

Canadian Archives: Patterns from a Federal Perspective

by HUGH A. TAYLOR

More than 115 years have passed since the government of Nova Scotia appointed the first provincial archivist in Canada. The centennial of the Public Archives of Canada has come and gone. In the years following 1872, Canadian archival institutions developed in a manner characteristic of this country and in sharp contrast to archival development in the United States of America. At the 1974 Conference of the Society of American Archivists held in Toronto, a session was devoted to "Strategies for documenting national cultures: a cross national comparison".¹ What has been the general shape of the emerging archival strategy in Canada? What problems do archivists and users of archives across Canada have in common? What might be our strategy for the future?

In 1967, when the Society of American Archivists last visited Canada, we were all busy celebrating one hundred years of life under the British North America Act with a declared objective of "peace, order and good government". This goal, in striking contrast to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" favoured by our American colleagues, was an all important factor in the development of archives in Canada. But what were the hallmarks of this "good government" a hundred years ago? A quick response might be "peace" in a united Canada, and "order" through the

1 This article derives from a paper given at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists in Toronto, October 1974. The session for which the original version of this paper was prepared, was designed to contrast archival development and strategies between Canada and the United States of America, requiring a search for those patterns of initiative and relationship which have shaped the Canadian tradition. For Canadian archivists, any future strategy must be an extension of this experience as a point of departure. I make no claim to original research and my interpretations, conclusions and projections may not always survive closer examination. I hope, however, to stimulate debate in view of a possible Canadian Congress on Archives in the autumn of 1978. My hypotheses should not be accepted uncritically, and if my viewpoint is largely federal that is where I now stand, conscious of my limited vision and inviting a response from others.

continuity of traditional attitudes and values supported by a government, not always very democratic, but deeply rooted in custom and case law, and grounded in the evidence recorded in parliament, the church, the courts of law and other valuable and comforting, if occasionally ponderous, institutions. Furthermore, internal peace and order were good for business and economic development so the concept of Confederation won general acceptance among the upper echelons of society whether of French or British origin. Moreover, for those who were interested, the records of the past were reminders of tradition, of progress, and of the origins of national unity which should be preserved for sound cultural reasons and not simply as evidence of human transactions.

All this is well illustrated in the early archival history of New France and Lower Canada.² The eighteenth and early nineteenth century was the golden age of record keepers in the old tradition, driving their quills, scattering their sand and serving well their various institutions. Following the surrender of Montréal to the British in 1760, the administrative state papers were shipped to La Rochelle and Rochefort where they subsequently disappeared, whereas the judicial, notarial and ecclesiastical archives remained in the colony to form the nucleus of the documentary evidence for *la survivance* in the years to come. Family, parish and state records were regarded as cultural baggage of the first importance and as early as 1787 the governor, Lord Dorchester, appointed a commission to survey the archives of Québec. Under the Constitutional Act of 1791, orders-in-council were used as instruments for records preservation, a procedure which has a very modern ring. Quite apart from the continuity for archives provided by the record keepers of Québec, another force generated a more active concern. The aftermath of conquest brought reassessment, re-examination and explanation of events and institutions on a national basis for which archives provided the evidence.

The Literary and Historical Society of Québec, founded in 1824 by Lord Dalhousie, drew most of its members from the British in Québec City who composed about 40% of the population. Society members were doubtless aware of the records of courts and notaries for some had purchased ancient seigneuries, in pursuit of which they would have certainly been conscious of the literary and historical value of surviving manuscripts. More importantly, perhaps, they believed their literary pursuits were circumscribed and in 1871, the Society petitioned the federal government on the grounds that

Authors and literary inquirers are placed in a very disadvantageous position in this country in comparison with persons of the same class in Great Britain, France and the United States in consequence of being practically debarred from

² The author is indebted to John Hall Archer, "A Study of Archival Institutions in Canada" (Queen's University: unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, 1969) for much of the historical background to this paper.

facilities of access to the public records, documents and official papers in manuscript illustrative of the history and progress of Society in Canada.³

The government responded promptly to the petition which was presented to the House by Alexander T. Galt and Joseph Howe who incidentally had been active in founding the Nova Scotia Archives 15 years earlier. Parliament voted \$4,000 and appointed Douglas Brymner as archivist in 1872.

Essentially, the petitioners were seeking access to material rather than conservation. Who better than a writer and a journalist such as Brymner with a background in dissemination of news and commentary to champion access to truth about the past as a complement to truth about the present? Remember that the writing of history at this time was still largely the preserve of the gifted amateur antiquary and man of letters who would soon all but disappear from this field before the onslaught of the "scientific" historians. It was an age of historical innocence unclouded by weighty matters of interpretation. Many writers believed that once the facts had been made accessible, the facts would speak for themselves—with some assistance from their prose.

