

The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries As Heritage

by HUGH A. TAYLOR

When the Royal Society of Canada in association with Heritage Canada planned the symposium "Preserving the Canadian Heritage" in 1975, it was necessary for archivists to make a special request that archives be accorded a separate presentation. The Dominion Archivist emphasized in his address the tendency to link heritage to "buildings, historic sites, artifacts and pictorial art. This in itself is a rich inheritance, but if this were all, the past would be an enigma to us as it was to early man before the invention of writing."¹ Visually unremarkable, voluminous in quantity, and hidden away in boxes, archives have generally been taken for granted as the information environment of traditional heritage, a collective memory to be ransacked by experts when some element of the past is to be fixed in time and space.

For non-literate communities the past is constantly renewed and celebrated through the recreation of tribal myths and legends as part of a collective wisdom communicated in part by the shaman through which they learn abiding truths about themselves. There is no linear sense of increasingly remote time, or historical development which has a way of fragmenting cultural experience in our own society until we have to ask whose experience and development for whom? Customary duties and rights are transmitted through oral tradition. The heritage of the tribe resides in the totality of its life and transmitted skills rooted in its land and natural resources.

With the emergence of written records which are marks of what we call civilization, the specialized skills of the secretary and scribe coupled with the authority of the ruler all conspired to accentuate the power which resided in those who kept the more fragile collective memory on the early "media of records:" clay, papyrus, parchment and paper. These officials were now the sources not so much of wisdom as of information. The propertied and privileged armed themselves with muniments to defend their titles. Heritage lay not in the records themselves, but the transactions and customs to which they bore witness as "evidences." The reluctance of mediaeval man to trust in literate documentation simply emphasizes a profound change in the source of the collective memory.

1 Wilfred I. Smith, "Archives as the Recorded Past" in *Preserving the Canadian Heritage* (Ottawa, The Royal Society of Canada, 1975), p. 107.

At what juncture then do records (meaning in the fullest sense of all that is imaged or textually written for public and private business) become part of a national or local heritage? This is not an easy question to answer, because we must distinguish between the evidence of a specific culture which they contain and the documents themselves as not always very prepossessing artifacts.

Documents contain the record of events; they are not the events themselves. It is a mark of heritage that it remains a present reality and the record of the past must be seen in this light. If heritage is concerned primarily with widely accepted and sharply apparent expressions of a culture in terms of its cultural "goods" in every sense of the word, of its buildings and its art, its dance and its song, which may be readily experienced and transmitted, then documents, with no purpose beyond written communication and without literary pretensions, may not rank very highly and indeed are in great danger of being regarded as worthless. The irony is that scholars who for centuries have used these documents to adorn a tract, support a thesis or simply to make the material more widely known have launched into print and at one stroke rendered the originals (apparently) obsolete, thus further threatening their survival.

Until recently the nearest that documents have come to being identified as heritage has been when they are generally regarded as having historical value, but such recognition has in the past left them at the mercy of the humanist as bred out of the Renaissance. For the classical humanist of the sixteenth century, the world was filled with artifacts which could be copied, improved upon, translated into fine art, transplanted, fragmented, framed, housed and finally anchored within a perspective of continuous space which receded towards a vanishing point. The viewer was always on the outside looking in as a detached spectator, in contrast to the total immersion of early mediaeval and tribal society. Nature itself became the ultimate artifact, the most stubborn and challenging of all to be mastered and contained by man. Classical humanism and the egocentric individualism that went with it sought to dominate and exploit men and materials with the intensity of a Michelangelo or with the gentle determination of an Erasmus.

It was classical humanism which gave rise to the inspired eclecticism of the great libraries, the galleries and the cabinets of manuscripts of wealthy and private collectors; this humanism was nothing if not acquisitive. It was the same humanism which gave us history as literature illustrated by choice quotations from documents sitting on the page like a row of Greek vases. It was this same demon for mastery, more especially the mastery of friction and gravity itself, which drove men to conquer distance, space, and outer space in an orgy of natural exploitation that boggles the mind. History came to be written in terms of mastery, and archives quickly accorded priority to the records of elites, housed in replicas of temples and fortresses.

