

many subject headings. Meanwhile, records of *The Body Politic* continued to be transferred to the Archives in a somewhat haphazard way. Also, through the combined effort of the newspaper's exchange programme and the Archives itself, an important collection of gay periodicals from around the world was brought together.

By 1975 it had become apparent that the success of the Archives would only be assured by the formation of a sound organizational structure independent of the newspaper. In December of that year, the operation of the archives was taken over by an Archives Collective consisting of six people. This Collective was and continues to be an autonomous body operating within Pink Triangle Press. Under the umbrella of this corporation, which provides office space and financial support, the Collective has full control over the operation of the Archives.

At this same time a statement of purpose was drawn up, priorities set, and decisions made regarding the organization of the collection along archival lines. The UTHA and *The Body Politic* files were reconstituted. All subject headings with the exception of organizations, individuals and events were removed from the main file. A catalogue of the more than 250 periodicals was prepared, four thousand clippings from 125 Canadian newspapers were collected and arranged chronologically and a separate index for them was begun. New contacts were made with various gay and lesbian groups, encouraging them to keep good records and indicating that the Archives was prepared to house these.

The Archives itself is a part of the movement whose story it attempts to preserve. This is reflected in the membership of the Collective and in the general organization and stated purpose of the Archives, which owes its existence to the interest shown by movement people. In addition to the preservation of the records of the various gay and lesbian groups the Archives acts as a resource centre for the movement. It actively seeks to trace the history of gay people in Canada in pre-movement times. Because the Archives receives almost all of its material from a still active movement, it is essential for several reasons that the Archives remain in the hands of the gay people. The relatively young age of the movement gives the Archives a unique opportunity of being able to preserve a very complete picture of gay activities. Attention is being paid to providing for future documentation likely to be acquired by the Archives.

The Canadian Gay Archives expects to take its proper place in the archives community. At present a member of the Toronto Area Archivists Group, it sees itself as a public institution dedicated to the preservation of a part of Canada's history. Its resources are available to researchers at 24 Duncan Street (Box 639, Station A, Toronto, Canada M5W 1G2).

James A. Fraser
Canadian Gay Archives

SAA Conference — 1977

Salt Lake City, Utah, played host most hospitably to the forty-first annual conference of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) in October 1977. The Program Committee's objective was to expand Association President Robert M. Warner's theme "The Continuing Quest: Archival Professionalism and Education." Despite initial appearances, the programme proved to be far from repetitive. Instead, it was tightly organized, balancing variety with thematic unity as some of the programme titles suggest: "Archival Literature: The State of the Art," "The Organized Profession," "Art, Craft, or Science: Archival Education in Graduate Schools," "Appraisal of Machine-Readable Records," "Disaster Prevention and Control," "Should the Archival Profession Require Certification?" "American Indian Archives," "Reference Service to

Genealogists,” and “Studying Family History.” In all there were thirty-four plenary sessions and eighteen seminars, with as many as twelve separate sessions running concurrently. These numbers alone tell part of the story: the Program Committee’s success was, in a sense, the individual delegate’s defeat. The chronic annual job of trying to cover as much as possible was as frustrating as ever; confronted with such *embarras de richesses*, delegates invariably felt they could never make the most of the opportunities.

While satisfying the real need for variety at an annual general convention, a plethora of different subject sessions often compromises quality by emphasizing numerous but too brief sessions wherein neither panelists nor participants in the audience can arrive at a satisfying consensus. Too often at the SAA meeting, the same old issues were trotted out and rehashed with the same old lack of resolutions. These exercises only increased the feeling of ennui in those present. There were exceptions, such as Charles Dollar’s lucid and depressingly pessimistic presentation on appraisal of machine readable records and the prospects for data archives at the National Archives and Records Service (NARS). But, unfortunately, the scholarly was sacrificed to variety and its handmaiden, brevity. How often the heart of a matter was about to be penetrated when a session ended. General participation is no doubt highly desirable, and while it is true that there are other forums for the scholarly treatment of subjects, such as archival journals, it is nevertheless time to introduce some sessions where the topics are presented with a view to publication.

