

INTRODUCTION

W. Kaye Lamb

by WILFRED I. SMITH

When the Association of Canadian Archivists was founded during the annual meeting of the Learned Societies in Edmonton in 1975, one of the first projects which it proposed was a suitable tribute to Dr. W. Kaye Lamb, who has contributed more than any other individual to the development of archives and the archival profession in Canada. It was realized, however, that his career in the library field had been at least as extensive and that his contributions in that field have been similarly significant. Also, even if he had been neither an archivist nor a librarian, his work as an historian has placed him in the ranks of Canada's most distinguished scholars. This led to the conclusion that while Dr. Lamb is undeniably unique in the dominant role that he has been able to play simultaneously in several distinct fields, there is an essential unity in his career since it has encompassed a subject which has never received adequate attention, yet which is one of the most significant and challenging subjects in modern society. This subject is the management and use of recorded information. It was decided that the most appropriate tribute to Dr. Lamb at this time would be a volume of essays on the institutions and programs which are concerned with recorded information, both published and unpublished. This volume is based on the following premises: that information is a vital national resource which is increasing in importance; that the current "information explosion" with its exponential increase in the volume of recorded information has necessitated significant changes in the methods of dealing with the records; that these changes have a major effect on the functions of archives and libraries, the institutions responsible for the acquisition, preservation, maintenance, and use of the collective records of human intellect and experience; and that a knowledge of the origins and development of these institutions is essential if we are "to enter the whole information field from a position of strength and not as a desperate leap onto the bandwagon of information science."¹ If countries have a responsibility to ensure the effective utilization of the rich resources of their knowledge and information for a wide range of uses from effective government and scientific research to recreational reading, they also have a fundamental responsibility to preserve the collective records, published and unpublished, which are an essential element of cultural heritage, the national memory, permitting a knowledge of the roots and continuity of our society and an awareness and understanding of a distinct identity.

1 Hugh A. Taylor, "The Discipline of History and the Education of the Archivist," *American Archivist* 40 (October, 1977): 396.

This volume is not intended to be a comprehensive study of information management or of archives-library relationships in Canada. It is hoped, however, that these essays, each of which has been written expressly for the volume by an author who is recognized as having a special knowledge of its subject, will illuminate the background of archival and library development in this country, explain the extent and nature of current activities and future developments in distinct but related fields, and emphasize both the vital role of information in the modern community and the importance of documentary heritage in the cultural life of a nation. In Canada as in many other countries, there is a tendency to limit the meaning of heritage to historic buildings, sites, and artifacts. Indeed, the international Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage which was adopted by the UNESCO General Conference in 1972 limits the definition of cultural heritage, for the purposes of the convention, to monuments, buildings, and sites. This is, of course, a rich inheritance but, if it were all, "the past would be an enigma to us as it was to early man before the invention of writing. In addition to physical evidence and the works of men we need the product of man's unique capacity to think rationally, to record, to transmit ideas and information. We need the printed word and the archival record. They are closely related elements in our heritage which are often overlooked in this context. Both serve not only to illumine the spatial dimension which contains the material products of civilizations, but also to record and express human thoughts and actions through the media of text and image which is a human achievement of incalculable significance."²

This volume is timely in view of the circumstances which make it important for the nature of libraries and archives and their dual role to be understood not only by managers of custodial institutions and the professionals who must adapt to the challenges of crucial needs of society and the technological changes required to meet them, but also by all levels of government and the general public. In the *Summary of Briefs and Hearings* of the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee, archives and libraries were discussed in a section on "Information Resources" in a chapter on "Knowledge and Scholarship." But in the final report of the committee, they were included with the National Museums and Historic Sites and Parks in the chapter on heritage. This points to the need for the roles of archives and libraries to be understood at a crucial time in their development when additional resources are required for national networks for both libraries and archives, for the conservation of new media for unpublished and published information as well as masses of conventional paper and literary works, when new legislation such as laws on access to information and privacy give to citizens mandatory rights to information in archives, and the increased volume of both holdings and reference requirements of archives and libraries impose a need for automated systems in place of conventional manual methods. Such responses to the current needs and changes in the management of recorded information which distinguish libraries and archives from museums, heritage organizations, and historic sites, however, should not detract from a popular awareness of the role of archives and libraries as custodians of essential elements of the cultural heritage. As a former Director General of UNESCO said: "...the historical approach is necessary for apprehending any

