

Records Management: The New Brunswick Case

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In the mid 1960s New Brunswick began to recognize, rather shamefacedly, that it was the only province in Canada without a Provincial Archives. Historians, citizens and the press expressed disgust at its government's decision to construct a departmental office building as the federally funded centennial project and clamoured that a Provincial Archives was a more suitable and useful undertaking. The clamour added to an urgent need to deal with government records that could not be moved to the very office building, then under attack, and with county records, often thrown out during the closing of county offices as part of the re-structuring of regional government by the province's Equal Opportunity Programme. Today, New Brunswick has a fully integrated programme with archives, records management and central microfilming under the direction of the Provincial Archivist. It boasts a modern records centre, legislation which gives the Provincial Archivist clear and comprehensive powers in the field of records management, a file classification plan and records schedule designed to meet the needs of New Brunswick municipalities of various sizes and approved schedules for many Department of Justice and provincial court records. The programme benefits from a number of practical advantages such as the inclusion of a records analyst on screening and interview panels for departmental records staff, file classification systems designed with ease of scheduling as a prime aim and the acceptance of central registries in several departments which actually incorporate ministers' files. All this has been accomplished with only modest growth from an original staff of five to eight in records management and four to five in central microfilming.

Much of the success of the programme is due to the capability, tenacity and dedication of the people responsible for its direction and operation, five of whom have been involved since its inception. Other reasons for the advance of records management lie in its opportune timing. It was born in New Brunswick during the buoyant Sixties, late enough to benefit from the experience of the federal government and several provinces in records management. Moreover, its beginning was unhampered by the traditional view of archives as a storehouse for treasures. Also, the relatively small size of the provincial government, its effective

¹ The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of the first two Provincial Archivists of New Brunswick who were responsible for the development of records management at PANB—Hugh Taylor and Michael Swift. Much of the background material has been gleaned from personal interviews with them and with Fern LeBlanc (Supervisor of Records Management), Catherine Gibson (Records Analyst) and Mark Fallon (Microfilm Analyst), who have been with the programme since 1966.

network of personal contacts and its sometimes unsophisticated and direct method of approaching and solving problems may be peculiar to New Brunswick. There is a good deal to be learned from New Brunswick's trials and successes in records management.

The Government of New Brunswick had shown early concern for its records but its efforts to deal with them did not resemble anything like an archival or records management programme. Important legislative attention was paid to New Brunswick records as early as the *Public Records Act* of 1929. Under this Act public records were defined as the "books, papers and records kept by or in the custody of any provincial or municipal officer in pursuance of his duty as such officer . . . all the papers, documents and record books of the Court of Sessions, of the Inferior Courts of Common Pleas, all Municipal Records prior to the establishment of the present system of municipal councils and such other public documents or records as the Lieutenant-Governor may declare to be of historical interest".² The Province was empowered to take possession of these records and also to take proper measures for their permanent preservation. In the same session an act to incorporate the Provincial Museum gave the Museum Board "responsibility for general management, regulation and control of such of the Public Archives as may be placed in the custody of the board". It authorized the Lieutenant-Governor-in-Council to transfer "from time to time" to the Board any public records defined in the *Public Records Act*.³ A few old government records found their way to the New Brunswick Museum but neither statute was ever invoked. Certainly no procedures were established for the selection of records for preservation or for their transfer to the Museum's custody.

Other legislation more closely to records management was introduced in the *Public Documents Disposal Act*, assented to in June 1963, which encompassed "books, records, maps, letters, vouchers and other papers of every kind, nature and description in any department or agency and . . . the books, papers and records vested in Her Majesty under the Public Records Act". This legislation established a Documents Committee consisting of the Deputy Attorney-General, the Controller General, the Legislative Librarian, one other person employed in the Public Service of the Province and the Deputy Minister or Deputy Head of the Department or Agency concerned. It was charged with responsibility for the preparation of schedules showing what should be destroyed "without photographing . . . with photographing . . . retained indefinitely by the department and . . . transferred to a place of safe keeping".⁴ It was from the deliberations of this Documents Committee in drafting regulations to accompany the *Public Documents Disposal Act* that one of the first requests for a Provincial Archives and a records management programme resulted.