Indeed, if access is regarded as the main theme during these formative years for archives, then the policy of Douglas Brymner becomes clear: a vigorous copying program in Europe with the cooperation of Québec and the Maritimes to continue the work of Louis-Joseph Papineau and others; the acquisition of British military records for the period 1760-1871, about to be shipped to England, which in the days before microfilm, would have rendered them virtually inaccessible to Canadians; the opening and copying of British Colonial Office papers relating to Canada for the period 1760-1842; a survey of surviving records across Canada and the simplest possible system of arrangement and cataloguing of the acquired material for the use of the public. In the sphere of public records, an order-in-council of 1890 required a comprehensive schedule of material intended for destruction, but this unfortunately remained a dead letter. Records Keepers *kept* since they had not yet learned to destroy—the archivists' art of appraisal and selective retention was as yet unknown in Canada.

Ten years after Brymner's appointment the incorporation of the Archives with the Library of Parliament was mooted, but no less a person than Prime Minister Sir John A. Macdonald averted this terrible fate! Macdonald realized that the Library and Archives had different functions and as a lawyer he would have had practical knowledge of this difference. Indeed, many years later it was the exertion of the Dominion Archivist, who was

3 Quoted in Ian E. Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty: The cultural rôle of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935", *The Canadian Archivist/L'Archiviste Canadien*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1973), p. 5.

also the National Librarian, that brought the National Library into being. Canadian priorities may seem a little unusual but they were crucial to the development of the Public Archives.

In 1895 Brymner took the initiative in the field of historical public records which were denied to him through departmental opposition or inertia. He sent a memorandum on record keeping in Europe to Prime Minister Sir Mackenzie Bowell and urged that all public records prior to 1867 be transferred to the Archives. The Privy Council appointed a Departmental Commission but Brymner died before its recommendations were implemented. Briefly, the Commission proposed that the offices of Dominion Archivist and Keeper of the Records be held by one person and that large bodies of pre-1867 public records from various departments be transferred to the Archives. Brymner's goal is summarised in a paper read before the American Historical Association. He outlined the future development of the Archives:

My ambition aims at the establishment of a great storehouse of the history of the colony and colonists in their political, ecclesiastical, industrial, domestic, in a word in every aspect of their lives . . . It may be a dream, but it is a noble dream.⁴

By the time of his death in 1902, Brymner had assembled no less than 3,155 volumes of material, with calendars for most of them in his Annual Reports, but more significantly, by 1904 the Dominion Archivist was so strategically placed and so powerfully armed that Brymner's dream could be realized in remarkably short time. An order-in-council of 1903 (P.C.2018, 7 December 1903) directed that all archival material "be assembled in one place and put into the custody of one person, and so arranged and classified as to be easily accessible to all persons interested therein"⁵ and "that it shall be the duty of the said Dominion Archivist and Keeper of the Records, under the direction of the Minister of Agriculture, to keep and preserve the archives of Canada and other documents and records . . . and data as may tend to promote a knowledge of the history of Canada and furnish a record of events of historical interest therein."⁶ In the words of the present Dominion Archivist, Wilfred Smith:

Here were the chief elements of the Archives Act of 1912, which is still in effect: a single archival agency to be responsible not only for the reception of government records which have historical value but also for the collection of historical material of all kinds and from any source which can help in a significant way to reveal the truth about every aspect of Canadian life. It was the formal endorsement of Brymner's 'noble dream'.⁷

4 Quoted in *ARCHIVES Mirror of Canada Past/Miroir du passé du Canada*, introduction by Wilfred I. Smith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972), p. 6.

5 Quoted in *Mirror of Canada Past*, Smith, intro., p. 8.

6 *Mirror of Canada Past*, Smith, intro., p. 10.

7 Ibid.

All this had been achieved on a budget which never exceeded \$12,000.

Already the priorities are recognizable in a very limited strategy: an emphasis on access; early recognition of international archival dimensions for Canada in Britain and France; the concept that the national archives should have custody of both public records and private manuscripts; the belief that a national archives should develop independently of a national library and that the roles of these institutions should not be confused.