This eclectic acquisitiveness tended to work against the true spirit of heritage which has always had a territorial base and strong regional sense. Indeed, the heritage movement as we know it today probably had its origins in that series of architectural revivals and preservation crusades in Europe which strove to affirm moral and aesthetic standards believed to be threatened by the last stages of a ruthless industrial revolution, which was itself the direct outcome of the forces of the Renaissance. Romantic in tone yet often narrowly academic in direction, the general thrust of these movements was to heighten aesthetic and religious

sensibilities according to the strict canons of a particular style such as early Gothic. Many splendid buildings were "improved" by alterations and additions of very uneven quality, but these early excesses were happily succeeded in England by the more temperate and objective Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings, the Georgian Group, the Victorian Society and the National Trust, supported indirectly by various statutes. All sought to preserve buildings and, since this meant on their original sites, the territorial imperative of the heritage concept was at once recognized. You could not put a house in a museum (though in Canada you would still be able to remove a painted room).

Thus, the architectural origin of the movement posited an environmental approach; first within the space of individual buildings, but later in the restoration of whole precincts to preserve accretions and series in an almost archival sense of organic growth. This context provided an emotive stimulation of the senses brought on by a visual and to some extent tactile experience; appreciation and perception through the senses reinforced a purely intellectual approach and ensured a much broader base of enthusiastic support from lay persons who clearly recognized all this as "heritage."

Meanwhile, archives remained firmly in the hands of antiquaries, academics and scholarly administrators. The Public Record Office in London may have been built in the Gothic manner suggestive of the inns of court and the glories of Tudor England, but this popular symbol of heritage belied a stern interior which may have often daunted the enthusiastic amateur lacking in scholarly attainments. Documents remained remote from the people and the dusty old archivist continued to be the stereotype.

By contrast, the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts, established in 1869 to gain access to and information on the accumulations of archives in the hands of the great landowners, churches, universities and corporations, undoubtedly helped to create a sense of their value to the nation; after the Second World War, the National Register of Archives greatly extended this work in cooperation with a new generation of archivists entering recently established repositories in counties and cities throughout England. Their subsequent work with local societies and schools was aided by a new breed of academic local historians who married the evidence of records with archeology and personal observation. The acceptance of archives as heritage grew apace, and feature prominently in the activities for instance of the Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art established in 1952.

In Canada, this perception has developed unevenly. Following the surrender of Montreal to the British in 1760, the administrative state papers of the French Regime were shipped to La Rochelle and Rochefort where they subsequently disappeared, whereas the judicial, notarial and ecclesiastical archives remained in the colony to form the nucleus of the documentary evidence for *la survivance* in the years to come. Family, parish and state records were regarded as cultural baggage of the first importance and as early as 1787 the governor, Lord Dorchester, appointed a commission to survey the archives of Quebec. Under the Constitutional Act of 1791, orders-in-council were used as instruments for records preservation, a procedure which has a very modern ring. Quite apart from the continuity for archives provided by the record keepers of Quebec, another force generated a more active concern. The aftermath of conquest brought reassessment, re-examination

and explanation of events and institutions on a national basis for which archives provided the evidence.² The dramatic break in the administration of New France (despite the elements of continuity) caused the earlier records to be associated with a glorious era that had come to an end and transferred them into a generally recognized heritage almost overnight. Discontinuity can have this effect even when the previous regime was seen to be oppressive. Modern public archives concepts emerged from the French Revolution and the archives of pre-revolutionary Russia are similarly valued.

