

Page recognizes that neither historians nor archivists are present at the creation of corporate records. It is the archivist's responsibility, not the institutional historian's, however, to develop a collecting strategy and procedures by which to identify and transfer on a systematic basis those records of continuing value. Moreover, the legal, fiscal, and administrative value of records carry as much weight as their historical worth. An institutional historian may be one of the many users of these archival records, and even be one of the advisors in selecting certain archival materials. The historian's purpose, goals, and functions, however, are different from those of the archivist and I for one think an historian, by training and experience, is unsuitable to assume my role in the corporation.

If the corporation wishes the services of an historian to do research, write, and conduct oral history interviews, hire one a year or so after the establishment of the archives. An archives comes first.

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No Anglo-Saxon Monopoly in Canadian Archival Tradition

As a practising historian-scholar as well as a professional archivist, I have followed the debate raised by George Bolotenko's article "Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well" in *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983), with more than a passing interest. My purpose here, however, is not to address those intellectual monads (or is it *manqués?*) who so blithely cast aside the coils of history and scholarship only to hang themselves in the noose of their new-found sense of professional identity as archivist *non plus ultra*. Rather than waste my time with those who exult in their role as mindless garbage-pickers in the trash heaps of Canadian history, I shall try to confine myself to the utterings of Gordon Dodds for whom I have the highest professional and personal regard (see his "Canadian Archival Literature: A Bird's-Eye View" published in *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84)).

As one who also holds a doctorate in "[Finno-]Russian and European history" and is "now an archivist in PAC's Manuscript Division," I am curious why an otherwise thoughtful article should have seemed to have singled out Bolotenko almost as though to dismiss his ideas solely on the basis of his personal attributes, to wit:

Yet, in George Bolotenko's opening article, the old spectres of archivist and historian did stalk the pages of Canadian archival literature once more, with renewed fury. A student of *Russian* and *European* history, now an archivist in PAC's Manuscript Division, Bolotenko roundly dismissed the *Canadian* search for professional archival *identity*....
 [Emphasis added]

Given the apposition of so many "loaded" cue-words in the passage, I am immediately reminded that there is an underlying exclusionary force or habit persistent to the behaviour of the "mainstream" in Canadian society and its

socio-cultural institutions. In such matters, many of us still have to contend with discovering for ourselves to what extent this anti-pluralist bias continues to exist.

Since the entire purpose of Dodds' remarks concerning Bolotenko is less than clear, should we then interpret his words from the perspective of that foot-dragging camp of yore (of course assuming the veracity of that hoary ACA slogan that some "archivists can make it [i.e., the excreta from the past] last longer")? Has it therefore been his aim to diaper in the cloth of Canadian nationalism and provincialism the posterior of the archival profession so grievously exposed by Bolotenko? Does Dodds really believe that the only historical and archival experience, knowledge, and practice relevant to "Canadian" archivists is that "made in Canada" by those found to be "*bona fide* Canadians"? Certainly, a hint of this appears when he avers that "Bolotenko ... dismissed ... *the* Canadian search for a professional identity...." At least, Dodds here seems to suggest that there is only *one* Canadian archival identity (whether now in existence or in the making).

Yet, in having said that, Dodds continues with the following quotation from Bolotenko's article:

Today's archivists — in pursuit of a unique identity (from out of the shadow of the historian), in keeping with the tenor of this technology-oriented era (the gibberish of a relevant calling), and in the tradition of the unschooled Nortonites — seem to be rejecting far too rapidly their former identity: the archivist as historian and scholar.

Surely, Bolotenko's stand is no dismissal of the "Canadian search for a professional archival identity," but rather is an affirmation of the need to preserve in any "new" identity that core of an older one which sees "the archivist as a historian and scholar." In having allowed himself to be so contradicted, I cannot believe that Dodds' ulterior motive could have been either to rise up in defence of mediocrity and narrow cliquishness in the archival profession of this country or to raise the old spectre of Anglo-Saxon supremacy under a slightly new guise. Thus, I must conclude that a subtle logic exists behind his earlier attributions to the Bolotenko *persona* which, if I am right, is that Dodds merely intended to limn an informative characterization of a valued colleague who happens to be steeped in the broader European tradition of archives which, after all, is both mother and father to our own.

Indeed, the European tradition has not only been the parent of the "mainstream" archives and archival thought in Canada, but it has also spawned a diversity of archival establishments and endeavours outside of that mainstream in this country. Unfortunately, because of past and present shortages in the professional ranks of suitable candidates in the mould of the archivist-historian-scholar, very little of the non-mainstream traditions has been reported in the archival literature of this country — and, much less, considered or understood. Hence, Dodds' survey of "Canadian Archival Literature" remains largely an Anglo-centric exposé with barely a nodding reference to other traditions here (save for that of the French-speaking community). The problem, of course, does not really lie with Dodds, but rather with the narrow parameters within which professional archivists have chosen to view themselves and their calling — a situation which hardly appears to be on the mend in the light of the harsh criticisms that have been piled at Bolotenko's door.

In none of that vitriol do I see any real appreciation of the new challenges that face archives or of the widening horizons that have resulted from the “new” scholarship of the last few decades. For example, from my own archival research, I could point out that the Finnish-Canadian community (though middle-class white collars the Finns were not) indigenously developed an archival tradition both in theory and in practice that can be traced to the beginning of this century. That tradition, by the way, was wholly supported from within the community and without the aid of public funds, but even then included a strong notion of public service that extended beyond the immediate needs of the institutional sponsors of Finnish-Canadian archival repositories. In other words, the much-vaunted “mystique” of archives so loudly proclaimed by certain professional archivists as their own invention is scarcely the property of any one group in Canada — be it based on class, education, economic status, ethnic origin, or even on the would-be professional archivists who beat their chests and sing praises to the integrity of their profession as unbesmirched by the taint of history or other “alien” accretions.

The fact is, nonetheless, that Canadian society has undergone a pluralistic revolution, as the result of which even the contents of the archives’ stacks are changing. For example, however much the “traditionalist” faction in the profession maligns the growth of new archival programmes in the mainstream institutions, those like the National Ethnic Archives Programme are drawing upon traditions and sensibilities created “outside” of the establishment of old-line archivists and archival material. The pluralist revolution is here whether we like it or not. There is no turning back or, for that matter, no safe haven behind bureaucratic and technological walls.

Consequently, only the faint of heart and weak of mind in the archival profession are still persuaded to believe that the medium is the message and the means are the ends insofar as archives are concerned. Professional egos notwithstanding, the message will always reside in the media that we preserve, and we ourselves as archivists are but the means in ensuring its transmission to others at whatever level we can or wish to function, that is, within our institutional and individual limitations as archivist-historian-scholar, bureaucrat, or technocrat.

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