In a letter dated 18 November 1975, the Documents Committee reported that during their consideration of the regulations they "became aware of the urgent need to establish a more comprehensive Records Management program . . . to develop a more efficient program for the management of records from the earliest stages of their creation to their final disposition". The Committee had a good grasp of the requirements of a records programme a director of records to control all central records operations including the establishment of standards,

2 Revised Statutes of New Brunswick, 1973, cap. P-24.

3 *Ibid.*, cap. N-7.

4 Acts of New Brunswick, 1963, cap. 9.

the oversight of departments to ensure compliance with regulations governing filing systems and retention schedules, development of central filing systems for departments and training of departmental records officers; a central microfilm operation under the director of records; an incinerator or shredding area for document destruction; a central, long-term storage area; and an archivist "perhaps associated with a librarian who would be responsible for ensuring that government records of permanent value and interest are preserved".⁵ The Committee directed its comments to D.D. Tansley, Treasury Board Secretary, which was at that time in an embryonic stage and operating under the Department of Finance and Industry.

Another source from which came a push for archives and records management was related to the new departmental office building. The planned movement of all government departments to the Centennial Building raised the problem of what should be done with the vast quantities of records existing in the various departments, as well as in the attics and basements of a number of government buildings. The Deputy Minister of Public Works, Richard Palmer, who was in charge of buildings, space allocation and other supply and service aspects of government was to be responsible for the move. He was familiar with the problems records presented during a move and was also concerned partly because of an amateur interest in history, with the likely possibility of losing valuable records. From the earliest stages of planning in 1962, Palmer was concerned with space for records and with their proper care and inevitably this meant authoritative disposition of inactive records.⁶ Palmer's department, Public Works, was to be the first to move in August 1966. As well as being faced with problems relating to the movement of their old records and records of all government departments, the Department of Public Works was experiencing serious difficulties with its filing system. Deeds, easements and expropriation documents of the Highways Branch were stored in such a shambles that costly mistakes of duplicate payments had been made. In May 1966, as an attempt to find solutions to records problems, Public Works engaged the services of H.M. Records Services Ltd. which was then involved in establishing the Ontario Government records management program. Harold Moulds, founder of the consulting firm, had heard of New Brunswick's problems from an equipment salesman who was his neighbour. One of Moulds' first recommendations was that a director of records should be hired and, on 1 June 1966, Fernando LeBlanc began work in this capacity following a period of training in Toronto with H.M. Records Services. The consultant outlined the duties of the Records Officer as identifying active and dormant records, transferring dormant records to a records centre, moving active files to central filing in the Centennial Building and microfilming or destroying records that were not needed. The Records Director hired a clerk to be in charge of the Records Centre and a file analyst. A member of the consultant firm's staff assisted the records officer and file analyst and two assistants in developing and implementing a filing system for the Highways Branch. The work of identifying, marking and moving records was undertaken by the records officer and Records Centre custodian. A building constructed in

5 The Williamson Papers, in private custody, were a constant source of information for this article. Most of the subsequent quotations are from this collection and from the files of the Supervisor of Records Management, and the Provincial Archives records in Record Group 22, Series 168.

1949 for records storage and other supply and service operations was designated as the Records Centre. It was soon overcrowded and additional storage space was obtained in a warehouse in Douglas, some seven miles from Fredericton. Two temporary employees and a truck driver were added to cope with the movement of records to two locations. A good number of the requests for dormant files made in the first months of the Records Centre operation were attributed to a desire to test the new system.

Palmer, in accordance with advice from Moulds and the Dominion Archivist, W. Kaye Lamb, who had been called in to consult on the establishment of a Provincial Archives in July 1966, moved further into the area of records management by calling for a moratorium on the destruction of government records which was effected by Order-in-Council on 6 September 1966. The directive covering the moratorium stated that it was the government's intention to retain all out-dated items for eventual sorting by professional archivists who would determine which records should be retained in a Provincial Archives. Out-dated records were to be stored in the meanwhile at the Department of Public Works' temporary records centre in Fredericton, where a Records Centre Custodian would restrict access and reference to materials to the department concerned. The availability of Fern LeBlanc, Records Officer, was noted and details were set out regarding the transfer of records and the development of a retention schedule for financial records.