Meanwhile, the anglophones founded the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec with rather different assumptions. Many had lived with the Romantic environment of literary and artistic pursuits. The thrust was more literary and detached. Archives were to serve the requirements of history and literature and a successful lobby secured the appointment of the first Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, whose ambition it was to establish "a great storehouse of history of the colony and colonists." The metaphor is significant as suggesting a vast and eclectic accumulation centralized in Ottawa and drawn from all parts of Canada, a warehouse in the Victorian sense where merchants' customers came and selected the wares they wished to purchase and make use of. Documents were of value only as materials to be made up, as it were, into the garments of history. This was, of course, an admirable purpose and the subsequent history of the Public Archives of Canada as second to none among national archives is well known. Documents, however, became secondary to history and the history becomes the heritage. Public records and manuscripts are collected according to the priorities of the historians and archivists in terms of élites and the view at the centre from the top. This is perfectly understandable, given the climate of the age but publishing history in the service of nation building and transposing documents into print further distances them from popular consciousness. Sir Arthur Doughty's famous remark³ subsequently carved on his statue shows that he understood the nature of archives as heritage and fought hard for their preservation, but documents were at the mercy of the last great age of print and centralization; violent opposition in the Maritimes to his lieutenant, W.C. Milner, presaged a stirring of local pride and conscience, and a wholly new attitude in Ottawa towards the province was ultimately symbolized by the return of the provincial Executive Council papers to New Brunswick by Dr. Lamb in 1968. Doughty himself was no prisoner of textual records and his wide ranging acquisition policy included maps, pictures and (for a while) artifacts, which laid a solid groundwork for one aspect of total archives.

Several factors conspired to alter the public consciousness towards archives after the Second World War, not least of which was a heightened awareness of documentary media, partly as a result of wartime radio, newsreels and posters and certainly with the coming of television and automation, which has begun to "retribalize" society in terms of awareness through our senses of the global village. Marshall McLuhan's controversial work helped at least to give us a glimpse of new

2 Hugh A. Taylor, "Canadian Archives: Patterns from a Federal Perspective," *Archivaria* 1, no. 2 (Summer, 1976): 4.

3 "Of all national assets archives are the most precious. They are the gift of one generation to another, and the extent of our care of them marks the extent our civilization" in Arthur G. Doughty, *The Canadian Archives and its Activities* (Ottawa, 1924).

configurations of conception, of pattern recognition, and of fields of knowledge no longer fragmented and compartmentalized.

As Dominion Archivist, Dr. Lamb was exactly suited to the needs of these times. He recognized records management as complementary to archives administration and ensured orderly accretions to the collective memory of public affairs; he vigorously pursued the use of microfilm as a means of translating information to Ottawa, while the artifact remained secure at its point of origin; above all, he worked to build cooperation between the PAC and the regional archives and, if this fell short of local expectations at the time, the PAC under his direction never consciously sought to dominate the archival scene. This spirit has been continued and expanded through microfilm diffusion and other programs of his successor, Dr. Wilfred Smith, in an effort to construct through various publications simple paradigms of information networking that will be expressed electronically in years to come. Using the McLuhan metaphor, we archivists have already shown distinctly "tribal" tendencies despite our typographic and consequently linear acculturation. We are constantly involved with the mosaic of surviving records within our collections, and the mosaic of information spanning them. We constantly seek not an artificially imposed classification by subject, but authentic pattern recognition of media in their archival order. There are gaps in all these mosaic patterns, and the urge towards "closure" in which we strive to complete the relationships is immensely sense-involving. This absorption is over and above our tactile involvement with a wide variety of media of record and our audio-tactile relationship with donors and researchers. We are not operationally specialized, and our work is not functionally fragmented. In short, we enjoy a healthy mix of experiences which embraces all our senses. Even when we become managers in a large archives, we resist fracture and specialization and encourage total involvement through matrix systems, task forces, and intermedia committees to further enrich the archivists still physically involved with the record themselves.⁴

As a footnote to the technique of "pattern recognition" as practised by archivists in arrangement and description through inventories as opposed to subject indexing of the material, Richard Lytle has found, in what must be the first published paper on the two approaches, that researchers were on balance better served by the provenance approach as opposed to subject indexing and that "Perhaps an improved version of the P[rovenance] Method would be the most cost-effective retrieval device for the archives system."⁵ Neither method is, however, very effective in retrieving information and there is much need for further empirical and theoretical research.

