

Canadian Archival Literature: A Bird's-Eye View

by **GORDON DODDS***

Canada, a country of twenty-five million people spread over ten provinces and two northern territories, its population concentrated in a narrow swath of settlement running more or less parallel to the American border, officially supports no more than five hundred archivists English- or French-speaking. Her two national archives, the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) and the Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ), employ by far the largest portion of this number and have historically had the most profound influence on the development of archives and the archives profession in Canada. Of these two giants, the PAC has had the more pervasive influence as a federal authority with bilingual responsibilities and interests, but the ANQ has recently exerted a provincial vigour in organization and in control which has excited a certain envy in other jurisdictions. A shining image in the Canadian scene has been the intimate relationship for more than half a century between the historical profession, manifest in the Canadian Historical Association (CHA), and archivists brought up and employed as historical researchers, most particularly at the PAC. It is an intimacy that has waned in recent years, but it did encourage managers of archives to hire intensively in historical research subject areas, to orient the administration and scope of their archives to stated historical needs, and in general to limit the range, amount, and quality of writings on or about archives in Canada.

The coming together of archivists in the early 1960s as a section of the CHA was no accident. It was inevitable, given the perceived role of archives at the time, especially at the PAC, although it is interesting that membership of the Archives Section was by no means dominated by PAC historical research staff. Lewis H. Thomas, Provincial Archivist of Saskatchewan, put the matter quite plainly in 1957:

Happily, the number of archivists in Canada has increased in recent years, with the result that there exists strong potential support for an organization of Canadian archivists. Some of us are members of British and American professional associations, but usually are unable to

* Much of the substance of this piece was prepared as an address rather sonorously titled "Professional Literature: Retrospect and Prospect. The Canadian Experience" delivered at the 45th Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists at Berkeley, California, on 3 September 1981. I have followed the editor's advice by bringing the remarks more up to date and adding to certain aspects. I have limited footnoting, wherever possible, to citations of quoted passages on the assumption that our literature is slight enough to permit such abbreviation without impeding access.

attend their meetings regularly. Since most of us are members of the Canadian Historical Association, and that Association throughout the years has been a vigorous supporter of archival development, it seemed appropriate to land our organization in close association with the C.H.A.¹

In late 1967, the same kind of impetus which had led senior archival managers to form a section within the CHA led Quebec archivists to form a provincial association, the Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ), quite independent of academic concerns *per se*. The members of the AAQ proclaimed themselves to be quite different professionals and set to building their association and literature (notably the journal *Archives*) directly on matters of great practicality and immediacy to archivists and keepers of records of many hues. It took English-speaking archivists until 1975, a mere nine years ago, to adopt a similar course by springing free from the philosophical and collegial restraints of the CHA and erecting their own independent professional society, the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA). Although a liaison bureau was immediately established between the ACA and AAQ, and though the new journal of the ACA published one or two pieces in French and produced resumes in French for some years, the only archival publications of joint concern which have emerged from the two associations have been the second edition of the *Directory of Canadian Archives/Annuaire des dépôts d'archives canadiens* in 1981 and *Planning for Canadian Archives/Pour un développement planifié des archives canadiennes* in 1983. I shall omit, in this commentary, any scanning of the AAQ-produced journal *Archives*; my observations on the Quebec-derived manuals, *Archives québécoises* compiled by François Beaudin in 1975 and *Les archives au XX^e siècle* by Carol Couture and Jean-Yves Rousseau published in 1982, have appeared elsewhere in *Archivaria*.² Institutional annual reports, promotional material, newsletters from the national and regional archives associations — including the ACA *Bulletin* and the AAQ *Chronique* — and surveys (with the exception of Wilson's) have not qualified for inclusion either. This is an arbitrary decision, for thoughtful archival writing or writing concerned with archival matters in general has risen to the surface in various ways and not always through the scholarly journal route. Certainly, I hope it goes almost without saying that, whatever has been written, still greater and more various matters have been discussed at all times. Our professional literature can thus only represent a rather twitchy thermometer of our dealings and directions.

The founding of the ACA suddenly crystallized both the mutterings of junior and middle archives staff in a number of repositories about the professional inadequacies of the CHA Archives Section, especially at early-1970s conferences, and the possibilities for a richer and more archivally professional body in Canada, which had already been sensed by one or two archivists at the more senior level who had had different exposures to the archives world. It was the opportunity to focus sharply on the profession of archivist, not as handmaiden to the historian but as a colleague capable of exploring and enriching a separate discipline. Part of that opportunity, some would say the only part, was the birth of the ACA's journal, *Archivaria*. This

1 PAC, Records of the Canadian Historical Association, MG 28, 14, vol. 17, file 57, Circular letter of Lewis H. Thomas, first Chairman of CHA Archives Section, 27 April 1957.

2 Number 2, pp. 104-5; and Number 16, pp. 159-60, respectively.

dramatic development, I would suggest, materially altered the perception of archives and the archivist in Canada by demonstrating more than anything else ever could that the recently achieved independence was justified. First, however, it is important that I paint in something of the nature and form of Canadian professional literature before January 1976 when the first issue of *Archivaria* appeared. That picture lies among the pages of *The Canadian Archivist*, which grew from a slim typewritten newsletter to a respectable photo-offset journal.

Prior to *The Canadian Archivist's* arrival in 1963, and indeed for at least six years afterwards, the only writing on Canadian archives was confined to descriptive short pieces in historical or library journals by provincial archivists and one or two contributions on PAC activities or viewpoints in British or American archival journals, usually by someone like the renowned Dominion Archivist and National Librarian, W. Kaye Lamb. A typical piece was his "Archivist and the Historian" published in the *American Historical Review* in January 1963. The early issues of *The Canadian Archivist* revealed how close the traditional relationships really were with history and with the PAC. Editor Hugh Dempsey, writer and historian at the Glenbow Institute in Calgary, repeated the usual newsgathering process about what archives were doing each year and scrounged up three "how-to" pieces — one from historian Edith Firth at the Toronto Public Library on editing and publishing archival documents, another from the PAC on preparing finding aids for manuscripts on microfilm, and a further item on mechanizing the PAC manuscripts catalogue. Edith Firth's article was returned to in the 1967 issue when the entire publication was given over to the topic. Keith Johnson, then chief of the PAC's Publications Division and now an Ottawa history professor, was about to publish the first of the PAC's volumes of Sir John A. Macdonald's letters and reflected on the archivist's role in the publication of documents. He especially reinforced the bond with the historical profession which was so fundamental to Canadian archival attitudes:

It is possible to work with documents without having much knowledge or curiosity about the people or the times which created them. Most of this kind of historical training, post-graduate training one might call it, must be acquired by the archivist's own efforts, by a never-ending study of the primary and secondary sources bearing on his chosen field. Only when an archivist is thoroughly soaked in history in this way does he become a really useful archivist.³

This reference to training quite disregarded the one "different" article about the profession which had appeared in *The Canadian Archivist* two years earlier. It derived from an address to the Archives Section in Charlottetown by Alan Ridge, then McGill University Archivist. Ridge, with British archival training and experience, asked provocatively "What training do archivists need?" and tried to alert Canadian archival managers to the kind of archives professional they needed to produce. He had raised the same spectre which Johnson had identified and which to this day has bedevilled the pursuit of archival education in Canada probably even more than it has done in America — historian or archivist or something in-between. Rather than take the true-blue Jenkinsonian adage that "the archivist is not and

3 *Canadian Archivist* 1, no. 5, p. 9

ought not to be an Historian," Ridge characteristically adopted Raymond Irwin's parable in his essay on "The Education of an Archivist" that "We must not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn; though treading out the corn may be his main duty, the wise animal seizes a mouthful whenever he can, and the corn will be the better trodden if he does."⁴ The vexed question of what an archivist really amounted to, or rather should amount to, surfaced in Canada constantly over the next decade, though not in professional writings. In a slightly more veiled fashion, nonetheless, the pull in two directions for the Canadian archivist was later felt again through the pages of *Archivaria*, partly in the position taken by the American historian, Wilcomb Washburn, in his rejection of what he considered the Margaret Cross Norton approach to being an archivist, and partly implicit in the writings of PAC archivist Terry Cook, who has brought the two directions into a much closer and productive harmony. George Bolotenko has now sharpened the focus even more keenly with a recent *Archivaria* attack on various schizoid perceptions in the profession through his "Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well."