2 W.I. Smith, "Archives as the Recorded Past," The Royal Society of Canada Fourteenth Symposium, *Preserving the Canadian Heritage* (Ottawa, 1975), p. 107.

cultural reality, present or past, because only such an approach provides us with meaning which is the essence and the message of culture."³ Or, as Professor T.H.B. Symons wrote in his report, *To Know Ourselves*, "We cannot possess the world of our own culture except by a constant effort to recapture the past through historical recollection."⁴

In a world in which information is one of the strongest forces shaping society, it is hoped that this volume will contribute to an understanding and appreciation of the important role of libraries and archives as essential institutions in the service of the community and that it will be a suitable tribute to a man who has made such significant contributions to their development and the use of their collective treasures.

This volume is, of course, a cooperative project and I would like to express thanks to the contributors, all busy people who found time to write essays for suggested deadlines and were remarkably patient when factors beyond their control delayed publication for many months. All were motivated by a desire to assist in an appropriate tribute to Dr. W. Kaye Lamb. I would like also to thank members of the Publications Committee of the Association of Canadian Archivists, particularly Marion Beyea and George Brandak, who from the inception of the project have provided editorial advice and assistance, and Glenn Wright and Terry Cook who have done the final editing for publication. I am particularly grateful to the General Editor and the Editorial Board of *Archivaria* for deciding that these essays are a significant contribution to archival scholarship and, as a result, offering to devote an entire special issue of the journal to their publication. All of us hope that Dr. Lamb will be pleased with the results of these efforts.

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William Kaye Lamb was born in New Westminster, British Columbia, in 1904. His father, Alexander Lamb, had come to B.C. from Scotland in 1888. His mother, Barbara McDougall, was born in Ontario and moved to the West Coast with her parents in 1872. After public school in New Westminster and high school in Vancouver, Kaye Lamb entered the University of British Columbia where he was awarded three undergraduate scholarships and obtained the degrees of B.A. with first class honours in History in 1927 and M.A. in history in 1930. In 1928 he was awarded a Nichol Scholarship for three years of post-graduate study in France. He studied at the Sorbonne under the direction of André Siegfried and also at the Ecole Libre des sciences politiques and the Collège de France in the academic years 1928-29, 1930-31, and 1931-32. He obtained a doctorate in 1933 at the London School of Economics where his thesis supervisor was Harold Laski.

In the fall of 1934, Dr. Lamb commenced his dual career as librarian and archivist with his appointment at the age of thirty as Provincial Librarian and Archivist. In 1936 he was appointed to the additional position of Superintendent and Secretary

3 W.I. Smith, "Archives and Culture," *Cultures* 4, no. 2 (1977): 53.

4 T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa, 1975), vol. 1, p. 15.

for the Provincial Public Library Commission, which was then running the largest extension service in Canada. In 1937 he founded the *British Columbia Historical Quarterly* which he continued to edit until 1946.

In 1940 Dr. Lamb was appointed Librarian of the University of British Columbia. During his last years there, he was involved with an increase in enrolment from 2300 to 9400 within two years, an influx which strained the resources and adaptability of the library services. He also worked with the architects and planned the first major addition to the Library building, 1946-48, an introduction to the field of library/archives architecture in which he became a recognized expert.

In the fall of 1948, Dr. Lamb was appointed Dominion Archivist, a position which he accepted on condition that he should prepare the way for the establishment of a National Library. When this was accomplished by the passage of the National Library Act, he was appointed National Librarian from 1 January 1953. His decisive role in the development of two national cultural institutions in the twenty-year period from 1948 to 1968 was unprecedented in Canadian national cultural history. While increased resources are only one indicator of that development, it should be noted that the combined staff during those twenty years increased from 37 to 516 and the budget from \$163,238 to \$3,852,000.