Impetus for the formation of a Provincial Archives was beginning to come from other directions. The Executive Assistant to the Minister of Youth and Welfare, who had responsibility for cultural matters, prepared a paper in February 1966 containing proposals regarding archival material in New Brunswick. The paper was forwarded to D.D. Tansley, who had received the recommendations of the Documents Committee in Archives and Records Management, with a note that money might be set aside in the 1966-67 estimates. The Executive Assistant subsequently moved in the same capacity to Premier Robichaud and was undoubtedly in a position to assist in back-room "politicizing" in support of an archives programme. The paper was re-worked and presented to Treasury Board with cost estimates attached by John Williamson, Assistant Secretary to Treasury Board, who was in touch with the archival situation because of his responsibilities for the New Brunswick Museum and Legislative Library estimates. He was an active promoter of a Provincial Archives largely because of his personal interest in local history and genealogy. The paper made reference to the long-term needs of a suitable Archives building, then under consideration, but concentrated on the urgent need to preserve valuable government records, and recommended the immediate microfilming of a great many documents. It proposed an Archives repository for English language documents and official government documents in the University of New Brunswick Library, the Bonar Law-Bennett Building about to be vacated, the University of Moncton as a repository for French documents and the continuation of the New Brunswick Museum as the repository for private papers. The document contained no reference to records management although its emphasis was on the orderly preservation of government records. As a result of this presentation on 10 March 1966, a Treasury Board minute was passed directing that in order to prevent the loss of historical documents stored in the legislative and departmental buildings, the Legislative Librarian should develop an

archives programme and hire assistance to do this. The minute recommended to the Executive Council that sufficient funds be provided in the 1966-67 budget to permit the employment of a full-time archivist to continue the archives programme. There was no immediate action on this recommendation.

Pressure for the establishment of a Provincial Archives came also from the New Brunswick Museum which, in March 1966, forwarded recommendations concerning the future of Provincial Archives to the Honourable W.W. Meldrum, Minister of Education, who was responsible for the Museum. The Museum Board was concerned that the 1965 regulations for the *Public Records Disposal Act* made no provision for the housing or classification of those government records to be preserved. They understood that this role could fall to them because of the 1929 legislation which, if implemented, would see the Museum overtaken by an Archives. The Executive Committee was also concerned that, in the planned abolition of County Councils through the Equal Opportunity Programme, important records would be lost. They proposed a "Public Records Archives" in Fredericton and the continuation and official recognition of the New Brunswick Museum as a private archives. The Museum's brief made reference to conversations with Kaye Lamb and Wilfred Smith of the Public Archives of Canada, who concurred that this was the best possible solution. It suggested that Dr. Lamb be asked to survey government records and make recommendations for their more efficient management and housing.

Meldrum's response indicated that the concern of records preservation was presently under consideration by the Department of Finance and Industry and that the Museum's brief had been forwarded to the Minister of Finance. On 12 May, Meldrum invited Lamb to assist in solving New Brunswick's archival problem. Meldrum explained that the matter of an archives had been under consideration for some time and that expert professional advice was long over due. Lamb visited New Brunswick and met with the Legislative Librarian, Deputy Minister of Public Works, Minister of Education, Minister of Municipal Affairs, President of the University of New Brunswick, several professors of history and staff at the New Brunswick Museum. He surveyed the government's records and considered the Bonar Law-Bennett building as a possible archival repository. In a report submitted on 2 August 1966, Lamb made a number of very important recommendations which in effect laid the foundation for a Provincial Archives in New Brunswick. Many of these recommendations concerned records management and stressed the advantages of the joint development of archival and records management programmes:

- 1 That steps be taken immediately to establish a Provincial Archives in New Brunswick. The fact that New Brunswick is now the only one of the ten provinces without such an agency indicates that an Archives is not a frill; it is a part—and an essential part—of an efficient government service.
- 2 From its beginning the Provincial Archives should be concerned with records management as well as with archives in the more popular sense. Archival and records programmes should be developed jointly, taking fully into account the close relationships that should exist between them, so as to ensure that government