Brymner's successor, Arthur Doughty, who was appointed in 1904, took full and immediate advantage of the strong position prepared for him, and advanced on all fronts. His background in English "public" schools and at the University of Oxford, together with experience as a ministerial private secretary, helped immensely in developing what today would be called "leverage". He had the warm support of Lord Minto, and at one critical point the sympathetic ear of Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the prime minister. He saw the Archives and the history which would be written from its greatly expanded resources as a powerful tool for shaping national unity and identity. Given sufficient documentary evidence, he believed that "ultimate" history could be written which would be acceptable to both French and English alike. In particular, he deplored the divisive role of the various interpretations of events in school textbooks. Such claims attracted wide political support. At the academic level he found a powerful ally in Adam Shortt, the first John A. Macdonald Professor of Political Science at Queen's University.

The task these two men set themselves was considerable. Neither was a trained historian in the modern sense, but Shortt's background in the natural sciences had equipped him well for the scientific approach to history. Between them, these two energetic men laid the foundations in the warm and friendly atmosphere of the PAC for the writing and teaching of Canadian history. From the point of view of the Public Archives this fact is very important, for it was the Archives which became the nursing mother of the historical profession in Canada and not *vice versa* as in other countries.

Doughty's principle strategy was twofold: first, a considerable augmentation of the holdings of the Archives to include, in particular, public records and the great collections of manuscript material still in private hands; secondly, the publishing of original documents rather than calendars and especially those Canadian constitutional documents which would be the raw material, the "constitutional archaeology" to use his phrase, of a definitive political history which at that time seemed an attainable goal. In addition, Doughty greatly expanded Brymner's plan to survey documentary sources in the provinces through local agents of the Archives, an approach which aroused some regional opposition since it often involved moving material permanently to Ottawa. Yet these agents also served as a constant reminder that archives preservation at the provincial level was usually

minimal or non-existent. There were even plans, which came to nothing, for building regional branches of the Public Archives in the Maritimes and elsewhere.

The Historical Manuscripts Commission was established in 1907 to advise on acquisition, arrangement and publication. In the same year, the first volume of *Documents relating to the Constitutional History of Canada* appeared, edited by Doughty and Adam Shortt. Doughty's publication program prefigures what the PAC now calls "diffusion". His trust in the researcher, his emphasis on public service and the convenience of extended hours in the face of Canadian distances were to become the internationally recognised hallmarks of the national institution. In 35 years, the budget had multiplied by nearly 35 times the Archives' first allocation, reaching \$139,000.

In 1912 the Public Archives of Canada was created as a separate department under Doughty as deputy minister with powers to acquire archival material "of every kind, nature and description". The same year a royal commission on public records attempted to strengthen further the position of the Dominion Archivist—a reinforcement which was only to be achieved after two world wars and a depression had almost halted progress. The pictorial image did not escape his attention, and as early as 1922 he was making available glass lantern slides of items from the picture collection for use in schools.

Above all Doughty succeeded in acquiring several great private manuscript collections, the names of which were to stud the footnotes of countless histories and theses thereafter. If *The Canadian Archives and its Activities*, published in 1925, is concerned mainly with the Society of Canadian History in England and its counterpart in France, and was illustrated with the photographs of its distinguished members at banquets, such discreet publicity was vital if ancient families were to be wooed and won—and there never was a more ardent suitor than Arthur Doughty. In 1926 he secured a new wing for the Archives building which had been opened originally in 1906. For a while he became entangled by museum artifacts, especially war trophies during World War I, but fortunately this did not divert him from his path.

In 1935, Doughty retired, received a knighthood, and was granted the title of *Dominion Archivist Emeritus*. He is probably the only archivist who will ever have a statue erected to him in his honour. Ian Wilson sums up the contribution of Shortt and Doughty admirably:

Under their inspiration and direction, the Public Archives went far beyond the traditional record preservation rôle of a national archives. Through a vigorous acquisitions policy, extensive publications, advanced courses in history, encouragement for the universities, and above all by attitudes and policies which facilitated the work of students at all levels of sophistication, Shortt and

Doughty took the initiative, gained the support of successive governments and led them through the Public Archives to assist in fostering the development of the Canadian historical profession. Many of their policies were inspired by the work of Dr. J. Franklin Jameson at the Carnegie Institution in Washington. But what was left to a private institution in the United States became the "duty" of the Canadian government. Shortt and Doughty linked the requirements of the professional historiography to the general vision of a national, unifying Canadian history and by so doing made a dynamic Public Archives programme a cultural equivalent of the economic programmes of the National Policy.⁸

Provincial archival activity also was most vigorous when it fell under the inspiring influence of Brymner, Doughty and the PAC. Doughty's impact on the emerging archival strategy was decisive. Archival initiative and development in Canada took firm root in government, and were seen to be the responsibility of government. Ontario provincial archives developed under Doughty's guidance and for want of a better solution he had plans for a regional repository of the Public Archives in the Maritimes. This did not rule out non-governmental alternatives, of which Queen's University was to be an outstanding example, but increasingly the PAC and the various provincial archives took leadership roles, not in a dominant fashion, unless their legitimate mandate, over public records for instance, was challenged, but as facilitators and coordinators.

