

# *Archival Issues*

**Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference**

**Volume 17, Number 1, 1992**

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Academic Archives*

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## EDITORIAL POLICY

*Archival Issues*, a semi-annual journal published by the Midwest Archives Conference, is concerned with the issues and problems confronting the contemporary archivist. Submissions relating to archival theory and current practice are solicited. Diversity among topics and points of view is encouraged. Ideas and opinions expressed by the contributors are not necessarily those of the Midwest Archives Conference or its Editorial Board.

Material in a wide range of formats—including articles, review essays, proceedings of seminars, and case studies of specific archival projects or functions—will be considered for publication. Guidelines for authors of articles and case studies are available upon request from the editorial board chair.

Manuscripts should be sent to the board chair, Joel Wurl, Immigration History Research Center, University of Minnesota, 826 Berry, St. Paul, MN 55114. The editorial board uses the current edition of *Chicago Manual of Style* as the standard for style, including footnote format. Decisions on manuscripts will be rendered within ten weeks of submission. Offers to review books or suggestions of books to review should be sent to the book review editor, Ann Bowers, Center for Archival Collections, 5th floor, Jerome Library, Bowling Green, OH 43403.

MAC members receive *Archival Issues* and the *MAC Newsletter* upon payment of annual dues of \$16; institutional memberships are \$32. Single issues of the journal are available at \$3.50 plus fifty cents for postage and handling. An index to Vols. 1-8 (1976-83) is available at the single-issue price. Inquiries regarding membership or purchase of journal copies should be directed to Becky Haglund Tousey, MAC Secretary, Kraft General Foods Inc., Archives Dept., 6350 Kirk St., Morton Grove, IL 60053: 708/646-2981.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *America: History and Life* and *Library Literature*.

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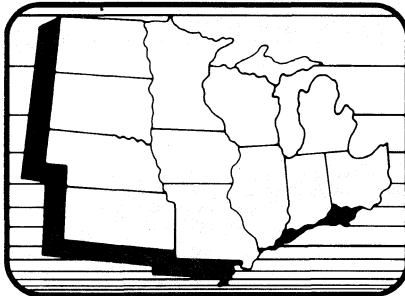
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# MAC

MIDWEST ARCHIVES CONFERENCE



*From the Editor, on the transition from **Midwestern Archivist** to **Archival Issues***

MAC is a very easy-going organization. So easy-going, in fact, that an Editorial Board Chair can be appointed without ever having to articulate in advance what s/he would do with this lofty assignment. But over the past several years, the organization's leaders have wisely selected Board members and Chairs who are eagerly challenged and/or scared to death (like me) by such blind faith. The upshot has been one of the most successful recent publication ventures in the archival field, the *Midwestern Archivist*. With the issue you are now holding, the journal that was *MA* now takes on the title of *Archival Issues: The Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference*.

Just what does this change signify or portend? The easy out on this question is to say, quite truthfully, that only time will tell. Yet, while I might have been able to escape talking about "the vision thing" at the time of my appointment, this new development begs for at least a sound bite.

First, it is important to note that the decision to change the title was not accompanied by any kind of movement to alter the character of the journal. For a variety of reasons, MAC Council judged that the time had come to acknowledge formally that its journal's scope and readership stretched well beyond the midwestern United States. The *Midwestern Archivist* has covered a remarkable diversity of topics appealing to archivists nationally and, indeed, internationally. *Archival Issues* will strive to continue that tradition.

Still, this journal *has* truly been a reflection of the organization that produces it; the new subtitle is not a pacifying gesture to the hidebound among us. The Midwest Archives Conference, celebrating its 20th anniversary in 1992, carries a reputation for responsiveness to the practical concerns of archivists in typical circumstances. Accordingly, the content of the *Midwestern Archivist* has generally been oriented toward the application of archival principles to actual archival settings. MAC is also commonly viewed as an especially open and accessible group with a history of reaching out to and enlisting the talents of newcomers to the profession, a trait reinforced recently by the establishment of a *Midwestern Archivist/Archival Issues* "New Authors" award for first-time contributors to archival literature. Again, these are features that I expect will persist into the journal's future.