- records are handled economically, and that items of long-term value are identified, segregated and preserved.
- 3 That a "no destruction" order be sent immediately to all departments that will soon be moving to new quarters, and to all the county offices that are soon to be taken over by the Province.
 - 4 That the Department of Public Works provide emergency storage for all records surplus to departmental and county requirements until such time as they can be reviewed by a staff competent to judge their interest and usefulness from the historical and long-term point of view.
 - 5 That this emergency storage programme be extended to include records now in such areas as the attic of the main Legislative Building. In the latter location obsolete and useless material is mixed up with a considerable quantity of old and valuable historical records. It should not be impossible to make a first rapid sorting and dispose of many of the useless papers. However, "when in doubt never destroy" should be the rule until review by an archives staff is possible.
 - 6 The existing Public Records Act, the Public Documents Disposal Act, and the regulation issued under the latter in 1965, are satisfactory in many ways, but they make no adequate provision for the review of records from the historical and long-term point of view. Departments themselves are not always good judges of this, and no public records should be destroyed without the approval of the Provincial Archivist. (Archivists will not be found to be unreasonable in this respect; it is generally recognized that between 80% and 90% of the records created by a government can be destroyed ultimately without loss to posterity.)
 - 7 That insofar as possible all the older official records of the Province should be placed in the Provincial Archives, once this agency is properly established. At present some records are in the custody of the Legislative Library, while others are in the Library of the University of New Brunswick and the New Brunswick Museum. I gained the impression that all three are ready to surrender these records, once the Archives is established on a secure basis.
 - 8 That very serious consideration be given to the possibility of establishing the Provincial Archives in the building now occupied by the Bonar Law-Bennett Library on the campus of the University of New Brunswick. As explained in some detail in an accompanying note, the building is not ideal for archival purposes, but its location is excellent, and if a low-cost addition is added at the rear, in which a records centre can function, it should serve both the historical branch and the records branch quite satisfactorily.
 - 9 That early attention be given to the pressing need for more space and more professional staff at the New Brunswick Museum, as outlined in the accompanying notes.

In the notes and explanations attached to the report, Lamb further elaborated on records management terminology and on savings that could be achieved from such a programme. He recommended the establishment of two branches under the Provincial Archivist, and laid out the responsibility of the records branch in running a Records Centre and scheduling records. He also advised that microfilm services were most satisfactory and economical when centralized and that many authorities had found a central microfilm unit functioned best when attached to the Archives, particularly where it had a well-developed records branch.

Lamb had spent some of his leisure time with John Williamson, who became a ready convert to records management advantages probably because of his experience in government—particularly on Treasury Board. It was Williamson who conducted the matter of Archives and Records Management through Cabinet deliberations. In August and September 1966 he sent the Lamb report and memoranda to the Minister of Education, to Cabinet and to Cabinet Committee. He stressed the pressing need for a comprehensive programme to manage old county records needing care and departmental records in deteriorating condition, the cost-saving benefits of a records management programme and the waste of valuable space in departments. He reminded Cabinet that New Brunswick was the only province without an Archives and that his colleagues had agreed in principle to an archival program by their vote of money the previous year for the salary of an Archivist. He did suggest, however, that no one competent could be recruited without commitment to a proper archives building. Williamson also provided information on the progress of Public Works in records management and on the moratorium on the destruction of records and noted that these measures were in accordance with Lamb's recommendations. Williamson took advantage of the topical issue of Equal Opportunity to further justify records management, claiming the need for such services presently existed because of the government's size and complexity and would be intensified by the introduction of this restructuring program.

The memoranda to Cabinet forcefully linked records management and archives, referring to "the dual role of Archives in Records Management and historical preservation". Perhaps his concern was prompted by a threat to an integrated records management and archives programme contained in a proposal of a consultant working with the Office of Government Organization to review government structure in relation to reorganization through the Equal Opportunity Programme. This consultant suggested the establishment of a Provincial Archives under the office of Legislative Council and a Records Management Supervisor under the Department of Public Works, Buildings. It is impossible to discover whether the threat was serious but it was reinforced in a memorandum of Richard Palmer which stated his agreement with the consultant that archives and records management were separate functions. He added that no archivist had been appointed although provincial budgets allowed for one from April 1966 and that the Department of Public Works, Buildings was a service organization that could appropriately and immediately assume records management responsibilities.

No immediate response was made to the pressures of either Williamson or Palmer, although an extract from the minutes of the University of New

Brunswick Senate, 15 September 1966, indicates that the President had been told by that date that the Archives would be established in the Bonar Law-Bennett Building. The decision was made in mid-December at Cabinet Budget Conferences that provision be made in the 1967-68 estimates for capital facilities and operating costs for a Provincial Archives staff. In February 1967, a memorandum of Palmer of Public Works reported on his investigation regarding preservation of the Bonar Law-Bennett Building and included a reminder that space for the construction of a Records Centre was available at the rear of the building. Palmer wrote to Williamson, on 3 April, regarding arrangements for records "which I understand will be under the supervision of a Provincial Archivist" indicating that the establishment of an integrated archives and records management programme was a *fait accompli* by this date.

