, the metadata and the ability to easily save messages sent and received allow archivists and researchers to reconstruct the contexts of this type of communication more easily.

The ease with which one can route e-mail to named folders also makes it simple for people to impose their own organization on their material, further personalizing not only the message itself, but the manner of storage as well. In this way, especially if the

archivist maintains the electronic records in an electronic environment, it is possible not only to capture the content and the metadata, but also something that in the past archivists could only approximate through original order: the individual's own internal method of organizing and storing the information. However, archivists should be aware of how this freedom to choose is constrained by the configuration of the e-mail program. Also, we need to acknowledge that, as with their paper records, many creators keep very disorganized spaces.

Individuals create and make available personal information about themselves using another common digital medium, the personal homepage. On a homepage, a variety of material is compiled and organized, so that one can view an individual's résumé, writings, and interests all in one take. Weston Thompson and Caryn Stein claim that homepages are analogous to old-fashioned scrapbooks, but go even further because they are "living documents that the creator can—and generally will—alter many times."[2]

Erecting personal information on the worldwide Web also allows people to be "touched" by a potential audience of millions. The business community has realized the marketing possibilities of the Internet and so have individuals, even if they are not after financial gain. It is curious to think about why people put personal information on the Web, and how they decide what is appropriate personal information to be looked at by strangers. The way the Web is constructed allows people to find you, but you cannot openly solicit their attention. People are drawn to a personal Web page as a way of displaying oneself. We reckon that not knowing who will see your display is conceivably what makes it exciting to mount information of a personal nature in what amounts to a public space. People have to find your personal homepage somehow, whether they stumble upon your page by accident or track you down deliberately. Also, one doesn't know who has accessed one's personal material, or downloaded it for that matter. There is a thrill to being exposed to strangers in this indirect and therefore, we assume, safe way. Another reason for the erection of a Web page is its faddish standing among today's technically touched individuals. The authors are both cognizant of social pressure to prove mastery of the technology by putting up a personal page.

Although the above might seem like a frivolous aside, archivists should always consider self-consciousness and audience when assessing personal papers, whatever the medium. The medium will often, as is the case with these types of electronic records, impact both context and content in complex ways.

These new opportunities for documentation aside, we would like to examine some of the problems engendered by a shift from traditional paper to electronic formats. Perhaps the best way to look at this transformation would be to break down the phrase "personal papers" into its individual components. If we can come to an understanding of the changes in what is "personal" and what are "papers" in our society, that will steer us in a direction for dealing with the new forms of documentation of individuals.

First, papers. The use of electronic means of communication, including word processing and e-mail, has significantly influenced how people create documentation of their lives. As mentioned earlier, archivists, records managers, and consultants have studied the move to these mediums within organizations, but these transformations also pertain to the personal realm. Much of the information formerly transmitted only on paper now exists only in electronic form, which has a critical impact not only on

how we create and revise documentation, but also on how we consume and retain it. Richard Lanham hits on this idea as well, writing that "Texts are not fixed in print but projected on a phosphor screen in volatile form. They can be amended, emended, rewritten, reformatted, set in another typeface, all with a few keystrokes."[3] When one adds the reality of being able to immediately send or transmit one's work over networks, most documents no longer exist in a static form, the way putting ideas down on paper necessitates.

Furthermore, as the development and use of new information and communication technologies have become more widespread, documents are created in many different formats. From multimedia projects to personal homepages and beyond, new expressive digital media proliferate. Since content in these formats, too, can be easily altered over time, the past forms, looks, and contents of these documents become replaced, and normally lost, with the developments of their replacements. This ability to continually edit documents leaves the archivist, historian, or producer himself/herself with only a view of that which currently exists, and no record of previous versions. As an example, if on a personal homepage an individual erases certain links or content that reflect political leanings in order to "sanitize" the page before joining a corporate team or government office, he/she will do so without leaving any trace of its existence. Creators could potentially save and store versions of electronic records at certain points in their development, but we acknowledge this practice to be rare.

Electronic mediums inherently possess this tendency to erase contexts and historical processes, which poses a significant problematic shift in the concept of "papers" from an archival standpoint. We would also suggest that this lack of evidence of development over time has the deleterious effect not only of erasing history, but also of decreasing societal awareness of the past.

In addition to papers, the "personal" is rapidly changing in our society, although perhaps this is a more difficult point to make. New technologies allow communications between folks from afar, in quicker ways, and in different formats. Electronic mail, for instance, allows users to be in convenient and frequent personal contact with one another from around the world. Our networked world is becoming smaller, a global village. As a trade-off, though, technology now mediates human communications in ways formerly unimaginable.

One significant consequence of the development of more sophisticated communications technologies lies in the reality that communications can now more easily be monitored. For instance, although electronic mail seems to be private, all messages are recorded on back-up tapes owned by the Internet service provider. When people are aware of such things, the lack of privacy could and does alter that which gets transmitted. While these mediums provide opportunities to preserve documented material, they also alter the content of the communication in ways that cannot be quantified.

The fact that many electronic personal records reside on servers not personally owned by users creates another problem. If authors or creators do not own the medium on which they produce and store their material, can the material really be considered theirs, and if not, is it really personal? Although good-faith relationships normally exist between users and service providers, the records actually belong to the service provider even though they are created by users. The authors' lack of ownership of their personal

material indicates yet another area where the concept of personal papers is jeopardized.

Another change in the "personal" is the impersonality of many of these new forms of communication and self-expression. The effect of the mediation of computer technology on graphic creativity cannot be overstated. If you've seen one e-mail message, you've in effect seen them all. There is nothing personal about the format itself. One can almost understand why an archivist would throw up his/her hands at the challenge of devising policy for collecting and preserving personal e-mail if the personality of the content is suspect and if there is nothing personal about the format itself. Although some character strings have emerged to represent personal touches — **:-) ;-) :-(** — these serve to prove our point rather than to undermine it. These few uniform symbols, already rendered meaningless through overuse, cannot approximate the relatively infinite possibilities afforded even by paper and pen. The move to electronic communication has all but eliminated nuances often found in paper documents.

Homepages seem to allow a certain amount of room for self-expression, and for those with access to the tools, they are relatively easy to create. But personal HTML documents tend to all look the same and, more importantly, they generally suffer from a lack of original content. In a way they are a peak of post-modern activity: a pretty package full of referents, in the form of clickable links, leading you away from the "original" document back to the "real original" document. People personalize their homepages by the selection of links they choose and graphics they copy from other documents to in effect "represent" them. Originality finds its expression in arrangement rather than in content.

This results, arguably, in the individual's voice of authority being undermined by the very same complex technologies that have been set up as tools intended to facilitate communications, workflow and creativity. Marshall McLuhan coined the now clichéd phrase, "the medium is the message." The authority of the individual, which can be thought of at the most rudimentary level as the unique voice of a person, has been overwhelmed by the authority of new technologies, flattened out by uniform presentation, by fears of surveillance, and by a greater interest in the packaging than in the contents.

Deflecting attention away from original production on the part of the creator has profound implications for material that we have previously considered personal papers. "Personal" material, as we now define it, might not even be created in the future. People will continue to create material, but it may only be considered fallout from transactional processes, and not be imbued with anything remotely resembling the rarefied aura of, say, the papers of the United States' founding fathers. Intimately tied to this is the fact that the media for personal expression will continue to change. The term "personal papers" is even now outdated, as more and more of what might be considered "personal" is generated in electronic formats and, if retained, may never exist as paper. It may have been created on a "personal computer," but there is nothing particularly unique about that machine's performance. Both terms, "personal" and "papers" are fast becoming anachronistic. If they are going to continue to be used to identify the non-work-oriented materials generated by an individual, they will need to be explicitly redefined and expanded.

Up to this point we have argued that new digital mediums provide opportunities to document the lives of individuals who use them, but that archivists will need to fully consider the changes in personal materials. It would be helpful to consider some possible strategies for curating electronic personal records through an examination of the work of Adrian Cunningham. In an article in *Archives and Manuscripts*, Cunningham suggests strategies to combat the shifts of personal materials into electronic formats, and a brief discussion of his thoughts would be prudent here.[4]

In many ways Cunningham's article draws on the ideas of organizational electronic records researchers, generally calling for the retention of electronic materials in electronic form, hardware and software standardization, increased technological ability among archivists, and proactive strategies to educate records creators. But at the heart of his argument Cunningham points out where organizational techniques will not suffice, due to the unique nature of personal papers.

For instance, when encountering authors' works in progress, he advocates encouraging writers to print out drafts to provide a record of the writing process.[5] Most contemporary authors who work with word processing software save over previous drafts, thereby losing the creative process. This erasure of process can be eliminated by printing out hard copies periodically, thereby fixing the text in time. Although this idea can be criticized by pointing out that drafts can be saved and fixed in time electronically more easily and compactly, we believe the practice of using a paper printout better preserves the writing process because it offers writers the opportunity to edit without employing the uniform appearances of a text editor. To put it another way, we believe the unique traces left by the proverbial red pen to hold evidential value lost to the text editor, and if an author works with hard copies, they should be encouraged to save them. For authors who work solely in electronic formats, we advocate capturing the work in progress electronically.

Another point where Cunningham diverges from organizational strategies is the call for distributing the custodianship of records out toward their creators. Cunningham sees this practice, and we concur, as inapplicable to collecting institutions on very obvious grounds: people die and their heirs will not be interested in managing electronic records legacies. Clearly, it will continue to be necessary for archives to physically house personal electronic materials. This need will require archivists to increase their technological knowledge, and Cunningham even suggests new positions be created within archives for computer professionals to provide support to users and staff.[6]

The wide variety of record formats and storage media are causing problems, and technological obsolescence in particular will force archivists to be more proactive. Herein lies Cunningham's most radical proposal. He advocates a shift from traditional practices of identifying donors of personal papers near the ends of their lives to performing this function as early as possible in individuals' careers. A relationship between archivist and author would then need to be cultivated in an extremely long-term sense, with the archivist acting as advisor to the creator on records-keeping activities. He justifies these radical methods by reminding us that these records will be lost to technological obsolescence and incompatibilities without an extremely proactive approach.[7]

It is this suggestion of Cunningham's, however, which gives us the greatest distress. While such a strategy would conceivably provide for tidily kept records, it would also influence the creation of those records in unforeseen ways. Furthermore, the difficulties of dealing with a donor over the long term cannot be overemphasized, especially considering the sometimes iconoclastic natures of many records creators. There is a crass, backroom archival joke: the only good donor is a dead donor. While surely this is a harsh and often untrue statement, all archivists involved in collection development know of troubles that arise when dealing with donors, and these troubles will only be magnified with Cunningham's approach. The ultra-proactive suggestions also would affect appraisal decisions, favoring the work of individuals who gain renown earlier rather than later in life. Additionally, archivists would be forced to appraise records at a time much nearer to their creation, without the benefit of time and hindsight to assist in these decisions.

Though flawed, Cunningham's suggestions do serve an expository role, forcing us to consider the consequences of avoiding the problems caused by the emergence of new information technologies. The degree to which archivists work with potential donors aside, we see it as imperative that archivists come together to educate the public, both on how to manage their personal records, regardless of format, and on the broader issues surrounding the emergence of electronic mediums of communication. We harbor no illusions that the public has displayed much interest in either preserving the traces of their personal production or in the broader issues. But these issues are at least beginning to be articulated in the popular press, as evidenced by this plea from Jeff Rothenberg in *Scientific American*: "The content and historical value of thousands of records, databases, and personal documents may be irretrievably lost to future generations if we do not take steps to preserve them now."[8] These issues are of tantamount importance, and nothing short of future visions of history rely on archival solutions to these problems.

Perhaps more importantly, though, archivists will need to focus on how the introduction of information technologies into both public and private spaces changes the human behavior we strive to document. Archivists must discuss and research the changes brought on by new information technologies. This requires analysis beyond realizing that we will need to deal with encroaching electronic records. Along with calls for re-educating ourselves in the uses of new technology, we need to apply ourselves to learning of the impacts these technologies are having and of their broader societal implications. Without doing this work we will be susceptible to making much poorer selection and appraisal decisions, potentially ignoring much material that does not exist in electronic form or that has no direct connections to the coffers of government and organizations.

The challenges posed by electronic records remain daunting, especially in these early stages of consideration. But instead of ignoring these issues, manuscript archivists must engage these problems, and our voices and concerns must be heard in formulating policies and procedures for the collection of materials in electronic formats. We must also reaffirm that these materials of a personal nature are worth collecting, for the absence of a discussion of personal papers in electronic records literature implies they are not. And we must continue to commit to collecting materials in non-electronic

formats, thereby documenting the lives and experiences of those without access to the new technologies. As such, we need to remind ourselves of the cultural role played by archives and manuscript repositories in our society, and strive to attain these goals for ourselves by collecting and making accessible the personal materials of a wide range of people, whatever the format.

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NOTES

1. Potential legal issues arise when considering preservation of and access to electronic mail. Unlike telephone communication, where capturing documentation requires a proactive approach (i.e., you have to either actively record it or someone else must tap it), the technology of electronic mail intrinsically records the messages, and users must intentionally delete them to remove them. Even when messages are deleted, back-up tapes preserve the information. While archivists will certainly need to be sensitive to personal and legal issues when providing access to material stored on back-up, having to confront these issues improves upon a situation where no records exist at all.
2. Weston Thompson and Caryn Stein, "Using Electronic Manuscripts to Document Student Life," http://www.si.umich.edu/~wthackt/Emss/ (viewed August 1997).
3. Richard A. Lanham, "The Implications of Electronic Information for the Sociology of Knowledge," *Leonardo* 27:2 (1994).
4. Adrian Cunningham, "The Archival Management of Personal Records in Electronic Form: Some Suggestions," *Archives and Manuscripts* 22:94–105.
5. Cunningham, ibid., 96–98.
6. Cunningham, ibid., 102.
7. Cunningham, ibid., 101.
8. Jeff Rothenberg, "Ensuring the Longevity of Digital Documents," *Scientific American* (January 1995): 42.

HOW AND WHEN WE MAKE THE NEWS: LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF ARCHIVES IN TWO WISCONSIN CITIES

SALLY J. JACOBS

ABSTRACT: What do local newspaper editors consider newsworthy about archives? Utilizing the powerful searching capabilities of electronic databases, the author retrieved full text articles that included any of the following terms: archive, archives, archivist, archivists, and archival. Articles were then analyzed by topic, size, placement, and date of publication. The single largest reason why archives received coverage was that they housed materials used to create a cultural product that was currently offered for public consumption.

Introduction

The author decided to investigate what local newspaper editors consider newsworthy about archives after several halting attempts to create a press release for a newly processed manuscript collection. While reading helpful advice by Megan Sniffin-Marinoff, Ann E. Pederson, and Gail Farr Casterline on how to work with the media, the author stumbled upon the seemingly obvious suggestion that archivists supply newspapers with the types of stories that editors want to publish.[1] Unfortunately, these "how-to" articles contained precious few examples of topics or hooks that might appeal to a local newspaper editor. Sniffin-Marinoff's suggestion that archivists read their local newspaper to get "a much better sense of what angles to try" inspired the author to analyze local newspaper coverage of archives in the state of Wisconsin.[2]

A search through archival and library science journals uncovered only two articles that analyzed newspaper coverage of archives. The first, by journalism professor James Boylan, was an impressionistic study from 1985.[3] Nearly 10 years later, in 1993, Richard Cox conducted a quantitative analysis of archival coverage in the *New York Times*.[4] While each article provided insight into the larger issue of archives in the news, neither author attempted to discern what newspaper editors thought was newsworthy about archives.

Both studies were in response to David B. Gracy's call for action against the "image problem" he believed was plaguing the archival profession. Negative images in the public mind and poor funding, he argued, were inextricably linked.[5] As a result, Boylan and Cox were concerned with how archives were portrayed in the news, rather than how or why newspapers decide to cover archives. In order to address this question, the author designed a new study that allowed her to analyze the content, size, placement, and timing of local newspaper articles about archives.

Methodology and Scope

The data set for this study had to be large enough to decrease the influence of a single newspaper or archival repository on the results, and large enough to allow for comparisons. It was also desirable to have a data set small enough for content analysis of each full text article without having to create a statistical sample. Using these parameters, the scope of this study was set to include newspaper coverage between January 1994 and June 1995 in the following Wisconsin newspapers: *Capital Times, Wisconsin State Journal, Milwaukee Journal*, and *Milwaukee Sentinel.*

While these articles appeared in newspapers with four different names, it should be noted that those papers are owned by only two companies: Madison Newspapers Inc., and the Journal Sentinel Inc. Within the time span of this study's data set (April 1995) the two Milwaukee papers merged into a single daily edition, the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel*. Since the dailies in each city did not truly compete with one another, the narrative part of this paper will often refer to "Madison coverage" and "Milwaukee coverage." References to specific articles, however, will always include the full title of the newspaper.

This study utilized the powerful searching capabilities of the Lexus/Nexus and Milwaukee Journal/Sentinel electronic databases to create the data set. A global keyword search, using the truncated term "archiv*" was performed. This search returned full text articles that included any of the following terms: archive, archives, archivist, archivists, and archival. As a result, every mention of archival records, collections, institutions, and professionals was included in the data set. Although this type of search casts a wide net, there are still certain types of coverage that could have been missed. If a reporter failed to use the keyword when describing archival records, the article would not have become part of the data set. Possible examples include articles about current records and record keeping, or manuscript materials housed in a special library or museum rather than an archives. To its advantage, this global keyword search guarantees the retrieval of all articles covering what *newspapers* considered "archival."