As a result of these and similar perceptions, communities also began to discover their heritage as never before. Documents, for so long the information environment for historic sites, buildings and works of art, became precious artifacts in their own right, not individually in an antiquarian sense but *sui generis* as a powerful medium

4 Hugh A. Taylor, "The Media of Record: Archives in the Wake of McLuhan," *Georgia Archive* 6, no. 1 (1978): 5-6.

5 Richard H. Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives Part II. Report of an Experiment Comparing Provenance and Content Indexing Methods of Subject Retrieval," *American Archivist* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1980): 195.

of communication to the reader, providing a sense of immediacy with the past and possessing their own aesthetic and emotive qualities.

In addition, the heritage movement has been greatly reinforced by the thrust of a conservator society towards a participatory and self-sustaining existence in which ecology, community development, and a whole variety of lifestyles and options can grow organically in a present and future closely integrated with the past. The extraordinary burgeoning of local heritage and historical societies and the energy and sense of celebration which they release make them a centre of community activity far more broadly based than hitherto, involving its members in small museums, archives, simple restoration, local history and genealogy. There is every sign that family history is becoming not just a pastime, but a search for personal identity in an era of intensive and rapid change.

Family history is not simply genealogy, although this would normally provide the structure. Family history should involve a knowledge and understanding of social history and material culture. The family tree will set our ancestors within their proper environments but according to their occupations and background, and the local museum or archives may well be able to allow generalization within reason on the kinds of lives they led. At this point we have to draw on a wide range of sources, many of which may not be literary at all, and none the worse for that, in providing an accurate mental picture of local society. A study of local implements and technologies may lead to an examination of local industry and patterns of trade which in turn may lead to parameters imposed by government and national politics. This surely is how the world was seen by our ancestors first through the family, then the village or neighbouring town; national events would rarely impinge save in time of war, general elections, economic depressions and such like. The origins of the "highland clearances" lie behind many a family in Nova Scotia. National histories are important, but they do not have to be approached first.

The pictorial records helps to recreate appearances, bearing in mind the conventions of the artist and the objectives of the photographer. If these records are used in conjunction with a personal visit to the scene, it is remarkable how the original topography can be recreated in the minds-eye, especially in small towns, coastline and the countryside which may not have changed out of all recognition. At dawn and dusk shapes are reduced to silhouettes, sounds are dominated by the animal world and we can to some degree see and hear as our forefathers did. All respectable local historians, academic or otherwise, have now learnt to put their boots on and get a feel for the lie of the land which, in human terms, is usually a constant. Surely the rigorous pursuit of an accurate family tree for its own sake merits this kind of pause and pilgrimage, which may in turn offer physical clues or a chance of encounter which the record alone could never provide?⁶ To further enrich this record, we might encourage families to keep their own archives and suggest what to save, recommending deposit in a local archives on a regular basis when space becomes a problem.

For the archivist, these developments raise a number of problems which are presently engaging our attention. We will have to decide what shall be retained in the

6 Hugh A. Taylor, "Family History: some new Directions and their Implications for the Archivist," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter, 1980-81): 228-231.

original as opposed to transferring the informational contents and configuration to microfilm and videodisc, and to what extent this should be available in local centres. We must remain professionally vigilant about standards in all archives, but recognize that less important material may be set at risk so that the public can enjoy the greater gain of the authentic experience of documents in the very small repositories. We must avoid "skimming off" early records from municipalities which may one day set up their own archives. At the most, we should take them on deposit only.