On 1 May 1967 George MacBeath arrived in New Brunswick to head the Historical Resources Administration, which had developed from the decision to build an historic village on the Saint John River based on a core of buildings situated on territory to be flooded in the building of a hydro-electric power dam. MacBeath, who had served as Director of the New Brunswick Museum until 1964, was well aware of the need for and the requirements of a Provincial Archives. Having many projects to bring under control, he used Lamb's recommendations as a check list to be followed in the establishment of a Provincial Archives. The joint archives and records management operation Lamb called for was instituted in fact in the autumn of 1967 when the Records Management Supervisor, the Manager of the Records Centre, two stores clerks and a truck driver began to work under the Provincial Archivist's direction although the official transfer did not occur until the 1968 spring estimates. Indication that central microfilming was also to come under the Archives' control was made in a letter of George MacBeath to a prospective applicant for the position of Provincial Archivist.

Microfilming had begun in New Brunswick as early as 1953. It is rumoured to have originated over the chance purchase of a small rotary camera by an official of the Department of Finance with a general intention to copy financial records and land petitions. The rotary camera would not do the job but a microfilm programme did develop under the Department of Natural Resources' Photographic Division. That programme was strengthened by the Federal Government's procurement of a microfilm camera for the province to microfilm vital statistic records. 1966 was a likely time for the transfer of the microfilm operation to Archives for the Director of Photographic Services and the only employee experienced in microfilm was leaving the Department of Natural Resources. One of the factors that weighed considerably in the movement of both central microfilming and records management to Archives was the need to develop a sufficient portfolio for the Historical Resources Agency.

On 1 October 1967, the first Archivist of New Brunswick assumed his duties. In addition to overseeing renovations to the Archives building, purchasing equipment and supplies and establishing all aspects of the archives, records management and microfilm programmes, he had to deal with vast quantities of old county and departmental records disassociated from their creators and with a great volume of more current material stored in the two Records Centre buildings. The main requirement relating to the latter records was to decide



Hugh Taylor, Provincial Archivist of New Brunswick, 1967-1971, with Ray Crewdson, General Manager of the Fredericton Exhibition. (Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

which were valuable and should be preserved and which might be destroyed.

One of the first major developments in the records management programme was the beginning of forms management. It began in 1970 because of the difficulties in identification created by great quantities of forms having no indication of the title or purpose or even the name of the department using it. A forms analyst was hired and Data Control Division of Supply and Service transferred a forms designer position to the Provincial Archives. Forms were quickly brought under control with the amalgamation of various types, elimination of others and mandatory approval of all proposed forms by the Supervisor of Records Management. The Deputy Minister of Supply and Service reinforced the program by requiring that all forms be approved by the Records Management Division before printing would be undertaken by Multigraph Services, which was under his authority. The relative ease with which responsibilities shifted to create an integrated archival programme was abruptly halted in 1975 when forms management was lost. A new branch established in Supply and Service saw this activity as an appropriate additional responsibility to complement Queen's Printer, communication, mail service and printing services already being transferred to it. The argument for retaining forms management and records management was adequately made but an appeal to Management Services of Treasury Board by the new branch was successful. There is little

satisfaction in knowing the programme has decreased in effectiveness and is left with only a forms designer who has been unable to maintain strict control over forms creation, although the forms are printed by the branch employing him.

The Central Microfilming Unit continued with much of the work it had previously undertaken for government departments as well as filming historical records for the Archives and newspapers for provincial libraries. An important project was the introduction of a microfilm system for medicare records control in 1972 which has continued with gradual modifications. Microfilming has proceeded slowly, and with caution, following proposals for microfilming designed by Provincial Archives staff or submitted to it for assessment. In 1978, when space became available for records management and microfilm operations in the same building, Central Microfilming was made the direct responsibility of the Supervisor of Records Management. It increasingly becomes an even more integral part of records management processes.