As an initial step prior to categorization, all inappropriate hits were eliminated from the data set. There were several articles about medical breakthroughs that were published in journals such as the *Archives of Internal Medicine*. Stories in which the term "archive" was used only metaphorically were also eliminated. The most common metaphoric usage was in reference to something non-current. One review of a Pink Floyd concert, for example, complained that "each song from the band's archives was played with such mechanical precision that you could sense these guys were switching themselves into autopilot." Another author referred to his memory as "my private archives."[6]

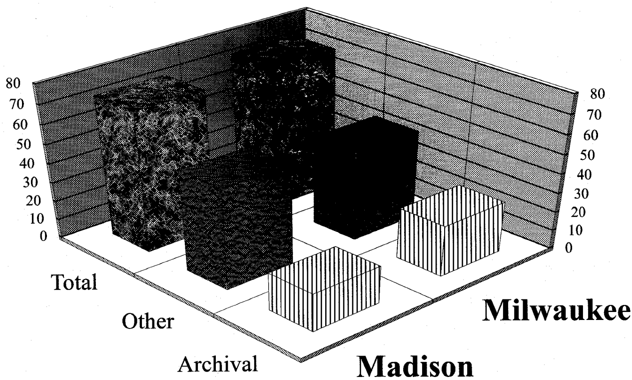
From an initial return of 182 articles, 35 were eliminated at this stage, leaving 73 Madison articles and 74 Milwaukee articles, for a total of 147.

The categories were created by the author, and the author completed all of the sorting herself. There is no guarantee that another individual would have created the same categories, or sorted articles in the same way. Despite their questionable validity, the categories remain because without them it would be nearly impossible to discuss 147 articles.

Newspaper Coverage by Topic

Even before the formal categorization was performed, it was clear that the data set consisted of two distinct types of articles: (1) those in which archival materials or repositories were the primary focus, and (2) those that mentioned archival materials or repositories but were primarily about another subject. As Figure 1 illustrates, the majority of stories from both cities were categorized as "non-archival, " or "other." Milwaukee had both a higher number (27) and a higher percentage (36%) of articles that focused on archives. In the Madison papers, there was a larger discrepancy between the two categories.

Fig. 1: Total Number of Articles by City and Category

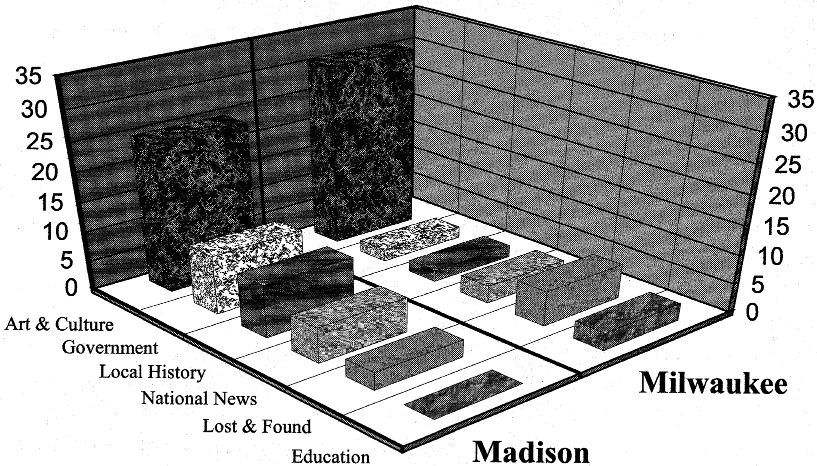


Of the 147 articles in this study, 100 (68%) mentioned archival materials or repositories, but were primarily about another subject. Articles in this "Other" category focused on a variety of topics, which were labeled as follows: Art and Culture, Government, Local History, National and International News, Lost and Found, and Education.

Non-Archival ("Other") Articles

As Figure 2 dramatically illustrates, the majority of articles fell under the heading of "Art and Culture." Forty-six percent of Madison articles and 64% of Milwaukee articles had art, cultural events, or travel as their main focus. Many of these articles were reviews of books, films, or musical compositions that had been created or recreated using archival materials.

Fig. 2: Subject of Articles in the "Other" Category



Book reviews included a children's book about Rosie the Riveter that featured archival photographs, and a book about World War II that used oral histories and archival materials to "create a narrative not only of the [D-Day] invasion but of the combatants' family lives and military training." In addition, there was a review of a new biography of the LaFollette family of Wisconsin. The reviewer points out that this book depended on "the family's penchant for writing letters, which resulted in a voluminous horde stored in the National Archives."[7]

A review of H.L. Mencken's "A Second Mencken Chrestomathy" described the process of creation as follows:

> The sequel had been prepared by Mencken but never published. [Terry] Teachout pulled the manuscript from the voluminous Mencken archives at the Enoch Pratt Free Public Library in Baltimore, dusted it off, and edited it for publication. The great majority of the 238 items contained herein have never appeared in book form or are from books no longer available."[8]

There was even a review of a Jack Nicholson biography that had been created by the University of Wisconsin-Madison Center for Film and Theater Research. According to the book's author, the excellence of the University of Wisconsin's collection and help

from the staff of the Milwaukee Public Library made it possible for him to "do the Hollywood books from here."[9]

Articles about music included an announcement about the Beatles' album "Live at the BBC," which included songs "from the band's archives" that had been recorded only for broadcast and never released. A visit to Madison by the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra prompted a profile of the orchestra and its conductor, David Berger. In describing his efforts to transcribe orchestral pieces from Duke Ellington recordings, he explained "I had help from the Smithsonian's Ellington Archives with some pieces, but many I had to do from scratch."[10]

An article about an upcoming silent film series announced that Charlie Chaplin's "The Circus" would include an orchestra whose conductor "discovered Chaplin's original score for the Academy Award-winning film among the comedian's estate archives in Switzerland."[11] A follow-up article four months later provided a more detailed profile of conductor Gillian Anderson, describing her as "part conductor, part detective, part historian, and part magician." As a music librarian at the Library of Congress, Anderson discovered the original score to the 1928 silent film "Le Passion de Jeanne d'Arc" while working on an LC microfilming project. It was after this initial restoration that she was invited to Chaplin's archives in Switzerland to restore the original score for "The Circus."[12]

A review of the Milwaukee Repertory Theater's production of Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest* described it as "the best 'Earnest' you will ever see." The Rep's artistic director, Joseph Hanreddy, "dug through archives and research material at the New York Public Library to unearth Wilde's original four-act version of the play in addition to some of the playwright's notes." According to the reviewer, this careful re-creation was a key factor in the unusually high quality of the production.[13]

There were 10 articles about Wisconsin's most illustrious architect, Frank Lloyd Wright. Archives were mentioned as a source of material for several exhibitions, including a major retrospective at the Modern Museum of Art in New York.[14] One article described a new line of Frank Lloyd Wright reproduction furnishings created by Thomas Heinz, a lecturer on Wright who had "55,000 photographs on Wright in his archives."[15]

Three articles about the Taliesin Preservation Commission included the term archives almost incidentally. Spokesperson Bruce Brooks Pfeiffer was described in each article as "director of the Frank Lloyd Wright Archives." These articles were not eliminated at the beginning of the analysis because they did in fact discuss the preservation needs of archival materials.[16]

In addition, there were two articles about summer festivals that mentioned archival records. A profile of Milwaukee's annual Festa Italiana admonishes visitors not to miss the "wondrous" exhibition of photographs from the Italian Community Center's photographic archive: "If you visit Festa and miss this fascinating, historical facet of the festival, you will have toured the limbs without visiting the heart."[17] The annual gay, lesbian, and bisexual pride festival featured a traveling exhibition from the International Lesbian and Gay Archives in Los Angeles.[18]

Three articles mentioned archival institutions as a place to visit while traveling. The author of an article about Bergen, Norway, explains that he was in town "for a few

weeks looking through the city archives." He neglects to mention the nature of his research, although a genealogical search is not unlikely for a Wisconsin native.[19] An article about London's Covent Garden mentions that the Theatre Museum, which houses theatrical materials from the Victoria and Albert Museum, "contains exhibits and a small theater, as well as archives for serious research."[20] There was a also a travel article about Chicago that recommended a visit to the Museum of Broadcast History, where visitors are allowed to use the "archives of video tapes of classic TV and radio" for two dollars per day.[21]

In summary, the single most common reason archives were newsworthy was because they played a role in creating cultural products currently being offered for public consumption. Such products included books, music, films, plays, exhibitions, festivals, and museums, most of which were locally available. Exceptions to this local connection were the Frank Lloyd Wright exhibition in New York and the travel articles.

Since Madison is the capital of Wisconsin, it is not surprising that its newspapers had more articles about "Government" than the Milwaukee papers. Two Madison newspaper pieces about disagreements regarding the use of a University of Wisconsin campus building mentioned the archives of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The controversy began when Governor Thompson rejected long-standing plans to build a student center in the University's Red Gym building, and chose instead to hand over most of the floor space to the State Historical Society[22] (a decision that was later overturned). Additional articles covered a separate debate regarding the funding of new positions that were part of a public records project at the State Archives. Faculty and administrators at the University of Wisconsin complained that they were required to transfer funds to the State Historical Society at a time when most campus libraries were forced to cancel subscriptions to academic journals in order to survive financially.[23]

The author of an opinion piece in the *Wisconsin State Journal* used cases from the archives of the Special Public Defenders Office to argue for the placement of a cap on criminal prosecutions.[24] Archives were newsworthy in government-related articles because archival institutions were involved in state budget controversies, and also because they contained information about state legislation that had implications for new public policy.

Madison papers published several "Local History" articles about anniversaries, including the University of Wisconsin's role during World War II,[25] the dramatic enrollment increase that followed World War II,[26] and the 1970 bombing of the Army Math Resource Center in Sterling Hall.[27] A 1995 *Milwaukee Journal* article began with the declaration: "This week marks the 100th anniversary of the day Milwaukee's society women temporarily put aside their needlework and teacups and became newspaper editors, advertising executives and circulation bosses." This "Women's Edition," as it became known, was an effort to raise money for the Milwaukee Welfare Fund. Souvenir copies were printed on silk and sold for $100 each. The article mentioned that the *Journal* has retained a copy in its archives.[28]

Not every local history article focused on an anniversary, however. One Madison story described fears regarding the possible health risk of a certain area on the University of Wisconsin campus. The archives of the Wisconsin Agricultural Experiment Station recorded that 13 anthrax-ridden cow carcasses had been buried at a specific

location after an outbreak of that disease in 1909. Nearly 90 years later, the UW-Madison athletic department wanted to build a boat house on the site. A 1990 soil study indicated that the area was free of contaminants, but the University administration was still reluctant to authorize the boat house. Unfortunately, the author merely reported on the conflicting information, rather than trying to resolve the seeming discrepancy.[29] In another article, the *Capital Times*' city government reporter traced the history of a city landfill along the shore of Lake Monona. Included was a 1943 photograph from the archives of the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources.[30]

Archives were newsworthy in local history articles because they provided newspapers with information either about notable anniversaries or the ecological history of certain locations. In some cases, archives offered a local angle on current events. The World War II stories, for example, were a local angle on the international remembrance of D-Day.

Articles about "National and International News" tended to focus on prominent individuals or institutions. One story attempted to dispel the common myth that Albert Einstein was a terrible student in math and science: "Walter Sullivan...found Einstein's academic records in Swiss Archives and learned that Einstein had been remarkably gifted in those fields, even as a youth."[31] The *Milwaukee Sentinel* proclaimed "tell us something we don't know" in an editorial about a new legal memo found in the National Archives. Apparently this memo proved that "Nixon's trusted secretary, Rose Mary Woods, intentionally caused the famous, or infamous, 18-minute gap in an Oval Office tape recording."[32] Another article retraced Bill Clinton's efforts to avoid being drafted to fight in Vietnam. The article was an excerpt from a biography of Clinton written by David Maraniss, who had used the Lee Williams papers at the Fullbright Archives.[33]

Archives were considered newsworthy in stories about national and international news because they offered new information about prominent political or historical figures. However, archives also made the news if they contained shocking or scandalous information.

"Lost and Found" articles related how individuals had been located using archival records. One article described how villagers in Ohey, Belgium, tracked down the families of American pilots who had "diverted their flak-riddled bomber...away from their homes." Every year the village had remembered and prayed for the pilots without knowing their names. For the 50th anniversary of the event, the names of the pilots were found among the records in the National Archives, and surviving family members flew to Belgium for the ceremony.[34]

Other articles described genealogical searches and family reunions. One piece described in detail how Clayborn Benson, executive director of the Milwaukee-based Wisconsin Black Historical Society spent eight years trying to track down his father and his father's family. He created the Wisconsin African-American Genealogy Society to teach other African-Americans how to trace their ancestry. Thus, archives were newsworthy because they contained information that helped to locate "lost" individuals, and also because they housed materials of interest to genealogists.

Only Milwaukee papers published "Education" articles that had references to archives. One described a school trip to Washington, D.C. that included a visit to the

National Archives to see the Constitution, Bill of Rights, and the Declaration of Independence.[35] A second article mentioned a grant-winning project that proposed to use computers and the World Wide Web to link classrooms with the National Archives.[36]

Another education-related piece profiled a Door County High School project. Students "armed with tape recorders and a wealth of background material from...the Washington Island Archives," gathered family histories and local reminiscences to create an oral history of their island. When the projects were completed, the interviews were donated to the archives.[37]

In articles about education, archives were considered newsworthy when they were a destination for a notable school trip, were part of a project that received grant money, or were involved in creating an oral history of a particular place at a particular time.

Archival Articles

The remaining 47 articles, or 32% of the data set, focused primarily on archival materials or repositories. This "Archival" category was further divided into five sections: Profiles (of collections and projects), Controversies, Exhibitions and Openings, Calls for Donations, and Destruction of Materials.

Madison and Milwaukee papers each profiled two archival institutions during the time span of this study. An article about the Country Music Museum in Nashville, Tennessee, described it as a memorabilia-filled museum that also houses "an academic archive that attempts to trace such intangible, but very distinctive creative processes as writing a country song." The archives contained a "nearly complete" collection of country music records that were used by contemporary musicians such as Emmylou Harris and Steve Earle. The article also described museum-sponsored community projects such as songwriting workshops for high school students, and an annual concert featuring performances of the best student creations.[38]

A profile of the Circus World Museum in Baraboo, Wisconsin, described it as "a Mecca for thousands of circus fans," which contained 70,000 photographs, 8,000 posters, 2,000 books, 1,000 sound recordings, and 600 films. The article also pointed out that many researchers are particularly interested in newspaper clippings, schedules, ledgers, and other business records. According to the library's archivist, the repository is also visited by many genealogists and relatives of circus employees or performers.[39]

An article about the archives at the Museum of Broadcast Communications in Chicago included an interview with the museum's founder, Bruce DuMont. DuMont repeatedly emphasized the accessibility of the collection:

> DuMont is clear that this collection, like New York's Museum of Television and Radio, is designed to promote viewing by the general public, not just scholars. He rips university archives for stockpiling old programming that are accessible to only a few. "There is a thirst for knowledge, and much of that knowledge is stored away in university-based archives that are available to only a selected few," he said. "Preservation without presentation is a waste of time and money."[40]

A profile of the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research, at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, contrasted its mundane appearance to the glamour of answering

the reference requests of Hollywood celebrities like Diane Keaton, and hosting visits by such famous stars as Ginger Rogers and Hal Holbrook. The collection was described as "equal parts film, theater, and television" with "a dizzying array of...scripts, correspondence, promotional materials, photos, manuscripts, and, of course, films."[41]

Common factors in all of the profiled institutions was an emphasis on non-textual materials, and a focus on subject areas that many people enjoy and appreciate.

Two archival projects were also profiled. The first described the Illinois-based Lincoln Legal Papers Project. For the initial stage of this project, "researchers visited Illinois courthouses and four dozen manuscript archives around the nation in search of cases on which Lincoln worked." The goal of the project was to "locate and edit all of the legal records associated with the twenty-five years Lincoln worked as a practicing attorney," and it was estimated to require 16 years of work.[42] As this case illustrates, archives can become newsworthy when they participate in projects that uncover information about prominent figures in American history.

There was considerable coverage of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin's efforts to preserve government records in electronic format. The article that profiled the overall project described it as an effort to survey how electronic records "are being kept and how they can best be preserved, and to assist state and local agencies in planning effective record preservation programs." Reporter Mike Miller also outlined similar past efforts and described them as being plagued by a lack of funding.[43]

The same newspaper not only published an additional story about the complex maneuvering needed to obtain funding for the current project,[44] but also printed the following editorial, which argued emphatically for the project's worth:

> Just when it looked like the Legislature was about to close its collective eyes to the impact of changing technology on the preservation of vital government records, a miracle happened. Well, maybe not a miracle exactly. Maybe more like a bit of legislative legerdemain. But in any case, the State Historical Society now has a good chance of getting the resources it needs to preserve the state's archives as the rapidly changing computer technology complicates getting access to old data. ...Saving records may not be an issue that grabs the public's attention, but it is important for future generations. This is small change in the massive state budget, but it matters a great deal to the state's ability to manage the public's business. We urge the governor to sign this measure.[45]

The electronic records project at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin involved several issues: preserving government records, access to those records, and ensuring the public accountability of government. Newspapers are committed to the concept that governments should be publicly accountable for their actions, and archives are committed to preserving government records and making them accessible. Archivists capitalized on this common ground, and the result was not merely coverage but advocacy.