In his presidential address to the Canadian Historical Association in 1958, Dr. Lamb reviewed his first ten years at the Public Archives. He suggested that the major achievements during that period were the establishment of the records management system and services associated with the construction and staffing of the Ottawa Records Centre in 1956; the great increase in the acquisition of post-Confederation records including prime ministerial and other political papers, and business and other corporate records; the introduction of microphotography which was significant not only for providing a means of acquiring complete copies of important public and private papers in Canada and abroad, but also as a research service through interlibrary loans of microfilm, as an important security measure, and as a service to government departments through the operations of the Central Microfilm Unit. These developments accelerated in the next ten years and were added to by such measures as the reorganization of holdings into record and manuscript groups, the publication of preliminary inventories to textual records, the introduction of training courses for professional archivists in cooperation with the Archives Section of the CHA, the initiation of the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories*, and the expansion of the national collections of maps and photographs.

As National Librarian, Dr. Lamb was concerned with the planning and development of a national institution starting from the beginning. From the first, emphasis was placed on services for the country as a whole of which *Canadiana*, the national bibliography published each month, and the National Union Catalogue, which soon recorded the contents of nearly three hundred Canadian libraries, were of special importance. In addition, the government's newspaper resources were brought together at the National Library and the holdings of monographs and serials grew rapidly.

A major achievement was the construction of the National Library and Public Archives Building at 395 Wellington Street, in which Dr. Lamb played a vital role in obtaining government support and an active part in planning the building. There

were frustrating delays in regard to construction but, when the building was officially opened by Prime Minister Lester Pearson in June 1967, it was a climax to the notable efforts by Dr. Lamb as Dominion Archivist and National Librarian in the interests of both national institutions and the public they served.

While performing the demanding dual role of Dominion Archivist and National Librarian, Dr. Lamb was considered a valuable member of the cultural hierarchy of the federal government, an indication of which was his membership on various committees. In addition to his statutory positions as Chairman of the National Library Advisory Committee and of the Advisory Council on Public Records, he was a member of the Historic Sites and Monuments Board, the Permanent Committee on Geographic Names, and the Decorations Committee, and the Canadian member of the History Commission of the Pan-American Institute of Geography and History.

Even more important in terms of impact and contribution in the fields of librarianship, archives, and scholarship was his membership in a wide range of professional associations, in nearly all of which he attained the presidency. For example, in the library field he was President of the British Columbia Library Association, President of the Pacific Northwest Library Association, President of the Canadian Library Association, and Honorary Member of the (U.S.) Special Libraries Association. In the archives field, he was President of the Society of American Archivists, President of the Society of Archivists (Great Britain and the Commonwealth), Vice-President of the British Records Association, and Member of the Executive Committee of the International Council on Archives. In the academic field, he became President of the British Columbia Historical Association, President of the Canadian Historical Association, President of the Champlain Society (for twelve years), and President of the Royal Society of Canada. He was for many years the only Canadian member of four rather exclusive American organizations to which entry is by election only: the Massachusetts Historical Society, the Colonial Society of Massachusetts, the American Antiquarian Society, and the Institute of Early American History and Culture.

Dr. Lamb carried out surveys of library and archival institutions in Nigeria and Guinea for the Ford Foundation in 1961 and undertook a major archival study for the Government of Australia in 1973.

Among the many honours awarded in recognition of his achievements are the Medal of Service of the Order of Canada, the Tyrell Medal of the Royal Society, and honorary degrees from the Universities of British Columbia, Victoria, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Assumption, McMaster, Toronto, York, New Brunswick, and Victoria (Toronto). Other awards range from the Kodak Award for contributions to the development of microfilm to those of Fellow of the Society of American Archivists and one of the first Honorary Life memberships of the International Council on Archives.