The year 1967 was something of a Canadian — and a Canadian archival — watershed. A breath of fresh air politically seemed to waft across the country on the back of the centenary celebrations and Prime Minister Lester Pearson soon passed the Liberal party baton to Pierre Trudeau. In federal archival Canada, changes were on their way too. W. Kaye Lamb retired just as the PAC moved into his monument to librarianship and archives on Wellington Street, Ottawa, and an era seemed to pass. His successor, Wilfred Smith, was to foster an atmosphere for the growth of Canadian archival awareness within the country as much as abroad. The chairman of the 1967-68 Archives Section just happened to be another British exile, Hugh Taylor — in Canada since 1965 and passing from setting up the Provincial Archives of Alberta to doing the same for New Brunswick. Under his care that year, the Section formulated its constitution and bravely held that it aimed *inter alia* "to disseminate and distribute information relating to the Archives profession." *The Canadian Archivist* also acquired Hugh Taylor as its new editor. He confessed to being unable to find anyone to take it on, so typically he did it himself. In the fall of 1968, the Society of American Archivists actually gathered in Ottawa for its thirty-second annual convention and unwittingly set the first of two goads to Canadian professional independence by showing what could be done by archivists and by demonstrating it on Canadian soil (the second time was in Toronto in 1974). One of the only twenty-five Canadian registrants, John Bovey, now Provincial Archivist of British Columbia, remarked in a review of the meeting that "the sessions on purely Canadian subjects seemed to be the liveliest and most bracing of the whole conference" (they were on business archives and the state of the archives in Quebec). During that year too, John Archer, then Queen's University Archivist, finished his "Study of Archival Institutions in Canada" to earn a doctorate at Queen's the following year, 1969. The study was basically a descriptive cross-country review and revealed little but weakness and stagnation in many quarters of archival Canada, with perhaps the notable exceptions of the PAC, and the Provincial Archives of Ontario which had recovered from its postwar slump to dive headlong under Donald McQuat into an enterprising records management programme. Archer's thesis is much referred to, for not only was it the first of its kind but also the last, until

4 *Ibid.*, no. 3, p. 4.

the study report of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada presented its 1981 *Canadian Archives* survey, from a task force chaired by Ian Wilson, John Archer's young archives assistant in 1969, subsequently his successor at Queen's, and now Provincial Archivist of Saskatchewan.

Hugh Taylor, somewhat precipitously perhaps and, as we shall see, more because of his own thinking than that of others around him, saw fit to quote John Archer's observation in the 1969 issue of *The Canadian Archivist* that "we are slowly moving towards a Canadian archival methodology."⁵ In retrospect, this statement seems almost outrageous, for there was nothing to support such a claim in our limited professional literature in 1969, precious little to that point at conferences to give it much force, and far too little participation or thought given to archives amongst the rank-and-file archivists across the nation. Perhaps it had been prompted by the registration of thirty-one students for the Carleton University/PAC six-week course in Archival Principles and Administration, almost all of the students coming from outside the PAC, which still ran its own internal training scheme too. Certainly great store across the nation was set by this more-or-less bi-annual course (and still is, even though it is now mounted and held exclusively at the PAC, twice in one year for the first time in 1983), though little worth printing came from it until a paper rather than an examination was recently made a mandatory requirement from students. Whatever the reason for Archer's remark and Taylor's repetition of it, in 1969 Canadian professional writing was only at the beginning as far as Canadian publication indicated. The worst blow at the foundations of a professional literature in Canada seemed to have been directed, one hopes unwittingly, by *The Canadian Archivist's* very own editor, Hugh Taylor, who advised archivists to send in not simply news from repositories and papers on their history and development or conference reports other than the CHA but, most alarmingly for a tender Canadian archival psyche, he asked for "papers by Canadians which the *American Archivist* cannot take."⁶

Despite such odd pleas (at least they seem so in retrospect), with Hugh Taylor's lively encouragement, *The Canadian Archivist* in 1969 was relatively fat and flourishing. John Andreasson, by then McGill University Archivist and now a veteran Canadian archivist and records manager of stature, wrote an appreciation of Kaye Lamb suitably entitled "Historian's Friend" and contributed an article on "The Conservation of Writings on Paper in Canada." Ron D'Altroy of the Vancouver Public Library sketched out the ingredients of an "effective photo archives;" Wilfred Smith sent in the findings of a small committee of the Archives Section on "Archival Training in Canada;" a records consultant in Montreal, Bill Gray, told how consultants worked; and there were reports of a conference on oral history research in Calgary and one on land registration and data banks in Fredericton. And, characteristically, the editor threw in an eleven-page article of his own, "Archives in Britain and Canada: Impressions of an Immigrant," which he had given as an address at Carleton University in 1977. It was here that Taylor first touched on the drastic changes which he felt archivists would need to face in the coming years —

5 *Ibid.*, no. 7, p. 3.

6 *Ibid.*

“even in Canada,” he observed somewhat wryly, “it will be hard to call a ‘manuscript’ the magnetic tape generated by a private individual.”⁷

The issues of *The Canadian Archivist* for 1970, 1971, and 1972 revealed Taylor’s breadth and energies yet further, as he moved from the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick where he had gathered under his statutory mandate private manuscripts, public records, records management, forms control, central microfilming, and the legislative library. This time his move was to head up the Historical (now Archives) Branch of the PAC and superintend the unfortunate fragmentation of responsibilities along burgeoning media lines. First, however, he drew again on his English experience in Leeds, Liverpool, and Northumberland to give a fine paper on the archivist and administrative history to a seminar at York University, Toronto, and to publish it in 1970 in *The Canadian Archivist* (now deliberately patterned in size after *The American Archivist*), along with the milestone proceedings of the symposium on “Acquisition Policies: Competition or Cooperation.” Speakers at the symposium, the first of its sort ever to be recorded in print in Canada, included the retired Kaye Lamb, Andreasson for McGill, Archer from Queen’s, McQuat from Ontario, Turner from Saskatchewan, Dempsey from the Glenbow, and Weilbrenner from the PAC: their observations and opinions have to be a starting point for any talk of acquisition strategy or networking in Canada. Jay Atherton’s oft-cited talk to the 1968 SAA meeting in Ottawa on “Automation and the Dignity of the Archivist” appeared here too. Readers could also see that optional archival courses in graduate schools of history or librarianship were being given, in addition to the PAC/Carleton University course, by Taylor in Fredericton, Archer and Wilson in Toronto, and Andreasson at McGill. Oral history, international archival and records management conference reports, appraisals, and taxation cropped up in the next two issues. In 1971 the first article on sources for research — “Loyalists in New Brunswick” — heralded a second on “Economic History Sources at the PAC” the following year: both innocently anticipated an approach which *Archivaria* would take up with a vengeance.

