

Oppen and Terry Cook. Their first task, of course, will be to set their own house in order. The variety of functions carried out by Interior poses many problems for the public record archivist. Immediately provenance becomes both complicated and clouded and this means that the record group concept is much more difficult to apply. Registry systems change and administrative continuity is often the only touchstone which can be used to identify major series of records so that they can be easily comprehended by researchers. The project participants have already begun to solve this problem by undertaking an exhaustive and comprehensive study of the various branches, agencies, programs and offices which at one time or another were part of the Department of the Interior. At the same time they are beginning to canvass headquarters and field offices in an effort to locate unscheduled files which originated in Interior.

The first stage of the project, which will last two years, has three objectives. First, it will provide definite information on what Interior files are still in the custody of the federal government and enable the Resource Section to undertake a more systematic approach to acquiring them. Second, it will enable the archivists involved to reorganize all the relevant record groups and slot new accessions into the appropriate areas more easily. Finally, all the inventories for the groups of records which have been established will be published and distributed free of cost to researchers.

When this first stage has been completed, the project's participants will produce a hand-book outlining the various branches and offices within Interior, including a resumé of the historical records available throughout the country for the study of their role and activities. Also included will be a general who's who of prominent and influential individuals within the Department and an analytical guide to the legislation which governed the duties and responsibilities of the Department of the Interior from 1873 until 1936. In the end, the Department of the Interior Project should produce a number of research aids which will both facilitate and promote the study of crucial but hitherto neglected aspects of resource development and land settlement throughout Canada by exposing to researchers the great wealth of information available in the files of what was a large, dynamic and, at times, a creative federal government agency.

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Records Management and Archives in Mexico

As a result of a visit to Mexico in 1975 by the Dominion Archivist, Dr. W.I. Smith, the government of Mexico asked the Public Archives of Canada to

provide staff to conduct a survey of records management activities within the Mexican government. Two members of the Records Management Branch, D.T.W. Shadd and W.W. Bilsland, conducted the survey during the entire month of February, 1976 and are now preparing a report and recommendations on their findings. Although the contents of the report will be confidential, there are certain aspects of the organization of the records management and archival activities and, indeed, the organization of the Mexican government which are not confidential and can be outlined below.

The government of Mexico uses the name "Secretariat" to describe the equivalent of the Canadian department. Each secretariat is very much a self-contained unit. With the exception of certain offices within the Secretariat of the Presidency, there are few central agencies or common service organizations which serve the various secretariats. For example, there is no equivalent to the Canadian Public Service Commission, to the Treasury Board or to the department of Supply and Services. Each secretariat, as the need arises, attends to its own "housekeeping" requirements as well as its operational areas. The entire field of records management and, somewhat surprisingly, the realm of archival or historical records are handled by each secretariat.

Accordingly, the National Archives of Mexico provides none of the services in records management which the Public Archives of Canada offers to Canadian departments, including for example such services as records centres for the storage, reference and disposal of dormant records, records classification and scheduling assistance, micrographic advisory services, central microfilming services and conservation and restoration services. There is at present no organized system for the automatic transfer of historical records from the secretariats to the National Archives of Mexico as these records become superfluous to the needs of the secretariats. Consequently, the acquisition program of the National Archives of Mexico is relatively static. The holdings date mainly between the 1520s and the 1850s, with very little material of significance post-dating 1850.

The impact of the system upon the secretariats is predictable. They, rather than the National Archives, have most of the records of historical value post-dating 1850 and, in a number of cases, also hold valuable material dating back to the earliest periods of the Spanish Conquest. Accustomed to an orderly flow of records from Canadian departments to dormant records centres to the Archives Branch of the Public Archives of Canada, it was an unusual experience for us to touch in a Mexican secretariat's records office original records bearing the signatures of some of the conquistadors.

Although the holdings of the National Archives of Mexico are limited to the time period described, they are rich in historical information. In addition, Mexico has many other organizations—museums, historic sites,

archaeological institutions and historical galleries—housing treasures which in Canada one would normally expect to find in an archives. The buildings themselves and their displays are magnificent and attract many visitors. The average Mexican, incidentally, seems much more interested than the average Canadian in such buildings and in his history. Finally, many individual churches have holdings of historically valuable material. Unfortunately, there is no one central source of information as yet which a researcher may consult concerning these resources.

Within the Secretariat of the Presidency is the Office of Administrative Studies. This Office commissioned our study and had earlier initiated others in the records management area. It has now established working groups to identify problem areas and to recommend solutions, and has established an excellent working relationship with the various records managers of the secretariats. The Office of Administrative Studies is determined that records and archival management shall be raised to a high level of competence within the various secretariats of the Mexican government. The report which we shall be submitting should be of help in achieving that goal.

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Australian Society of Archivists

During the biennial conference of the Library Association of Australia at Perth in August 1973, archivists were invited to meet and discuss a proposal advanced by Michael Saclier of the Australian National University Archives calling for an archivists' association. At this meeting a steering committee was formed "to investigate and promote the formation of an association of archivists". Through a series of newsletters, the steering committee reported to archivists throughout Australia, and local meetings were held in all the main centres to encourage archivists to discuss and vote on proposals put forward by the committee. As a result, the Australian Society of Archivists was formed and the inaugural meeting was held in Canberra, 5 and 6 April 1975.

The objectives of the Society fall into two categories. It is seen as a professional society for archivists in Australia and the Pacific region which will be concerned with basic professional matters including the preservation and care of archives, standards of archival practice and administration, professional conduct amongst archivists, archival qualifications and professional training, the publication of a journal and other material, the promotion of a professional identity among archivists and the advancement of professional standing and welfare.