Dr. Lamb managed to contribute many articles to historical, archival, and library periodicals and in addition was involved in extensive editorial activities including the *B.C. Historical Quarterly*, the Champlain Society, the *Atlantic Neptune*, the Yale-McGill series on Canadian-American Relations, and a series of biographies of Canadian prime ministers. A bibliography of Dr. Lamb's works is included in this volume, but the list of his publications since his retirement in 1968 is most

remarkable. Even when he was busiest, Dr. Lamb managed to find some time regularly to work towards one or more historical publications. Since he never took holidays or leave, he was obliged to select writing of a kind that could be done in bits and pieces over a considerable period of time. Editing historical documents was ideal and Dr. Lamb has been recognized as attaining the highest standards of excellence in historical editing in the field of exploration, of which the journals of Sir Alexander Mackenzie and George Vancouver for the Hakluyt Society are a culmination.

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When Dr. Lamb retired, first as National Librarian and then as Dominion Archivist, glowing tributes were published in professional journals and the press. They need not be repeated here and an adequate assessment of the impact of Dr. Lamb's multifaceted career should, perhaps, await the biography which must one day be written. It may suffice at present to note certain characteristics which help to explain aspects of his career and the nature and extent of his influence.

One of the most notable features of his career was the number of important tasks he was able to undertake simultaneously. At one time he was President of the Society of American Archivists (the first non-American to be elected to that position), President of the (British) Society of Archivists (again the first president from abroad), President of the Royal Society of Canada, a Vice-President of the British Records Association, all in addition to his regular duties and other memberships. Professor C.P. Stacey, who has known him well for many years, has noted that Dr. Lamb has been "a person of endless energy and capacity for work," that he was the only person who could have managed to perform simultaneously the duties of Dominion Archivist and National Librarian which "must have involved working about twenty hours a day." Yet, those who were in close touch with Dr. Lamb — members of his staff, visitors, fellow members of the associations — were always impressed by the lack of tension and apparent pressure, by his unflinching good humor, relaxed manner, and friendly greetings which were the same to all, whether cabinet ministers or janitors. The late John Gray, former President of the Macmillan Company of Canada, has commented that "he either had tremendous energy or he used what he had very well; I suspect both were true," and that "he was seldom too busy to chat, drawing information about what was going on and planting the seeds of things he thought should go on ... this broad interest and knowledge was the product of his capacity for keeping track of scores of specific ventures." Many of Dr. Lamb's fellow committee members have observed that his chairmanship of committees was a model of that art. He was always well prepared for every meeting and usually had a sensible solution to propose for nearly every problem. It was natural for him to rise quickly to the top of every organization or association with which he was involved. Dr. Lamb demonstrated for many years a remarkable administrative ability and could in many respects be regarded as a model for managers of cultural institutions. But he was more than an administrator. When told about this volume of essays Professor Stacey wrote: "I hope it will be worthy of him, and I hope that it will make clear his stature in the world of scholarship. It would be a pity if it left the impression that he was primarily an administrator, though he did great work in administration." Dr. Robert Bahmer,

former Archivist of the United States, has referred to the universal respect for Dr. Lamb in international archival circles: "There have been few true scholars who have been successful in our hemisphere as top archivists. Kaye Lamb was one of the best and I suspect that it was his integrity as a scholar that won him the support for his program as Dominion Archivist."

In his international activities over nearly two decades, Dr. Lamb created a very favourable image of archives in Canada. Among the contributions with which he is directly associated are his keynote speech on liberalization of access to archives at the Extraordinary Congress of the International Council on Archives in Washington, D.C., in 1965, and his efforts as a member of the ICA microfilm committee in 1966-68 which were considered essential to its success. Finally, Peter Walne, Secretary of the Society of Archivists and Chairman of the Publications Commission of ICA, has written: "That the Association of Canadian Archivists should sponsor this volume is a just and well-deserved tribute to a great man, whose stature in his two professions will be undiminished by the passage of time and who will always be remembered by those who knew him with respect and with affection, not only in his own country but across the oceans."