

- To encourage research into problems connected with the use, administration and conservation of archives and records and to promote the publication of the results of this research.
- To promote the standing of archives institutions.
- To advise and support the establishment of archives services throughout New Zealand.
- To publish a bulletin at least once a year and other publications in furtherance of these objects.

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The Manuscript Society

Ottawa has been selected to be the site for the 1978 convention of the Manuscript Society. In choosing Canada, only a few years after meeting in London, England, the Society wishes to emphasize its international character and its growing non-American membership. Its quarterly publication, *Manuscripts*, carries a good balance of learned articles, business reports, organizational information and professional advertisements, and frequently highlights research studies, events and activities which transcend their traditional North American orientation.

The Manuscript Society looks upon itself as an "international society of collectors established to foster the greater use of original source manuscript material in the study, teaching and writing of history . . . to facilitate the exchange of information and knowledge among researchers, scholars and collectors. . . ." The Society numbers among its members institutional and private collectors, dealers in manuscripts and other archival materials, archivists, manuscript curators, historians and other researchers. It holds annual meetings, usually during the last week in May, in urban centres which have archival repositories or manuscript collections. The program is divided into sessions at which papers are read, issues debated and topics discussed. Strong emphasis is placed on tours of repositories which often involve visits to historic sites and noteworthy cultural centres. Total membership of the Society is 1,204.

To lay the groundwork for the 1978 Meeting I attended this year's convention in Philadelphia. Because of the unfortunate publicity in connection with the tragic deaths of a number of American legionnaires, the attendance at the Society's meetings was less than expected. Not quite 80 members registered out of the usual complement of 100-150. As expected, the theme of the meetings was the Bicentenary of the American Revolution. Meetings were held at, and tours were conducted of the archives of the American Philosophical Society, the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, the Presbyterian Historical Society (which incidentally has many Canadian and Canada-related documents), the University of Pennsylvania collections, the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library, the Rosenbach Foundation, the First Bank of the United States, the Temple University Library, the Athenaeum, and the Balch Institute with its ethnic archives collections.

The papers which were read and the panel discussions which took place had a very pragmatic significance, and included topics such as "Archives and Manuscript Security," "Current Trends in Collecting Business History Archives and Manuscripts," "Manuscript Forgery Detection," "Collecting Ethnic History Archives and Manuscripts," "Break-through in Conservation," and "Collecting Archival Drawings." Other papers were: "Two Traitors in the American Revolution," "A Rising People: The Founding of the

United States, 1765-1789," "The Centennial of 1876," "The American Kaleidoscope," "Private Collectors of Philadelphia," and two anecdotal talks on Philadelphia dealers and collectors.

Again, as in the past, there was the members' auction at which manuscripts were sold. The auction is virtually an annual ritual, and an important source of the Society's revenue, for vendors share the auction proceeds with the Manuscript Society treasurer. The majority of auctioned documents sold at prices from \$10 to \$100, although one sold for \$600. Most items went to private collectors. The non-American MSS consisted of A.L.S. of figures such as: Robert Devereux (the second Earl of Essex), Gabriel Faure, Ignace Paderewski, Aga Khan, Aram Khatchaturian, Louis-Cyr Sanson, *inter alia*.

There is no doubt that a meeting which includes archivists, curators, manuscript dealers, and private collectors provides a worthwhile forum for exchanging ideas, comparing professional attitudes, discussing problems of mutual concern and resolving potential conflicts of interest. The Manuscript Society is agreeable that we invite to the 1978 Ottawa convention our Canadian colleagues from the Association of Canadian Archivists, L'Association des archivistes du Québec, and particularly the National Archival Appraisal Board. A committee is now being organized to plan the Ottawa meeting and to make it an interesting and exciting event.

R.S. Gordon
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ACA Conference

For many archivists, the first annual meeting of the Association of Canadian Archivists at the Learned Societies, Laval University, Quebec, 31 May to 2 June, 1976, was characterized by a sense of maturity. The programme offered stimulating sessions, and participation derived from ideas and concepts, not from rank in the profession or in institutions. Fewer persons than in the past seemed inclined to entertain the debate about the appropriateness of the Association. More archivists were concerned with getting on with the job, with finding the most suitable concepts and practices for meeting the challenge of preserving the national heritage. Everywhere there was a sense of challenge, a sense of crisis in archives, a sense of commitment. As always, dialogue before, during and after sessions demonstrated the essential unity of purpose among archivists, regardless of location, language or level. As ever, the social contacts, aided by events such as the Association des archivistes du Québec/Association of Canadian Archivists cabaret evening, proved that the informal contacts rival the sessions themselves in importance.

A recapitulation of the sessions must always fall short of being an accurate reflection, for there is no substitute for attendance. Nevertheless, it may still be worthwhile at least to identify some elements of a successful conference. Much of the appeal of the individual sessions derived from the orchestration to fit into what I believe will be the overall "theme" of future conferences and the goal of the ACA's activities: improved communications throughout the archival profession. This theme demands a continuing dialogue on issues confronting archivists, leading to a consensus which will be presented to those outside the profession.

The first day of sessions began with "Scratch an Archivist" by Samuel S. Silsby, Archivist of the State of Maine, who looked at problems for archival programmes confronted by efficiency experts in league with budgetary cutbacks. "Local Records: Centralization vs. Decentralization" featured a proposal by Kent Haworth, Provincial