MAC's image, however, includes much more than this, and perhaps its greatest strengths over the years have been its inclination to adapt to changing realities in the profession and to take a few risks now and then. This, too, has played a crucial role in the success of the journal. The question, I believe, is not "*will Archival Issues* differ from the *Midwestern Archivist*?"; rather, it is "*how much*?" The pages that follow my remarks will look quite familiar to readers of recent *MA* issues. At least the next couple of installments of the journal will likewise offer the standard fare (though of course, with new and timely contributions) of feature articles and book reviews. But while the name change is not ushering in a new mission, it *is* sparking some imagination on the part of MAC

members, and some fresh ideas for content and format innovations are making their way to the Editorial Board and MAC Council discussion tables. So, if you're among those who have especially enjoyed the *Midwestern Archivist*, I think you will continue to look forward to receiving *Archival Issues*. If you've been feeling that the journal could stand to stretch its boundaries a bit, I encourage you to stand by. More than that, I urge you to communicate with me or the other members of the Editorial Board. *In fact*, better yet, send us something to consider for possible publication. No matter what avenues this publication explores in the future, its complexion and its value will always be determined most by the submissions it receives.

Shortly after the journal's new title was first announced, I received a letter from a MAC member noting "I look forward to continued life with *MA* turned *AI*, but let's hope readers don't confuse *Archival Issues* with 'artificial intelligence.'" Averting any confusion of this sort will occupy the concerted energy and ingenuity of this and all future Editorial Boards. We welcome your contributing to this enterprise and appreciate immensely your past and (we earnestly hope) abiding interest in "The Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference."

Joel Wurl  
Chair, MAC Editorial Board

***To the Editor:***

As the current president of the Society of Ohio Archivists, I was dismayed to read Kevin Proffitt's article, "The Archival Bridge," that appeared in the last issue of *The Midwestern Archivist*. The editors of the journal have done a disfavor to their readers by accepting the article without checking its accuracy.

Mr. Proffitt's description of SOA as "flaccid and inactive" and his implication that it is about to "waste away to nothing more than occasional social gatherings" are erroneous. SOA today has nearly 200 members, a sound treasury, and promotes the work of archivists in the state in numerous ways including conferences, workshops, and a newsletter. It makes a solid contribution to the profession.

SOA is about to celebrate its 25th anniversary, and like any organization of its kind it has had its share of ups and downs. Perhaps during the period of Mr. Proffitt's close association with SOA (nearly five years ago) it was not everything he hoped it would be. But it is a very different organization today from the one he describes.

After reading Mr. Proffitt's article, one has to question whether it helps to build the "archival bridge" of cooperation between state and regional organizations alluded to in its title.

Barbara Floyd  
University of Toledo  
President, Society of Ohio Archivists

***Author Kevin Proffitt responds:***

Barbara Floyd's letter is a misrepresentation of my article based on an incomplete reading and criticizing quotes out of context. For example, I did not imply, as Barbara says, that SOA "is about to" waste away to nothing more than occasional social gatherings. I foresaw this as a possibility if SOA's recent decline continued and spread. As for my description of SOA as "flaccid and inactive," I believe this statement is accurate—for the time period I discussed. I also said SOA is "working now to rebuild" its influence and prestige.

Barbara also says that my "close association with SOA" was "nearly five years ago." Actually my term of office ended in April 1989—three and one-half years ago as of this writing. Further, my article is a revision of a paper originally presented at the MAC spring conference in May 1990 (not 1989 as stated in *The Midwestern Archivist*)—one year after I left office. Through the process of editing and publication my article did not come into print until the summer of 1992.

I examined SOA based on my experiences during four years as a council member and president from 1985 to 1989. I used my observations of SOA during this time as an example of how state organizations must refocus and redirect

their efforts to survive in a changing archival world. I discussed this in the context of SOA's past problems and current successes—a fact Barbara fails to discern or acknowledge.

I am proud of my article and stand by it. If Barbara's and my perceptions of SOA—then and now—differ, so be it. I am sure, however, we agree on the importance of a healthy and active SOA and the role such a group can have in the archival profession.