Hugh Taylor’s fondness for breezy “think” sessions led him to publish an edited version of a beery conversation (of sorts) with some PAC middle managers in 1972. He called the transcript “Archives 2002” in commemoration of the PAC’s centenary in 1972, but it revealed little that was either searching or coherent. The same issue of *The Canadian Archivist* saw yet another cascade of Taylor’s notions about the impact of the “information explosion” on the education (or training as it used to be called) of the archivist. He began ominously with “a great era in archival development is drawing to a close in North America,” but swiftly turned round to advise (again a Canadian “first” for such a specific advocacy) that a post-graduate course in archives was needed which “should be essentially academic and philosophical”⁸ — an appeal to a renaissance humanism as an appropriate context and style for tomorrow’s archivist. Ten years on, even though a graduate course has begun in Vancouver (another Canadian first), it is still doubtful whether the spirit of Taylor’s cry will be heeded or understood.

7 *Ibid.*, p. 31.

8 *Ibid.*, 2, no. 3, pp. 30-35

Ian Wilson happened to be chairman of the Archives Section in 1972 and admitted in *The Canadian Archivist's* foreword that he had revived the notion that Canadian archivists should have their own association. As usual, the membership provided no clear answer: of forty-two who replied, twenty wanted immediate separation from the CHA, eleven wanted to wait even longer, and eleven refused absolutely. Wilson sighed deeply and again emphasized that Canadian archivists should “develop a strong national professional body” — even inside the CHA if necessary, though one wonders how that could have worked. He also recorded that “the need for more archivists to write on professional subjects”⁹ was pressing. Wilson’s chance to twist a few other archival elbows came the following year when Taylor resigned the editorship of *The Canadian Archivist* and it took on yet another size of binding, to intensify the librarian’s nightmare.

As if to follow Taylor also, Ian Wilson opened his first issue as editor in 1973 with a long extract from his master’s thesis — “Shortt and Doughty: The Cultural Role of the Public Archives of Canada, 1904-1935.” His research was thorough and well developed, his style mature and attractive to read, and the whole article shed some new and helpful insights on the growth of the national archives, its relationship to the historical profession, and its towering stature amongst Canadian archives. It was followed by three pieces on manuscripts acquisition, and one from a notorious dealer addressing Canadian archivists along the line of “while some of my best personal friends are librarians or archivists, I find my views absolutely and diametrically opposed to them on matters of principle and philosophy.”¹⁰ Stories of the late Bernard Amtmann’s entrepreneurship in dealing and selling through his Montreal Book Auctions are legion. His outspoken attacks on archivists as enemies of his trade were from his perspective probably quite true, but he could not comprehend our reasons for being opposed to his practices. With unerring skill, however, Amtmann did snatch at our professional Achilles’ heels by challenging us with his remonstrance: “in our hands, the material is alive. It becomes a treasured reality, not simply another number on an all but inaccessible shelf.”¹¹ In 1973 it was difficult for anyone, let alone outsiders to the profession, to sense much vibrancy or sense of purpose. No written response was printed by Canadian archivists until a later Amtmann diatribe in 1977 — “A Conspiracy Against the Canadian Identity” (published in *Archivaria* 5) — moved Ian Wilson to write a fine put-down of Amtmann’s “great men” theory of history, rather in his own rebuttal drawing proper attention to the view that “public archivists assume a broad social responsibility to document the community they serve.” Using the PAC’s latest and most apt buzz-word (from the title of its 1972 commemorative volume *Archives: Mirror of Canada Past*), Wilson described an archives as “the mirror of society in which citizens can see themselves in the context of the continuous images of earlier generations.”¹² Both Amtmann and Wilson struck at matters which had been nagging at the minds of archivists in Canada for some time — who were we and what did we need to help us find the answer?

9 *Ibid.*, p. 2.

10 *Ibid.*, no. 4, p. 42.

11 *Ibid.*, p. 47.

12 *Archivaria* 6, p. 187.

Bernard Amtmann challenged the Canadian archivist, corporately as it were, to be someone more sensational than a filing clerk. He appealed clamorously for life and motion — for the very use of archives. Wilson brought out his 1974 *Canadian Archivist* just as a committee of three Archives Section archivists (David Rudkin, University of Toronto Archivist, and Marion Beyea and Gordon Dodds from the Archives of Ontario) were touring the country collecting support for an independent professional association, sponsored by Hugh Taylor's Committee of the Future! Shirley Spragge, a student at the 1973 PAC Archives Course, submitted a paper on what a professional archivist really should be and Edwin Welch, then teaching an archives course at the University of Ottawa library school, put stress on the need for continuing education, another neglected area. Scott James of the City of Toronto showed how to clean glass negatives; Michael Carroll described how the PAC was trying to establish a machine readable archives capacity; the first whiff of Canadian copyright peculiarities emerged in a piece by Basil Stuart-Stubbs (then Chief Librarian of the University of British Columbia, now director of its Library School) which he called "Copyright — Librarians, Archivists and Other Thieves;" and Robert Gordon, Chief of the PAC Manuscripts Division, held forth in nostalgic reminiscence on his field experiences as editor of the *Union List of Manuscripts* in an article curiously titled "Footnotes in Archivia" (which turned out to be Atlantic Canada). Mention too might be made of Carroll's comments on Meyer Fishbein's edition of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) conference on statistical research proceedings which turned out to be the first book review of any substance at all to be published as part of Canadian archival literature. Carroll applauded Fishbein's enterprise, but recorded disappointment that "there was an overall unwillingness to be in the vanguard of thinking in the area of archival principles and administrative practices."¹³ Peter Gillis of the PAC had much the same sort of criticism of a later NARS volume on James Finster's urban research edition in the first issue of *Archivaria* the following year, though he hoped along with a colleague reviewing foreign relations research that Canada would benefit from American experience in this kind of conference and publication. If archival principles seemed in short supply from Washington, they were no more visible in Canada — at least from anything much that could be read. Ten years of *The Canadian Archivist's* publication had shown precious little concern with such matters. It is probably fair to say that, *inside* Canada at any rate, only Hugh Taylor had really got close in print to confronting some of the "whys" of archival work with his idiosyncratic infusion of English comparison and personal enthusiasms. Yet even then, there lacked much consistency or growth. Much of Taylor's thrusting out from conventions most probably seemed fanciful, if not irrelevant, to too many Canadian archivists in 1974.

The final issue of *The Canadian Archivist* under Ian Wilson's editorship did contain one article which, by dint of its painstaking analysis and exemplary research, perhaps spoke of good things to come in Canadian archival literature. It possessed the quality of submission which Canada's professional journal ought to be receiving and the character of research in which archivists ought to be proficient, if not masters. Certainly it was exactly of the kind of administrative history hinted at by Hugh Taylor at the 1969 seminar at York University — research which would abhor

13 *Canadian Archivist* 2, no. 5, p. 107

the purely interpretive angle of the academic historian, but which would rise above mere description and anecdote. The author was Peter Bower (then Chief of the British Records Section at the PAC, now Provincial Archivist of Manitoba) who produced a blockbuster analysis of the records of the British Colonial Office, particularly as they related to the Maritime provinces of Canada. He had originally presented his paper at a meeting of the Archival Association of Atlantic Canada — then one of four regional archival associations in Canada, now defunct. Canadian professional literature was on the edge of yet another divide. Already in 1973, two Provincial Archives of Ontario staffers, Marion Beyea, now Provincial Archivist of New Brunswick, and Linda Johnson, later Yukon Territorial Archivist, had offered to put out a topical newsletter on a shoe-string budget for the Archives Section and its regular appearance through 1974 allowed the journal some release, thus pushing it imperceptibly towards scholarly status.