The period of the Depression and World War II was a time of pause and some retrenchment. Within the world of Canadian archives there was no counterpart to the Historical Records Survey in the United States.

The policies and programmes of Shortt and Doughty were crippled by the financial stringency of the Depression and by the deaths of those who had worked to implement them. The work of the Board of Historical Publications was wound up after Adam Shortt's death in 1931. Between the first of January 1931 and the thirty-first of December 1935 the Archives lost through death or retirement twelve of its members, six of whom were senior personnel. Only one of these archivists was replaced and no new positions were created. Financial difficulties even forced Doughty to stop using the photostat and to revert to manuscript copying for researchers. Regional offices were closed and the Archives gradually lost its national presence.⁹

The Archives of Ontario also suffered a similar serious loss of government initiative and the resultant vacuum was partly filled by a growth in collecting by university archives of regional records below the provincial level, thereby leading to serious tension in later years. Queen's University, partly because of the special relationship between Shortt and Doughty and an early interest in Canadian studies, pursued an acquisition policy which crossed the ill-defined boundaries of federal and provincial spheres of interest. But if nothing else, this pause resulted in new departures and a reassessment of archival strategy during the next quarter century.

⁸ Wilson, "Cultural rôle of the P.A.C.", *Canadian Archivist*, p. 25.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 24.

The aftermath of World War II saw a remarkable proliferation of archives, particularly in the western nations of the world. For instance, every county in England and each province in Canada had a government archives by 1970; all had mandates for government records and private manuscripts; many became involved in records management. In Canada, the archivist inherited the riches of both the record keepers and the collectors of manuscripts. Families and institutions recognized a new profession, a new expertise at work within space designed specially for the care and servicing of documents. Within a generation, archives became storehouses not only of evidence and raw material for the professional historian but also of media resources in which the material, by its very nature and not *via* historians' gloss or transmutation into print, could move people in mysterious ways to illuminate and enrich human experience. Not only manuscripts, but also iconography of all kinds, especially still photographs, films and maps, acquired a new importance as expressions of cultural and historical significance. The dream of ultimate history, of final synthesis to be read and passively accepted, gave way to an infinitely more subtle mosaic which demanded involvement, participation, constant reinterpretation and interpenetration. In *Gutenberg Galaxy* published in 1962 and in *Understanding Media* printed two years later, Marshall McLuhan articulated much that archivists can feel in their bones: the elemental power of the media in their care and, by a process of transference, the emerging power of the archivist within society as a key figure in the information network.

Dr. W. Kaye Lamb's term of office as Dominion Archivist, 1948-1968, spans almost the entire period now under consideration. By 1966 the implemented findings of the Massey and Glassco Commissions and the creative energy of Dr. Lamb had placed the Dominion Archivist in firm control of the retention and disposal of federal public records. The first of a series of Regional Records Centres was opened in Toronto in 1965. Microfilm was deployed with spectacular success to duplicate the image and not merely the contents of documents in London, Paris and elsewhere. It also enabled these images to be diffused throughout the scholarly community to an extent and at a cost denied to Doughty in his published volumes. At the same time a new emphasis was placed on the acquisition of private manuscripts for the period after 1867 so that the Archives was soon to receive the papers of every prime minister but two since Confederation. The climax of this achievement can be seen in the new Public Archives and National Library Building opened in 1967. Shortly afterward, the annual budget reached 5.5 million dollars. This brief account of Dr. Lamb's term scarcely does justice to a man who more than any other fostered the growth of archives in Canada through his persuasive advice and the service of the PAC offered generously at strategic moments.

The post-war development of the Public Archives should be set within the Canadian scene as a whole. Nova Scotia discovered microfilm early and

a program for newspapers and church records was instituted in 1944. In the Québec archives, there continued an earnest commitment to extensive publication, genealogical research and service. Archival legislation and the development of regional repositories in Montréal and Trois Rivières were to develop a unique configuration in harmony with the record-keeping tradition of this province. In Ontario, after a period of severe retrenchment, the Archives from 1950 developed along the lines of the PAC to become by far the largest and most advanced provincial archives in the country, albeit surrounded by non-government alternatives for donors in the universities of Queen's, Western Ontario and McMaster. It fell to Saskatchewan to pioneer legislation for the new provincial archives of the 1950s and 1960s. Under an act passed in 1945, a joint board represented government and university interests, a unique arrangement, and the clauses outlining the authority of the provincial archivist and the disposal of documents became exemplars for the remaining western provinces and New Brunswick. In general, the provincial archives was empowered to acquire material in the private sector and could veto the destruction of any public document.

