

a corruption and this is silly. There is a tremendous amount to be learned from these and a dozen other disciplines and the better we learn to adapt that knowledge to our purposes, the better we will become at "well" management. It serves no one, least of all the archivist, to drive wedges of fear and mistrust between our work and that of administrators, technocrats, or record managers. It serves no one to take as a motto an out-of-context remark by Nietzsche (ironic or not) which glorifies the useless as an alternative to the scientific when neither should be acceptable.

My humanist training teaches me that the battle between science and art was fought in the mid-seventeenth century and that the Miltons and Donnes and Burtons and Brownes of that time demonstrated once and for all that the winners are those who can hold fast to both elements and, with them, create something new. It also teaches me that such battles are fought in public and not while hiding behind a desk in a basement stack. The future of this profession lies not in retreat and a siege mentality, but in synthesis and action. In the final analysis, Bolotenko would have me, and many of my colleagues, become less than we already are. He would have us quivering in "a small corner" and abandon much of what has been accomplished. One cannot develop a profession by hiding in corners; one can only suffocate it.

As a final comment, may I add a contribution to the apparently burgeoning field of archival poetry:

Archivist to Historian:

We've kept well these ancient waters
For your succor and delight.
So come on in and have a drink,
The line forms to the right!

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A Wearisome Issue

It would appear that George Bolotenko ("Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well," *Archivaria* 16) sees archivists as a valiant little band of scholars besieged by a growing and faceless bureaucratic horde of professional information scientists. This perception of our profession clearly needs to be refuted, but I must confess the task is becoming a trifle wearisome.

The author's main proposition is, ostensibly, that archivists should be historians. First, I had trouble with the presentation of the argument which was so muddled as to resist my efforts either to comprehend or rebut it in any systematic way. Take, for example, the indiscriminate use of the term "historian." While the author's argument relies heavily on the meaning of this word, it is never defined. The results are most confusing. Mr. Bolotenko opens by announcing his intention to argue that the archivist must be an historian, but wait: not a real historian, only an historian "by inclination." (p. 6) Later, when Felix Hull claims that being an historian is very

different from simply having a sense of history, he is denounced for not making sense. Surely, the author claims, "to have a sense of history ... is to be an historian...." Really. But then the author concedes Hull's very point by adding "...at least by disposition and outlook." Pardon me? Finally, having lavished scorn on a series of celebrated archivists for asserting that the archivist should not be an historian, Mr. Bolotenko himself concludes that "the archivist should perhaps *not* [my emphasis] be an historian." (page 20) Good grief!

Then, I had trouble understanding the point of this article. If it is that archivists should have a strong historical sense, a knowledge and understanding of the needs and methods of historians, who would disagree? Has the author discovered an imminent threat to the continued existence of this type of archivist? Not at all. What he has done is merely bemoan the loss of the old exclusive relationship archivists enjoyed with historians. This attitude is most disappointing, for it displays a lack of understanding of the fundamental and necessary changes that have taken place in the archives world and in the real working lives of archivists across this country over the last fifteen years.

The fact of the matter is that more records of Canadian society are being identified and kept (and better kept) today than ever before. The fact is that more members of our society understand and use archives than they ever did. The fact also is that while an historian (however defined) may make the best archivist, he or she may also make the worst; any one who employs archivists will have experienced the latter. In fact, how many of our best archivists are scholars?

What then is the motive for such an article and why is it the lead article in our professional journal? Does it perhaps address an issue still current at the PAC which for most of us has been resolved for many years? Does it perhaps reflect a nostalgia for that golden age when an elite band of scholars, intellectuals, and archivists protected the heritage of an indifferent population? Well, the people are no longer indifferent and we have been forced to respond to their demands. There aren't enough scholars in the land to look after our heritage even if they wanted to, which most, categorically, do not. Scholars want naturally to research, interpret, and write, which is why they chose to be scholars not archivists. Those who do want to look after records (and researchers) must give up the scholar's life and be prepared to do archivist's work, meaning whatever is necessary to ensure the identification, preservation, and availability of the greatest possible number of the permanently valuable records of our society. This rarely allows for an impressive accumulation of bibliographical credits, but it is important work — arguably a more important contribution to "History" broadly defined than that of any individual scholarly discipline.

In conclusion, I am disappointed that this tired issue of archivists and historians is still being used to denigrate the new, healthy, positive relationships which archivists have developed with other professional and client groups to the benefit of all. I can perhaps understand these views coming from an author who has recently left an academic career for work in our national archives. I expected more, however, of the editors of *Archivaria* and recommend they submit to having their collective knuckles rapped.

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EDITOR'S REPLY: *While Bolotenko can defend himself, the charge by Scott James that the editors of Archivaria should suppress certain viewpoints that may be disagreeable to some archivists, or even to the profession as a whole, simply is wrong-headed. It smacks of the very Orwellian danger against which Patrick Dunae cautions us a few pages earlier. And far from highlighting a tired, irrelevant canard (by giving Bolotenko the "lead article" status), the editors felt that the issues he raised go right to the centre of the definition of our young, evolving profession and that they are worthy of debate and further analysis. The unprecedented response of readers, including Scott James himself, obviously vindicates our position, thus preserving our knuckles, I should hope, quite unbruised.* T.G.C.

A Challenge to Archivists and the ACA

Congratulations on a most stimulating series of lead articles in *Archivaria*: "Archives from the Bottom Up: Social History and Archival Scholarship" by Tom Nesmith (No. 14) and "Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well" by George Bolotenko (No. 16). They have guaranteed my continuing support of the Association of Canadian Archivists when it was admittedly beginning to wane. I welcome the challenge that both offer to archivists to become actively involved in the historical enterprise and not primarily to busy ourselves with the formidable intricacies of information science and the bolstering of our professional image.

Perhaps, however, we should be taking the argument one step further. Can we turn Bolotenko's dictum on its head and suggest that the archivist makes the best historian, rather than only that the "historian still makes the best archivist." (p. 6) Bolotenko himself builds the base for this assertion when he argues that the "new historians" have relinquished their responsibility to the context, to the totality of the human past. The most fundamental critique of history is surely that it has failed to take into account crucial aspects of the collectivity of human experience. Just as the archivist is repeatedly admonished to faithfully represent the totality of human experience, so the best history does likewise. Not to do so is a failing just as much for good history as it is for a good archival programme.

If this be the case, perhaps we should be adding to the historical enterprise in the small and large domains that our archival responsibilities take us. For archivists to write history should not be considered a quaint and tolerable pastime, but rather a fundamental part of our responsibilities. Perhaps the oft-repeated nostrum that we archivists need to turn our energies to becoming better managers deserves a healthy dose of scepticism. This is not to say that archives do not need better management and better promotion — this they surely do. But the courses to this end, no matter how current the pop psychology that they offer, are perhaps not the most appropriate place for many of us to be spending our time. We would be better employed doing a critique of the latest magazine article, book, or television programme that made extensive use of the archival sources we know best.

To take the argument yet a further step, we need to carefully examine the activities and priorities of our Association of Canadian Archivists in this light. The lesson that I draw from Nesmith and Bolotenko is that I am better spending my time with the host of academic and other societies that are investigating the documents under my