Two articles about "Controversies" covered the nude "posture photos" at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. The photographs, made ostensibly for scientific studies, were taken of incoming students at several U.S. colleges during the middle part of this century and presumably included such prominent alumni as George Bush and Hillary Clinton. The original *New York Times* article mentioned that the

University of Wisconsin-Madison had taken similar photographs, and local news reporters followed up on the lead. An interview with Frank Cook, director of the UW-Madison Archives, assured reporters that the photographs had all been destroyed in the 1970s. Hence, potential scandal with a local angle made archives newsworthy in this case.[46]

Several articles were about "Exhibitions and Openings." Most of these were announcements for photographic exhibitions that featured materials from local archives, or collections of prominent local figures that had recently opened. Similar to the "Art and Culture" section in the "Other" category, archives were newsworthy because they were part of a product for consumption, in this case an exhibition of archival materials. The difference is that articles in this "Exhibitions" section (in the "Archival" category) focus on archival materials, rather than a secondary product such as a book or a film.

Articles that were "Calls for Donations" varied in size from short announcements to detailed descriptions of projects. Shorter announcements included requests for photographs of historic farms, and memorabilia relating to the "hundreds of artists who have appeared at the Pabst Theater over the past 100 years." Examples of longer profiles were all calls for letters for the Voices from Vietnam project at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. The project was created to document the experiences of Wisconsin soldiers during the Vietnam War.[47]

The final category, "Destruction of Materials," includes three separate articles about a single fire that damaged the Oshkosh Public Museum.[48] This was the only example of archives receiving coverage because of a disaster or loss.

Topics that Are Missing from Local Newspaper Coverage

National events with significance for archival practice were conspicuously absent from Wisconsin news coverage. Between January 1994 and June 1995 the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* printed 16 articles about President Clinton's appointment of a new Archivist of the United States. Archivists and historians were highly critical of Clinton's choice, Kansas Governor John W. Carlin, and pointed to Carlin's lack of archival experience as proof that the appointment was for purely political reasons. This controversy raised several important questions about the purpose, mission, and purported political neutrality of the National Archives. The debate that surrounded Carlin's appointment addressed issues relevant to all government records, not just those at the federal level.

Another topic covered by the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* during this time period was the "PROFS" case. The National Security Council (NSC) was forced to adopt new record keeping guidelines that would ensure the retention of electronic mail records. The NSC had claimed it was not an agency of the federal government and therefore not required to preserve such records. This case, like the debate surrounding Carlin's appointment, resulted in decisions that influenced the definition of records, public records, and electronic records.

It is possible that the design of the study is responsible for the lack of articles about the PROFS case in the data set. Such articles, if they were published, might not have

contained the term "archives." This is far less likely in the case of John Carlin, however, since any mention of his appointment would have to include the term "archivist."

Negative portrayals of archives and archivists were almost completely absent from the data set. According to David Gracy, archives are commonly stereotyped in the press as "dark and dusty." James Boylan noted that feature writers and columnists had "a rather narrow repertory of literary tools to describe archives." They tended to emphasize bulk and decay to such a degree that Boylan found it "hard to believe that an ordinary reader would recognize in such descriptions a facility either useful or usable by the public."[49]

These stereotypes were notably absent from the Wisconsin coverage. To confirm this impressionistic conclusion, the author conducted a keyword search of the full text articles for the following terms: dust, dusty, must, musty, dark, dingy. The only example found was the description of editor Terry Teachout "dusting off" the H.L Mencken manuscript before publication.[50] In no other case were these terms used to describe archival collections or repositories. One author did rely on bulk to describe the Wisconsin Center for Film and Theater Research's collections, referring to "a dizzying array" of materials. [51] As a whole, however, Wisconsin articles seem to be in striking contrast to the articles studied by Gracy and Boylan.

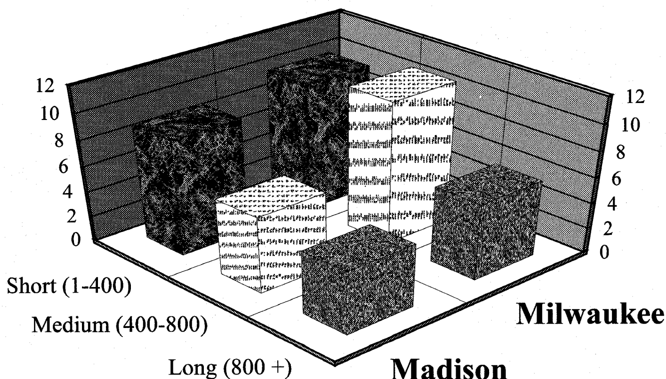
Size, Placement, and Timing of Coverage

In addition to the preceding content analysis, the data were sorted and analyzed to find patterns in the size, placement, and timing of coverage.

Articles with an archival focus were sorted by length based on the number of words and arranged into the three most common categories of small (1-400 words), medium (401-800), and large (800+ words).[52] As illustrated in Figure 3, Milwaukee had higher totals in each category. This is due to the simple fact that there were twenty-seven Milwaukee articles in the archival category, and 20 from Madison papers.

It is intriguing that the number of articles with 800 words or more is nearly equal for the two cities: five in Madison papers and six in Milwaukee papers. If this number

Fig. 3: Size of Articles with an Archival Focus



holds constant over time, it might indicate a conscious or unconscious limit on feature-length articles about archives. An editor, for example, might feel that a seventh or eighth article of this length would be "too much" coverage for a topic such as archives. Unfortunately, this study is not broad enough to allow for a definitive argument of this sort.

In each case the number of short- and medium-length stories far outnumbered the longer stories. In Madison, 75% of the articles fell into the short or medium category. While for Milwaukee papers, 78% of the articles were either short or medium length. We can conclude, therefore, that feature-length profiles of archives are relatively rare. Nevertheless, the total figures indicate considerable coverage over time.

In addition to the relative size of articles, their placement was also analyzed. This analysis was conducted in the hope that it would offer insight into whether newspapers cover archives as a news item or as a softer feature item. One difficulty in this comparison was that Madison papers appeared to be divided into many more sections than Milwaukee papers. In this situation, having only electronic copies of articles was a distinct disadvantage. This analysis also revealed what appeared to be inconsistencies in indexing. Since it is unlikely that Milwaukee papers would have so few articles in the local section, this may be a case where an indexer cataloged an article on a Local page as if it was an article in a separate Local section.

Articles about archives were published in the following sections: News, Features, Opinion/Editorial, and Local. The most significant finding was that stories with a focus on archives had similar totals for the News and Features sections. As Figures 4 and 5 illustrate, this relationship was similar for both Madison and Milwaukee coverage. Articles on topics other than archives, in contrast, did not have a similar distribution between News and Features sections. While the awkwardness of the data precludes any sweeping generalizations, it appears that articles that mention or feature archives appear in several sections, with the largest number appearing in Features sections.

Patterns of coverage over time were also analyzed. Please note, the data set for this study included articles from a period of 18 months (1.5 years) rather than 24 months

Fig. 4: Placement in Madison Papers

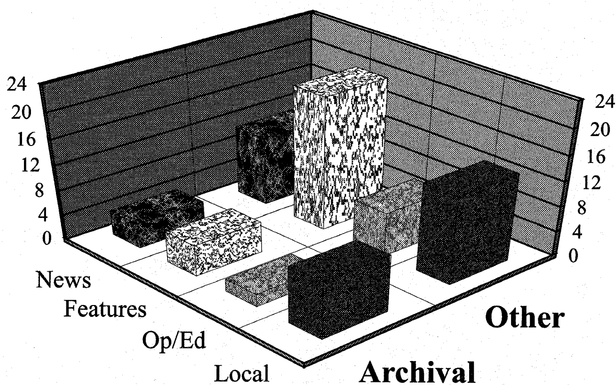
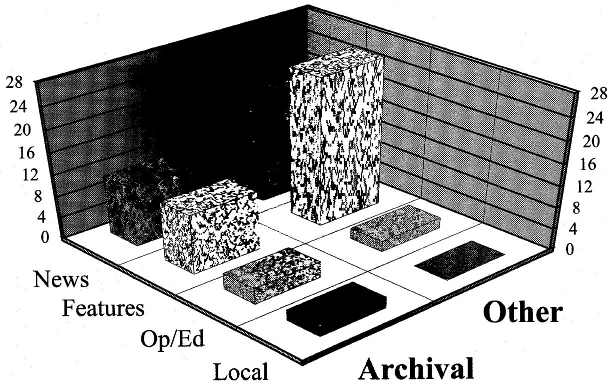


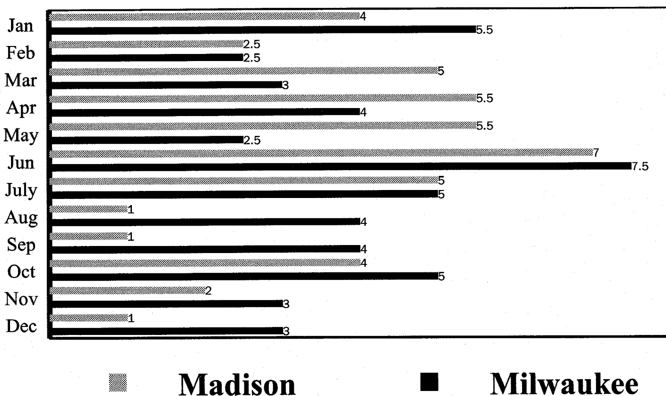
Fig. 5: Placement in Milwaukee Papers



(two years). Therefore, the January – June numbers are an average of 1994 and 1995 totals. For example: there were four Milwaukee articles in January 1994, and seven in January 1995. The average is 5.5, as seen in Figure 6. The figures for August through December are 1994 totals only. As Figure 6 illustrates, both Milwaukee and Madison papers showed a dramatic increase in the number of stories for the month of June. Although it is not entirely clear why this pattern occurred, there are a few possible explanations.

June is the month when school children begin their summer recess and families go on vacation. There were three types of June articles that related to tourist activities: Frank Lloyd Wright's Taliesin museum, Milwaukee's summer festivals, and travel destinations outside Wisconsin. More than half the June articles were on the topic of tourism. Regrettably, this study does not cover a time period long enough to prove that the June totals are anything other than coincidence. It is interesting to note that if tourism

Fig. 6: Distribution of Articles by Month



is in fact the reason for increased coverage in June, it might also explain the decrease in articles in August, when summer vacation ends and school begins.

Conclusion: What Do Local Newspaper Editors Want?

The largest single reason why archives received coverage (38% of the total data set) was because they housed materials used to create a cultural product offered for public consumption. Products included books, films, plays, and exhibitions. Archives also received coverage when they were part of budget controversies or other scandals, when they shed light on a current political debate, when they offered new information about a prominent person, or when they illustrated some aspect of local history. All of the institutions that received in-depth coverage emphasized non-textual materials and had collecting areas with general appeal, such as film and television history, country music, and the circus.

One of the interesting findings in this study is that the *products* of archival research received much more coverage than the primary materials used to create them. This "secondary coverage" has several implications for outreach efforts within our profession. On the plus side, it points to a possible tactic for increasing publicity: collaborating with researchers to publicize the fruits of their labor, and encouraging researchers to talk about the collections they have used. We can use "secondary coverage" to create an image in the public's mind of archives as a treasure chest of raw materials that can be transformed into the books, films, and plays that so many people enjoy.

A related strategy would be to emphasize archives as the source for original, "authentic" versions of cultural treasures. Oscar Wilde's original four-act version of *The Importance of Being Earnest* was one example found in this study. One could also send notices of exhibitions to the local newspaper, since exhibitions are a cultural product just like books and plays.

The prevalence of articles about secondary products also suggests that, at least as far as editors are concerned, local newspaper readers are not interested in using primary source materials.[53] This conclusion may be disheartening for outreach advocates who believe increased use is the only way to guarantee the survival of archival institutions. Overburdened reference staff, on the other hand, may breathe a sigh of relief. "Secondary coverage" provides an acceptable compromise between these somewhat disparate views. In other words, we can promote the value of our institutions, our collections, and our work without inviting everyone to become our patrons.

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50. Roger Miller, "The Sage of Baltimore Hasn't Lost His Savor," *MJS*, 5 Mar. 1995, Features sec., p. 9.
51. Tom Alesia, "A Showcase of Film, Theater and TV History," *WSJ*, 8 Apr. 1994, Rhythm sec., p. 3.
52. Articles with a focus on topics other than archives were not analyzed for length. The amount of space devoted to archives varied so much that the length of these pieces did not accurately reflect the amount of archival coverage.
53. One could argue that genealogists are an obvious exception, but the percentage of local newspaper readers who are interested in genealogical research may be small.

RIDING OUT THE APOCALYPSE: THE OBSOLESCENCE OF TRADITIONAL ARCHIVY IN THE FACE OF MODERN CORPORATE DYNAMICS

PAUL C. LASEWICZ

A 'Parabull': of cows, cars, and starship captains

> *In the beginning, there was the cowpath. It was time-worn, beaten down by generations of cows as they headed to water—not a straight line, but a weaving path that avoided obstacles. Then came the car. It looked at the path the cows had wrought, and saw it was good. So it paved over the cowpath, and got to the water faster than a cow could ever dream of. Then came the starship captain, whose transporter technology gave him the ability to get to the water quicker than anything this side of light waves. Not only did instantaneous travel make land-based obstacles irrelevant by removing spatial issues from consideration altogether, it radically altered man's perception of the universe.*
>
> *—The Galactic Encyclopaedia of Folk Tales (2077 ed.)*

Jumping back a few generations from this fanciful tale, we can see that it has parallels in the modern world of corporate archives. Today's corporations are changing at an unprecedented rate, and that pace is accelerating ever more as the millenium approaches. Unfortunately, the philosophical raison d'etre supporting corporate archivy—that companies cannot know who they are or where they are going unless they know where they've been—has not kept pace. It is still the same cowpath that was used in the golden age of archival advocacy (and not, coincidentally, large corporate centers!) during the 1970s and early 1980s. Worse yet, it appears this limited conception of utility still influences the way corporate executives perceive the role of an archives. Juxtaposing this misguided philosophical foundation with managerial misperceptions of potential is a prescription for disaster, and can only serve to place corporate archives increasingly at risk as time goes on.[1]

It used to be that a corporate archivist's greatest fear was that his or her organization would deemphasize the importance of its history. While that deemphasis is more of an issue than ever for many parts of the corporate world, it is almost relegated to irrelevancy in the face of what author Rick Tetzeli has imaginatively tagged as "the two horsemen in the apocalypse of corporate efficiency": technology and downsizing. Changing management philosophies that emphasize a shrinking corporate center through decentralized and outsourced functions have combined with a firm commitment to desktop access through PC and network technology to radically alter information channels in most corporations. These alterations have significant implications for traditional archival precepts, and will force corporate archivists to reexamine what their goals are and make some hard choices concerning how to best accomplish them.[2]

Outreach: Victims of Success

Traditionally, specialized repositories such as archives or libraries have pinned their funding hopes to the creation of an enlarged user base. The argument was that high use indicated demand, and demand indicated utility and, more importantly, a demonstrated need. The assumption was that dollars would flow to a demonstrated need like beer to the bleachers at a ballgame. High use was seen as the best way to justify existence, and the literature abounds with discussions of the need for outreach as a survival tool.[3]

Now, however, there are disquieting indications in the corporate world that that assumption is no longer accurate. At Aetna, one of the nation's leading healthcare and financial services corporations, the Corporate Information Center, a state-of-the-art business library, had successfully marketed itself to the organization through the 1980s and into the 1990s—customer surveys consistently characterized the CIC's services as excellent over 90 percent of the time. In 1996, as part of a corporate center expense reduction drive, senior management instructed the CIC to reduce its $1.9 million budget by a third, regardless of how many requests the department handled. Under these financial strictures, the department was forced to alter staffing levels, mission, access policies, products and services—despite the fact that there was no user ground swell demanding change.

A more telling example of changing times is the story of Aetna's audiovisual function, another 1980s success story that has recently fallen upon hard times through no fault of its own. Aetna's AV met the company's internal and external audiovisual needs, producing educational films, company television broadcasts, and video and multimedia productions for conferences and other meetings. In 1991, the department handled 358 projects, had a staff of 26, and a budget of $3.8 million. But management saw the department as too easy to use; it was too accessible, which resulted in it being used too often. Which, in turn, made it too expensive a proposition for the company. The result? Aetna eliminated the department in a downsizing wave early in 1995. By year's end, the department still had handled 156 projects (43.6% of 1991 levels). But its involvement in most of these had consisted primarily of serving as a middleman, farming out internal projects to external vendors. Staff levels had been reduced 88% to 3, and the budget had been cut nearly 87% to just over $500,000.

