

Theatre History Research Programme

The Canadian Theatre History Research Programme held its first working conference at Université Laval, 26-27 May 1976. The purpose of the conference was to promote the exchange of information and a discussion of co-operative planning to ensure the continuation of theatre history research across the country. To these ends, a series of reports were discussed, including two of specific interest to archivists: "Theatre Archives and the Co-ordinated Arts Services Archives Program" by James Aikens and "Public Archives of Canada: National Arts Archives" by R.J. Taylor.

The Aikens report described the function of the Co-ordinated Arts Services, a Toronto organization created by six major Ontario-based performing arts companies to provide common services which can be more efficiently administered when shared, in co-ordinating a workable archives programme for each member organization. Aikens stressed the need for a strict selection process, noting "the less bulky an archives is, the more likely it is to be put up with and preserved." The Taylor report described the work of the National Arts Archives, which is responsible for collections of papers relating to Canadian theatre history within the Manuscript Division of the Public Archives, in terms of acquisition, arrangement, description, and reference.

During the discussion on archives, several important questions were raised concerning access, selection, and the reporting of holdings. One researcher made a strong appeal for access to material "uncatalogued in the basement" of repositories and this feeling of frustration was echoed by teachers of theatre history in the audience. The chairperson, Professor Sheldon Zitner of the University of Toronto, ended the session on archives with a four point summary of the comments. He stated that there should be a clear understanding that archival material included more than just textual documents. He called for some means of increasing information for both students and teachers of how archives work. He noted the role which computers could play in the use and processing of archival sources. Finally he suggested that there was a need to raise the level of understanding of the stewards of documents whom he considered were not archivists or librarians but those responsible for disposal, the originators. Professor Zitner's concluding advice to archives was to find it, keep it, publicize it.

R.J. Taylor
Public Archives of Canada

George Warburton Spragge 1893-1976

Dr. George Warburton Spragge, Archivist of Ontario, 1950-1963, was a man with a lifelong involvement with history as teacher, writer, archivist, editor and informed amateur in heraldry.

The Spragge family has been rooted in the history of Ontario and its educational development since the migration of Joseph Spragge to Upper Canada as a schoolmaster in 1820. Born in Cobourg in 1893, George Spragge was educated at Trinity College School, and Trinity College, University of Toronto, where his grandfather was first chancellor of the College in 1852. He took a B.A. in 1915, a year's study at the University of Edinburgh in 1919 after military service and later a B. Paed. (1928), D. Paed. (1935) and M.A. (1940) from the University of Toronto. Dr. Spragge taught history first at Trinity College School and Upper Canada College, and after his military service in World War II, at the Rehabilitation School in Toronto.