The vexed question of central and local polarities will have to be faced more honestly. There is no question that, if archival material is to be recognized as heritage, it must remain as close as possible to its point of origin. The need of the PAC (and the provincial archives by the same token) to review their acquisition policies in favour of this principle is urgent. The sheer size of medium of some collections limits where they can go, but the larger archives should resist "collection building" on the library model in order to achieve a symmetry of resources by theme. This may be hard for the Public Archives of Canada to accept, since it has already done pioneer work in several collecting fields, but at the very least the donor should be offered an honest choice of appropriate repositories. Above all, the phrase "national importance" as a criterion for collection policies should be avoided by the PAC as entirely inappropriate. Collections of national importance, if they have any local affiliations at the point of origin, are also of local importance and this applies in particular to the papers of artists, for instance. On the other hand, the claims of the PAC on nationwide organizations and businesses together with individuals closely associated with the federal government should be given due weight. In this way the territoriality of the documentary heritage would be respected. As regards the recovery of heritage material abroad and the protection of similar material from export, the Cultural Property Export and Import Act, 1977 fully recognizes archives as "cultural goods" in the artifactual sense and not just as information.

If the heritage approach at the popular level and academic regional history using quantitative techniques, such as the Landon Project in South West Ontario, are not to collapse into parochialism, the networking of information is essential. However, this problem may not in the long run be as formidable as it would first appear if we use the videodisc and other digital methods to their fullest capability. Up until now archivists have been daunted by the need to input by hand all information to be used electronically. Surely the videodisc, since it deals with images as opposed to textual information, could contain many finding aids and inventories compiled onto the disc directly or via microfilm? This would retain a large variety of tools still valuable for search instead of rendering them obsolete. In the not too distant future, historians and genealogists would be able to access videodiscs for manually compiled finding aids while sitting at terminals in their own homes.

The more broadly based contribution which archives and archivists are making to society as a public social service through close cooperation with museums and art galleries (which often have custody of "image" archives such as photographs and topographical drawings) on the one hand, and local societies within the heritage spectrum on the other, is having its effect upon the archival profession. Contact and experience with alternative institutions practising active personal involvement, decision-making by consensus and maximum flexibility within the group has already modified the public bureaucracies, of which archives form a part. The

conventional wisdom of modern management now favours the use of task forces, matrix management, and several forms of interdepartmental cooperation. Of course, the information explosion has a great deal to do with this also. A developing pattern which sees the public sector providing coordination for local voluntary societies of all kinds grouped into federations for like-minded endeavour is very significant. The Federation of Nova Scotia Heritage is a good example. This is a perfect microcosm of how the heritage concept has expanded from its architectural origins. The various archives of Nova Scotia have been closely involved, particularly in workshops by the directorate of the Federation, as the most practical and involving ways of moving information. If one compares this network of cultural activity (and there are other similar federations for artists and crafts people) with the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society and its very active genealogical committee fulfilling a valuable complementary role in encouraging more academic research along more traditional and scholarly lines, one can see again something of the change which is occurring.

If the study of family history is regarded as a kind of social therapy or preventive medicine against rootlessness and alienation, then it may be helpful to compare public service in Archives with other social services where it has been found that the decay of services was the sign of the reorganization of social life itself.⁷ Our own service has not decayed because we have by and large adapted to changing demands. Nevertheless, we have to realize that "the internal stability of an organization, so critical to its success as a bureaucracy, depends very much on its external development or field. The more unstable and fluid the latter, the more dysfunctional do the rigid patterns of bureaucracy become."⁸ There are signs that the younger members of our profession (the so-called "activist archivists") are disturbed by these signs which have a great deal to do with cultural awareness and the limitations of the heritage movement which is still predominantly conservation oriented in a somewhat conservative way. Referring to the social services it has been noted that "practitioners mark their advance in terms of the number and kinds of innovative programs in which they can participate."⁹ Described as professional "development in turbulence," satisfaction depends on sometimes risky flexibility within organizations when it comes to responsibility and authority. If only standard services are provided, employee morale declines. Another useful phrase is "the collapse of distance"¹⁰ which, when applied to archivists, is the problem which arises when too much outreach in public service threatens the curatorial role. When archivists were seen as rather remote and formidable persons with a small and scholarly clientele, this problem did not arise.