The rationale behind this move was that it was seen as the easiest way to reduce costs. Changing a culture of use that had evolved over decades would be a difficult and drawn out process; it would be quicker to eliminate the function entirely. Today, Aetna is reliant on external audiovisual vendors to meet its needs. They cost more on a per unit basis than the in-house function, but they are also harder to use, which, in the new logic, will soon reduce spending. In effect, the company placed an artificial barrier to usage in order to cut costs.

What is so unsettling about this new trend in corporate thinking is not that it is illogical. In fact, it is chillingly logical. What is disturbing instead is that it rarely follows the path of traditional rationality. In modern corporate America, companies don't eliminate the need or the use—just the positions. The implication for corporate archivists is that in a dollar-driven environment, time-honored notions of outreach may no longer be effective justifications for existence; in fact, they may actually become arguments for elimination.

Reference Issues: From Feudalism to Democracy in 80 Keystrokes

By the millenium, experts anticipate that 45% of the average corporation's information technology budget will be spent on building enterprise-wide information systems. This budgetary commitment will meld with the current management trend of flattening organizational structures to radically alter access to information in the 21st-century corporation. Unlike their paper-pushing counterparts from as late as the 1980s, the employees of the 21st-century corporation will be characterized by an ability to access the information they need, instantaneously, at their desktops. Instead of working through layers of corporate structure to obtain answers, future "knowledge workers" will dive into electronic channels and grab the internal and external information they need in a few keystrokes. That world is here today. In the corporate environment the emergence of Intranets and "push" technologies like Web-mounted news broadcasts have revolutionized the information environment. These technologies are imperfect to be sure, but improving daily at a palpable pace.

The emergence of this democratized information culture clearly holds some interesting implications for traditional concepts of reference. First, it suggests the elimination of physical fiefdoms. There will be less reliance on location as the advent of electronic storage and delivery removes physical barriers to information. The physical fiefdom will be replaced by intellectual fiefdoms—electronic or "virtual" repositories characterized by their cross-disciplinary capabilities, incorporating information culled from a wide variety of internal and external sources and media.

These developments suggest a new corporate information paradigm: The virtual repository will be staffed by "subject matter experts" who will be positioned close to internal clients (organizationally speaking), both to facilitate access and to better know their clients' businesses in order to more effectively anticipate information needs. Developing this close working relationship will be relatively feasible for corporations, which have fairly finite, consistent user bases. Ultimately, the development of this relationship between SMEs and their clients will result in more research products, regularly prepared—new product analyses, demographic studies, backgrounder reports,

standard question fact sheets, competitive analysis, organizational data, and stockholder data. The reasoning behind this anticipatory approach to reference is not new, but the emergence of enterprise-wide information systems makes it possible on a much larger, more comprehensive scale than ever thought practical. Properly managed, these virtual repositories hold the potential to truly be one-stop information shopping.

There will be a reduced reliance on face-to-face, or even voice-to-voice contact. While this might suggest the decline in the importance of the reference interview, more likely it will force subject matter experts to identify new ways of defining client needs, which will in turn accelerate the movement toward providing tailored information products that anticipate client queries. The virtual repository will also result in the reduction of public access spaces, as space costs money. Technology will be crucial here not only in terms of formatting and storage, but also in terms of delivery via networks, groupware, hyperlinks, automated finding aids, and electronic imaging. [4]

What are the implications of all this for today's corporate archivist? First of all, if the archivist is reading the organization's information environment correctly and is adapting to meet changes in it, then there should be a decreasing reliance on actual reference inquiries. The proactive corporate archivist should be working to tailor products for electronic access; but implied in this shift is the recognition that if the archives' existence is justified by the number of reference requests answered, the archivist may have to find other ways of measuring performance and effectiveness.

Secondly, in today's world the unique nature of reference at a corporate archives requires the staff to do almost all the research required to answer client questions. It is often more efficient for the archivists to tackle complex requests themselves, which could result in spending weeks sifting through the collection and throw the most flexible of year-long departmental plans out of whack. This focus on customer service has always been one of the ways a corporate archivist could demonstrate value, and therefore justify continued existence. However, in a corporate culture where end users expect to have all the information at their fingertips, corporate archivists will once again have to look for other ways to prove their worth.

Appraisal issues: The Irrelevance of Historical Primacy

Traditionally, the corporate archives has positioned itself within a company as a collector of material that documented the growth and development of the company. In practice, this has almost always been an unreachable ideal as business needs, company size, organizational alignments, and limited resources made a complete fulfillment of this objective difficult (if not impossible) from a purely practical perspective. Nonetheless, the concept of impartial historical primacy—that the archives chief utility to a corporation and society is as a historical resource—remains the noble goal to which most business archives appraisal theory still aspires.[5]

But trends in today's corporations have a way of making even state-of-the-art appraisal theories obsolete. Of the two main appraisal philosophies currently being debated in business archives circles—structural and functional analysis—neither matches up very well with the reality of today's large companies.

The precepts of structural analysis are that organizational structures reflect the business realities that produce records, and any changes over time in structure stand as an accurate portrayal of the evolution of the firm. However, these precepts are philosophically far too rigid for the living records of a corporation. Any appraisal strategy based on corporate structure is seriously undermined by the extreme fluidity that characterizes the organizations of today and, as experts predict, tomorrow. Author Nick Blozan writes, "Management gurus are predicting the rise of the Virtual Corporation [where] companies will form temporary strategic alliances to take advantage of fast-changing business opportunities, only to disband when the tasks are accomplished and move on to the next project." Even a previously staid insurance organization like Aetna has experienced since 1991 three major corporate reorganizations, a $4 billion divestiture, an $8 billion acquisition, and a host of lesser alterations at divisional levels. It appears that corporate fluidity makes structural analysis a much more viable approach for records that are either inactive or closed, and therefore much more apropos for business repositories that acquire business records than a corporate archives with open record groups.[6]

Functional appraisal is philosophically more flexible in its approach to business records in that it encourages the documentation of function, which ostensibly will remain the same in most corporations regardless of how the structure of the organization is changed around it. But like its structural sister theory, functional analysis has a basic premise of documenting a company at a level far beyond what the company will ever need for its own purposes. In corporations, where archivists generally work within the strictures of limited resources, elimination of 'nice-to-have' functions, departmental politics, employee territorialism, records retention programs, far-flung divisional and branch offices, and sheer anti-historicalism, it may be asking too much of them to even begin contemplating a systematic collection policy that approaches the sophistication of these philosophies. It may be that the greatest applicability for the corporate archivist of these collection theories would be as the philosophical underpinnings of an arrangement and description policy—helping them manage what they already have and what they may get, by plan or by those seemingly abhorent accidents of evidence.[7]

In addition, both appraisal theories are undermined by the rapid approach of the paperless office. "A number of developments have recently combined," notes Leo Gotlieb in a Canadian accounting publication, "to bring the paperless office much closer to reality than most people think." Electronic data interchange, office application software "suites" with seamless multimedia merging capabilities, fax software that eliminates the need for hard copy, e-mail attachment capabilities, intranets and 'groupware' that allow documents to be shared and worked on by any number of people, trends in telecommuting, inexpensive storage capabilities, increases in network capacity and modem speed, and sophisticated compression/decompression techniques are all making it possible to bring multimedia applications to individual desktops without excessive waits—and you don't have to be a technocrat to see that information flow is changing even as you read this. Even though research in the early part of the 1990s indicated that only 10% of corporate records were machine-accessible, some experts predict that by the millenium over half the information in organizations will be in digital form. "In short," Gotlieb points out, "it has become both possible and practical

to create, access, and work with an almost unlimited variety of computerized information, without conversion at any stage."[8]

What are the implications of this future for corporate archivists who are overtaxed just trying to manage paper documentation? Some would argue that this is an argument for archivists to position themselves as electronic records experts—to recognize that the future is technology, and that they have to adapt to it if they hope to do their jobs (as defined) and continue to document the company. In a sense, though, migrating to an electronic storage function based upon traditional archival precepts may turn out to be too tough a financial, technological, and political nut to crack for institutional archives already pushed to the brink.[9] This conclusion may prompt many corporate archivists to give up the ghost of historical primacy; in essence, to abandon any pretension of being able to historically document a corporation at a meaningful level beyond its public face, and settle for collecting only the most rudimentary of documents—annual reports, board minutes, marketing and product information, divisional and employee publications, press releases, advertisements, and human resources manuals. However, it is likely in today's corporations that any archives assuming such a niche strategy would soon be trampled under the hooves of the apocalyptic horsemen. Since being left on the wayside of any corporate efficiency movement would not provide the personal security that an archivist desires and the permanence archival records demand, the question for a corporate archives is raised: Is there life after history?[10]

Gatekeepers to Wisdom: The Power of Knowledge Managers

From the perspective of the corporate archivist, the declining relevance of traditionally accepted approaches to outreach, reference, and appraisal may indicate that it is time to sit down and take a good hard look at what an archivist's role in today's corporation should be. The growing gap between the profession's precepts and corporate realities have added a sense of urgency to the issue. Whatever the answers that are reached by corporate archivists, a few basic generalizations will be true. The answers must be individualized, seamlessly fitting the needs of the organization; be proactive, anticipating change rather than reacting to it; and most importantly, be flexible—not limited by constraints of what conventional wisdom decrees an archives is supposed to be.[11]

If traditional archival beliefs and practices are becoming increasingly irrelevant, then what can archivists turn to that is pertinent? Clearly the solution isn't in the past, so the archival equivalent of the transporter must of necessity lie in the future. And what does the future hold? One possible vision is the world of knowledge management, the creation, capture, sharing, and use of a company's best thinking about its products, services, processes, market, and competitors. Knowledge management involves gathering internal information and combining it with related external data in order to: speed organizational access to information, eliminate redundant collection processes, enhance organizational synergies, and create structural intellectual capital. It views knowledge as actionable information, that is, information that has been edited and formatted for accessibility, relevance, and ultimately, business use. Knowledge is drawn from traditional sources like libraries, online products, and departmental manuals, as well as

some decidedly untraditional sources like the employees themselves.[12] And while knowledge management is heavily reliant on technology for both storage and subsequent sharing of information, it recognizes that hardware is not the most crucial part of the system—the provision of the 'right' information is.[13]

Knowledge management is an emerging discipline that systematically and actively manages and leverages the stores of knowledge that exist in a typical company, creating "knowledge centers" or networked databases containing organizational information. These databases can contain everything from internal best practices suitable for potential replication in other parts of the company, to daily performance statisitics, to self-guided benefits orientations for new employees, to listings of topical experts in the organization. "Companies must gather, cultivate, and manage intellectual capital as carefully as they do financial capital. Leverage knowledge ... and you can reduce time to market, cut research and development costs and boost productivity."[14] This is not a new idea—management theorist Peter Drucker expounded on the emergence of a knowledge-based society and its implications for work in the late 1960s. It is, however, new to everyday business life. For the first time, technology is making it practical. "'In the old world,' noted Thomas W. Malone, professor at Sloan School of Management at MIT, 'information was very expensive, so we managed with relatively small amounts of it; we developed organizations that could work in an information desert.' Storing, moving, and finding information is so much cheaper and easier now that 'We're in something more like an information jungle. Survival techniques that worked in deserts won't be as effective.'"[15]

According to a recent study by the American Productivity and Quality Center in Houston, there are several key ways American companies are currently using the concept of Knowledge Management. They are using it to:

- tie a firm's knowledge to revenue enhancement by linking it to growth strategies;
- focus on the systematic reuse and transfer of best practices within the company;
- capture information on customer needs, preferences, and concerns;
- catalogue and use the contributions individual employees make to corporate knowledge as a foundation for company-wide management; and
- marshal intellectual assets such as patents, research and development, new technologies, and management practices to improve profitability.

The realistic attainment of these objectives is made possible for the first time by the exponential growth in information storage and retrieval technologies. But while technological advances have opened new information frontiers, they alone are not the whole solution. The biggest challenge in this future world of electronic wizardry will be finding people with the magic combination of cognitive, problem-solving, and people skills to interact effectively in a high-volume information environment.[16] These knowledge managers will fill the void between the high priests of the information age (the software engineers and codesmiths) and the people who actually get things done (the knowledge workers), using their technical skill in classifying, abstracting, and processing information to proactively capture corporate knowledge as it is created.[17] "The future of information management is one in which there will be human involvement only if it is necessary to add value. As computers grow in power and software in sophistication,

people will be increasingly displaced. But where people remain involved, the technology to help them do their work effectively will be spectacular."[18]

Crucial to the success of this technology-based business world will be controlling the quantity and quality of the information available. "The trouble with the information age," writes *The Economist*, "is that it seems to place no value upon differentiation." Pundits have labelled this overabundance of facts "infoglut" and "infobog." But management guru Tom Peters puts it best in his own inimical way when he characterizes the flood of data in cyberspace as "garbage at the speed of light." And David Schenk has coined "data smog" as a tag for the effects this information pollution has on clogging the efficiency of both work and society.[19]

The information technology industry is very aware of this clogging effect, and software vendors are working to design filtering mechanisms to control the flow of information into corporations. And yet, as Isaac Asimov wrote in another context, "Scientific apparatus offers a window to knowledge, but as they grow more elaborate, scientists spend ever more time washing the windows." This point is amply demonstrated by the current difficulties with push technologies, which aim to define and deliver filtered information to the desktops; it appears clear that technology won't provide a reliable mechanism anytime in the near future. In the words of a pair of Ernst &Young consultants, the value of information choices "lies in being very conscious of what is being excluded, as well as what is being included."[20] As a result, corporations are increasingly recognizing how ideally suited information professionals are to serving as human filters—that is, as knowledge managers. "In the past few years...companies have begun to see them as some of the most valuable people in the organization. We are starting to see information work as a possible route to strategic management and the main board."[21]

Reaching for the Brass Ring: Archivist as a Knowledge Manager

Identifying the competencies necessary to be a knowledge manager of the future is more a taxonomy of function than a job description. Regardless of the type of information worked with, today's information professionals exhibit commonalities of function. They acquire information; they obtain physical and intellectual control over it; they store and access it in a cost-effective manner; and they provide value-added service to users.[22]

By managing intellectual and physical fiefdoms, such as libraries, records centers and archives, these information professionals have developed exactly the cognitive management skills that human resource managers are projecting to be in great demand in the networked corporation of the future. In a world where *The Economist* can pithily assert that "facts and figures are generally best used as a drunk uses a lamp-post—for support rather than illumination," information professionals have already mastered the art of throwing light on subjects by organizing and providing selective access to relevant materials based on their understanding of specific industries and their comprehension of technology.[23]

Information professionals have also developed the skill at managing resources that will be at a premium in the networked corporation, where technology investments that

focus on technology rather than content threaten to create informational sinkholes rather than fonts of knowledge. Crucial to avoiding these sinkholes will be efficiency of knowledge delivery. While cost-effective storage and retrieval of knowledge will be technology reliant, it will be the human value-added factor of appraisal, arrangement, and description of that information that will ultimately facilitate its use, thereby making the difference between unlinked facts and knowledge.[24]

Another crucial skill that information professionals possess is their experience in handling queries, and once again, it is the human value-added factor that makes the difference. Their knowledge of information-seeking behavior can prove valuable to IT developers because of their understanding of search engines and their ability to interpret the needs of users. But the personal touch is also useful at the end-user side of the transaction, as business managers tend to prefer personal and informal sources of information over formal and published sources. According to Arian Ward, Leader of Change at Hughes Space & Communications, knowledge management isn't about technology, but "about people and tapping their knowledge and potential. It's about linking them so they can share their knowledge and learn from one another. It's about becoming enlightened to the unlimited possibilities these intellectual assets offer. The emphasis needs to be on people and culture."[25]

The customer service mind-set that information professionals have developed in anticipating and exceeding the needs of their companies is an advantage in newly emergent information cultures that need to emphasize facilitating access to information rather than controlling it. Whether they realize it or not, information professionals have already inculcated an organizational reputation for openness and accessibility that will carry significant political weight as they start building relationships and partnerships with business and information technology areas in the future. One of the greatest concerns of any corporation seeking to change its information culture to more effectively utilize emergent technologies is overcoming ingrained proprietary cultural traits that work against information sharing. In this environment, the customer service-inspired generosity of information professionals can serve as a visible, tangible model of behavior for others to emulate. In a serendipitous fashion, the cultural generosity of information professionals has combined with the technological imperatives of the last decade to remain current with electronic developments to produce just the right mix of personal/technical expertise necessary to flourish in a networked corporation.[26]

The implications for corporate archives in this networked corporation seem clear. Corporate archivists share the same competencies that make other information professionals ideal candidates for knowledge managers. In addition, they are already experts about their companies from their collection and reference activities, since they generally perform most of the research on reference queries—even if the answers are found outside the archives' holdings. So it seems logical to position corporate archivists as knowledge managers for internal information; acquiring, maintaining, and updating organizational material is already part of their job. They are familiar with the types of information needed, and have the company-wide network of contacts necessary to update that information in place.