Property Tax Branch, Fredericton, where actions total 200 per week. Microform remedies are under consideration. (Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

The provision of a new building for records management in 1978 has benefited the programme in other ways. The only recommendation of Kaye Lamb that had not been followed closely at the founding of the Archives was one respecting the Records Centre. Lamb had suggested construction of a Records Centre at the rear of the Bonar Law-Bennett building, but when records management was transferred to the Archives in 1968, the Records Centre remained in the Department of Public Works' Records building and the Douglas warehouse. Space was inadequate from the beginning and in 1972 when the

newly established medicare operations needed space, the Record Centre operations were moved to a leased temporary war building on McLeod Avenue that had been used as a factory. The supplementary storage space in Douglas was moved to another warehouse, the Neil building, in downtown Fredericton during 1971. Identification, scheduling, disposition of records and reference services continued in very undesirable conditions. Requests were frequently made for a better Records Centre and Richard Palmer, still Deputy Minister of Supply and Services, who had been involved with records management from its beginning, was fully aware of the need for more and better space. However, fortune had changed and restraint was the watchword; the former quarters were requested and granted. The MacLeod Avenue building had not provided enough space, was not secure, was not fire proof and had undergone flooding in the spring of 1972. The Neil building was also proved unsatisfactory and records from both centres were moved to the liquor warehouse which served until 1977 as a Records Centre. It was an improvement to have the records physically together, although



The submerged basement of the New Brunswick legislature building. Storage for government records until the flood of 1973. (Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

the building was still inadequate in terms of space and fire safety. The lack of an adequate Records Centre was a serious hindrance to the development of the records programme. Staff had difficulty pressing to bring valuable records to such poor storage conditions and attempts to promote the program had to be curtailed. The flood of 1973 which damaged many government records stored in departmental basements, particularly Supreme Court records, contributed to the case for a better Records Centre. Immediately after the flood, A.J. Brown, an employee of the Public Archives of Canada Records Management Division, was

invited to Fredericton to survey the flood damage with the hope that his recommendations would add more weight to the case for new quarters. Senior Justice officials using the Record Centre or considering its use wrote letters condemning the space but none of the pressure had an immediate effect. The need of better facilities was acknowledged but not the urgency. In 1977, the headquarters of a formerly assisted industry which went bankrupt reverted to government ownership. It was a large un-partitioned building of brick and steel construction located in the Industrial Park outside Fredericton and ideal for a Records Centre. A request was made, personal contacts were resorted to but the building was sold to reclaim the government's investment. However, shortly after, a similar building became vacant and the same pressures were applied this time with more success.

Palmer had retired as Deputy Minister of Supply and Services but his replacement was aware of the need for a Record Centre from his period of service on the Public Documents Committee as Controller. This building was also sold, but obtained immediately afterwards on a fifteen years lease for the Record Centre. An addition built to provide space for the Text Book Branch and Election Branch provides the prospect for space for future expansion. The present records area provides 55,000 cu. ft. of storage space of which 30,000 is filled. The quality and quantity of the records programme can now expand. Masses of unscheduled records are still to be dealt with but increased space makes this possible. In the autumn of 1978, a Treasury Board minute aimed at making efficient use of the Record Centre was passed directing departments to co-operate in the scheduling of all unscheduled records stored at the Centre and to comply with the requirement that no unscheduled materials be sent to it.



Some of the million and a half documents in government buildings damaged by the flood of 1973. (Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

This regulation added clout to the strong legislation concerning records management already existing in the 1977 *Archives Act*. The first *Archives Act* passed in 1968, establishing a Provincial Archives, gave the archivist only a passive role in records management. A Public Records Committee was to make decisions on lists "placed before it". The fact that decisions had to be unanimous gave the Provincial Archivist a necessary veto but he did not have clear authority to establish classification systems, retention schedules and encourage the use of the Record Centre for storage of dormant records. Amendments to strengthen the legislation regarding records management operations were suggested by Brown of the Public Archives of Canada as part of his report, following his visit to New Brunswick to survey the damage to records from the 1973 flood. As it became clear the *Archives Act* needed substantial changes, it was decided to develop a new one. Much of the terminology was clarified and definitions were changed or updated, a number of offices and agencies formerly not covered by legislation were brought within the compass of the Act and the responsibilities of the Provincial Archivist to prepare record schedules, to provide economical storage facilities for dormant records and to encourage the use by departments of modern record storage and classification systems were made explicit. The scheduling process was streamlined. The approval of schedules by the Public Documents Committee and authorization by Order-in-Council are no longer required. The Provincial Archivist is able to approve schedules which have been developed in cooperation with departments and agencies. The Act also empowers the Provincial Archivist to certify true copies of documents in his custody and make copies so certified the equivalent of the original records. Also the Act states as a general principle that all public records transferred to the Archives are open for public inspection unless restricted by Order-in-Council "where public disclosure. . . is prejudicial to the public interest or to a citizen's right to privacy".