At Edmonton in June 1975, the Association of Canadian Archivists was approved by most of the CHA Archives Section, which then terminated its own life leaving but a small liaison committee with the CHA. In the ACA Executive, a completely new set of Canadian archivists, a number of whom had been very active in bringing about the independent association, provided professional leadership. With the exception of three committee chairmen, all came from non-management positions and like the first president many were staff archivists *outside* the PAC. Hugh Taylor stayed with the new structure as chairman of the important Education Committee, but Ian Wilson gave way to Peter Bower as journal editor. A new title, *Archivaria*, was forged for the journal through joint inspiration (I believe it was initially suggested by Robert Gordon to Peter Bower) and two issues per year were announced. A number of highly significant changes in the style, management, and funding of the journal were swiftly wrought. In the Association's first year, the ACA Executive guaranteed a very large percentage of its income to the production of *Archivaria* and placed complete confidence in the new editor. Peter Bower's experience in journalism, his ability to team-manage *Archivaria's* production, coupled with his determination to raise a Canadian scholarly journal on and about archives, and a knack for connecting with suitable contributors, catapulted the first issue of *Archivaria* into a completely new phase of Canadian archival literature. *Archivaria*, quite untrammelled now by the need to be the Association's telephone in print — the new Association had also established a regular newsletter — was clearly out to become a vehicle for thoughtful, interesting, and lively research and discussion. Material would be solicited avidly, but refereed carefully by authorities in appropriate fields of scholarship or responsibility, and it would be typeset, professionally formatted, and bound. Graphics would become a standard characteristic of the journal; the visible paraphernalia of research (footnotes, tables, charts, and statistics) would be a common feature; and advertizing by commerce and by archival institutions was encouraged to provide both revenue and a new look. The first issue in January 1976 had no more pages than the last issue of *The Canadian Archivist*, but it was crisp and stylish, with carefully defined departments — articles (full and shorter), notes and communications, “counterpoint” for debating issues, “potpourri” for archival singularities, a large book reviews department, and the start of a retrospective bibliography of works in archival and auxiliary sciences to 1974.

Bower's first article was typical of a pattern which has persisted through sixteen issues of *Archivaria*. The author, Arthur Ray, was a historical geographer, not a

historian nor indeed an archivist, his subject field was Canada's earliest multinational, the Hudson's Bay Company, and his subject was an analysis of the Company's account books as sources for research. The article was substantial, scholarly, and heavily illustrated. Similarly, James Lambert's article on religious records was not descriptive or polemical, but stood firm on its own stipulation that archives should look at "changing religious styles and the new directions which theology and religious and secular historiography seem to be taking, in order to determine whether or not the current organization of religious archives will permit them to perform their proper functions."¹⁴ Lambert carried his observations through into a second *Archivaria* piece where he sketched out a religious archives programme for the PAC, thereby incurring the wrath of Marion Beyea, then archivist of the Anglican Church of Canada, who deplored the undermining of institutional responsibility for archives:

What Lambert fears about institutionality is institutions, and even individuals, retaining their records and creating for the researcher a nightmare of scattered sources.... I am distressed by the alternative to institutionality: a monolithic research centre containing all the records deemed of permanent worth.¹⁵

Lambert and Beyea were once more at the heart of a Canadian archival problem, the constant danger of PAC aggrandizement in the private or quasi-public sector at the expense of existing archives or potential archives. Yet, in the second issue of *Archivaria*, Hugh Taylor had contributed a wide-scanning article, "Canadian Archives: Patterns from a Federal Perspective," in which he roundly dismissed the "big brother" view of the PAC and painted a quite rosy scenario for the Canadian archival future, stating that the aims of Canadian archivists "should be nothing less than the identification and availability for research of the surviving Canadian documentary record of permanent value wherever it may be," though he added "but not necessarily in its original form."¹⁶ In this piece too, Taylor touched on the "total archives" notion adopted by Wilfred Smith in 1972 to explain the PAC's custody of every medium of record and the control of the entire life cycle of records. Taylor was especially quick to point out that this also carried a corollary of "total utilization of archives." In particular, he reflected on a matter of great significance to the growth and character of the Canadian archival profession and, by inference, gave a partial explanation for some of the articles which were to fill the later pages of *Archivaria*, especially those by Terry Cook relating to provenance and the division of archives along media lines:

There are those who would argue that the Archives Branch of the PAC is a loose federation of professional groups who are separated by the discipline imposed by the various media in their custody, and who are held together only by Branch-wide programs of acquisition, custody, reference and public service. This is partly true, but possibly it is also true that the alchemy of the unique, original record works its magic on all of us and turns us, regardless of discipline, into an integrated body of

14 *Archivaria* 1, p. 48.

15 *Ibid.*, 4, p. 211.

16 *Ibid.*, 2, p. 19.

archivists — members of a flexible, dynamic and responsive profession, with a five-thousand-year tradition of adaptation and survival.¹⁷

I am not sure that sixteen successive issues of *Archivaria* have turned Canadian archivists into an integrated body of archivists, regardless of discipline, since there is little doubt that the journal has often sharpened divisions amongst us as to what an archivist is and does in Canada. Yet it has also correspondingly encouraged archivists to get closer to resolving what we should be and should do. The results of an ACA survey across the membership regarding attitudes to *Archivaria* indicated that most archivists were generally supportive of its style, content, and quality. A good many responses suggested that the journal was providing interesting, meaty material, although an alarming minority indicated that large portions of each issue were irrelevant to their work as an archivist, presumably because this minority either did not appreciate the kind of approach the editors followed or were disappointed that descriptive, “how-to” shop-oriented material was eschewed in favour of research-based contributions. There was criticism too that funding from the Association of *Archivaria* had been too massive (it now stands at 40 per cent of ACA income, though this accounts for less than 15 per cent of the journal’s expenses) and that too high a price has been paid for whatever contribution to Canadian professional literature *Archivaria* has made. The editors to date — Peter Bower, Edward Dahl of the PAC National Map Collection (who was responsible directly for Numbers 5 and 6), Terry Eastwood, (Canada’s first full-time university teacher in archival science), Terry Cook, and myself — would quite refute these views and point to the nature of the journal’s content. Some of the outstanding items in early issues give an idea of our general position: “Australian Archives in Lamb’s Clothing” from Robert Sharman of Western Australia looking at the influence (or lack of it) of Kaye Lamb’s report — he also produced a review of Wilfred Smith’s report on New Zealand archives in “Dr. Smith goes to Wellington;” Carl Vincent’s crisp offering from his 1976 address to the SAA in Washington in which he took the Scott/Fenyo debate on the record group to its logical conclusion in “A Concept in Evolution;” Ian Wilson’s article on “Canadian University Archives,” reprinted by the SAA in a recent publication; Terry Eastwood’s concerned discussion of archival controls over ministerial records in British Columbia, “The Disposition of Ministerial Papers;” “Teaching Archival Studies in an Irish University” from veteran archivist, Dudley Edwards; Nancy Studen’s seminal essay on Canadian labour archives, “Labour, Records and Archives: The Struggle for a Heritage;” historian Joy Parr’s novel study on Dr. Barnardo’s records as “Case Records as Sources for Social History” — all of these and more were spawned during Bower’s editorship, and one can hardly conceive of any archival work for which such studies would be irrelevant.

Numbers 5 and 6 were put together by Edward Dahl with assistance from Peter Bower and Terry Cook. Bower had inserted a substantial theme section on labour archives into Number 4 and Dahl carried on the theme device in Number 5 by devoting the entire issue to “Photography and Archives” — allowing considerable scope for practical pieces as well as more philosophical ones, and of course printing photographs amongst the pages with enviable clarity. This volume has been in great demand by archivists, historians, and photograph curators continent-wide. Dahl’s

17 *Ibid.*, p. 14.

second volume in 1978 opened with the topical and critical issue of confidentiality and freedom of access to government records by carrying a paper from the Secretary to the Cabinet for Federal-Provincial Relations. Conrad Heidenreich submitted an analysis of seventeenth-century maps of the Great Lakes; Jean Dryden described the trials and tribulations of an archivist dealing with the restricted papers of William Lyon Mackenzie King; Veronica Strong-Boag examined the archival base of women's history in Canada; Ken Larose looked at the problems of preserving motion picture film; and, in an unusual article on "Archives and the Environmental Scientist," two Manitoba geographers pursued the nature of archival resources relating to the effects of environment on man and *vice-versa*.