Ironically, by integrating the archives into a corporate knowledge management system, the archivist has the potential to keep appraised of a much wider sweep of material

than was ever practical before, material that is much closer to the day-to-day aspects of decision-making than that which most archivists can ever hope to acquire. There is no more valuable source of strategy and philosophy than the thinking of managers, consultants, and sales representatives; knowledge management systems for the first time hold the potential of capturing that thinking, company-wide, *as it happens*. It is also likely that the archivists will work more closely than ever before with product knowledge managers, as a good portion of archival holdings document the development of product lines, and therefore contain information that product knowledge managers will need for their knowledge centers. In a fashion that can only be characterized as a classic accident of evidence, knowledge management offers the opportunity to document the inner workings of business in ways never imagined by scholars or appraisal theorists. The irony of the situation is that in order to be in a position to save this information, corporate archivists, prompted by the non-historical needs of their company, may have to transport themselves beyond the pale of traditional archivy. In effect, they may have to evolve away from being archivists in order to more effectively perform the archival function.[27]

Conclusion

This is just one vision of the future. It assumes that the survival of corporate archivists will be based not solely on management of permanent resources but also on their ability to contribute in other ways. It presupposes a corporate environment where traditional archival concepts are becoming increasingly irrelevant: Outreach is outmoded by changing management philosophies; effective appraisal is stymied by volume and technology; reference activity is irrevocably altered by technological developments; and the archives' mission is made obsolete by technology-driven organizational changes. Lastly, it assumes that the future of the corporate archives is closely tied to the development of corporate knowledge management systems.[28]

In this environment, technology and management philosophies will force new ways of thinking. "Experience has shown that networking is a Trojan Horse undermining vested interests, which liberates the creativitiy of new layers of staff," writes Michel Bauwens, a futurist cybrarian. "Bureaucracy, an organizational and communication pattern based on restricted flows of information and a monopoly of knowledge, cannot survive the introduction of networks."[29]

One path to continued existence may be to proactively expand responsibilities which, thanks to the leveling tendencies of knowledge-sharing corporate cultures, may be easier to accomplish than in traditional hierarchical environments where corporate archives are notoriously powerless. While the concept of powerlessness is generally equated with organizational placement, more significant contributing factors can be found in the nature of archival work. Expense control measures in nonprofit centers limit staff size, which of necessity creates a focus on day-to-day, in-house activities like reference and processing, rather than high-visibility, cross-company projects. In addition, the specialized knowledge of archives positions—an expertise which, in the absence of organizational stature, creates that sense of uniqueness from which archivists

have always taken comfort—actually serves to isolate archivists from the rest of the organization.[30]

The most likely way for corporate archivists to overcome these limiting factors is to identify and assume related functions within the corporation, basing their pitch on the demonstrated universality of their information management skills. Most experts feel that flexibility and adaptability are keys to enlarging influence in organizations, and companies are placing a premium on the ability of current and future workers to adapt to change. By broadening their roles, corporate archivists can overcome the institutionalized powerlessness that places them at risk. They can expand their levels of expertise and break through the limitations of archival fiefdoms. As they become identified as fonts of cross-disciplinary knowledge, they will become more desirable intercompany team members on high-risk projects, thereby increasing their visibility. But in order to do this, archivists need to have a particularly fluid conception of their work, one that is not tied to a static job description or a defined physical space. At Arthur Andersen, which boasts one of the world's most advanced knowledge management systems, "knowledge integrators," who keep the firm's knowledge database orderly, describe their roles as part-librarian, part-entrepreneur, and part cruise ship social director.[31] That kind of personal flexibility will be the key to the future of corporate archives.

It's a bit of a paradox, but the pressures facing corporate archivists today may be at once both a threat to their existence and their greatest opportunity to maximize the impact of their skills on their organization.[32] If we have to reinvent our roles, now is a good time to do it. Organizational theories and technological developments that result in flatter organizations that exhibit more cross-divisional cooperation are redefining power structures within companies, and opening up opportunities for proactive archivists to carve out new roles and responsibilities. The emergence of knowledge management is just one of those opportunities.[33] "Knowledge is still power, but being part of the team that creates it, gathers it, shares it, and refines it is necessary to be successful as an information professional in the nineties."[34]

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NOTES

1. Peg C. Neuhauser, *Corporate Legends and Lore: The Power of Storytelling as a Management Tool,* (McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1993): 187; "First and foremost, then, a corporate archives helps a business to understand itself: how it got where it is today, its strengths and shortcomings, and its role within its sphere of operations. ...Archival records, moreover, assist the corporation in projecting a positive image of itself and in creating good will. Information about the corporation can build identity and loyalty among employees and can prove useful in orientation and training programs." Donn C. Neal, "Introduction," in *Corporate Archives and History: Making the Past Work,* Arnita A. Jones and Philip L. Cantelon, eds. (Malabar, Florida: Krieger Publishing Company, 1993): 2–3. There are several recent examples in the insurance industry where a primarily history focus is driving the development of new or existing corporate archives. The American Insurance Group hired a corporate archivist in late 1996 to start an archives based primarily on historical utility. Mutual of New York is funding a survey of insurance archives to help it decide what materials it needs to collect to preserve its company heritage and the future use of its history. And a Wisconsin insurer, American Family, recently publicized its archives to employees as the "keeper of the past, where "many interesting artifacts" are stored, and where neat trivia like how much was paid out for a typical claim in 1927 can be found. "Keeper of Our Past," *All American* (February 1997): 16–17.
2. Rick Tetzeli, "Surviving Information Overload," *Fortune* 130 (July 11, 1994): 60; John McDonald, "Managing Information in an Office Systems Environment: The IMOSA Project," *American Archivist* 58:2 (Spring 1995): 146–147. For similar sentiments regarding university archives, see Lee Stout, "The Role of University Archives in the Campus Information Environment," *American Archivist,* op. cit., 124–140.
3. For instance, see John J. Grabowski, "Keepers, Users, and Funders: Building an Awareness of Archival Value," *American Archivist* 55:3 (Summer 1992): 464–473.
4. Helen Tibbo takes a thoughtful stab at defining reference techniques in an electronic environment. From the corporate perspective, however, she is essentially paving over cowpaths: major corporations tend to display more connectivity than the environments she focuses on. Therefore, her still primarily reactive reference philosophy won't be of much use to proactive corporate information providers. Helen R. Tibbo, "Interviewing Techniques for Remote Reference: Electronic Versus Traditional Environments," *American Archivist* 58:3 (Summer 1995): 294 ff. See also Karl M. Pearson and Diana J. Jarvis, "Drumming Up Business," *Special Libraries* 87:3 (Summer 1996): 163–168; Craig St. Clair, "Electronic Outreach in the Archives: Bringing Them in at Digital Equipment Corporation", *SAA Business Archives Section Newsletter* 11:2 (Winter 1994) 4; Linda Folland, "Amway's Data Central: A Global Media Archive as a Tool for Corporate Communications Strategy," *SAA Business Archives Section Newsletter* 13:1 (Summer 1996): 7; Adam L. Gruen, "MCI History at the Desktop", *The Business Archivist & Archives Newsletter* 1:1 (February 1997): 8–10.
5. "All archivists, whatever the archives in their care, accomplish the culture function of protecting the existing evidence of past cultures for future cultures to interpret, absorb, and creatively renew." Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," *American Archivist* 57:2 (Spring 1994): 328; see also Margaret Hedstrom, "Electronic Archives: Integrity and Access in the Network Environment," *American Archivist* 58:3 (Summer 1995): 317–318; Bruce H. Bruemmer, "Avoiding Accidents of Evidence: Functional Analysis in the Appraisal of Business Records," paper presented at The Records of American Business Symposium, 12 April 1996, Minnesota Historical Society, Saint Paul, Minnesota: 2; Philip F. Mooney, "The Practice of History in Corporate America: Business Archives in the United States," Jones and Canteleon, op. cit., 17–19; for an extremist societal perspective, where the author takes a 'what's the point' look at the practicality of documenting the volumes of information produced today, see Cullen Murphy, "Backlogs of History," *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1996): 20–22; for a rebuttal of the belief that a corporation has a social obligation to save its records for society, see Timothy L. Ericson, "Beyond Business: External Documentation and Corporate Records," paper presented at The Records of American Business Symposium, op. cit.
6. One of the latest theorists to argue the pros of structural analysis is forced to admit that "Structure is particularly problematical as a guide to the appraisal of business records ... because [it] has so many variables and is so protean." After that caveat, he then asserts that structure is "indispensable" to arrangement and description, an assertion which may hold true for 'dead records,' but which continues to be problematical for corporate archivists attempting to deal with the 'living records' of an extremely fluid organization. Christopher Baer, "Strategy, Structure, Detail, Function: Four Parameters of the

Appraisal of Business Records", paper presented at The Records of American Business Symposium, op. cit., 31; the discussion of the virtual corporation is from Nick Blozan, "Network Production and Restoration for Today and Tomorrow," *Industrial Management* 37 (March–April 1995): 27; see also Bruemmer, ibid., 18.

7. For a discussion of the levels of appraisal necessary to adequately document business, see both Bruemmer and Baer, ibid. See also Michael Nash, "Small Business, Manufacturing, and Flexible Specialization: Implications for the Archivist," *American Archivist* 58:3 (Summer 1995): 286.
8. Leo R. Gotlieb, "Our Journey with Information Management," *Management Accounting Magazine*, Society of Management Accountants of Canada (November 1994): 18; for a detailed examination of the expected developments in desktop technology and their implications, see Ronald F. E. Weissman, "Archives and the New Information Architecture of the Late 1990s," *American Archivist* 57:1 (Winter 1994): 20–35; for a discussion of practical business applications of Lotus Notes, the leading groupware product on the market, see Diana d'Ambra, "Full Power of Notes Frequently Goes Untapped," *Best's Review Life/Health* (August 1996): 90–93; see also Bruemmer, ibid. The notion of a paperless office and its implications for archivists was touched upon in *American Archivist* in the early 1980s; see Richard M. Kesner, "Microcomputer Archives and Records Management Systems: Guidelines for Future Development," *American Archivist* 45:3 (Summer 1982): 299 ff.; for a more recent discussion see McDonald, op. cit., 142–153.
9. Both David Bearman and Charles Dollar have pointed out the cost inefficiencies of creating a centralized electronic records storage environment. Hedstrom, op. cit., 319–320.
10. A necessary implication of this shift would be clearly placing the burden of documenting business records on external repositories. This in turn provides impetus to the paradigm of industry-wide documentation planning. Perhaps the future of documenting the records of American business will not be on an individual company basis, but as the result of concerted efforts to collect limited materials from a lot of companies. This could be done along the models already established by the Minnesota Historical Society's relationship with 3M, and Duke University's with J. Walter Thompson, but it would probably be unrealistic to expect a significant portion of American businesses to buy into this concept. It may be that most businesses have too few incentives and too few resources to ever make this concept work on an industry-wide basis. "Like world peace, when the time comes to make difficult decisions, the result will almost always be based on a local or institutional self-interest rather than 'the greater good,'" which makes working without corporate cooperation the most likely of all possible scenarios. In this environment, it may be that the best way to document American business may be external documentation, the kind of data linkage of informational resources that has been the bread and butter of historians for years. Repositories may design strategies to collect publicly available information on the company, obtaining copies of tax and regulatory filings, press releases, articles, online sources, and other valuable and relatively accessible sources. It is not a perfect solution to documenting business records (see Duranti, op. cit.), but it may be the most practical one. Ericson, ibid., 8; for an in-depth discussion of the variegated solutions to the issue of acquiring and retaining business records, see Karen Benedict, " Collecting Repositories and Corporate Archives: Variations on a Theme?," paper presented at The Records of American Business Symposium, op. cit.
11. An important discussion of flexibility and proactivity can be found in Robert Irving Berkman, *Rethinking the Corporate Information Center: A Blueprint for the 21st Century* (FND/SVP 1995), especially chapter 7; see also James V. McGee, Laurence Prusak, and Philip J. Pyburn, *Managing Information Strategically* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.1993): chapter 5; in England, "'There are many cases where companies are having to reinstate information departments they had earlier axed.' For this reason…information scientists need to promote themselves and their skills to the rest of the organization." Richard Poynder, "Back in Good Books: Richard Poynder on the Corporate Librarian's Transformation," *Financial Times*, The Financial Times Ltd., 17 January 1996: 20. For similar views, see Lewis J. Perelman, "Why Barnstormers Will Inherit the Knowledge Era," *Knowledge Inc.* 1:4 (July 1996); "Employers place far less emphasis on experience and much more on adaptability. Most of all, they're looking for people who can learn." David Stamps, "Are We Smart Enough for Our Jobs?", *Training* (April 1996): 44; McDonald, op. cit., 146–147; Stout, op. cit., 138–140.
12. Lois A. Remeikis, "Knowledge Management: Roles for Information Professionals," *Business & Finance Bulletin* 100 (Fall 1995): 41; "A lot of the value of the corporation is in the minds of the employees." Joseph Maglitta, "Smarten Up! Management," *Computerworld* (5 June 1995): 84. Most corporate archivists don't need to be told about the ephemeral nature of individual knowledge, nor its significance as a corporate asset. In a growth environment, the wisdom of a wizened veteran doesn't always receive the wide circulation it deserves due to logistical issues. According to an estimate by

Fortune, 62% of an industrial company's assets are intangible—ideas, concepts, time, and talent. And it is all at risk in an atmosphere of normal turnover, let alone downsizing. Standard corporate turnover rates average about 10%; in five years that rate will result in the loss of 50% of a firm's experienced workers, so capturing that knowledge either as it is created or before it leaves could be a key competitive advantage. Thomas A. Stewart, "Mapping Corporate Brainpower," *Fortune* 32 (30 October 1995): 209; Laurie W. Payne, "Unlocking an Organization's Ultimate Potential through Knowledge Management," *Knowledge Management in Practice* (American Productivity & Quality Center, 1996): 5.

13. "In cyberspace, knowledge only has to be produced once, and it can then be shared to anybody in the corporation, anyplace, anytime." Michel Bauwens, "Cyberspace: The Final Frontier?," *The Information Advisor* FIND/SVP 7:6 (June 1995): 1. "Knowledge workers are end users who employ a wide range of information technologies to draw on diverse information resources to address their immediate needs through sophisticated sifting, search, and reassembly of data into highly usable formats." Richard M. Kesner, "Group Work, 'Groupware,' and the Transformation of Information Resource Management," *American Archivist* 58:2 (Spring 1995): 157.
14. Maglitta, op. cit.; Payne, op. cit., 3–7.
15. Peter F. Drucker, *The Age of Discontinuity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1968): 263–380; Drucker continued to develop his notions on knowledge and knowledge workers into the 1980s. See Drucker, "The Coming of the New Organization," *Harvard Business Review* (January–February 1988): 45–53; Malone quoted in Stewart, op. cit.; for a period-piece prophecy regarding the expense of the information issue, see Drucker, "The Manager and the Moron," in *Technology, Management & Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970): 166–177, especially 172–173.
16. Poynder, op. cit.; Rick Mullin, "Knowledge Management: A Cultural Evolution," *Journal of Business Strategy* (September/October 1996): 58; Stamps, op. cit.; George Taninecz, "The Web Within," *Industry Week* (4 March 1996): 45 ff.
17. "Information professionals can play a valuable role in the technology area because of their understanding of search engines and for their ability to interpret the technical requirements of users to a company's information technology group." They "function as the conduit to corporate knowledge." Remeikis, op. cit.; Stamps, op. cit. In Lotus Notes, databases can be arranged in 'views' to facilitate end user access to the information. Properly crafted views require familiarity with both the databased information and the needs of the end users. Kesner, "Information Resource Management," op. cit.; d'Ambra, op. cit.
18. Gotlieb, op. cit.
19. "In Praise of Knowledge: It's Time to Move on from Information," editorial, *The Economist* (UK) 27 May 1995: 20; Tetzeli, op. cit.; Taninecz, op. cit.; David Schenk, "Data Smog," *The Next Progressive* (September 1993). Drucker once again anticipated these issues as early as 1957 in a paper before a conference on management science in which he described the paralysis of managers in the face of too much information. "Organization of information is often more important to the ability to perceive and act than analysis and understanding of the information." Drucker, "Long-Range Planning" in *Technology, Management & Society*, op. cit., 129–148, especially 136–137.
20. Michel Bauwens, "Knowledge Transfer, part 2," *Information Advisor* FIND/SVP 7:7 (July 1995): 5; *The Economist*, op. cit.; McGee and Prusak, op. cit., 137.
21. Poynder, op. cit.; one highly visible expression of the importance of humanized information systems is Thomas H. Davenport, "Saving IT's Soul: Human-Centered Information Management," *Harvard Business Review* (March–April 1994): 119–131. For an additional discussion of the need for information professionals as key and necessary filters for controlling Infobog even for experienced users, see Maglitta, op. cit.; Bauwens, op. cit.; Jon Foley, "Infoglut: New Tools Can Help Tame an Ocean of Data", *Information Week* (30 October 1995): 30, Fiona J. Mellor Ghilardi, "The Information Center of the Future: The Professional's Role", *ONLINE* (November/December 1994): 8–9; Stamps, op. cit.; Herbert S. White, "White Papers: The Perilous but Also Opportune Future for Special Librarians", *Library Journal* (January 1996): 59. For the Asimov quote, go to *http://www.cipher-sys.com*.
22. "[Archivists] are raised professionally in a tradition of uniqueness. We invoke uniqueness as both a rationale for action and an excuse for inaction. But we have made the mistake of extending the uniqueness of our records to a uniqueness in the techniques of managing them." Frank G. Burke, "Archival Cooperation," *American Archivist* 46 (Summer 1983): 294; for a practical discussion of the uniting of various types of information professionals into an Information Utility model, see Richard M. Kesner, "The Library as Information Center: A "Utility" Model for Information Resource Management and Support," *Library Trends* 42:3 (January 1994): 373. Margaret Hedstrom, in her perceptive article on networked organizations argues for the continuing need to differentiate between electronic reposito-

ries like archives and libraries, but in a corporation where both functions are subsumed under one common goal—to contribute to the bottom line—such differentiation will in most cases be irrelevant and potentially cost ineffective. However, Hedstrom's more current thinking on "distributed electronic archives" (a network of electronically linked institutional archives), described at a recent conference on documenting the digital age, is a paradigm that more closely parallels today's environment in the corporate world in that it utilizes technology to connect isolated pockets of information; Hedstrom, op. cit., 316–317; Margaret Hedstrom, "How Do We Make Electronic Archives Usable and Accessible?", paper presented at the Documenting the Digital Age Conference, 12 February 1997, Villa Florence Hotel, San Francisco, California, *http://dtda.mci.com.*

