

FOCUS: Anglican Church of Canada, General Synod Archives

The diocesan structure of the Anglican Church of Canada has been a determining factor in the development of its archives. The thirty dioceses, each grouping a number of parishes around a cathedral, originally met in four regional Provincial Synods which still exist. Since 1893, the Anglican Church has had a national dimension with all the dioceses meeting in a General Synod and around it there has developed a national structure of departments to look after missions, religious education, and social service. Records are created at organizational level and many of the individual bodies have archival programmes as do some Anglican colleges and schools, fraternities and associations. Despite the bond of Anglicanism, each body operates independently and is not subject to any central control. Although the General Synod Archives (GSA) in Toronto, the central and largest of the archival operations, has no formal relationship with the other programmes, it has been able to implement co-operative programmes and provide some direction in the care of Anglican records.

The General Synod first made arrangements for record keeping in 1905 when a canon was passed appointing a Registrar to preserve all relevant journals, files, reports and other documents. The Registrar's work was unwittingly aided over the years by a series of committees of historically minded churchmen who gathered materials for the study of Anglican history. By 1955, when a part-time archivist-historian was appointed for the General Synod and premises were set aside for the archives, the basis of a collection of printed and manuscript Anglicana had accumulated, including records of the General Synod and of other branches of the church and the papers of individuals. After 1955, co-operation between the GSA and the dioceses developed — listings of diocesan holdings were exchanged, journals of proceedings of diocesan synods and diocesan periodicals were added to GSA holdings, and joint microfilming projects bringing together full runs of Anglican periodicals were undertaken.

The expansion of the General Synod Archives to a full-time archival program in 1975 was the result of the patient lobbying by the same historically minded churchmen who had served on archives committees, notably Dr. T. Millman, the General Synod's archivist-historian. The justification for expansion was the need for a records management programme to control the records of the church's national office and its committees and projects. The expanded activity of the GSA soon came to include the forging of closer relationships with other Anglican archives in order that it meet the needs of researchers as well as ensure that its holdings were developed and used to their full potential. Other archival operations within the Anglican community range from a vault in a parish hall to diocesan records deposited in a provincial archives and to an efficient and full programme in environmentally safe quarters. Financial and staff restraints prevent the Anglican Church from undertaking the comprehensive programme the GSA would like to assist in implementing, that is to honour the principles of institutionality and the concerns of regionalism by leaving records with their creating agency if feasible and if standards of care and service can be met. Such a programme would consist of arranging for public, university or other archives to be repositories for Anglican records if the particular Anglican body cannot maintain them; assisting the various Anglican archives in arranging, describing and publicizing their holdings, and in distributing copies of finding aids amongst archives; microfilming or obtaining microfilm of Anglican holdings whether in Anglican or other archives; creating a central repository for all Anglican records; and offering safeguards in the form of a master negative of materials held in diocesan, parish and association archives in case of the destruction of original records.

The response to requests by the GSA for assistance and the attention the GSA has paid to problem situations can be noted as modest progress towards attaining these objectives. The GSA staff has arranged the records of the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Quebec City, placed them in neutral containers, and prepared an inventory with a view to having them microfilmed. Certain records required in western Canada for research were microfilmed in Montreal. All registers held by the Diocese of Caledonia (Prince Rupert, British Columbia) and Keewatin (Kenora, Ontario) were copied along with a quantity of other records of these dioceses as plans are made to locate the originals in safer facilities. The GSA has provided space for the records of Holy Trinity Church in Toronto while it recovers from a fire and is microfilming them before they are returned. Organizational work was undertaken with the records of Wycliffe College, Toronto; microfilming has been done for the Sisters of Saint John the Divine Archives; and the Ottawa Diocese has used the GSA's camera to microfilm a number of its earliest registers. The GSA has provided assistance, advice, supplies, and information to a number of other depositories of Anglican records.

It is obvious that Anglican records in Canada are scattered widely and the means of adequately caring for them must involve representatives in the areas where they are located. For this reason an important project was the sponsoring of a workshop held in Toronto, 1-4 March 1978, for archivists responsible for Anglican records. It provided instruction in basic archival principles and techniques aimed at the adoption of simple and effective systems of arrangement and description and safe handling of archival materials. The workshop also provided an opportunity to discuss strategies for acquisition, policies regarding restrictions and public access, and methods of publicizing archival holdings. Participants discussed co-operative ventures and agreed that the GSA should seek some degree of standardization in matters such as canons affecting archives, authority lists for cataloguing, fee structures for genealogical searching and restrictions affecting certain classes of records common to all dioceses. It is hoped that the various archives will be able to provide better service and that a co-ordinated programme for Anglican archives will develop.

Concern for the network of Anglican archives has been a challenging aspect of the work of the GSA, but the records for which this archives is directly responsible must not be neglected. Because the records management programme is under the supervision of the archives and its operations carried out by the small archives staff, it is restricted to the selection of and movement of records to the archives. It has involved emptying several storage vaults and filing cabinets, inventorying, scheduling and deciding on the disposition of records in a number of Church House offices, and making arrangements for future regular transfers of materials to the archives. The programme has been scaled to the needs of the church, which is relatively economical in the amount of paper it generates and reproduces. The transfers from some of the offices, for example, can be set as infrequently as every five years. The reception accorded to the records management programme has been good and, although the programme is restricted to the operations that bring records to the archives, the archivist is asked to advise on the creation of filing systems and the distribution of minutes and reports.