Both Bower and Dahl's issues gave full rein to book reviews. Dahl, also co-editor of Numbers 2 to 4, had come to the rescue of the book review section of Number 1 as it was about to go to print with only three reviews; he quickly secured six more reviews for that issue and thereafter, over the next five issues, published reviews on an average of twenty books per issue. Where possible, reviewers were asked to analyze critically works which had utilized archival sources in an interesting way or to make some assessment of the working materials behind interpretative studies. This remains a difficult task, but it is one which elevates reviewing from archival angles well above the mere recording of content. *Archivaria* has not run after every finding aid that has emerged in publishable form, simply because the editors wanted to avoid pedestrian and repetitive observations. In Number 11, for instance, I relegated most strictly archival publications to notes, since they hardly justified independent review space. This kind of policy has not always met with satisfaction and the journal book reviews department suffers from a lack of archivists willing and able to provide critical judgement. Number 16 has happily attempted, with reasonable success, to dispel this weakness into obscurity. In Number 10, however, an archivist (Edward Laine) and historian (Donald Avery) set to with such criticism of each other over the interpretation of sources that, for a number of readers, judgement seemed to have been totally suspended.

As for main articles of the six volumes of *Archivaria* which fell to my editorship, I was happy to persist with the approach, quality, and range achieved by my predecessors — even, I am afraid, to including two further finely researched pieces based on the amazingly rich records of the Hudson's Bay Company. Wherever possible, I was anxious to encourage thoughtful and interesting articles on matters of theory and philosophy in archives as much as in the use of archives as sources. I believe that this policy has achieved a satisfactory mix for the archivist and the user of archives, though I like to think that the archivist does not really see this as a divisible property. Certainly, I prepared each issue of *Archivaria* as if this was not so. Number 10, for instance, particularly attempted to encourage historians of medical matters to reveal how they worked with archival resources in a relatively new field. The exercise was instructive, if not wholly successful, and it certainly ought to have whetted the appetite if not the combativeness of the archivist.

Numbers 7 through 12 plainly reflected the editor's proclivities and flaws as much as they did the contributors' and I look back through them from time to time with many a grimace. I do, nonetheless, have certain favourites which time does nothing but enhance. Each of the following five — for entirely different reasons — commend themselves: one from a Calgary political scientist, Tom Flanagan, who cast a cool and measured glance at archives as political and economic realities; another from a

National War Museum librarian, Ludwig Kosche, for his intricate, absorbing (critics said tedious and unnecessary) demonstration of how archival sources could and could not be used to authenticate a relic of Isaac Brock from the Queenston Heights fracas of 1812; yet another from a medieval historian teaching at the University of Glasgow, Michael Clanchy. His delightful exposition detailing the transfer from memory to written record in the England of the Middle Ages is, by any stretch, the most important study on records-keeping I have ever read. Archivists ignore it at their intellectual peril. The other two contributions of outstanding note came from archivists at the PAC's Federal Archives Division, each article full of vigour, brimming with ideas, and engagingly styled. Peter Gillis, now a federal Treasury Board policy administrator, gave us a skilfull and entertaining investigation of archives as perceived in espionage fiction, along with a shrewd analysis of the archivist's role in balancing scholarship against bureaucratic secrecy. Terry Cook, still an archivist *sua culpa* (?!), delivered his masterly salvo, "Media Myopia," as an up-to-date step in the debate he began on "The Tyranny of the Medium." His declaration, in echo of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, and in equally ringing phrases, that "provenance is not a throwback to the past; rather it is what distinguishes us now from librarians, gallery and museum curators, and antiquarian manuscript collectors"¹⁸ deserves to be tucked under every archivist's pillow. It is pieces such as these five which promise to stand Canadian archival writing on its head in less than a decade and promise that *Archivaria*, to borrow a hopeful phrase from my introductory note on "The Compleat Archivist" in the first volume, will remain "a source of inspiration — a springboard of enterprise and imagination for the discerning."¹⁹

Late in 1980, a volume on which Hugh Taylor had begun work during his last years as Director of the PAC's Archives Branch, trickled with great difficulty from its Euro-American publisher, K.G. Saur, through the mails into Canada. The International Council on Archives (ICA) had issued *The Arrangement and Description of Archival Materials*, a manual of nearly two hundred pages. Perhaps this work should not be strictly viewed as Canadian archival writing, but I believe it deserves notice for two reasons. The first is that it is crammed with Canadian examples — "a small, entirely unofficial, contribution by some members of the Archives Branch to the international archival scene," wrote Hugh Taylor, "and does not follow, in every case, the practices of the Public Archives of Canada."²⁰ A second reason is that it was compiled and introduced, with much of his customary flair for intellectual stitchwork, by Hugh Taylor, whose impact on archival Canada for over fifteen years has been undeniably catalytic. Unhappily, the manual is not a very satisfactory distillation of thought and practice on arrangement and description. It is presented as a primer, but is so meagre or obvious in some aspects, and as one reviewer has pointed out such "a faithful synopsis of the way things are done at the Public Archives [of Canada]"²¹ that one wonders at its utility, especially when the media divisions of the PAC are hardly in agreement on arrangement and descriptive methodology. The best portions of Taylor's manual are where he inserts his own thoughts and experience, but its weakness lies in the scattered, inconsistent analysis

18 *Ibid.*, 12, p. 148.

19 *Ibid.*, 1, p. 80.

20 ICA Handbook Series, vol. 2, p. 20.

21 J.R. Davison, *Archivaria* 14, p. 182.

and the failure to bring together a systematic methodology for dealing with records of all media. As Richard Berner has recently observed in his interesting historical analysis of *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States*:

Arrangement and description ... are uniquely archival. They represent a body of practices that are coherent and are derived from a unique perspective in regard to material that is the subject of no other profession's attention. These practices are susceptible to an analysis that will reveal their underlying principles.... Because the profession's approach has been preeminently practical, eclecticism has been rampant. There has been too little reflection on the broader basis of individual practices and techniques that have evolved in myriad institutional settings and subsequently borrowed by others. Quasi principles have originated from commonsensical methods that have accumulated over time. As such, they have been time honored and resistant to objective examination.²²

The ICA handbook demonstrates only too readily both the fruits of too little reflection on the broader issues and the depth of eclecticism in one archival institution alone. And, I suspect, it serves as an amber signal to those who would too often mistake scale and resources for much more than conventional wisdom. Hugh Taylor's "heap of documents on the floor" and "paper archaeology" imagery, bright as it is with graphic ideas and notions, is ill-served in this Canadian contribution to archival literature.