In time most of the Provincial Archivists acquired powers in their spheres approaching those of the Dominion Archivist at his level, contributing to a harmonious working relationship. However, only in New Brunswick was the Provincial Archivist, after a late start in 1967, fortunate in securing manuscripts and public records, records management and forms control, the central microfilm unit and the legislative library under one direction as a single information resource and as a service which links records creation, through records management, to archival administration and research in printed and unprinted sources. Many other archival institutions emerged during this period but special mention should be made of the city archives in Toronto, Québec, Montréal, Edmonton, Vancouver and most recently Ottawa. The records of many other municipalities are cared for in various provincial and university archives.

Present Canadian archival strategy should be examined in the light of such antecedents as those which have been discussed above and which demonstrate how archivists have progressed in the past by taking bold initiatives and by responding to circumstance and events in a sensitive and effective manner to meet evident needs. What then of the present?

The Public Archives of Canada has ceased to be a manuscript-oriented institution serving, on the one hand, professional historians and their students whose main interests have been directed toward constitutional and political history, and on the other, the amateur genealogist, the historical dilettante, and local antiquarian. During recent years, the Public Archives has increasingly recognized shifts in archival concerns and research emphases which have to some extent changed its role and caused a

redefinition of aims and methods. A few examples will reveal clearly some aspects of this metamorphosis:

- The decline of national and purely political history, written with a centralist perspective, in favour of regional, urban, and local studies which often involve a mosaic environmental approach and several related disciplines. An increased use of maps, architectural resources, and an even closer relationship with provincial and other archives is certain to result from the new regional approach to research.
- The decline of an élitism which restricted the appreciation of history to those who lived close to the evidence or who were sufficiently privileged to be able to reach it. This limited public use was largely unavoidable before the appearance of new reproduction and duplication processes.
- The growing enjoyment and appreciation of history and a sense of historical environment by the general public through exposure to the archival image. This involves realizations that history does not have to be read to be enjoyed and that it is much too important a matter to be left entirely to the historians.
- A demand for the riches of the Archives to be “projected” in other provinces and other cities, towns, and villages of the nation. Means are being explored, through microfilm and facsimile publishing, to meet this new challenge—the “touring” of the Public Archives exhibitions is a start. The Library’s fine pamphlet collection, now being copied on microfiche, may become very useful in this area.
- A sharpened audio-visual awareness of the past, complementing and reinforcing written history, is beginning to make heavy demands on appropriate records—witness the increased use of the Picture Division and National Map Collection by the public and especially by the “media”.
- The recognition of photography in all its forms as a valid record of the past. The actual and potential growth of the National Photography Collection and the National Film Archives, which have multiplied several times in the last eight years, bear this out.
- The importance of recorded-sound historical evidence. Despite a very small staff, accessions and services in this field are growing rapidly.
- The need to devise finding aids, including the use of electronic data processing, which will retrieve information rapidly and selectively. Successful projects with the Prime Ministers’ papers will be further improved and extended into other fields.
- The necessity for the Public Archives to acquire systematically collections of national importance, not only from outstanding individuals but also in support of a range of subjects many of which

have remained largely unexplored hitherto. The Systematic National Acquisition Programme (SNAP) has been remarkably successful already in this regard.

- The emergence of a Public Archives less structured in the old sense as individual skills, initiatives, and managerial capability are deployed in a more fluid way to meet the new problems and challenges of the Archives as a vast multi-media resource centre.
- The need for an intensive analysis of the archival resources of the Public Archives to establish long-range programs for total conservation of a small proportion of the holdings and alternatives which will preserve at least the informational content (on microfilm for instance) of the remainder, unless a future technological breakthrough makes possible the mass preservation of originals.

Within the Public Archives, the Archives Branch (formerly the Historical Branch) now has custody of every medium of record from parchment to magnetic tape. Furthermore, the complementary activities of the Records Management Branch and the Technical Division in conservation, photoduplication and microfilm services has enabled the Public Archives to develop what Dr. Wilfred I. Smith has called the “total archives” concept:

The Public Archives of Canada is perhaps the most prominent example of ‘total archives’ in practice. In the past it has been considered unusual, if not unique, among national archives, but it seems now to illustrate the trend of world developments in its field.¹⁰

This entails a second concept, particularly appropriate to a country so vast as Canada: “the total utilisation of archives” whatever the medium, through acquisition, analysis and diffusion wherever possible. These two concepts have grown out of the needs of a changing world.