With so many new approaches to heritage in general and archives in particular emerging, and with individuals seeking their own personal relationships with heritage, we should, like the social service professionals, "design the environments within which clients develop their own conceptions and satisfactory roles. To design such settings professionals must become experts in how clients learn, clarify, plan

7 John Case and Rosemary C.R. Taylor, eds. *Co-ops, Communes and Collectives* (New York, Pantheon Books, 1979), p. 159.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 164.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 168.

10 *Ibid.*, p. 170.

and decide."¹¹ As improved information retrieval increases options and choice, we will increasingly be called upon to design and recommend new strategies of research. Indeed, twelve years ago, James B. Rhoads, when Archivist of the United States, recognized the extent to which our archival systems influenced and limited historical research and writing:

It is the present system which makes all researchers conform to the same pattern of documentation; it will be the computer that will liberate researchers and enhance the role of the individual in his attempt to reconstruct the past by giving each researcher the opportunity to ask for information in the form and to the extent that suits his personal needs best. That is freedom.¹²

Barbara Fisher also noted about the same time that "the computer does not set men to dream. Instead it urges a sometimes rude awakening, for it exposes us to our old habits, practices and thoughts in an entirely new perspective".¹³

Since our documentary heritage is increasingly concerned with disaggregate information about ordinary folk, it is not surprising that much more attention is being devoted to carefully designed surveys based on precise parameters. At the very local level the uncovering of all surviving documentary evidence before a certain date may call for a systematic approach to all persons and institutions with the precision of an archaeological "dig."

These new trends towards greater individuality and personal responsibility on the part of archivist and client will affect training patterns. Apprenticeship has its advantages, but "the trouble with apprenticeship ... is that it perpetuates the standards and even more the outlook of the dominant old hands."¹⁴ At the same time "all the training and schools are committed consciously or not to a managerial viewpoint. They accept that there is an order of things in which a few people think out the objectives, programmes and processes needed by an archives establishment and direct inferior persons in carrying out the work."¹⁵ Some rethinking may be needed here if we are to be in tune with the times.

The connection of records management with heritage may seem rather remote. Yet, if the "collective memory" is to be systematically updated to contain not only administrative decisions but also the response of the community to its administrators (and producers in the private sector), operational files must be retained that are appropriate to record linkage and other techniques of quantitative history. We should also try to preserve names attached to case files no matter how long they have to remain restricted. Posterity will not thank us for nameless microbiographies, for they are the records of persons who once lived and (if they appear in such statistics) probably suffered with quiet desperation. They are the ancestors of the future and we should not permit of mass executions by archival decapitation.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

12 James B. Rhoads, "The Historian and the New Technology," *American Archivist* 32, no. 3 (July, 1969): 213.

13 Barbara Fisher, "By-products of Computer Processing," *American Archivist* 32, no. 3 (July, 1969): 217.

14 Michael Cook, "Professional Training: International Perspectives," *Archivaria* 7, no. 1 (Winter, 1978): 28.

15 *Ibid.*, p. 29.

Although we may be frustrated in our efforts to enable society to enter fully into its documentary inheritance because our finding aids are presently so limited and readers must usually come to our repositories, the future holds great promise.

Television has introduced us to powerful new forms of sensory perception but its one-way mode has invaded our houses where it imposes or reinforces standards affecting us all. So far, its principal contribution to documentary heritage has been to expose vast publics to archival images, especially early photographs and film, in such a way as to validate them as "real." Not until television becomes interactive and is linked more closely with the computer will the new hybrid medium generate the full potential of all its parts and enable the individual and communities, through personally designed patterns of search, to explore and experience the past in the present which may be translated into active experience of ancestral stamping grounds or the local scene.

In Canada, the development of "videotex" or two-way cable TV transmission incorporating the telephone, computer, optical fibres, television screen and videodisc¹⁶ could enable a researcher to call for finding aids on videodisc and then, if available, the materials themselves on videodisc which would then be displayed on the TV screen. A great many other kinds of personal interaction and electronic mailing and filing of family archives would also be possible.