Such strong, clear legislation is a definite asset to the records management programme although its acceptance and success depends very much on the availability of staff to carry out surveys, projects and routine duties. Only three new positions have been added since the inception of the programme, a Records Analyst in 1972 and 1973 and a Records Scheduling Officer in 1976. In the beginning, all aspects of records management, promotion, establishment of filing systems, scheduling as well as the development of the total programme and procurement of a Records Centre fell to the Records Management Supervisor and the Provincial Archivist. Addition of staff has made duties more specialized and allowed more departments to be brought into the programme. The method of operation in departments has changed somewhat from early days when records management staff themselves undertook all work in departments and branches. Now records management staff conduct studies for departments (which often includes an inventory of the unit's record holdings), recommend systems, scheduling and equipment and assist the department's records staff in implementing the recommendations. The Records Management Division is instituting a policy of obtaining a commitment from a department that a position of Records Officer will be created before a study begins. However, it is necessary to remain flexible and records management staff will continue to compromise by undertaking the actual work, working with branches rather than the whole department where it is politically wise to do so. These compromises were made for Management Services Division of Treasury Board, which needed a sound



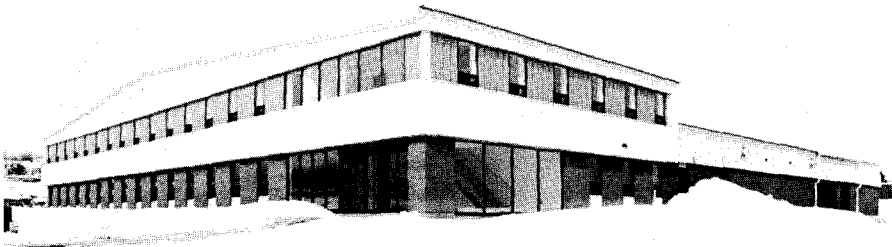
Michael Swift, Provincial Archivist of New Brunswick, 1972-1978, with Records Supervisor, Fern LeBlanc. (Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

and practical introduction to records management because of its role in management consultancy. Records management staff continue liaison with departmental staff, have held the first annual course in records management and will develop other education sessions and host a monthly meeting of Government records officers. Although there is need for more records positions under the Provincial Archives to meet requests from different departments and to permit introduction of the programme to other departments more quickly, there is little hope of such increases in a time of restraint and this growth would have to terminate eventually if records management is to be the money-saver to government it touts itself to be. Concentration of the Provincial Archives records staff in an advisory role, as a body that sets and encourages standards through the preparation of manuals, co-ordinates scheduling of records, conducts studies to promote better handling of records through systems and microform applications and which offers the services of Records Centre and Central Microfilming will meet gradually most of the records management needs of the New Brunswick Government.

One of the major difficulties with the program has been the failure of departments to classify their Records Officers at positions high enough within the civil service. At present, if the operation is complex or large enough the level is Clerk IV, which provides a salary in the \$9,000 to \$12,000 range. Yet, even when this level is attained it is not often that the incumbent is given the authority needed to deal with management and to implement systems. The problem results from the past tendency to upgrade a clerical person already in the department to the records position. This person is often the most qualified, experienced and suited to the job but is not usually given the new status or full records management responsibilities, which then remain fragmented. Ways of remedying the situation are in progress, work at re-classification including comparison of records officer positions in other jurisdictions, development of a series of seminars scheduled to begin in the autumn of 1979 for Directors of Administration and Deputy Ministers to explain the records management program and the role of department records officers, and provision of courses, continuing education and meetings to qualify employees, both on paper and in real terms, and to give them confidence. Promoting the development of departmental programs and maintaining a relationship of control is an important counterpart to the development of the Archives records program *per se*.