Archivaria changed editors in June 1981 as planned, following the Sixth Annual Meeting of the ACA in Halifax. For the first time since it began, *Archivaria* also left the PAC where an office, telephone lines, and some editorial time had informally provided substantial assistance. A feeling that the journal should go out to the "provinces" for a while had been prevalent in the ACA Executive for at least a year and Terry Eastwood in Victoria, a former editor of the *Archives Bulletin* and former president of the ACA, agreed to take up the challenge. In the summer volume of 1981 (Number 12), I had been able to publish an index to all issues since 1976 — a project begun in 1977 under Dahl's leadership. With this actual and symbolic end of the PAC era for the journal, Canadian archivists might now conceivably have looked to new blood, new style, and new direction from the Pacific coast. In fact, the western sojourn was to be shortlived. Eastwood, in May 1981, had just been appointed to the University of British Columbia's School of Librarianship to head up the long-awaited graduate programme in archival education. Numbers 13 and 14, in content at least, were still put together with considerable assistance from PAC staff. Cartographic archives were agreed upon as a theme issue for Number 13 and social history and archives for Number 14, the former perhaps less potentially wide-ranging than the other (similar, in retrospect, to photographic archives in Number 5, medical history and archives in Number 10), but nonetheless anticipated with some enthusiasm. Before the two issues — both well beyond their due date — were printed, the ACA was asked by Terry Eastwood to find someone else to shoulder the editorship. After much difficulty and negotiation, the job was accepted

22 Richard C. Berner, *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: An Historical Analysis* (Seattle, 1983), p. 5.

by Terry Cook under certain conditions and *Archivaria* returned to the PAC in January 1983, this time with specified and formalized means of institutional assistance. Cook also undertook to have both 1982-83 volumes (Numbers 15 and 16) in print by June 1983 in order to put the publication back on track and to make sure that *Archivaria* qualified for the all-important Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council support once again.

The thematic approach, pioneered by Peter Bower in Number 4 and taken up by Dahl and Dodds in Numbers 5, 7, 8, and 10, governed three of the emergent four volumes of 1981-83. "Cartographic Archives" was the title of Number 13 (a much smaller issue than the previous nine). The emphasis was wholly upon management of "collections" and, in three instances, on somewhat mundane historical sketches of collections at the PAC, the Library of Congress/National Archives, and the University of British Columbia. A revised version of an international conference address under the title, "The Cartography of the Recent Past," by a Scottish map-maker promised much more than it delivered. Though archivists in any medium should have been aware of such concerns as part of their daily routine, Dorothy Ahlgren (Chief, Government Cartographic and Architectural Records Section at the PAC) and John Macdonald (then an archivist with the Machine Readable Archives Division at the PAC) thought it still worth observing in an article on a geographic information system that "archivists require no new principles to deal effectively with complex information systems and the changes brought about by advances in technology."²³ Their commentary was thoughtful and the example which they chose to illustrate their contention — a federal information system for environmental planning — was useful. It did demonstrate, as other archival writing has, the tendency to keep re-inventing the wheel (however skilfully) by presuming that self-revelations are new to everyone else too; for example, in phrases like "there is today no assurance that, having acquired the form, archivists have acquired the substance." Again, this contribution came from federal archivists more versed perhaps in PAC convention than in theoretical investigation. A promising sign in Number 13 was David Bearman's notice on the National Information System Task Force (set up by the SAA in 1977). In a brief introduction to NISTF, he observed it has emphasized that

information systems need not be automated, indeed that the image of a gigantic national computerized information resource has at times been a barrier to systematic consideration of the role of the profession in the evolution of national information systems.²⁴

This kind of shoulder-tapping has become much more prevalent in archival writing within the last five years in both the United States and Canada and is redolent, I think, of a much more searching analysis of what archivists should be about, though the reasons for it are not easily formed.

23 *Archivaria* 13, p. 65, but see also p. 64 for an apparent contradiction that "technological developments, particularly in the computer area, have far-reaching implications for archivists." I have taken broad issue with such alarms, particularly those which broadcast that archival principles will not serve machine-readable forms of recorded information, in an address prepared for the Society of American Archivists' meeting at Minneapolis, 6 October 1983, entitled "Nineteenth-Century Archival Theory vs. Twentieth-Century Realities."

24 *Archivaria* 13, p. 127.

One very good reason for the content of *Archivaria* 14 was the direction and concern about the role of the archivist articulated by Tom Nesmith, another PAC archivist who had spent much time quietly reflecting amongst archival resources relating to women and children. Although the two hundred pages of “Archives and Social History” suffered from too many typographical and design flaws, it was full of rich material — by thirteen social historians — looking at archival resources and explaining something of their methodology in exploring subjects as diverse as death in Victorian Ontario, demographical theory and method, intelligent databases, and family papers. All are interesting pieces without exception and a further example of *Archivaria*’s continuing and unique attempt both to avoid the tedious trap of trade publication and to advance the frontier of the archival profession by making linkages and connections. Nesmith, influenced perhaps by Fernand Braudel’s remarkable tapestry of scholarship drawn from archival knowledge and conscious of the contextual weaknesses of the likes of Le Roy Ladurie (on whom he had contributed an earlier *Archivaria* review article in Number 12), introduced the volume with a plea for a renaissance in archival scholarship where “the archival scholar should attempt to see record creation and use as integral aspects of the history of society.”²⁵ His articulation of the “historian-of-the-record,” approach to archives and archivists catches the central thrust of *Archivaria*’s style and content and threatens, most attractively I believe, to mark a turning point of note in Canadian archival writing. In short, Number 14 may be seen, despite its vacuum of contributions by archivists themselves, to be their Achilles’ heel.

If any connection was needed between Tom Nesmith’s advocacy of archival scholarship and the subject of volume 15 — “Archives and Libraries: Essays in Honour of W. Kaye Lamb” — it can be seen in former Archivist of the United States, Robert Bahmer’s, reference to Lamb: “I suspect that it was his integrity as a scholar that won him the support for his program as Dominion Archivist.”²⁶ Lamb’s prodigious talents as archivist, librarian, editor, administrator, and historian were instantly recognizable as deserving of some recognition when the ACA began in June 1975. At an early meeting of its Executive, it was decided that some sort of *Festschrift* should be put together, though I recall being unhappy with the prospect *per se*, bearing in mind the impoverished quality of so many similar vehicles of professional honour. Marion Beyea, then chairperson of the Publications Committee, nonetheless took up the agreed route with Kaye Lamb’s successor, Wilfred Smith, and there began a prolonged process of pulling the volume together. Only in late January 1983, some eight years on, did the gathered material find an unexpected outlet between the covers of *Archivaria*, as a special issue. It is true that Lamb’s scholarship was not directed to the kind of archival research which Tom Nesmith had specified and indeed he did have trouble defining the nature of archival expertise. Nevertheless, such was the polymathic quality of Lamb’s contribution to the development of Canadian heritage resources that *Archivaria* had no absolute difficulty in undertaking the *Festschrift*. The result (as I had feared in 1975) was uneven to say the least. Ian Wilson’s history of the PAC’s origins was the highlight in terms of research and writing quality and Hugh Taylor’s nuptial article on “The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage” was the only item which chose or dared to take the past into the future towards a

25 *Ibid.*, 14, p. 9.

26 *Ibid.*, 15, p. 15, quoted by Wilfred Smith in his introduction to the special issue

final electronic apotheosis (or nightmare), [when] 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.²⁷

With the exception of a lively foreword from J.W. Pickersgill, the other three archival contributions by William Ormsby, Michael Swift, and T.H.B. Symons were broadly descriptive. A jarring note in the latter's article on Canadian studies was the reminder to archivists in 1983 that, as his now famous *To Know Ourselves* report of 1976 had observed in the now equally famous chapter on archives:

The crucial importance of archives to teaching and research about Canada is still only dimly perceived — if this is true of many of those who are actively engaged in education, how much larger still must be the lack of awareness among the wider public?²⁸