23. Remiekis, op. cit.; *The Economist*, op. cit.; Stout, op. cit., 139.
24. Stewart, op. cit.; Value-added processes are characteristics or attributes which are added to the data to make it more valuable to the user than the original information. Susan K. Goodman, "Measuring the Value Added by Records and Information Management Programs," *Records Management Quarterly* 28 (April 1994): 3; for a thoughtful discussion of the differences between data, information, knowledge, intelligence, and wisdom, see Bauwens, "Cyberspace: The Final Frontier?," op. cit.; see also Bauwens, "Knowledge Transfer, part 2," op. cit., and "Twenty-First Century Information Systems Management," 4030MIT, Datapro Information Services Group, (June 1996): 8.
25. For technology, see Remeikis, op. cit., and Richard N. Katz and Victoria A. Davis, "The Impact of Automation on Our Corporate Memory" in Jones and Canteleon, op. cit., 115–121; for the personal touch, see David Kaye "Sources of Information, Formal and Informal," Information Sources for Managers, *Management Decision* 33 (September 1995): 13; Davenport, op. cit., 121; Payne, op. cit., 5; Lori Zipperer, "The Creative Professional and Knowledge," *Special Libraries* 84:2 (Spring 1993).
26. The literature abounds with the importance of overcoming proprietary information cultures. Three of the most useful are McGee and Prusak, op. cit., chapter 6; Davenport, op. cit., 120, 124–127; and Thomas H. Davenport, R.G. Eccles, and Laurence Prusak, "Information Politics," *Sloan Management Review* (Fall 1992). For a detailed statistical analysis of the existence and impact of organizational proprietary culture, see http://cism.bus.ute...du./suri/node1.html. For a discussion of the opportunities present to archivists who embrace the new world order, see Hedstrom, "Electronic Archives," op. cit.
27. d'Ambra, op. cit. For a discussion of the impact of technology on traditional archivists which, while a thoughtful and necessary wake-up call, still may—in some basic respects—constitute paving over cowpaths, see Avra Michelson and Jeff Rothenberg, "Scholarly Communication and Information Technology: Exploring the Impact of Changes in the Research Process on Archives," *American Archivist* 55:2 (Spring 1992): 236–315; for a counterpoint to the view that technology will force archivists away from their theoretical groundings, see Luciana Duranti, "Commentary", *American Archivist* 57:1 (Winter 1994): 36–41. Duranti's argument is flawed from a corporate perspective in that its assumptions are based on traditional archival precepts, which have limited applicability in corporate settings. She argues that protecting the integrity and impartiality of the records should be the "first duty" of every archivist. In a corporation, however, integrity in the traditional corporate hierarchy is generally the purview of non-archival areas like records managers, systems managers, and the legal department; impartiality is an often irrelevant virtue in a for-profit environment. Regarding preservation being an essential component of the knowledge economy, Donald Waters has recently built a persuasive case for linking the concept of knowledge and the function of archives in a digital environment; see Donald J. Waters, "How Do We Archive Digital Records? Report of the CPA/RLG Task Force," 11 February 1997, paper presented at the Documenting the Digital Age Conference, op. cit.
28. There is a school of thought among management consultants that even the most adaptable organizational cultures must continue to strongly emphasize stability and continuity with the past. "If it does not, the organization would not be flexible and adaptive. It would be chaos and filled with continual confusion." Neuhauser, op. cit.
29. Bauwens, "Knowledge Transfer, part 2," op. cit.; Kesner, "The Library as Information Center," op. cit.; for a more detailed discussion of this phenomena, see Tora K. Bikson, "Organizational Trends and Electronic Media: Work in Progress," *American Archivist* 57:1 (Winter 1994): 48–69; Weissman, op cit. As caretakers of one of those physical and intellectual fiefdoms based on a monopoly of knowledge, corporate archivists need to reinvent themselves in the face of knowledge-sharing influences in order to continue to justify their existence. "Constantly evolving technology has also demanded that librarians reinvent themselves and their jobs." Poynder, op. cit.; see also McDonald, op cit. For a discussion of what those changes might mean for information professional skill sets, see Marydee Ojala, "Core Competencies for Special Library Managers of the Future," *Special Libraries* 84:3 (Fall 1993): 230. Ojala postulates an electronic future when 'cybrarians' proactively access, evaluate, for-

mat, and market cross-disciplinary data in a customer-driven fashion. They provide information leadership and are in tune with shifting organizational and human dynamics. See also "People Part of Groupware," *ONLINE* (March 1994): 276 ff. See Pearson and Jarvis, op. cit., and Perelman, op. cit., for further discussions of information professional core competencies.

30. Although hired for their specialized knowledge, archivists can also find that expertise is an isolating factor—a creator of powerlessness. Alison J. Head and William Fisher, "Special Librarians: The Origins of Power and the Susceptibilities to Powerlessness," *Special Libraries* 86 (Spring 1995): 121; as corporate hierarchies go through a technology-driven shaking-out process, foresighted archivists are presented with an opportunity to reach for the brass ring. "Networked information and communication technologies permit entire firms...to reconsider traditional boundaries and invent new organizational forms." Bikson, op. cit.; on recognizing and pursuing opportunity, see also Weissman, op. cit.; Duranti, op. cit.; John McDonald, "Commentary," *American Archivist* 57:1 (Winter 1994): 42–45; Victoria Irons Walch, "Commentary," *American Archivist*, ibid., 76–81. "With their [networks] introduction, power moves from the bureaucracy (those who control the flow of non-sharable paper-based information) to the cyberocracy (those with the best skills to access the shared knowledge streams on the networks). Power goes to those most adept at consensus-formation through knowledge-sharing." Bauwens, "Knowledge Transfer, part 2," op. cit.; "Powerless special librarians are regularly cast aside to the bottom of the organization where their work becomes unrecognized, their chance at developing coalitions is nil, and their self-esteem is minimized," resulting in some cases "psychological distress, discontent, loss of productivity, and...even sabotage." Head and Fisher, op. cit.; see also Ghilardi, op. cit., on the need for aggressiveness on the part of information professionals in driving changes in organizational information processes, as it is they "who have first-hand experience with research sources and users and their needs"; for an overview of proactive outreach in the corporate environment, see Helene F. Jaillet, "Corporate Politics and the Information Professional," *ONLINE* 17:4 (July 1993): 48, and Pearson and Jarvis, op. cit. Jaillet emphasizes doing basic legwork to identify the organizational and political structures within a corporation, and then tailoring a strategy for finding a niche in these power loops; one information specialist argues that the proper proactive strategy in a downsizing environment is not to validate bad management decisions such as reducing library budgets by working to maintain the quality of what's left. Instead, special librarians should attempt to convince management that they made a mistake and steer them away from the empowered end-user panacea. This is, I think, a wrong-headed approach in that it places information professionals directly in conflict with centers of power, which violates a basic principle of organizational politics: *Never gratuitously make enemies*. I believe a more fruitful strategy would be to stop trying to defend what once was; instead, move forward by anticipating future needs and then position oneself to help the corporation meet those needs. White, op. cit.
31. One of the most powerful expressions of this strategic approach, from the library perspective, is Thomas H. Davenport and Laurence Prusak, "Blow Up the Corporate Library," *International Journal of Information Management* 13 (December, 1993): 405–412; Poynder, op. cit.; Head and Fisher, op. cit.; Stamps, op. cit.; "Special librarians seeking to enhance their organizational power must also assess potential power bases that are expandable. ...Organizations increasingly require someone who is able to merge technical expertise with general organizational management, decision-making, and in turn, corporate power." Involvement with high-risk innovative projects is crucial to future success in that the teamwork brings executive visibility and additional skills. "Special librarians are desirable intercompany candidates for teams because of their research expertise; their ability to access, organize, and filter information; and their understanding of information-seeking behavior." Head and Fisher, op. cit.; for Anderson reference, see Stewart, op. cit.; for an example from the archival world, see Folland, op. cit.
32. It is also an issue for other information professionals, as a look at the literature will attest. "Becoming 'chief knowledge officers' or managers could help some IS groups gain or regain organizational stature." Maglitta, op. cit.; "Don't Be Shut Out," *Information Week* (16 January 1995): 28.
33. Head and Fisher, op. cit.; "In the modern organization, knowledge centers...are probably the most important input of evaluated information to major decision making. Each of these centers is made up of highly knowledgeable people who either process internal information or monitor the external environment and adapt and interpret external information in the context of internal information and decision needs." Goodman, op. cit.
34. Remeikis, op. cit.

PUBLICATION REVIEW

The New-York Historical Society: Lessons from One Nonprofit's Long Struggle for Survival. By Kevin M. Guthrie. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 1996. 246 pp. Bibliography and index. Hardcover. $30.95.

The headlines were indeed sensational. On February 4, 1993, the *New York Times* reported that the venerable New-York Historical Society would shut down its library, cancel nearly all public programs, and dismiss 41 staff members. The condition of the society was near disaster. On hearing the report, anyone who managed an independent historical agency certainly kept an eye to the news to follow the aftermath of this sad story. Newspapers can be a valuable source of information, and in subsequent stories the *Times* did report on a succession of events and decisions that averted the first-envisioned worst case scenario. But was there more to the story? Were there lessons to be learned? Officials at the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, which was helpful in the eventual reorganization of the NYHS, wisely saw the need for a more serious and complete study of these events. Though the case was extreme, it clearly rested on factors, events, pressures, and trends familiar to all who manage private independent historical societies.

The Mellon Foundation commissioned Kevin M. Guthrie, of its staff, to essentially write a case history with the expectation that all who have responsibilities of this kind could benefit from a detailed understanding of the struggles of such a prominent institution. Guthrie, whose background includes an MBA from Columbia University, delved into the history of the NYHS, paying particular attention to shifts in management and in financial operations. He portrays the institution as essentially conservative and Old World, struggling to address its multi-faceted mission (including the historical museum, library, manuscript collection, and art collection). In recent years, expenses often exceeded income with the difference met by transfers from an unrestricted endowment. This pattern forced a real crisis when the stock market crashed in 1987. That forced the NYHS to look at its current operating procedures and its general financial future.

With his perspective as financial consultant, Guthrie then chronicles a story of strategy after strategy that seemed always to fall short of expectations. They included deaccessioning, bold program initiatives, institutional affiliation, and retrenchment. However, from 1987 to 1995 the NYHS accumulated more than $15 million in additional deficits (including depreciation).

The analysis is thorough and provocative. Guthrie is not afraid to raise some hard issues. In the process, he provides a far better sense of what it means for an academic institution to be vulnerable. I learned a lot from the book. The one area where he seems to have pulled his punches a bit relate to the membership and trustees of the organization.

Their role in the strategic shifts of the NYHS seemed pivotal at certain moments over the past 40 years, but they are not fully discussed or explained. On the other hand, the role of the staff and of the administration is carefully discussed and documented. This and the financial aspects are the strength of the book.

As this book went to press, the story had not yet ended. In fact, the NYHS still exists and seems to have found an appropriate combination of strategies. Items have been deaccessioned and the library has affiliated with New York University. Hopefully, all will be well.

Professional concerns over the administration of archives and museums generally focus on matters relating to collections. There is very little literature on issues of management and administration within that context. This book not only addresses central issues in the administration of cultural patrimony, it does so in a sound, effective, and analytical way.

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Development of an Expert Assistant for Archival Appraisal of Electronic Communications: An Exploratory Study. By Anne Gilliland-Swetland. University of Michigan Ph.D. dissertation. 1995. 256 pp. Available from University Microfilms, $46.00 microfilm/$57.50 softbound.

The Cook and the Eater

The use of the concepts, methodologies, and techniques of Knowledge Technology in the archival community is, as far as I know, not particularly widespread. This sounds like an understatement, but it is therefore no less remarkable. Archival work (not only that part of it that we call "intellectual control") is almost by definition based on knowledge; and information technology is a part of daily life, as common as the pencil and card trays of the '50s. Why not, then, apply this powerful extension to information technology, or Knowledge Technology. Its scientific area is not too extreme: universities offer courses and degrees in it. Its application in society is neither the exclusive domain of scientists nor of the computer branch. Insurance companies rely on Knowledge Technology, as do many transport firms, spare parts centers, and oil companies.

One can guess at an explanation. First, of course, there is the unfamiliarity with the science. But, beyond that, I can observe a similar professional reluctance towards it

among medical doctors, lawyers, and other professionals. Knowledge is something you acquire as a professional. I would almost say that it is something you possess. What would a patient think of his doctor generating his diagnosis out of a PC? For many professionals, knowing something by heart seems to be better than retrieving knowledge from a system. The professional may be partially right. The reputation of previous generations of expert systems is not great; they pretended to replace the human expert without having the human capability of thinking with the right brain, missing the quality of intuitive thinking, despite techniques of fuzzy logic and so on. One of the very few archival examples of expert systems, as early as 1986 at NARA, made this clear.[1] But sciences experience evolution, and even computer scientists change their thinking.

What is Knowledge Technology? The term, or Information and Knowledge Technology, covers, more or less, a variety of related terms, including Artificial Intelligence, Expert Systems, Knowledge Engineering, Knowledge-Based Systems, and so on. Related to Knowledge Technology is the field of Knowledge Management, including learning organizations. The roots go back to the '50s with the work of M. Davis, A. Newell, H.A. Simon, and J.C. Shaw on problem solving. The first expert systems were developed a decade later, in the late 1960s, but it took until the 1970s before research started on a large scale. The early expert systems mostly concerned the field of medical diagnosis, with applications such as MYCIN, developed at Stanford University.

If we leave aside artificial intelligence and natural language processing, we see a development towards less pretentious systems. Rather than replacing the expert, they support her or him by suggesting solutions, and by offering tools for preserving experience and new knowledge. One of the basics of modern knowledge systems is the separation of knowledge and inference. Instead of implementing systems intelligence (how it should work) as algorithms into the program, the knowledge is modeled as a separate part of the system and implemented into knowledge bases, using a special knowledge-representation formalism. Subsequently, the knowledge is applied by highly standardized inference engines to transform the input into the required output. A modern expert system is rarely written in a high-level programming language, but usually built in a special, restricted environment, in an expert shell.[2] Reaching beyond conventional information systems, the development of a knowledge-based system consists typically of identifying knowledge-intensive processes, knowledge acquisition (from experts), and knowledge representation.[3]

An archival representative of the latter sort of knowledge-based systems we find in Anne Gilliland-Swetland's dissertation *Development of an Expert Assistant for Archival Appraisal of Electronic Communications: An Exploratory Study* (University of Michigan, School of Information and Library Studies, 1995). As a matter of fact, archival appraisal is quite likely an interesting area for the application of Knowledge Technology since it depends heavily upon the knowledge and experience of an expert (the archivist) and since the appraisal of electronic records in particular might be supported by automated systems or even conducted by computerized tools. In the author's words, the study "represents one attempt to address, from an archival perspective, the emerging need to facilitate the distillation of mission-appropriate information and evidence from the ever-growing mass of information created and communicated by networked

eletronic information and record-keeping systems." With the basic components of a knowledge-based system in mind, we will look more closely at the dissertation. We must keep in mind that the study has been undertaken in the domain of the electronic communications of Michigan State University, from the perspective of a university archivist.

Indeed, the researcher puts much energy into knowledge acquisition, seeking "to delineate existing archival appraisal theory and practices based on expert opinions." The second chapter of the dissertation contains a review of literature associated with both archival appraisal and electronic records—limited practically to North American literature—including a short section on documentation strategy. Except for this one-sided limitation, this is a first step in knowledge acquisition. The chapter deals wtih issues such as the place of appraisal in archival work, appraisal principles, and appraisal methods, all of them essential components of expert knowledge. The sections on electronic records are useful, but in my opinion they deserved a separate chapter, which would include the specific questions related to the appraisal of electronic records.