Such developments would turn archives as we know them today into documentary museums, where readers may come to handle and enjoy the original materials on paper and parchment until they too must be sealed in containers and suspended in an inert gas as the last examples of their kind. Archivists meanwhile will be appraising the automated record (we hope with more expertise than they do now) and publishing videodiscs of their other material which will be universally available long after the originals have turned to dust, much as with microfilm and newspapers today.

And so, in this final electronic apotheosis (or nightmare), the record as we know it will disappear and the new tribalism will enable communities to live in small alternative institutions on an intimate human scale while remaining linked electronically to the whole universe of communication. Alvin Toffler foresees wired cottages in the future¹⁷ where many activities, professions and crafts will be carried on without the need to commute to a city and so avoid soaring transportation costs. "In tribal society the lack of a literate elite allows information to be shared equally through immediate sensory reading of the environment."¹⁸ The new tribalism will be literate, but the capacity to access information will equate to "immediate sensory reading of the environment" and the documentary heritage of the past.

For those who wished to enter into ancestral folkways and lifestyles if only to escape for a while the gathering speed of change, there might be "enclaves of the

16 Douglas Parkhill, "The Necessary Structures," in D. Godfrey and D. Parkhill, eds., *Gutenberg 2* (Toronto, 1979), p. 74.

17 William Irwin Thompson, *At the Edge of History: Speculations on the Transformation of Culture* (New York, 1972), p. 108.

18 Alvin Toffler, *The Third Wave* (New York, 1981), Chapter 16, "The Electronic Cottage," pp. 194-207.

past”¹⁹ where life would remain much as it was. We already have the Hutterites and Amish as remarkable examples of this possibility. Documentary preparation for such a retreat would clearly be an advantage. For those who believe in the potential of astral transference, *Time and Again*, by Jack Finney,²⁰ is highly recommended. In this novel the central character is transferred periodically to the New York of the 1880s. Contemporary photographs give an additional air of conviction to the story which is well conceived but is, of course, just a story, though an admirable documentary of a non-event conveying a quite eerie sense of reality. Its plausibility is based upon our perception of the historical photograph as a reality in its own right, as, in effect, heritage.

Professor Symons has urged us “to know ourselves” individually and collectively and has stressed that “Canadian Archives are the foundation of Canadian studies.”²¹ His report is not only about Canadian studies, but also about heritage; our self-knowledge as individuals and as a nation of communities derived from our heritage may yet be our salvation.

If archives were not at first to be accorded a session at the Ottawa heritage conference mentioned above, libraries had no representation at all. This may have been that, like archives, books and the printed page have tended to be taken for granted as a source which informs all aspects of the past. Yet to what extent are libraries also the repository of our heritage?²²

This is not the place to discuss libraries in general terms of the public service provided by librarians. Their contribution to the whole spectrum of learning and knowledge goes without saying. However, when libraries and books are to be treated as cultural goods, certain problems arise which deserve some consideration.

First, there is the nature of the medium. The printed page was rarely designed to be unique — otherwise it would likely have remained a textual manuscript (this is also true of prints as contrasted to paintings and drawings). Losses over time may result in the survival of single copies; this does not of itself render these items archival, and there is no reason why uniqueness should be a criterion for consideration as heritage — otherwise, for instance, no Canadian automobiles would qualify.

The study of libraries as heritage suggest three areas of concern. There is the very general sense in which the entire printed resource accumulated over time is preserved and made available to posterity, with its formidable impact on our culture. But surely this is too general a sense and includes the products of all those other alien or distantly related cultures which come to us through books. Then there are libraries assembled by individual Canadians in the course of their lives, or

19 Alvin Toffler, *Future Shock* (New York, 1971), pp. 390-92.

20 Jack Finney, *Time and Again* (New York, 1970).

21 T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa, Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975), II, p. 69.