The seminar approach introduced at this convention attempted to encourage greater participation and personal satisfaction by limiting enrolment, thereby providing each member with an opportunity to contribute to a discussion. Initial reaction was decidedly negative, probably because of some unhappy comparisons with college seminars. There was a fear that teacher-student roles were being artificially created. Fortunately, this was not the case. Without exception, participants were unanimous finally in praising this innovation. Judging by the numbers who wished to participate, the seminars on appraisal of private papers and public records led by Philip Mason, Wayne State University, and Meyer Fishbein, NARS, respectively, were particularly popular. These three hours of intensive, intelligent and informative discussion of professional issues with colleagues from all over the continent were, for many delegates, one of the most stimulating experiences of the whole week. Such seminars should be offered again on the same limited enrolment basis.

Enthusiasm is always generated by an intensive experience at a conference which renews the archival soul. But the euphoria of collective strength faded before real disagreements among SAA archivists over archival education and certification. Because archivists have traditionally tied themselves so closely to an institution — their employer — it has been difficult to establish independent networks identifying all practitioners in a relationship which is strong and independent of these institutions. Whether this lack of commonly accepted professional criteria has, as Delores Renze (University of Denver) suggested in “The Organized Profession,” encouraged or even aided the manipulation of archivists by other allied professionals such as librarians and records managers is open to question. But it is certain that the fragmentation of the profession, our catholic criteria of professional entry, our often eccentric and always idiosyncratic training programmes, and our quiescence in the face of outside attacks such as those in New Mexico so humorously and entertainingly described by Myra Ellen Jenkins (State Records Center and Archives, New Mexico) reveal our professional impotence. By not establishing recognized training programmes and professional standards, by not countering attacks on what we all consider the major priority of our profession, preservation of the permanent record, and indeed by *not going on* the offensive ourselves, are not archivists as Jenkins and Renze suggest, being negligent?

Professionalism was probably the dominant theme at this convention, and certification as a means of creating a cadre of publicly recognized professional archivists was fiercely disputed. The recent plunge of records managers into certification through the Institute of Certified Records Managers was the example most frequently discussed, partly because it is an allied discipline, but mostly because its experience is recent and the memory of pitfalls fresh. Certification as practised by the Institute of Certified Records Managers was discussed by William Benedon, Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, and Edwin Welch, Ottawa City Archivist. The SAA Education and Professional Development Committee's eagerly awaited proposals for ways to encourage professionalism were outlined by Trudy Peterson of NARS. In brief, the proposal relies on the grandfather principle virtually confirming the status quo, coupled with a programme for SAA approval of certain university-based archival education programmes whose graduates would in future be certified by examination. The open forum on certification led by Gerry Ham, Chairman of the Education and Professional Development Committee, overwhelmingly rejected the kid gloves approach to certifying present incumbents. It remains to be seen what alternatives will be presented in the revised plans. Certainly certification and a tightening of educational qualifications is marked for the near future.

What tangible effect on education programmes and on the archivists' public image this new-found self-confidence and muscle-flexing will have in the long run is impossible to predict. Certification suggests the possibility of decertification; professional credentials implies the possibility of malpractice and unethical conduct — difficult issues even for established professions. Are we ready to sacrifice flexibility and rend our community, albeit a loosely knit one, for the fabled fruits of certified professional existence? Are we able or willing to impose a code of ethical practice? Perhaps a less glamorous but ultimately more profitable route, as most members at the forum seemed to agree, is through approved education rather than certification.

For archivists practising in Canadian institutions the SAA commands ambiguous feelings. Under strong executive leadership the SAA has in recent years successfully represented Association interests at a national level by securing very tangible results such as favourable court decisions, advanced publications programmes and greater funding. But while the scope, size and quality of its operations are admirable, and although warmly welcomed into its ranks and indeed occasionally honoured as in this year with the election of Hugh Taylor as vice-president (president-elect), Canadians nonetheless are always on the periphery. One invited speaker from Canada was identified in the printed programme as representing the Provincial Archives of Canada (read Ontario), an unfortunate perceptual confusion which was repeated in the session's introductions. But should Canadians, or any other national for that matter, expect an American association to be anything else but that, a national association representing American concerns? The SAA cannot be all things to all people and while there is undeniable benefit for Canadian members, it is to Canada's national association that archivists must look for leadership in handling matters peculiar to our jurisdiction.

The search for professionalism and consensus on the direction of archival education will continue long after the formal closing of the conference. The outcome of this search will depend largely on the will, the strength of purpose, and the perseverance of the Society's leadership. Our hope, not a vain one, must be that meetings such as this are constructive, sounding membership opinion and guiding future executive action. Whatever that action, it should be well considered; whatever the steps, they must be well measured.

Barbara Lazenby Craig
Archives of Ontario