The achievement of Kaye Lamb in twenty years at the PAC did much to elevate the national role of that institution. What the *Festschrift* does not indicate, except by inference in Michael Swift's upbeat summary of "The Canadian Archival Scene in the 1970s," is the nature and impact of that federal role on archives and archivists across the country. Swift referred to the movement towards defining that role in the 1980s in the context of a Canadian "archival system." The tangible, published evidence of this archival therapy to date has manifest itself in two quite distinct publications by Canadian archivists: *Canadian Archives: Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Archives* (known to some as the Wilson Report) in 1980 and the Proceedings of the First Congress on Archives (held in Kingston, 3-4 June 1982) published in 1983 under the title *Planning for Canadian Archives*. Both works, funded by the federal government, were published in English and French. Wilson was able to give substance to the anxieties expressed by Symons five years earlier by gathering together an organized body of statistics provided by responses to a questionnaire sent to Canada's archives. The Consultative Group was able to show plainly, and alarmingly, that Canada's archives were struggling to stay alive, that there was no Canadian archival system (little coordination, shared objectives, or national structure — the report said) and that the PAC accounted for 60 per cent of total annual archival expenditures and 41 per cent of the paid staff. Even more horrifying was the finding that at least half the responding archives had an annual budget of less than \$20,000. The bald data on their own would have allowed the Group to come forward with some obvious recommendations to the Council for means to improve this miserable, though not altogether surprising, imbalance. Instead, Ian Wilson used his considerable writing power to good effect in providing a context for employing the received data, an explanation as to why archives operate in certain definable directions, and a sense of national archival purpose. The most outstanding merit of the Wilson Report was its boost to archival self-knowledge and its crystallization of the mutual affinity normally only felt by archivists when attending their Association banquet once a year. Yet, ironically, its main weakness was seen by

27 *Ibid.*, p. 127.

28 *Ibid.*, p. 59.

some to be the reinforcement of the PAC's preponderance on the Canadian archival scene by encouraging it to set up an Extension Branch "to administer consulting services, information services, technical facilities and a grant program for the benefit of the entire archival system" on behalf of a National Archival Advisory Committee. To its credit, the PAC declined to give weight to this major recommendation — a fact upheld by the final report of the Appelbaum-Hébert Commission on federal cultural policy which accepted the ACA proposal that Canadian archives should have a National Archival Records Commission not dissimilar to the American equivalent of some years standing, in part at least to separate wider interests from the institutional priorities of the PAC. Despite this act of self-denial the PAC, in all its acknowledged professional benevolence, is still an archival force to be reckoned with if printed evidence is any guide — not least, as *Archivaria* demonstrates each issue, in the furtherance of archival writing.

If the Wilson Report gave official vent to significant Canadian archival data and positions, what place does *Planning for Canadian Archives* have in Canadian archival literature? The short answer must surely be "a lowly one," but not, one would hope, a symbolic one. If these proceedings are at all a reflection of either the thinking of certain senior archivists (since virtually no others could attend) or the state of Canadian archival planning, the picture is indeed muddled. Transcripts of both addresses and discussion reveal, with the brief exception of Terry Eastwood's prescription for information sharing, little of what the attending archivists were discussing or consenting to. Some time was plainly accorded the time-honoured dance between archivists and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council over recognition of archivists as assessors and about suitable mechanisms for archival support. The Council's Executive Director was even taken to task by the Dominion Archivist for suggesting, naively but quite properly, that the archival community had not agreed upon a unified recommendation for a national archival granting authority. The greatest amount of time appears to have been given over to selected users telling archivists what they wanted and archivists struggling with the wording of resolutions. Above all, the resolutions listed with a few comments on pages 117-27 seem not to have derived at all from the foregoing proceedings, but were included as if this was the kind of ending a congress *should* have, rather than as a natural outcome of logical, constructive debate. There is in fact precious little evidence that this hotly promoted and much-acclaimed affair justified the confidence that "the Congress and its resolutions here become a point of reference for discussion and proposals for meeting the problems of archives." The oddest or shrewdest (it is difficult to choose) comment of all was the editors' statement that the Congress "contrasted the immaturity of our profession with the maturity of individuals."²⁹ Perhaps the proceedings should be seen as an aberration or at least an unfaithful record of an event, but in print at least they do not present much of a step beyond the content of the very earliest Canadian archival writings. Certainly, this dreary publication bears in recorded speech none of the promise and vigour that has been consistently present in archival writing since the early 1970s.

In contrast, the latest volume of *Archivaria* which appeared within three weeks of the proceedings was full of considered experience and ideas. Terry Cook and his team of PAC editors had whipped up an entire issue within a few months. Cook, like

29 *Planning for Canadian Archives* (Ottawa, 1983), p. xvi.

myself in earlier issues, had felt obliged to carry responses from archival associations and archivists to the Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee Report (some forty pages) as part of the journal's responsibility to the profession. As before, it was difficult from such contributions to accurately gauge the sense of the country and much easier to read with enjoyment or despair of individual opinions. But, of course, this is a measure of liveliness and variety which deserves courting. Book reviews in Number 16 were generally of high quality and almost all by archivists, six of them again from the PAC. Robert Hayward's appreciation of two books on surveying was a demonstration of the informed archival base *Archivaria* had been aiming at in review standards. One article was drawn from the Ottawa ACA conference of 1982, a snappy, stylish presentation, "Masters in Our Own House?" from Tony Rees, City Archivist of Calgary, followed by three short commentaries which took a rather different perspective on the archivist's task. Another was reprinted from *La Gazette des Archives* of 1977 in translation — Michel Duchéin's somewhat lengthy examination of the principle of *respect des fonds* — and yet another examined the role of Joseph Cuvelier in the growth of Belgian archival education at the turn of the century. The tone of Number 16 was undoubtedly struck by the editor in his "Dead or Alive?" cry for "vigorous intellectual debate" and a challenging of accepted archival assumptions. A far cry indeed from the early *Canadian Archivist* request for pieces *The American Archivist* did not want to print! Yet, in George Bolotenko's opening article, the old spectres of archivist and historian did stalk the pages of Canadian archival literature once more, with renewed fury. A student of Russian and European history, now an archivist in PAC's Manuscript Division, Bolotenko roundly dismissed the Canadian search for professional archival identity as Nortonish and bureaucratic:

Today's archivists — in pursuit of a unique identity (from out of the shadow of the historian), in keeping with the tenor of this technology-oriented era (the gibberish of a relevant calling, and in the tradition of the unschooled Nortonites) — seem to be rejecting far too rapidly their former identity: the archivist as historian and scholar.³⁰

He quite comfortably reverted to historian C.P. Stacey's advice to the PAC in 1972 that its pursuit should be "the old academic ideal" as "a community of scholars" if, as he saw it, the PAC archivists "are to retain their own professional pride and standing."³¹ Bolotenko's article was incisively written yet, taking perhaps the PAC as the typical archival bureaucracy (a dangerous assumption), he finally acknowledged that administrators, managers, and technicians would have to remain, but asked only for "room for the archivist as well," adding "in a small corner of the bureaucratic monolith where the humanist tradition can survive."³² In this sense, Bolotenko appeared to be restricting the archivist to a quiet backwater or, some would say, academic ivory tower. Was this the reward of scholarship which an archivist as administrator must eschew? Or was it the price of too narrow a role for the archivist? Then again, for a large archival institution, it might be seen as neither reward nor price, but rather a *modus vivendi* which might indeed embrace the polarities reflected, for instance, in the writings of both Rees and Nesmith.

30 *Archivaria* 16, p. 21.

31 **Canadian Historical Association**, *Historical Papers* (1972), p. 22.

32 *Archivaria* 16, p. 25.