22 I would like to emphasize that I am not a librarian, but an archivist who has spent several years working within library systems and as a manager of libraries and librarians. I hope therefore my observations will be read in this light by a profession which I greatly respect and from which I still have a great deal to learn. Much of what I have written here about archives could also be applied to libraries, especially in the field of non-print materials, and this section on libraries is certainly not intended as a postscript or an afterthought.

institutions such as colleges in the course of their existence. These can range from the well thumbed handful of volumes carried in the baggage of the pioneer settler to the libraries of the scientists or other professional assembled during a distinguished career, which may have considerable bearing on an aspect of the Canadian experience even though the material may not be specifically Canadian. More obviously "heritage" are those magnificent libraries of *Canadians* assembled by collectors such as Lawrence Lande and Eric Harvie, often with a prophetic insight in advance of popular taste. Finally, there are the collections of quite recent printed ephemera which may also be found in the great collections, but are more likely to feature in hundreds of lesser accumulations stored up by families and institutions often by accident or neglect in dusty attics and damp basements.

Much of this falls into "grey areas" between libraries and archives, for there is a sense in which the printing of a record may give it validity and authority in an almost archival sense. This is true of proclamations which exist in no other form, and might be extended to such announcements as the price lists and catalogues of a business firm which validate their activity as opposed to published business histories which are *about* activities. We are dealing here with the difference between primary and secondary printed sources both of which could end up as rare *Canadians*, and perhaps the product of local printing presses long since consigned to oblivion.

The heritage element of libraries is also restricted to some extent by the enormous impact of books published in the United States, Britain and France. In that this represents access to information and knowledge at the market price, that is one thing, but the specifically Canadian heritage in the field tends to be submerged and inhibited. This impact has inevitably translated itself into massive American influence through the Carnegie Libraries, the Dewey and Library of Congress classification systems, library science in general, and library schools in particular which are still accredited by the American Library Association. Of course much of this influence is world-wide and beneficial, but our heritage may be later identified specifically in the Canadian Library Association microfilm program for newspapers, the Canadian MARC embracing the two official languages or the Canadian Institute for Historical Micro-reproductions, or the whole revolution in print and images which Telidon may represent. But this perception may be far in the future where heritage will be seen as community process.

There is, I believe, some truth in the view that Canada is less the product of a print culture than the United States and that consequently we view our heritage differently. Both France and Britain have in turn implanted an ancient and oral continuity which still survives in Canada, which avoids melting pots, which recognizes particularisms and which has resulted in something approaching a genuine multicultural society despite intense pressure to centralize and homogenize through the older text books and techniques used in Canadian schools.²³

An oral and vernacular, yet at the same time literate, society is conscious of its limitations, and values the written record as preserving the memory. The United States as the first nation to be built entirely upon literacy and the printed word takes the survival of the printed for granted as all that needs to survive. This is a very crude

23 This theme was developed very effectively by A.B. Hodgetts in *What Culture? What Heritage?* (Toronto, 1968).

distinction, but there may be some truth in it if one considers the history of libraries and archives in Canada and the United States. The French had a long tradition of record keeping still maintained through the Quebec notaries. Nova Scotia can boast the first Public Archives in North America established in 1857; the first Dominion Archivist was appointed in 1872. In the United States, by contrast, the preservation of manuscripts began in the libraries of antiquarian and historical societies; the Library of Congress (a form of National Library) acquired the records of the early presidents and there was no National Archives until 1934. The State Historical Societies with strong literary origins gathered in the manuscript collections of distinguished sons; the corresponding State Archives often played Cinderella to their well endowed neighbors.

Meanwhile in Canada a different emphasis emerged. There was no National Library until 1952. Dr. Kaye Lamb, already Dominion Archivist, became the first National Librarian and the collection of manuscripts by the National Library was relatively circumscribed on account of the prior existence of the Public Archives. Provincial archives embrace all media of record; legislative libraries are usually restricted to books and printed government documents.

Such is the Canadian tradition and in consequence there is a balance, a complementary symmetry between archives and libraries which if at times uneasy has great potential for a co-operative future based on a rich and varied heritage jointly achieved.