The idea of “total archives” has made us realize that we can no longer identify the archivist solely as a keeper of records or a curator of textual manuscripts. There are the map librarians, or archivist/geographers, who are the heirs of a succession of cartographical experts and collectors for whom the map was the first pictorial *record* (as opposed to pictorial illustration) and who saw the manuscript map as an archival document of the first importance. For the new study of the environment we turn to printed maps, the successive issues of which record the palimpsest of destruction. Sir Hilary Jenkinson of the Public Record Office in London saw archives as the secretions of an organism: the land is itself a vast geological archives and the map is an inventory of the land. Then there are paintings, drawings and print curators in an archives—how do they differ from their colleagues in a gallery? For them, artistic excellence is not an overriding consideration, but

¹⁰ *Mirror of Canada Past*, Smith, intro., p. 20.

must be matched with the topographical and historical record supplied by the artist. Can an artist's work be called his archives? It is as much a statement as anything written. Does it have to be accompanied by notes to be "legitimised" as an archives? But then can pots be considered the archives of a potter? Yet, we are probably in agreement that photographs are the archives of a photographer, as they certainly are those of the government department that employs him. We are only beginning to accept photographs as record. Up to now they have been used almost entirely as illustration. If the photograph is archival, so is videotape, film and sound with its "hidden agenda" waiting to be read. These coalesce to form the only record of time in motion, the ultimate in historical record, albeit within a minute frame of reference.

What should be said of librarians who work in archives on printed material so rare as to be almost archival? If they are not archivists, they are certainly more so than most librarians. They have learned that to be effective within the environment of an archives they must "experience" their books and master the contents, just as archivists must "experience" their archives if they are to master, control and understand them. Certainly librarians have much to teach us about information retrieval.

With machine readable archives and electronic data processing, the circle of record is closed for the present. This latest archival medium compares today with last week, and is almost cinematic in its record of trends and profiles. In data archives, the creation of a file should have the input of the archivist to guarantee immortality for grandfather, if this is desired, before grandfather disappears in the presence of his great-grandson! The archivists in these archives are more likely to be graduates in the social sciences than history in the narrow sense.

There are those who would argue that the Archives Branch of the PAC is a loose federation of professional groups who are separated by the discipline imposed by the various media in their custody, and who are held together only by Branch-wide programs of acquisition, custody, reference and public service. This is partly true, but possibly it is also true that the alchemy of the unique, original record works its magic on all of us and turns us, regardless of discipline, into an integrated body of archivists—members of a flexible, dynamic and responsive profession, with a five thousand-year tradition of adaptation and survival.

The breadth of and the need for archival acquisition in Canada demands very close ties between repositories in the country. These bonds have been strengthened greatly by annual meetings between the Dominion Archivist and Provincial Archivists (including the Territorial Archivist of the Yukon) since 1970, and no doubt will be cemented by the annual conferences of Canadian archivists at the meetings of Learned Societies. The warmly

appreciated cooperation of the provincial archives in the diffusion program, whereby microfilm and finding aids of the prime ministers' papers and other material of provincial interest in the Public Archives are held in the provinces, has strengthened this Dominion-Provincial axis and should further the study of national events within the local and regional context which is an increasing feature of local studies, besides emphasizing the "one world" of archival resource.

In particular, acquisition policy between the federal and provincial archives has been more or less defined. PAC acquisitions must concern persons and institutions of "national importance", but in difficult cases there is resort to the possibility of duplication on microfilm. Gifts to the Crown are eligible for a reduction in taxable income equal to their value. A National Archival Appraisal Board consisting of experienced archivists with powers to "co-opt" other specialists reports to the Canadian Historical Association and is recognized by the tax authorities. This arrangement will be extended nationwide so that archives may more readily take advantage of this valuable incentive to transfer collections to the Crown. Federal public records slated for destruction because they are not deemed of permanent value at the federal level are transferred to provincial archives if there is a local importance attached to the material.