Chapter 3 is devoted completely to research methodology. The author states that "the methodology employed for this research marks a new direction for archival research and systems development, and was not modeled directly from any one approach used previously in archival research. Its underlying philosophy, however (that is, a modular research structure employing a variety of quantitative and qualitative techniques), was in line with that currently advocated by several respected communications and bibliometrics researchers." This would be true for any other similar research. Knowledge Technology in particular comes with methodologies and technologies that are new to archival science. Some knowledge scientists even advocate that the biggest advantage of applying these principles and methods is that it results in better information systems.

Gilliland-Swetland's methodology was based on modules. The first was citation analysis. This entailed a bibliometric analysis of citations in the archival literature (a quantitative technique) in order to identify living individuals who might be considered "experts" in the area of archival appraisal. The second module was knowledge acquisition. Through bibliometric tectoniques, particularly citation analysis, Gilliland-Swetland tried to acquire expert knowledge from both literature and appraisal experts. In line with accepted thinking regarding knowledge acquisition from experts, she conducted interviews and follow-up discussions with the identified experts (qualitative technique). The third module was the testing by building an expert prototype, using CLIPS software as an expert shell. The kernel of this part was the codification of knowledge and systems development.

Prior to the knowledge acquisition, Gilliland-Swetland anticipated a core filter. She expected further refinements by analyzing the knowledge of the interviewed experts. "Because of the lack of agreement on appraisal principles and heuristics," she modified and simplified considerably her proposed methodology and combined the acquired knowledge into several groupings representing the type of appraisal considerations cited, as well as how frequently each consideration was cited. At this point, the selection of the expert system software took place, followed by the actual programing and testing.

The essence of the research in this case is the bibliographic research and the knowledge acquisition. The aims of this part of the research were to establish that there was a core of commonly agreed-upon and codifiable principles and heuristics in archival appraisal, and to determine that this core could be transformed into rules for an expert system. The generic core would eventually be merged with rules derived from specific contextual information about Michigan State University. Such an approach is in line with the methodology for developing a knowledge-based system. But, as the author herself expressed clearly, the danger is that there is not an agreed-upon core of archival appraisal theory and practice. Looking at the 34 pages of statements by only nine experts, one may see an interesting variation in opinions. What is more, the whole knowledge acquisition part of the dissertation is summarized by a remark by David Bearman, on page 165, that "the cause, very simply, is that 'archivists' don't agree about what they do and so a standard description of how they do it fails to achieve agreement. For a 'profession,' this is a far more damning conclusion." The reader may imagine what the results would have been if European, Australian, South American, African and Asian experts had expressed their opinion. Or, one step further, the user of the archives. Because, indeed, who is the expert in a restaurant: the cook or the eater? (I carried out similar research in the Netherlands and arrived at similar results. There was agreement among the archival experts, but the statements were so vague that they could not be transformed into any kind of formal knowledge representation. The non-archival experts, however, the eaters, disagreed, but without being able to express more clearly their criteria.)[4]

In the limited domain of Michigan State University, Gilliland-Swetland could build upon her own knowledge and experience. One of her conclusions, on pages 181-182, was that the lack of consensus among the appraisal experts reduces the generalizability of any system developed with knowledge acquired from them. I find this conclusion, if true, a more important one than the test results of the expert assistant developed for Michigan State University. For me, the underlying reason is not the individual character of archives—a commonly used argument, at least in Europe—but deficiencies in archival methodology. Analyzing the grouping of expert statements does not reveal to me too much of an analysis of the appraisal process. And there I come to my main criticism of the research: the system development part of it. The dissertation focuses on knowledge acquisition and building the inference functions, what Gilliland-Swetland calls the filters. No doubt, the very heart, and no doubt a fine job with conclusions that should be taken into consideration by the archival community. But I miss the framework of the analysis of the business application, and systems design. On the other hand, I must confess that it would make the book less readable for archivists. Now it is at least 90% common archival language. To use a Dutch expression: it is without one single French word. It is worth publishing.

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NOTES

1 See *Methodology for Developing an Expert System for Information Retrieval at the National Archives and Records Administration, Final Report.* Arlington, 1986.
2 Peter Lucas and Linda van der Gaag, *Principles of Expert Systems.* Wokingham: Addison-Wesley, 1991.
3 Based on *Yourdon Systems Method,* the Netherlands Center for Knowledge Technology (CIBIT) developed a model-driven methodology for Knowledge-Based systems: SDF (System Development Framework).
4 Peter Horsman, *The Application of Knowledge Engineering in Archival Appraisal.* s-Gravenhage, 1997.

The Records of American Business. Edited by James O'Toole. Chicago, IL: The Society of American Archivists, 1997. 411 pages. Bibliography and index. Hardcover. Available from the Society of American Archivists, $34.95 members/$39.95 nonmembers.

Bottom line? The *Records of American Business* (RAB) is a wonderful book. It would earn kudos if only because it brings together 16 wide-ranging essays from 20 notable authors on issues relevant to business archivists. Given the scarce and generally dated nature of business archives literature to begin with, any contemporary contribution of this size constitutes an order of magnitude improvement.

But RAB is more than just an addition to the literature—its codification of business records topics and approaches stands as a quantum leap in the field. The depth of thought it brings to contemporary issues facing business records, its measured delving into controversial topics, and yes, even its flaws make it a rarity among archival literature—a truly seminal publication. It will, of course, serve as a standard reference for business archivists and their more open-minded colleagues from non-business repositories for decades to come. But by its elevation of archival pragmatism to ideological heights, it also throws out a challenge that will hopefully spark urgently-needed discussions among 20th-century documentarians of all kinds.

That there are indeed connections between the collection of business records and more mainstream efforts to preserve this century's history is a basic premise of RAB. James O'Toole, the editor of the collection, offers in his forward that "The challenges of preserving and making available the documentation of contemporary human activity may be seen in sharp relief by business archivists...non-business archivists have much to learn from their colleagues in corporate settings." While his interpretation that business archivists are on the cutting edge of archivy may be scoffed at by some, the universality of the business record experience is an effectively presented assertion threaded through many of the essays.

The problems facing the collection of American business records—arguably the most challenging task facing those seeking to document 20th-century American society—are manifold. Many of RAB's authors touch on various aspects of these problems,

which result in a multi-faceted (if slightly repetitive) delineation of the past and current business records environment. James Fogerty and John Fleckner insightfully point to America's social ambiguity towards business and history as factors complicating the preservation of business records. Fogerty, in a thoughtful tract on the role of oral history in documenting business, notes that "People like the things business brings—jobs, consumer goods, and services—but also have a well-developed sense of skepticism about the motives of business people, often honed by politicians and labor leaders whose own agendas have often depended on lines drawn between their own interests and those of business." Fleckner points to another schizophrenic social quality in his essay on business history in popular culture, when he describes "the paradox of the American public's dislike of history as an academic subject and the public's fascination with it outside of schools and universities."

These social ambivalences, and the implications they pose for acquiring resources to collect and maintain business records, clearly constitute a significant challenge for 20th-century documentarians for—as several essays suggest—it appears unlikely that the corporate world will ever document American business adequately enough to meet society's needs. Richard Cox and Christopher Baer contend that archivy in general has failed to make headway in the corporate world. Philip Mooney, the corporate archivist for Coca Cola, characterizes existing corporate archives as being locked in a two-decade-long period of stagnation brought on by their own myopic inability to interact with changing business patterns; he further postulates that this state may well continue for the foreseeable future because of archivy's failure to demonstrate to management its ability to support essential, ongoing (i.e., non-event-specific) business processes. Several essayists remark on the roller coaster history of corporate archives, and Michael Nash's piece on business historiography places those ups and downs in the larger context of business records usage. But Karen Benedict, in a measured and diplomatic treatment of the merits of internal archival programs and external business records repositories, says it best when she notes that most business archives have "a relatively short and unproved track record." This lack of permanency in corporate archives, which by definition should be permanent offices, means that external repositories are where—either by corporate choice or by company mortality—a large portion of business records will eventually reside, thus placing the burden of support back in the social arena.

While this lack of permanency is a significant obstacle to collecting business records, clearly the biggest hurdle to be overcome is the volume of records businesses produce. So it is fitting that the philosophical heart of the book is its contribution to the literature on appraisal. While each essay postulates different approaches toward defining the documentary core of a business enterprise, they have in common a pragmatic realization that there exists a tension between traditional appraisal theory on the European model, which focuses on protecting the integrity of the record, and the American interpretation of appraisal, which is largely cost-driven and concerned with different documentation priorities. This tension, according to Christopher Baer, "may be resolved in any number of ways, but not without some violence to one or both sides."

In these essays, it is generally theory that takes the pounding. Francis Blouin, in his introduction, asserts that "The ultimate purpose of appraisal is to foster the use of business records." Nash, in a revealing study of business historiography, cites a need to

adjust collecting practices to the realities of historiographical use. Bruce Bruemmer in his article on functional appraisal describes the game of corporate archiving as "one of survival, where an academic approach to documenting a company represents a luxury of time and resources." Cox, while arguing in a challenging yet contentious piece on electronic records that archivists must return to a focus on records and record keeping systems in order to successfully confront the electronic records challenge, still acknowledges that within the walls of the typical business, archivists and records managers "must work to demonstrate that the older records support the ongoing activity and mission of the corporation in order to stress the relevance of the records and the considerable costs in managing these records that need to be justified." Timothy Ericson suggests in his creative tract on documenting business through external resources that archivists should consider the broad range of appraisal strategies available to them, and then tailor these options to fit their own needs, for "... it becomes easier to make decisions based upon one's institutional mission as it relates to the type and extent of information needed." Baer, in a scholarly delineation of his appraisal process, takes this concept of amalgamating appraisal strategies another step when he articulates an approach based on strategy, structure, detail, and function. Greene and Daniels-Howell, however, go even further in introducing their Minnesota Method, a self-described "crazy quilt" of patchworked appraisal techniques. In a learned yet playful essay (which clearly establishes them as the new 'Bad Boys of Appraisal'), the co-authors contend that theory may be impossible to implement in the real world, leaving archivists to rely upon more pragmatic criteria: "In the end, the most concrete delimiter of documentation levels will be the space, staff, and technical resources of the repository." Taken in total, these essays point towards appraisal being much more of an intuitive process than a mechanistic one, the product of a systematized orientation that is internalized and based upon clearly defined priorities that balance needs and resources.

Revolving around this central core of appraisal strategies are any number of satellite issues, generally treated with the same depth of thought as appraisal. Michael Moss and Lesley Richard's examination of the European business records experience is not only a valuable comparative piece, it also raises several interesting concepts like a call for business records education and the need for a debate about how to handle corporate records in an atmosphere of mergers and acquisitions. Nash's painstaking study of business history citations traces the 20th-century use of business records by historians, and provides some valuable insights into the practice of business history—academics ought to take note the next time they feel like blaming corporations for not saving records for scholarly examination! Baer's piece includes a concise yet comprehensive historical sketch of the evolution of corporate structures that will be extremely valuable to individuals managing pre-20th-century business records. Marcy Goldstein, in a tract that nicely delineates the many roles an archives program can play in a corporation, argues for an expanded conception of archival responsibility based upon embracing the new technologies that are rapidly changing the nature of the workplace—a professional "morphing" that in turn raises the unanswered philosophical question of when a corporate archivist stops being an archivist, and if it should matter. Benedict supplies a well-conceived guide for assessing and negotiating the transfer of corporate archival records to external repositories, a piece valuable for both its thorough outlin-

ing of the issues involved and its attention to detail. Ernest Dick's piece on business visual records is an earnest if standard primer on the corporate audiovisual environment, useful for those completely new to the issues but less helpful to those looking for specific guidance in confronting those issues.

RAB is not an easy read for even the informed reader, and therefore would be a long, hard slog for those new to the field. Occasionally, the writing helps ease the task—the occasional well-turned phrase and the odd snippet of humor liven the pages a bit. But the issues RAB tackles are difficult ones, and that combined with the scholarly approach generally employed by its authors makes this a very dense book. Yet it is that very density that makes RAB so valuable, for this is not a how-to-manage-business-archives book, holding up well-funded business archives from generally unique (and therefore irreplicable) circumstances as pinnacles to which all managers of business records should aspire. Instead, its in-depth, rational examination of the why's of business archivy connects on a more universal, and more practical, level.

This pragmatic bent by definition means that RAB is not a definitive work, a sacrosanct tome to be blindly revered as it is passed on from one generation of archivists to the next. But that's okay, because it doesn't aspire to that exalted state; quite the contrary, its diverse opinions aim to provoke discussion and reflection. The breadth of perspectives in RAB sets the table for perhaps its most significant theme, a collective articulation of the lack of a "one size fits all" solution to the issues facing collectors of business records. The essays are liberally sprinkled with anti-theory like Greene and Daniels-Howell's bold assertion that "all appraisal is local and subjective," or Baer's colorful but apt metaphor that "to attempt to fit the records of modern business into the world of theory as derived from traditional European archives is rather like being asked to shoehorn an automobile assembly line or particle accelerator into the Orangerie at Versailles." In light of a declaration like this, RAB is not a wonder wrench, in theory adjusting to fit your every need but in reality rarely working properly. Instead, it's more a well-stocked tool chest: true, you may not need every gadget in the box (or even know what they all are for!), but it's nice to know that you have them, just in case.

This new feeling of confidence is a valuable contribution to the field in and of itself, for RAB's soundly argued sanctioning of archival individualism provides desperately needed validation to those of us struggling with the reality of business archives. As important as that psychological boost is, RAB has even a greater psychological benefit for business archivists—it brings us in from the outside. No longer can business archivists be considered the illegitimate and possibly mutant spawn of traditional archivists. We may never get the chaos theory of archives off the ground, but thanks to RAB we have something immensely more practical—an attitude!

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Archival Theory, Records, and the Public. By Trevor Livelton. Lanham, MD, and London: The Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996. 177 pp. Index and bibliography. Hardcover. Available from the Society of American Archivists, $33.50 members/$38.50 nonmembers.

This book is based on a master's thesis. As it states in the introduction, it is a theoretical analysis, not a practical guide. This is a very true statement. The general tone of the book is beyond the interest of most archivists, who desire practical advice, and it is certainly not a quick read. To fully appreciate the volume's character, try to imagine a bunch of very British academicians sitting in a closed, smokey room, talking and arguing about theory until they have absolutely nothing in common with the real world. Those who have always wanted to experience such a meeting will love this publication.

On his way to defining public records, the author takes various definitions and ideas of the North American archival profession and uses formal logic, various examples, and ideas of archival theorists, such as Schellenberg and Jenkinson, to eventually determine definitions and deductions. Livelton uses language that is pretentious and hard to find in your common desk set dictionary (examples include heuristic, gnomic, or the Tree of Porphyry. For those of you who do not wish to run to the nearest dictionary, porphyry is a type of purple rock). Although the book is written supposedly for all North American archivists, it seems to focus really on Canadian and British archivists' concerns and government practice, except for the appendix. This adds another layer of complexity for U.S. archivists. Because of these complications, the book is very dense and exhausting to read, much less understand. Perhaps better editing on the part of the publisher would have made the book more user-friendly, shorter, easier to read, with definitions for rarely used words. The appendix may be the result of the editor asking for additional information of a practical nature or American appeal, since it does not seem to belong with the rest of the book.

Livelton begins his book by examining common language and archival terminology, such as "archival theory." He notes different archival definitions, commonalities, and theories among North American archivists, as well as related occupations, such as judges, lawyers, and records managers. The author basically agrees with all the different definitions and, using formal logic, restructures them to arrive at new definitions. A firm viewpoint arguing against some of these definitions may have made the book more interesting. He gives a detailed account of the etymology and historical usage of archival terms such as records, information, documents, and archives, contrasting various ideas and definitions. This may be of interest for those archivists who have not studied the history of archives in Europe and/or the development of our professional vocabulary.

Livelton eventually discusses public records, logically determining that they are a subspecies of records according to his definitions. He contrasts the changing definition of public versus private records over time and the concepts that determine the public or private provenance of a record. Types of provenance in relationship to archival records are contrasted and defined, and perhaps more interestingly, so are the legitimacy of provenance and archival records. Livelton's question is if someone recreates an agency's collecting policy, without proper authority or advice from the appropriate archivists,

are the records that are then collected for the archives legitimately archival in nature or provenance? Quite frankly, most archivists do not care about this because they do not have the time to ask this question. Instead, they are forced to house and provide reference to whatever records their predecessors, for better or for worse, have collected according to the existing records schedule or collecting policy of their time. Unless the institution has a deaccessioning policy, there is no need to question why records are there because they are there to stay.

Livelton discusses provenance and the creator, in relationship to the sovereign (more British flavor) or governance of a nation. In relationship to public records, Livelton uses the appendix to discuss briefly the U.S. Freedom of Information Act and the Canadian Access to Information Act. Both acts have two broad areas exempt from public use, which are sensitive policy and procedures such as national defense and law. They also differ in who is granted access. In the U.S. virtually everyone is granted access, whereas in Canada only citizens and permanent residents are granted such access. This is the most informative and interesting part of the book. As mentioned above, it seems disconnected from the rest of the book since it is more a statement of facts than a logical debate.

