

uncertainty about copyright regulations, and the growing incidence of duplication of efforts by two or more repositories. Repositories initiating microfilming projects often discover that while they alone fund their projects, they are soon expected to produce multiple copies from their negative stocks for other interested repositories, usually at only the cost of the positive print.

During the summer of 1977 the IAA Committee surveyed about two hundred repositories in Canada, the United States and other countries to determine the need for a central agency responsible for gathering information on proposed microfilming projects and making it available to other repositories interested in participating on a cost-sharing basis. The positive responses convinced the Committee to go ahead with a pilot project which, if successful, might be developed into a more permanent clearing-house bureau. During the next few months, the Committee will write to all repositories known to be engaged in microfilming projects abroad, asking for an identification and list of their copying programmes. Information on the type, content and extent of the series/collections will be solicited, together with the cost estimate on the initial processing, as well as on the *pro rata* expenses which will depend on the number of potential partners in any venture.

The results will be compiled and published in leading archival and library journals throughout the world. Repositories interested in participating in the various microfilming projects on a cost-sharing basis will be able to contact initiating repositories to make the necessary arrangements.

Further information is available from the co-chairmen of the project: Sybil Milton, Leo Baeck Institute, 129 East 73rd Street, New York, New York 10021, U.S.A., and R.S. Gordon, Public Archives of Canada, 395 Wellington Street, Ottawa, Canada, K1A 0N3.

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## Archives and the Landon Project

The Landon Project, based in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Western Ontario, London, is an ambitious, computer-supported programme directed at the interdisciplinary reconstruction of the total history of a fourteen-county region in Southwestern Ontario. Building upon the impressive holdings of the Regional Collection of the D.B. Weldon Library at Western and guided by certain approaches to the study of human behaviour in the past being explored by the French *Annales* School, the Cambridge Group in England, the Philadelphia Social History Project, and the Canadian Social History Project, *inter alia*, the Project is a manifestation of the "new history" concerned with finding the common man so long shrouded by historians' concentration on "kings, politicians, and assorted other 'heros' of the past. . . ."

In an earlier guise, the Project centred on developing and providing much of the apparatus for a social science laboratory through the publication, in various forms, of historical documents, thereby making "available to the international scholarly community, a unified regional body of historically important social, economic, and political materials."<sup>2</sup> An essential ingredient of this Landon Series was an extensive

1 "The Landon Series: Documentary Studies on the Historical Evolution of Southwestern Ontario," a submission to Canada Council for a major editorial publications project from the Department of History, Faculty of Social Science, University of Western Ontario (September 1975), p. 2.

2 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

acquisitions programme based principally upon microfilming locally held public and private documents, supplemented by relevant materials in institutions such as the Archives of Ontario, the Public Archives of Canada, church and other repositories. When the funds requested in 1975 from the Canada Council for the Landon Series did not materialize, the Project metamorphosed into a monographic research programme but remained attached to a very substantial microfilm acquisitions component. "Immediately upon funding," reads one of the Project's submissions, "the Research Group will commence team efforts aimed at systematically identifying, examining, and describing the available universe of historical documentation on Southwestern Ontario."<sup>3</sup> During the next few years, the Project would microfilm appropriate local material and acquire copies of needed records and manuscripts from various repositories.

Against this backdrop, the Project held a symposium in London entitled "Studying Human Behaviour in the Past: A Blueprint for Interdisciplinary Regional History," 7-10 September 1977. Envisaged as a kind of workshop examination of the "state of the art," participation was by invitation only, though observers were admitted on application. Perhaps as many as eighty individuals attended the sessions, including historically-minded economists, geographers, sociologists, demographers, archivists, and so forth. Most of the main presentations were delivered by internationally known scholars from the United States and France with Canadians generally providing the formal commentaries. Sessions were entitled "Population History," "Economic History," "Political History," "*Mentalité*," "Historical Data Bases," "Archives for Regional History," and "Nineteenth-Century Canadian History: The State of the Art and Needs for the Future." Predictably, perhaps, because of the still unsatisfactory level of interdisciplinary contacts, the papers encountered a mixed and often subdued reception. The papers and commentaries ranged from the mundane to the philosophical, yet few of the "interdisciplinarians" (particularly the innumerate) apparently had the confidence to go beyond academic sparring to do battle in other fields. Nevertheless, some probing questions were entertained relating to the representativeness of the region and the length of the period to be examined by the Project within the broader objectives of *histoire globale*.

Hugh Taylor of the Public Archives of Canada gave the main presentation at the session entitled "Archives for Regional History," chaired by W.J. Cameron, School of Library and Information Sciences at Western. Alex Ross of Ontario Archives and Hugh Dempsey, Director of History, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, provided commentaries. Despite some uninspired papers and a few dull sessions, and the unfortunate absence of an advance copy of the key paper delivered by Gilles Paquet, Carleton University, and Jean-Pierre Wallot, Université de Montréal ("Reflections on 19th-Century Canadian History: *Idéal Historique*, State of the Art, Needs for the Future"), who nevertheless stimulated good discussion and greatly improved the quality of the symposium, the Project personnel need not be dissatisfied with the sessions overall and the calibre of speakers attending were there some consideration for the impact on funding agencies.

If we may leave aside details of the sessions and papers in anticipation of some future publication, the implications for archives of such programmes as the Landon Project demand attention. The first inference to be drawn from the Project's extraordinarily ambitious acquisitions schema is that, for whatever reasons, the documentary requirement of this regional total history programme is not adequately supported either by the archival configuration in Southwestern Ontario, or by the interests of established archival institutions. In the absence of a clearly defined local archives authority, it is presumably the Archives of Ontario that should provide at least the ini-

3 "The Landon Project: A Submission to the Academic Development Fund, Faculty of Social Science," (April 1976), p. 16.

tial leadership and encouragement for the development of local records management and archives. Only the narrowest interpretation of the Ontario archives act would relieve the provincial institution of this responsibility; furthermore, such a limited perspective would leave a void in long-term local archival development which common-sense alone suggests would not be in the best interests of Ontario Archives.