Where have twenty years of Canadian archival writing led? One conclusion is that they may have not actually led anywhere at all, that they merely mirror the ups and downs of reported archival activity or personal whim. *Archivaria*, in particular, has been assailed as a professional luxury (money ill-spent) and an indulgence for certain PAC egos. Certainly, more than one archivist has voiced the observation that the ACA's journal is so virtually only in name. They argue that it does not give form and substance to the reality of being an archivist across Canada or, for that matter, even at the PAC. The contention goes on to emphasize the practicalities of daily archival existence, often on slender budgets and in un-supportive environments. A well-heeled, glossy publication twice yearly — with the added animus of usually coming forth from Big Brother PAC — seems in such circumstances to be irrelevant to those who yearn for instruction manuals, fund-raising tips, and preconference workshops. The opposite extreme is to see a Whiggish progression in archival writing (of “onward and upward” — as one archivist used to put it) whereby each contribution builds inexorably on the foregoing, leading to an ever-enriched profession. Thus, the quality of what is achieved rapidly pales in significance beneath the quantity as every plan, every event, and every report of the event is proclaimed a “success.” Togetherness, a desirable objective to be sure, is confirmed at all costs. Only the very young or the slightly crazed shout that the emperor really is not wearing any clothes.

Both extremes are present in Canadian archival writing, though not in any abundance. No doubt the eye of the editor has kept them out of the journals, a fact to remember when looking to the literature as a true reflection of our professional activity and thought. For to be sure, the editorial portculliss must frequently descend if leadership is expected and quality desired. The freedom of the editor is sacrosanct too — again, a fact to consider in assessing the worth of a published article. It is largely the editor's veto which determines the kind and the thrust of any periodical writing. Yet the editors of the later issues of *The Canadian Archivist* (Wilson and Taylor) and those of *Archivaria* (following upon the model created by Bower) have, I believe, brought a rather special infusion to the development of archival writing. By careful nurturing, at times even coddling, the editors have often drawn out notions and perspectives of which the contributors themselves have sometimes been unaware. And because Canadian archivists in particular have never in these twenty years exactly been flooding the journals with contributions on anything, the editors took it upon themselves to search out articles quite deliberately and to fashion an issue in a particular manner. As far as *Archivaria* is concerned, this policy and method has revealed that a high percentage of articles derive from archivists and historians working in specialized subject areas of the federal government (not always the PAC itself), that a fair proportion of “Canadian” archival writing has been composed of international contributions (original or reprinted), and that theme issues are potentially a most constructive means of both focusing on and prising open specific sectors of archival involvement. Curiously, but probably for the better, there has not been a great reliance on printing papers just because they were delivered at the national conference of the ACA, although this trend is increasing. There is, of course, no good reason why conference papers should not be crystallized into print if they are seen to take the profession forward or even sideways. In short, the editor has adopted a leadership role in the development of Canadian archival writing which may be at odds with the general capacity of the profession to rise to such leadership. Do, for example, the proceedings of the 1982 Kingston congress

provide a much more accurate reflection of the state of Canadian archival *thought* than do the infrequent bursts of Canadian archival *writing*? And, if they do, does it matter? Does *Archivaria* have to expose the reality of Canadian archival life or, even worse, promote it in the fashion of trade magazines?

My answer is emphatically “no” on both accounts. *Archivaria* should be in the van of Canadian archival literature by affording an outlet for archival research and reflection, preferably but not necessarily conducted by archivists. The most satisfactory articles of the last twenty years have been those which asked new questions about our work or asked old questions in new contexts. The most outstanding have been those few which broke cleanly away from conventional practice and, through enterprising and thoughtful comparisons, offered fresh insight into the nature of records, records keeping, and records use. Doubtless, Canadian archival literature will extend to more than *Archivaria* alone but, as long as it does not, the grail for Canadian archivists ought to be preserved in its pages. If this means direction by a small cadre of PAC archivists, dedicated to pursuing the grail, and substantial indirect assistance from the PAC, so be it. This condition is unfortunate, but the prospect of being without the unique facility of *Archivaria* would condemn the profession to archival writing in Canada of a kind suited to newsletters, reports, and manuals.

Twenty years of Canadian archival literature have plainly not resolved the search for archival identity to the extent that most archivists can now subscribe to the same definition of “what is an archivist?” Scott James, City Archivist of Toronto, touched on the dimensions of the problem in a commentary following the ACA meetings of 1977 in Fredericton:

It is not that we do not address each other about our professional concerns; it is that, however much we talk, we so frequently fail to *communicate*. After six years of attending these annual meetings I still see archivists displaying an appalling lack of understanding of the nature of the archival community. Many of us are guilty of assuming that what we do as archivists is what all archivists do and that if others do not do what we do then *ipso facto* they are not really archivists.³³

As I indicated in an address to the ACA meeting in Ottawa in 1982, this problem has deepened over the last decade and the reason for it rests primarily upon the poverty of our collective knowledge and experience about the evolution and character of records and records-keeping — not simply in our place of employment or even in our own country, but world-wide and across time. I agree with Scott James that the Canadian archival community is not as known or as understood as it should be amongst archivists and I am also of the opinion that there is in a great deal of PAC-based publication an assumption that what its staff do *is* what all archivists do. The wide communication chasm between Canada’s archivists, not always displayed in archival literature, is a result of a failure to confront the theory and to develop the principles of records-keeping *irrespective of institutional practice and tradition*.

Alternatives to institutional habits are slow to arise, in sluggish economic conditions especially, and need concerted effort. Preappointment education in the

33 *Ibid.*, 5, p. 189

graduate programme at the University of British Columbia is the most promising of the long-term alternatives since, with intelligent structuring, it could provide an opportunity to explore the history of recorded information, the nature of communication, the structure of societies, the behaviour of man, and so on. As Frank Burke has so dramatically put it:

There will be intellectual discussion of the questions involved, linkage with sister disciplines in the discovery of transcendent concepts, a body of literature and counter-literature that will ultimately support challenges, analyses of counter-trends, heuristic exercises, taxonomic systems, paradigmatic explications and unimpeachable antitheses leading to further Hegelian progressions.³⁴

Such pursuits seem ambitious, to some even impractical. They are well beyond the intent of Alan Ridge's modest training proposals of 1966 and were not part of the Taylor-Welch educational guidelines of 1976, which were adopted by the ACA and printed in *Archivaria* 16 as an appendix to Terry Eastwood's summary of "The Origins and Aims of the Master of Archival Studies Programme at the University of British Columbia." Nor do I see any indication that they are yet included in the courses offered in this programme. They are, nonetheless, an absolutely essential approach to understanding archives and form a vital precursor to the growth of skills so emphasized by Eastwood in his summary.

Medium-term alternatives, affecting a much greater number of existing archivists, are both more elusive and more varied at the same time. They are all postappointment concerns and rely heavily on the enterprise of professional associations and certain archival agencies, acting in combination or separately. Again, the careful development of annual conference programmes which examine, compare, and probe issues related to the substance of records and records-keeping, rather than to the management and administration of archives as institutions, would be a useful swing of the pendulum. A speedy implementation of the Applebaum-Hébert recommendation for a National Archives Records Commission could assist with the growth of continuing education possibilities (theme symposia, sabbaticals for research, teaching secondments, visiting curatorships, etc.) which did not depend exclusively upon the scale and management of PAC resources. Even more helpful, instead of promoting restricted access congresses like the Kingston fiasco, a series of open, working meetings of archivists over a week each year at one location or other across the country to study and debate central archival issues would be conducive to building a more communicative profession. This kind of intellectual involvement for many working archivists would without doubt begin to stir enthusiasms and gradually convey to aspirants a more coherent and principled perspective upon a most ancient occupation. The impact of such initiatives on Canadian archival literature might well be revolutionary.

In the short term, the options are few. The editors of the ACA's journal must press flesh, twist elbows, and prick consciences, ignoring their reliance on institutional graces and external funding as far as copy is concerned. And Canada's archivists

34 "The Future Course of Archival Theory in the United States," *American Archivist* 44, no. 1 (Winter 1981), p. 45.

must encourage them to exercise their prerogative in the most imaginative and most stimulating way they know. Sustained growth of Canadian archival literature will require at least this much symbiosis over the next twenty years if it is to truly mirror the thoughts and deeds of its constituency.