The Public Archives has long resisted any kind of "big brother" relationship with other repositories; this was particularly evident within the Archives Section of the Canadian Historical Association which was never dominated by the PAC. Nor is it likely that the Association of Canadian Archivists will ever be overwhelmed by the PAC. The regional archival associations are informally recognised within the new Association, further diminishing any risk of domination. In the field of professional education there are now a number of archives courses being held regularly, of which the PAC course is but one and the goal of a post-graduate degree or diploma in archival science at a university is being pursued. It may be observed that the PAC course has been revised periodically in response to valid criticism that it was much too oriented to the National Archives. Archival techniques and strategies throughout federal, provincial and municipal repositories are broadly similar and there is an increasing circulation of staff through the normal process of competition and promotion. The PAC now has ex-staff members heading up the archives in the Province of New Brunswick, the City of Vancouver until recently, and the University of Toronto. The Assistant Dominion Archivist was Provincial Archivist of Québec for some time; the present Director of the Archival Resources Branch successively started the archives of two provinces before joining the PAC. Such interchange is healthy and makes for very responsive relationships.

Although what has been said above applies in general to Québec, the archival pattern here is somewhat different. A great many religious

institutions, court houses and registries have retained material relating to the early history of the province. As a result the ranks of provincial, municipal and university archivists are augmented to the extent that the Association des archivistes du Québec numbers more than 400 members. The archival wealth of the province is protected in a large number of small repositories, and material in private hands is guarded by a Cultural Property Act, 1972, which states in part that "any manuscript, printed item, audio visual document . . . whose conservation is of historic interest" may be deemed an "historic document" and if so must be registered and preserved. Such "recognized property" cannot be removed from Québec. It is not possible at present to estimate the effect of this legislation,

Because of the language barrier there are two major Canadian archivists' associations in Canada, the francophone Association des archivistes du Québec and the anglophone Association of Canadian Archivists, bridged by a joint committee, with some archivists holding dual memberships. Until the profession is more bilingual, the two societies should be able to co-exist without conflict. Meanwhile, bilingualism in the PAC is increasing and an archives course for francophones was held for the second time in 1975.

This survey should demonstrate how present archival strategies in the areas of access, acquisition processing and diffusion are firmly rooted in historical circumstance. Today's strategies are in many ways those of predecessors, but translated into contemporary terms and rearmed with the capabilities of modern technology.

To what extent is the Canadian approach inadequate or misdirected? In the past, we have paid insufficient attention to physical conservation of the material in our custody. The recently established Canadian Conservation Institute will have regional centres across Canada covering the whole field of artifact conservation as well as documents, but for some time its resources will be spread very thinly. Canada is losing more records at the municipal level than is acceptable, yet the healthy growth of municipal archives is probably being hindered by the practice of "creaming off" the best for provincial repositories. A systematic acquisition program for business archives has long been delayed, mainly for want of space. Even if such a program were mounted, most archives would have to place their acquisitions in limbo for some time, but at least the records would be saved. Despite some notable acquisitions, there has also been insufficient attention paid to the records of the labour movement if our repositories are to become inclusive of the Canadian experience as a whole and not just of the establishment. Likewise, we have done little to document the counter-cultures or even the environmentalist groups which form and reform and may even now be changing cultural attitudes in a fundamental way.

Archivists have a very long way to go before the popular appreciation of historical documents becomes an educational commonplace. Order is

brought to documents tolerably well, but archivists still know little and can retrieve even less of their content, and this is where new strategies must be found:

We are entering the era in which records will be controlled by automation and miniaturization. Rooms full of unsorted paper are fast disappearing. Organic order will be imposed and maintained at the moment of creation. Chaos and overwhelming mass will cease to plague the archivist. His principal battle, and perhaps his survival as a member of a distinct profession so hardly won, will depend on his control of a mass and chaos infinitely more complex; namely, the mass of data and the chaos of subject content.¹¹

Finally, there is an area in which archivists should perhaps have been “creating” the record. Many archives have remarkable collections of early photographs which document, for instance, the birth and early growth of cities. These collections are of matchless value and should perhaps have been extended systematically by the periodic commissioning of a photographic “update”. The photographic record of the Depression in the United States has no counterpart here and something similar to the “Documerica” program could possibly be developed by Canadian archives to enhance the value of the photographic holdings.

The truth is we would not be “creating” a record. The record is there and we would only be duplicating it in the same mode as when we microfilm documents, *provided* we call for *record photography* with a minimum of interpretation and all the skill which this implies, avoiding the subjective, “exciting” composition tendentiously coloured and speciously angled. Likewise oral history does not “create” records, but rather it records responses available in no other form.

What of the future? Brymner had his dream of “a great storehouse”; for Doughty it was “ultimate” history; we find it difficult to measure progress in such a linear fashion any more. Time was when archives and divisions within archives discharged traditional functions within their own separate orbits and expanded gently. They aimed to become larger so as to process more material and to provide a better service. This was the “direction” in which the Public Archives traditionally “headed”, and we have just celebrated a century of notable travel on this bearing with a succession of Dominion Archivists personally charting the course and taking most of the initiative.