Departmental programmes have developed in different ways and do not exist in all departments. The Department of Public Works which had the first records management programme was split into two departments in 1971—Highways and Supply and Service. Only the records program for Highways had developed adequately because of lack of support in the Supply and Service Branch. Highways is now the Department of Transportation and its records staff consists of six employees. The original departmental Records Officer from Highways left a well-established system to move to Economic Growth at the request of the former Deputy Minister of Highways, who had become the Deputy Minister of Economic Growth. This pattern repeated itself, with even further branching, when three senior management personnel from the Department of Economic Growth moved to senior positions in Justice and Education, as Directors of Administration and to Natural Resources as Deputy Minister. Having experienced the benefits of good records management, one of their first acts was to call for assistance in the introduction of new file classification systems. Some departments have requested assistance from the Records Management Division, without such semi-nepotistic connections, as was the case with the Department of Agriculture which was moving to a new building and wanted a new system. However, though it realized that it could not move all its old records, the department was very slow in creating a permanent records position and the programme has not developed as well as in those departments where it was supported by senior management who have had actual experience with the programme. Other departments are referred to the Records Management Division by Management Services of Treasury Board as part of their advisory service in improving management in general. Personal contact has been a significant part of these referrals too.

The introduction of records management to the Department of Justice was the outcome of senior management experience, Management Services referral and a real need to deal with records problems. This had been specially made evident by the damage of a great quantity of justice records stored in depart-



Records Centre. Government of New Brunswick — "a crowning achievement".
(Provincial Archives of New Brunswick)

mental basements in the flood of 1973. It is one of the most satisfying advances of the programme and an interesting, though not entirely typical, case study. Several attempts were made by the Archives staff to acquire court and Department of Justice records but, ironically, without success until after the flood damage when records were frozen, dried, copied and stored in the Provincial Archives and Records Centre. Small holdings of Probate Court records had been turned over to the Archives with municipal records following active solicitation by the Archives. A concentrated effort to acquire all historical probate records and set up schedules for this type of record began in February 1975. The support of the Deputy Minister of Justice and Executive Director of Programme was secured and the Judge of the Probate Courts of York, Sunbury and Queens was involved in designing and promoting the scheduling of probate records. It was ascertained that only twenty years of records were required to be kept in the courts' vaults. Draft schedules were circulated to Judges and Registrars who responded negatively fearing that removal of records to Fredericton would cause inconvenience and feeling that historical probate records were of interest only to the region concerned. However, fears were allayed through the gradual implementation of the schedules and careful attention to arrangement and service of court records at the Archives. All records, with the exception of those at Moncton and Saint John, were transferred and after a great deal of negotiating and salesmanship and a strong directive from the Minister of Justice to combat barristers' resistance, the Saint John probate records up to 1900 were finally transferred to the Archives. Schedules and a file classification system for Provincial Court Records were approved with the strong support of the Chief Justice and similar programmes are being developed for the Family Courts and County Courts. This work was carried on concurrently with the establishment of filing systems in Justice Department offices in Fredericton with a view to the scheduling of records and the transferring of dormant files to the Records Centre. It was referred to the Archives by Management Services of Treasury Board and facilitated by the appointment of a former employee of Commerce and Economic Growth in the position of Director of Administration. A study was conducted, inventory of records taken and a departmental records officer

appointed. A file classification system was developed for the office of the Minister and the Deputy Minister of Justice. Later, the files of the Executive Director of Programme and the Director of Administration were brought into a central registry as well as the records of Personnel and Public Prosecutions Offices. This was followed by the introduction of the system to Law Reform and Legal Services Division. The classification system has been extended to cover the files of the Saint John Prosecutions Office and the Corrections Branch, where it will be applied in branches throughout the Province. New employees were added to manage the work in the Department of Justice and the records staff now stands at four employees.

Records management has yet to be introduced into numerous departments of New Brunswick's government. Many challenges still confront the Archives—not least the establishment of a vital records programme and the enrichment of microfilm services to take advantage of developing computer technology. Nevertheless, the gradual progress and modest growth of the records programme, its excellent reputation for good service in all areas, the long service of key employees and the inevitable deepening of valuable personal contacts have admirably suited the economics, style and politics of New Brunswick. While records management in many North American jurisdictions has had its archival ups and downs, it might properly be claimed in New Brunswick that the system is moving in directions which may give archivists some real measure of satisfaction.

Résumé

Les Archives provinciales du Nouveau-Brunswick, bien qu'existant depuis douze ans seulement, ont pu élaborer un programme de gestion de documents progressif, qui comprend un service central de microfilmage. L'auteur, le troisième archiviste provincial, explique comment on a pu établir un tel système dans une décennie ou plusieurs organismes d'archives nord-américains ont perdu le contrôle de leur système de gestion de documents.



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