Without belabouring this complex and contentious issue, the point is that a non-archival organization has moved into the acquisitions field with objectives, methods, and a life expectancy not coincident with those of archives. While well-intentioned Project personnel have demonstrated a gratifying willingness to accommodate various archival concerns, and indeed are talking of hiring a professional archivist for the programme, it seems extremely unlikely that the Project will instill an enduring archival consciousness and concern for records management in areas visited by their microfilm camera. The Project, by its nature, is concerned with the research value of records rather than their legal and administrative significance. While these values are mutually compatible, though not always found in the same records, the Project's choice of material both by type and time frame will likely leave a misunderstanding, perhaps even apprehensiveness, with local authorities as to what should be retained permanently. Furthermore, the logistical problems inherent in the Project's acquisitions scheme are daunting to say the least, and are likely to be overwhelming if fitted into a rigid timetable. Expert and persuasive contact with the holders of records, obtaining permission to film, the location of fragments of natural units, archival arrangement and preparation — including repair — of material for filming, and so on, are time-consuming and exacting tasks not easily scheduled. A lengthy catalogue of the difficulties which will be encountered during the development and implementation of the acquisitions plan could be presented here, but essentially they all boil down to the fact that such relatively ephemeral schemes as the Landon Project are no substitute for a rationally-developed, sustained, archivally-based system of selecting, organizing, describing, keeping and providing access to records and manuscripts. Southwestern Ontario will certainly be richer for whatever material is properly filmed by the Project, but what is to happen to documents generated after 1920 when the Project's interest dissipates? Taking a broader perspective again, what of those materials of archival and research interest in regions not served by similarly ambitious projects? Only careful coordination of the Project with various established archives in Ontario and the active participation of the Archives of Ontario will overcome these and other problems inherent in the scheme. Anything less could well mean that the Project might become counterproductive to effective archival development in Ontario.

Interdisciplinary concerns are not new for archivists, and for some the "total archives" concept may appear to parallel the "total history" approach because of the common holistic overtones. It is likely to be hotly debated among archivists whether the total archives concept goes beyond the housing of the various media now to be found in most major Canadian archives, and the integration of these within one institution along with records management and various technical services. Does the concept include, for example, the idea of mirror of Canada past; that is, an accurate cross-sectional reflection of our total society through time? Certainly an archivist listening to the documentary needs of the various kinds of clients represented at the Landon symposium would have had his belief confirmed that researchers, to be safe and because of the unpredictability of future research trends and capabilities, would argue for the retention of the fullest possible record, public and private. Who would have thought some decades ago that the mountains of case files ignored or destroyed by archivists could be invaluable to researchers with the aid of machines? In short, the stated capacity and designs of the Landon Project clearly underline the crisis, which is not too strong a word, in acquisitions and priorities facing archivists endowed with limited resources.

Another broad issue raised by the Landon Project is the disposition of the documentary material in machine readable format generated by researchers. The preservation of this information requires considerable capital and maintenance expenditures, not to mention the increasingly urgent need for the development of specialized archival expertise and appropriate techniques. The Public Archives of Canada is probably the most advanced repository in the country concerned with machine readable archival material, but faced with the prospect of stupendous growth in the quantity of computer-based information simply within the government,<sup>4</sup> its provisions for privately created data will fall distressingly short of what is needed. Nevertheless, it will be a shame if a coordinated effort is not made to ensure permanent retention and up-to-date matrix access to machine readable material produced in the private sector, including the data bases developed by the increasing number of scholarly, computer-based studies.

Obviously, the archival issues surrounding the Landon Project are profound and more numerous than the few broached in this note. The demands on archives of computer-supported research will most certainly increase, and while not many of the ventures will be of the magnitude of the Landon Project, cumulatively they will overshadow this scheme at Western, overwhelming *archivistique* to the impoverishment of both research and archives.

The Landon Project should sound an alarm bell again for archivists. While none of the problems and issues are novel for the profession, the significant point is that we are still wanting the solutions. The Association of Canadian Archivists will be meeting at London in the spring of 1978; it is certain that the Project and its hardware will be a showpiece at Western, especially if the Canada Council underwrites the scheme. The Association could do worse than devote a session to examining in detail the implications for archives of the Landon Project, something which was not done in enough depth at the symposium.

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## Association of British Columbia Archivists

The Association of British Columbia Archivists finds its origins in a meeting held in Victoria in 1973. The following year, a second meeting was held in Vancouver to discuss a draft constitution and in 1975, a constitution was adopted and the Association registered under the Societies Act of British Columbia.

The Association was set up to provide an organization through which archivists, and interested persons, could meet and exchange ideas. It was further dedicated to the promotion and advancement of the retention, preservation and use of records of historical significance, and to the advancement of standards of professional competence of archivists in British Columbia. The Association holds its annual meeting in April, and usually a meeting every fall. It has endeavoured to establish seminars and workshops on archival procedures, when possible, and through its regular newsletter attempts to distribute information about archival administration and practice.

Present membership stands at about fifty, the majority of whom do not work full time in an established archives. Much of the effort of the Association has been address-

4 A recent article by the director of Machine-Readable Archives Division of the National Archives and Records Service in the United States suggests that within the next decade "we can anticipate that 80 percent of the information created by the federal government will be processed, stored, or retrieved by computers." There seems little doubt that this situation will in due course exist in Canada. Charles M. Dollar, "Computers, the National Archives, and Researchers," *Prologue* 9, no. 4 (Spring 1976): 30