The acquisition of materials from sources beyond Church House in Toronto, headquarters for the General Synod and many of the national bodies, is another matter which needs close attention. Many General Synod records of committees and officials, including those of the former Primates, were never deposited in the archives. In addition, many Anglican bodies and individuals do not appreciate the importance of the records in their possession, and must be persuaded to consider placing them in the GSA. Bishops, clergy, missionaries, teachers and Anglican associations such as the Council for the Faith and the Church Army are being encouraged to deposit their

papers. The GSA's collection of printed material continues to grow with the addition of books by Anglicans, on Anglicans and the church, parish histories, translations into the language of the native peoples, sermons and treatises, and periodicals which serve to complement the documentary sources and to ensure the preservation of these materials.

The field of interdenominational records is another area to be considered. Much of the church's work is carried on through interdenominational efforts and interdenominational records have to be kept in mind by the GSA. Until now the denomination playing the leading role has received the papers if it has an active archives. With more interdenominational activities being undertaken and with others coming to the point where the accumulation of records is becoming a problem, it would be well to formalize arrangements for the care of these records. In addition, the records of Anglican associations and bodies which are international in operation and scope are a matter of interest. One such body, the Anglican Council of North America and the Caribbean has chosen to deposit its records with the GSA and another, the Church Career Development Council has called on the GSA to consult on the management and disposition of its records.

The adoption of the additional manuscripts system has allowed the flow of archival materials generated by the implementation of a records management programme and of materials from other sources to be accommodated easily in the archives. Archivists working on a contract basis have prepared inventories for several of the large groups of General Synod records, including those of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society, the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada, and the General Board of Religious Education. Inventories and calendars exist for many of the collections and others are being prepared by regular staff. The holdings include nearly ten thousand photographs, relating largely to the church's missionary work in the Canadian West and North-West and in China and Japan. These are being copied and contact prints mounted on index cards to facilitate use of the collection. Films and tapes produced by the church's communication and visual aids departments are receiving preliminary listings. The production of an institutional guide for diocesan records and of thematic guides are desirable objectives but must wait; making GSA known through archives and special library directories and its holdings through the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories* must suffice for now.

Publicizing the GSA is an important part of the work. The archivist is often called on (or finds it advantageous to volunteer) to sit on committees relating to projects which are not direct responsibilities of the archives; examples are the commissioning of a church history and the overseeing of exhibits at Church House. In fact, several exhibits have been mounted including a major one to celebrate the history of the Missionary Society of the Church of England in Canada. The satisfaction of preparing these and the return they have brought in terms of increased knowledge of the archives, support for its programmes and new acquisitions must be balanced with the regular work of acquiring and arranging papers, preparing finding aids, and advising and assisting researchers. Further opportunities to publicize the archives are found in the preparation of articles for church periodicals and in the presentation of addresses to meetings of various church bodies.

The ultimate goal is nevertheless to gather materials and to make them available to researchers. The success in meeting this goal is the most rewarding aspect of the archival work. In 1977, over five hundred researchers visited the GSA and another 150 made enquiries by mail or telephone. Church House personnel more often turn to the Archives to meet administrative needs, to illustrate reports of past work, and to assist in the forming of future policies and programmes. Other researchers have included

academics, local historians, church members, genealogists and journalists. Linguists and sociologists have found the records of the Diocese of the Arctic and the papers, photographs, and translations of a number of prominent missionaries including Edmund Peck, William Bompas, Isaac Stringer and Archibald Fleming to be a valuable primary source.

Many challenges remain for the GSA beyond caring for the materials in its custody and contributing to the improvement of Anglican archives in Canada. These include encouraging and assisting other denominational archives, co-operating with Anglican archives in other countries, collaborating with secular archives as they expand the horizons of archival service, and the winning of acceptance and respect for this sort of non-government endeavour.

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FOCUS: The Machine Readable Archives Division of the Public Archives of Canada

In 1973 the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) established a new division, the Machine Readable Archives Division, to provide archival services for computer-generated records. Although not the first national repository to establish such a programme—its counterparts in the United States and Sweden having already done so—the PAC was the first archival repository in Canada to tackle machine readable records. This was in keeping with the Public Archives Act which provides for the acquisition of all historically significant archival material “of every kind, nature and description.”¹ Furthermore, in the federal government’s Public Records Order, the definition of “public record” includes “tapes, computer cards, or other documentary material, regardless of physical form or characteristics. . . .”² And finally, it was in keeping with the “total archives” approach of the Public Archives of Canada.

The Machine Readable Archives (MRA) has as its mandate the appraisal, acquisition, preservation, and reference service for machine readable records of historical and long-term value created by the federal government and those of national significance created in the private sector. To carry out this mandate, the Division has nineteen employees, including data archivists, computer science personnel, and clerical staff. It is physically located in the Larivière Building in Hull, a considerable distance from the main PAC building, resulting in many of the disadvantages and inconveniences which such remoteness implies.

A new archival medium required fresh approaches, procedures, and policies. Under the direction of Michael E. Carroll, the staff of the Division devoted considerable time during its first three years to developing proper methods and standards. Some similarities and differences which are apparent when this medium is compared with more familiar archival media can best be seen by outlining the Division’s main functions: appraisal and acquisition, processing, conservation, and public service.

1 Public Archives Act, R.S., c. 222, s. 1.
2 Public Records Order, P.C. 1966-1749.