### *To the Editor:*

Mr. Maher's article in *The Midwestern Archivist* v. 16, no. 2, was a thoughtful and thought-provoking piece on a subject that affects us all in these days of rising membership dues, declining institutional support, and the near extinction of the income tax deduction for professional expenses.

His inclusion of the Library Council of Metropolitan Milwaukee in the list of local or metropolitan archival organizations (p. 107) leads me to wonder what the other local associations are like. While I cannot say how reasonable the comparison is for all the groups in the list, LCOMM is not, nor has it ever been analogous to the Society of American Archivists or the Midwest Archives Conference.

To begin with it is important to get the names straight. Mr. Maher lists the Library Council of Metropolitan Milwaukee (LCOMM) but appears to be referring to the LCOMM Archives Committee. LCOMM was founded in 1973 with 35 member institutions and now includes 119 members. The key word here is *institutions* because LCOMM is an organization representing the interests of its member libraries, not the individuals on staff of those libraries.

The LCOMM Archives Committee which held its first meeting in 1977 began as the Archives Subcommittee of the LCOMM Long Range Planning Committee in 1975. In the March 1976 document issued by the committee, *A Plan for Cooperative Action*, objective 7 commits LCOMM "to produce an inventory of area archival materials in order to clarify and define areas of responsibility for obtaining, maintaining, sharing and preserving archival collections." Ironic that 16 years later the group is still trying to come to terms with this charge, only now it's using documentation strategy as a technique to achieve this lofty objective.

Crediting the committee with 20 members is generous on the one hand because, as in most organizations, a core group of 10-12 people regularly attend meetings and actively work on committee projects. On the other hand it's misleading to the degree that any staff member of an LCOMM member institution is welcome to attend programs and meetings of the committee. Additionally, the LCOMM board has permitted the Archives Committee to include in its membership interested parties whose parent organizations are not LCOMM members, a situation unlike that of any other LCOMM committee.

During its fifteen year history the LCOMM Archives Committee has waxed and waned. To a significant degree, the job mobility of archivists can be blamed or credited for this situation—the departure of a particularly active individual would leave a void, but soon one or more new individuals would come to

Milwaukee and the committee would rise phoenix-like. As oldtimers burned out or moved on to new interests, newcomers would see the opportunity the committee presented for professional development as something worth pursuing. The institutional nature of participation in LCOMM deserves some credit for keeping the committee going. A freestanding professional organization with individual personal memberships would not have been so easy or quick to revitalize.

It would be interesting to learn how the other local associations which Mr. Maher listed are organized and what their experience has been like. Is the LCOMM Archives Committee the oddball metropolitan organization or are there other variations on the professional association-cum-organizational committee that work for archivists?

In closing, may I point out that we have yet to gather sufficient data to prove or refute the hazards of long-term professional involvement on one's health or peace of mind.

Judith Campbell Turner  
Milwaukee Public Museum

P.S. On an entirely different subject, why can't the archival administrators and personnel managers who desire to keep down the number of job applicants be a little more reasonable? The importance the MARC AMC format has taken as a qualification for employment (as reported by Donald L. DeWitt's article in the same issue) is sad and telling. The MARC AMC format is a procedure to follow to construct a cataloging record. An individual who is not totally computer-phobic and has had a decent introduction to cataloging principles and practices can pick up the format from a manual with a little on-the-job training at most. Cataloging is not a closed-book exam nor should the MARC format be akin to those infamous foreign language requirements that "qualifications happy" authors of job descriptions love to slip in.

***Author William J. Maher responds:***

I am appreciative of the additional information Judith Campbell Turner has provided on the Archives Committee of the Library Council of Metropolitan Milwaukee. As cited in footnote 3 of the article, information for the table on which I listed the Library Council, its founding date, and number of members was drawn directly from SAA's 1989 Directory of Regional Archival Associations.

The status of the Milwaukee archives group exemplifies one aspect of the multiple dimensionality of archival organizations and further explains why neat typologies cannot describe fully the relationships of national, regional, state, and metropolitan archival organizations.

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