Almost imperceptibly, however, linear development has begun to evolve into a more complex matrix. In the Public Archives for instance, the Systematic National Acquisition Programme saw members of the Manuscript Division becoming involved in the methodical acquisition of

¹¹ Hugh A. Taylor, “Information Retrieval and the Training of the Archivist”, *The Canadian Archivist/L'Archiviste Canadien*, Vol. 2, No. 3 (1972), p. 30.

manuscripts at the federal level; relatively junior archivists began running their own programs and making responsible decisions as never before even while encountering unfamiliar media such as photographs and maps, thereby becoming increasingly aware of the work of other divisions. Meanwhile the clientele of the PAC has also changed. The historian and genealogist have been joined by many other "ists"; the press, radio, film and TV have increasingly turned to the Picture Division; urban studies have crossed all divisional bounds; the general public has shown an interest in exhibits requiring input by the Branch as a whole. The PAC divisions could no longer remain self-sufficient. Inevitably, of course, there have been some "boundary disputes".

At a more philosophical level, theories of knowledge have also changed. Almost imperceptibly we are being taught to re-engage all of our senses. The age of the personal encounter, the rap session, sensitivity groups, environmental studies and consumer consciousness all are aspects of a new personal involvement in society which demands not only knowledge but experiences—"happenings". Instead of "making progress" or "heading" in a specific direction we try to touch at all points, to make contacts in all directions, to communicate. The giving and receiving of information is no longer linear transmission by memo and letter (although these are still used for the record) as much as by the telephone, the computer and television, which extensions of our whole nervous system require heightened awareness and spontaneous reactions.

This climate plays havoc with traditional bureaucratic processes; tidy organizational chains of command are thrown into disarray; apparently secure people often become uncertain and defensive as rules change rapidly and structures give way to relationships in which we must actualize ourselves if we are to live and thrive.

Archivists are learning to respond to multiple situations as repositories become totally involved in the information and conservation businesses. At first this may seem to be a loss of direction and control but this interpretation holds only if we retain a traditional view of the role of archivists. Treasury Boards are recognizing that, in contrast to the old "5% a year" attitude to expansion, program planning and budgeting are attempts to measure the effectiveness of archival responses at all points.

In this new style bureaucracy, the role of senior management is less a matter of "direction" (with all its linear overtones) than of reacting swiftly to changing needs and then transmitting this response to others—being accessible, helping to solve problems, arbitrating, unsnarling, keeping the lines open.

What then should be the goal of Canadian archivists? The vision of "onward and upward" with mounting acquisitions endlessly chasing steel

shelving and finding aids following closely behind is somewhat daunting. There is, of course, still much that must be saved in an ongoing program of permanent retention and acquisition. The final aims should be nothing less than the identification and availability for research of the surviving Canadian documentary record of permanent value wherever it may be, but not necessarily in its original form. In this scheme, recognized repositories should share physical custody and control, but perhaps the PAC should take the lead in creating finding aids, miniaturising and distributing copies of holdings, and giving aid to small repositories which lack professional staff, so that their collections can be examined and evaluated. Archivists have an increasing obligation to diffuse information through publications and exhibitions, videotape and televisual display, the cassette and the on-line terminal, creating a whole new inter-related environment—the retrievable past which will not be just the historical past. To achieve all this we will need not only good strategy, but some uncommonly good generals as well. I believe we will find them.

Résumé

Au cours de la réunion de la Society of American Archivists de 1974 une session comparative portant sur les stratégies de documentation de l'histoire nationale a mis à jour le besoin impératif pour le Canada de se définir une stratégie nationale de l'archivistique. Après avoir décrit les principales étapes de l'évolution des archives au Canada depuis la Nouvelle-France, l'auteur s'attache à circonscrire le rôle qu'entendent jouer les Archives publiques du Canada dans le réseau archivistique canadien. A partir du concept d'"archives complètes", auquel elles souscrivent, le concept d'"utilisation totale" devient un corollaire logique selon lequel la collection de documentation du passé, quelqu'en soit le médium, doit non seulement être préservée, mais également diffusée. Ainsi, la copie de documents historiques ne doit pas être négligée puisqu'elle permet une plus grande utilisation et une meilleure préservation d'un grand nombre de média. Les Archives publiques du Canada ont un rôle spécial à jouer et devraient prendre les devants dans la création d'instruments de recherches modernes, dans la miniaturisation, la diffusion et surtout l'aide aux dépôts plus modestes. L'archiviste doit ainsi s'adapter à tous les milieux créateurs de documentation historique.