Each chapter in the book is followed by detailed end notes. The book has a substantial bibliography. Overall, the book is well organized, well researched, and written by a writer who knows how to write, although not in a concise manner. Brevity, let us remember, can be a virtue.

I was concerned that I was unable to appreciate the true theoretical genius of this book until I discovered that a graduate of the University of Maryland archival program working in another institution was having worse problems than I was trying to read and understand it. She was also trying to review the book for professional publication. Perhaps the University of British Columbia is teaching theory beyond the ability and appreciation level of those of us who graduated from lesser schools, such as the University of Michigan.

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Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression. By Jacques Derrida. Translated by Eric Prenowitz. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1996. 113 pp. Hardcover. $17.95.

A couple of years ago, on one of those very rare occasions that saw members of a university faculty actually engaged in a substantive intellectual discussion, a colleague announced to several of us that he had decided what he wanted engraved on his tombstone: "He didn't understand deconstruction." We all laughed aloud, silently cursing for not ourselves having come up with the *mot*. Most archivists who attempt to work their way through this deceptively short book, their eye perhaps having been caught by the first word of its title, will probably have the same reaction.

Attempting to summarize the work of Jacques Derrida (born in 1930) or the movement, grounded in literary theory, with which his name is linked, of course, a fool's errand, but here goes. Western philosophy has generally assumed that speaking is a purer form of expression than writing. Because oral language arises from human biology, it is a more direct and thus more real method for signification and the expression of meaning. Speaking alone has the "full presence" of its originator. Writing, by contrast, has been considered external and technological. Ever since, in the dialog *Phaedrus*, Socrates condemned writing as "no true wisdom, but only its semblance," Western thinkers have tended to see writing as a contaminating force. Because writing introduces a particular material existence (letters or symbols physically inscribed on some medium) on the otherwise unadulterated oral expression of meaning, it is remote, artificial, and inferior.

This outlook, Derrida and the deconstructionists say, has imposed a "violent hierarchy" that privileges orality over literacy, a hierarchy that undergirds others: if we think that speaking is "better" than writing, it is only a short step to such other conclusions as good is "better" than evil, male is "better" than female, and so on. His demand for the overthrow of the fundamental "logocentric" hierarchy (and eventually of all the others that derive from it) points out that speaking has many writing-like characteristics, including forethought and even deliberate composition, and that the dichotomy between speaking and writing is a false one. Thus, the only reliable means for achieving sound human knowledge is to note the existence of these hierarchies, to invert them, and finally to resist the creation of a new hierarchy by also displacing the second term from its new position of superiority. The result is a never-ending process of de-constructing—that's what the word means—language and ideas. The meaning of texts is, therefore, by no means obvious on their face, and it is both impossible and unwise to privilege some supposed real intent of an author over any other possible reading. The bad news is that this inherent instability of all language prevents the emergence of any single meaning in anything. The good news, deconstructionists argue, is that it also opens up limitless possibilities for interpretation and the expansion of ideas.

Still with me? In this book, originally presented in lecture format at an international conference on the history of psychiatry in 1994 and published the next year in French as *Mal d'Archive*, Derrida attempts to apply this general philosophical method to two concepts he finds related: the idea of recording something officially and authoritatively in an archives on the one hand and, on the other, the scientific claims of Freudian psychology. Archivists might think that connecting these two is a leap from the sublime to the ridiculous—I'm not saying which is which—but here (I think) is how Derrida makes it. Archives are seen as the authoritative sites of records of all sorts, a final authority to which one can appeal. The contents of archives are unbiased and true, and one must take what one finds there at face value. Freud borrowed this concept of archives metaphorically and identified the individual subconscious as the authoritative site for the true meaning of human thought and experience. Each person's subconscious was, in effect, an archives that held the key records for understanding the personality. Just as one could not challenge the veracity of what one found in a real archives, so one had to accept the evidence from the archives of the subconscious in resolving the problems of the personality. But both of these final authorities are

deceptive, Derrida believes, because they presume a stability of language and understanding that he has already rejected. To think that either kind of archives is the repository of a fixed and ultimate truth is risky. Because the very language of records, whether documentary or personal, is unstable and must be constantly deconstructed, we must doubt the evidence we find there. To the extent that we fail to do so, we continue to suffer from a bad case of archive fever.

Well, what shall we say about all this? First of all, the concept of archives presented in these pages is at least off the mark and may verge on caricature. Derrida says several times that he has no explicit concept of archives but only an indeterminate "notion" of them. That notion is not one that readers who are themselves archivists would accept, I don't believe. To characterize archives as unambiguous, univocal, and always true authorities runs contrary to actual archival experience. Archives may be an authority to which factual appeals are made in particular settings or circumstances. You consult an archives for a birth record, for example, to prove age or citizenship. You retrieve from an archives a contract or a will or a property deed to settle a particular matter of law: Is this field mine or yours, and where is the dividing line between us? You consult a collection of personal papers to find out what a particular family or individual was doing at a particular time. But archivists know that records may be useful to a wide range of people for an equally wide range of purposes, all of them entirely different from those originally intended. When other questions are asked of the birth record, for example, it yields information not about a particular person, but rather about patterns of nationality, birth rate, illegitimacy, and so on. The answers the archives may give to such questions are no less useful, authoritative, or true than their answer to the original question. More important, the information in the archives is not made untrue or unreliable by this shifting use; the information is simply put to different purposes. Indeed, some archivists, T.R. Schellenberg prime among them, have maintained that it is only when records may be put to these other purposes that they truly become archives. Whatever "logocentric" hierarchy the archives may contain does not render them unreliable or worthless; it may make them just the opposite.

Archives are also seen increasingly as sites of memory, individual and collective, and insofar as Derrida is (or seems to be) exploring that notion, he is very much onto something of concern to professional archivists. Archives certainly are not value-free, objective sources that cannot be challenged, and most archivists have given up thinking that they are. We know, for example, that the very production of written documentation in the first place is affected by any number of factors, particularly those dependent on the reigning Holy Trinity of the academy: race, class, and gender. We know, too, that the survival and preservation of certain archival records and not others, whether by accident or design, can diminish their comprehensiveness and their value, thus skewing memory in one direction or another. How, given all that, archives contribute to the construction of memory, the deliberate remembering of certain things and the equally deliberate forgetting of other things, is an important issue for us to consider. Such a consideration is not, in my view, advanced by Derrida's argument with Freud's century-old (mis)understanding of what archives are and what they do for us.

It becomes clear fairly early on here that Derrida's real interest—one is tempted to say "target"—is Freud and the intellectual edifice that Western thought has built on

him. Archives are of interest to Derrida only tangentially, and maybe even not at all. The Freudian view of human nature, after having held the field for decades, has certainly been subject to increasing criticism and attack in recent years. That may or may not be a worthwhile case to press, though it is certainly beyond the interest of professional archivists as such and beyond the ability of the present reviewer to assess. Potential archival readers of this book, however, should realize that it is not really about them and their concerns. Moreover, the incredible difficulty of reading the book makes working through it a dubious goal. Even the most committed of readers will be frustrated by this kind of presentation and tempted simply to give up. Few will blame them. It is often said that Derrida makes for challenging reading precisely because he practices the very destabilization of language that he preaches. Yes, indeed. The meaning of words shifts constantly; on virtually every page the reader must abandon habitual understandings of what things mean and be prepared to substitute new ones that are not themselves always clear. Exotic words and undefined neologisms abound: topo-nomological, archontic, consignation, exergue. I can't help but think that readers simply should not have to work this hard.

There are legitimate and important issues to which this book alludes, and archivists should not ignore them. What are the social expectations that lead to the creation of archives and their use in human affairs? What role do archives, both real and metaphorical, play in the complicated processes of remembering and forgetting? What are the assumptions that underlie archival practice? What is the interplay between oral and written communication, both in the present and over time? As electronic record-making and record-keeping proliferate, how are the boundaries between orality and literacy shifting? What is the "near-orality" of e-mail, for instance, and how does that affect how we think about and deal with such forms for the conveying of meaning? What critical approaches must we as archivists apply to the information in our care and the uses made of it? These are crucial questions that face archivists, both as professionals and as citizens. Thinking about them is our task for the present and the future. Sadly, I don't believe that many of us will be helped in that by *Archive Fever*.

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Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual. By Gregory S. Hunter. New York, NY: Neal Schuman Publishers, Inc. 1997. 283 pp. Illustrations, appendices, bibliography, and index. Softcover. $45.00.

Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives is seventy-first in a series of "how-to-do-it" manuals for librarians produced by Neal Schuman Publishers. The work joins a lengthy list of guidebooks intended to introduce the beginner to the spectrum of archival work. For the author, the meaning behind the book's title of a practical archive is to make the reader aware of the usefulness and functionality of an archive and the

information contained within it, and how the archival profession uses the more pragmatic aspects of archival theory on a daily basis. As with any single-volume presentation to archival work, there is much to cover, and this particular attempt for a broad introductory coverage of the profession practically succeeds.

The work is arranged to cover the evolution and management of an archive in 10 chapters. Starting with "Introduction to Archives and Manuscripts" in chapter one, the work moves into the following topics in chapters two through nine: "Conducting a Survey and Starting an Archives Program," "Selection and Appraisal," "Acquisitions and Accessioning," "Arrangement," "Description," "Preservation," "Security and Disaster Planning," and "Access, Reference, and Outreach." The final chapter covers electronic records, followed by two appendices and a bibliography. The first appendix provides background information on North Fork University on Long Island, the setting for a case study used in the volume. The second appendix is a reprint of the Society of American Archivists' 1992 Code of Ethics. This is a sensible layout for the intended audience of the work and helps to demonstrate the issues, problems, and consequences facing archivists through the life cycle of acquiring, managing, preserving, and providing access to records.

For each chapter, Hunter "summarize[s] the best thinking on archival theory and methodology and combine[s] it with practical advice for those who are working in archives at *any* level" (italics in original, p. xii). Drawing heavily upon the Society of American Archivists' Archival Fundamental series, the author presents the material in a straightforward manner, emphasizing the mission of the archivist to provide access to records once they have been acquired, preserved, arranged, and described. Hunter provides a solid theoretical framework, drawing upon classic writings by such authors as Theodore Schellenberg and Oliver Wendall Holmes, and meshing them with newer concepts and approaches in security, appraisal and the World Wide Web, among others. The use of North Fork University's Department of Archives and Special Collections as a case study—more fully in some chapters than in others—along with tables, charts, and examples of surveys, policies, and inventories serves well to illustrate the issues and concepts that are being presented. The author also uses quotes from newspapers and other print media on archives, records, and personal papers to reinforce the message of practical archives and their significance to individuals and society.

Hunter's attempts to keep current with the archival profession, especially with the World Wide Web, gives cause for a small number of concerns. Not surprisingly, eight months after publication a portion of the Web page addresses cited in the work have moved or are no longer in existence; any publication discussing the Internet and especially the World Wide Web will quickly show its age. However, the author has adroitly included small sections on format integration for cataloging and the Encoded Archival Description document-type definition for the markup of finding aids on the World Wide Web. Another section dealing with public relations and fundraising would have been a welcome and contemporary addition to *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives.* While these two topics are not recognized as core archival functions, they are part of the job duties and daily realities of many archivists and archival repositories.

Portions of this work did not receive careful examination before going to publication. The three-page index contains noticeable omissions, errors, and entry emphasis.

Woody Allen and the television program "Star Trek" are included as citations, but documentation strategy and encapsulation have been overlooked; Rochester Institute of Technology falls between reappraisal and records. A work of more than 280 pages intended for beginners merits a more thorough and complete set of entries to assist the intended audience and other readers. In addition, the descriptive section discusses the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) as if it is the only bibliographic utility into which archives enter records, without mentioning the Online Computer Library Center (OCLC), or the numerous other stand-alone or local systems that utilize the MARC format. It is ironic that the book's case study institution of North Fork University's Department of Archives and Special Collections, similar to most college and university archives that are situated within libraries, would most likely use OCLC, not RLIN, to communicate bibliographic information in machine-readable form.

Beginning and experienced archivists should choose carefully from the lengthy bibliography. Hunter has compiled an exceptional resource for further research and reading, but a closer review of the entries would have prevented confusion. The electronic records section, for example, has at least 11 articles dealing with the MARC format and retrospective cataloging projects that would be better served in the description section of the bibliography—where the other cataloging articles have been located—instead of lumping (or misplacing?) all automation-related works under the rubric of electronic records. Some of the articles in the bibliography will be of little assistance or utility to introductory or even experienced archivists, and an appendix listing of journals that publish articles of interest to archivists could direct interested readers elsewhere for guidance, or for more current writings on archival theory, standards, and practice.

Students, librarians, and others interested in finding a single work introducing them to archivy will find *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives* to be a competent beginning. Hunter has presented the materials in a direct manner and worked toward a balance between the theoretical underpinnings of the profession along with its more pragmatic aspects and techniques. While a goal of a practical archive may be laudable in its own right, beginning archivists need to be encouraged that what the profession and society need most are not practical archivists, but archivists grounded in the theories and realities of archival work that are *imaginative* and have goals and visions beyond the practical.

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The Cigarette Papers. By Stanton A. Glantz, John Slade, Lisa A. Bero, Peter Hanauer, and Deborah E. Barnes. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1996. Bibliography and index. 539 pp. $29.95.

This is a penetrating and damning analysis of the tobacco industry's "thoughts and actions over the past thirty years." The work is based on approximately 10,000 pages of internal documents (many labeled "confidential" or "privileged") from the Brown and Williamson Tobacco Corporation (B&W) and its parent, BAT Industries. BAT is the second largest manufacturer of cigarettes in the world, and B&W is the third largest manufacturer in the United States. Several thousands of the pages were sent by "Mr. Butts" to Professor Stanton Glantz, one of the authors, at the University of California, San Francisco. The documents were eventually placed in the Archives and Special Collections Department of the UCSF library and are now available on the Internet (http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco).

The authors, most of whom are affiliated with the Institute for Health Policy Studies, the Department of Medicine, and the Division of Clinical Pharmacy at the University of California, San Francisco, persuasively argue that since the early 1960s, B&W and BAT have known of the addictive nature of nicotine and have been aware of the many health problems that arise from smoking. They have chosen, however, to deny such knowledge and to hide damaging scientific information about the dangers from smoking. Because they acted in concert with other tobacco companies, the authors correctly indict the industry as a whole. They build their case, chapter by chapter, by quoting all or portions of B&W and BAT documents and then providing analysis and interpretation. They are particularly effective when comparing the internal documents to the often contradictory public stances of company and industry representatives. This is a book of dense and often technical prose, both in the documents themselves and in the authors' analysis; each chapter, however, includes straightforward and useful introductions and conclusions.

For the archivist, the most interesting discussion occurs early on and pertains to placement of the documents sent to Professor Glantz in the UCSF Library, Archives and Special Collections Departments, and the attempts by B&W to have them removed. Unfortunately, the discussion is very brief. In essence, B&W failed in its attempts to have the documents returned (on the grounds that they were stolen) and to have access to the circulation records to determine who had used them, because the San Francisco Superior Court ruled that public interest, especially in the area of public health, dictated that the materials be made public. Equally important, the court found that the materials were already in the public domain. The documents had not only been sent to Professor Glantz, but even prior to that, they had been released to a number of the country's leading newspapers and radio and television stations, which had used them to write and prepare stories. At the request of B&W, courts had issued subpoenas against various of the news agencies. The subpoenas were eventually quashed in favor of the agencies' right to protect the confidentiality of their source. Many of the documents had been subject to public scrutiny, therefore, prior to the suit against UCSF. Both the California Court of Appeals and the California Supreme Court refused to overturn the decision of the Superior Court.

The history of how the documents came to be available to the public, however, is not why the authors wrote the book. As such, there is only one tantalizing sentence on how B&W sent private investigators to stake out the archives and to photograph people reading the documents, but no attempt to provide further details. What should reference archivists do if a person sits in or near the reading room and photographs researchers? What did the UCSF archivists do? Did the archivists have any qualms about accepting what were clearly identified as internal company documents from someone unaffiliated with the company? How were copyright issues handled? What factors led to the decision to put the documents on the Internet? The UCSF archivists could write an article of interest to many of us about all that happened from the time they were offered the papers to the time the papers were finally ruled to be in the public domain.

The University of California San Francisco Library and Center for Knowledge Management posted the B&W and BAT documents on the Internet as part of the Tobacco Control Archives. The Archives identifies, collects, and makes available primarily unpublished materials on efforts directed towards "education about and control of the dangers of the use of tobacco" in California. The central focus is on documenting the history of Proposition 99, which was a successful initiative on the state ballot in 1989 to raise the excise tax on tobacco sales. The Tobacco Control Archives includes box and folder listings for the collections it comprises. Through GALEN II, the digital library of the University of California San Francisco, it also provides a gateway to a host of fascinating primary resources available online for the study of the modern tobacco industry (http://www.library.ucsf.edu/tobacco/cigpapers/suppl.html). In addition to the B&W and BAT documents, there are government documents, interview transcripts, documentary transcripts, and court documents, all of which could be used by faculty, graduate, and undergraduate students for research and writing. Archivists, especially those in an academic setting, should spend time reviewing the sites.

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Yale University Library

MIDWEST ARCHIVES CONFERENCE
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