

I must take issue with Gordon when he writes of my going to the PAC to “superintend the unfortunate fragmentation of responsibility along burgeoning media lines.” I don’t wish to revive the Cook/Birrell debate, but I make no apology for the division of the Branch (in most cases) by media. Arrangement, custody, and information retrieval do not yield to one archival discipline but several. We do not yet have any “general theory” of archives, quite apart from the physical problems of preservation. A record of provenance should of course always be mandatory, but automated systems will in future facilitate a more holistic intellectual control. But there, I suspect, I *have* revived the debate!

With regard to the *Manual* on arrangement and description, I offer no defence. It was never intended to stand alone, as the introduction tried to explain, but rather to complement the available literature. Clearly it could have been much better, but without some general theory of archives for the English-speaking tradition and applicable to all media, such a work within a small compass is almost impossible. The *Manual* was conceived and produced during an education period of three months and the manuscript accepted by the ICA without a word of criticism (which I found disappointing), so I could only presume satisfaction. I mention this because we desperately need a multi-media “Jenkinson” which builds on the verities of our mentors and critics (and this is one of the challenges which Gordon presents). Without it we can only offer choices, compromises, and *ad hoc* institutional solutions.

Finally, I would like to endorse Gordon’s conclusions on “the poverty of our collective knowledge and experience about the evolution and character of record and record keeping.” The study of each medium of record is still in its infancy. A seminar on “Society and the Documentary Record” presently being offered in the Master of Archival Studies programme at the University of British Columbia explores the nature of records through history, their impact on government, and the impact of the principal media of record on society and hence on the user. This is only a start. There is a long journey ahead.

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### ***Canadian Manuscripts in British Repositories***

I was very impressed with Michael B. Moir’s piece, “Scottish Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories” which appeared in *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84). It is refreshing to see Moir’s firm grasp of the processes by which the documentation of interest to his field of study was generated and his commitment to seeing that documentation identified, acquired, and adequately listed. His careful explanations of the types of manuscripts to be found in Canada which are of interest to students of Scotland and his considered comments on how the archival description of such collections could be improved should be noted and acted upon.

I have a strong fellow-feeling for Moir’s project, being concerned myself with the identification in Scotland as well as England, Wales, and Ireland of manuscripts of relevance to Canada. I must even admit to some sense of relief in hearing of his work: I at least have something to point to when British and Irish colleagues question me

about the listing of materials of relevance to them in Canada. Perhaps other archivists and scholars can be encouraged to follow Moir's lead and begin identifying material of Irish, Welsh, and English relevance in Canada.

Moir discusses in detail the present difficulties in locating collections containing content of a Scottish nature and of assessing the extent of that content from descriptions in existing Canadian inventories. It will be, I am sure, cold comfort to him that the difficulties are scarcely less imposing when dealing with Canadian content in British collections. The most obvious problem is the sheer bulk and diversity of the material of relevance to Canada in Great Britain and Ireland. To its credit, the Public Archives of Canada has been listing and copying material in the British Isles for 103 years. It now holds approximately 1.3 million pages and 7,000 reels of microfilm from the British Isles, an impressive collection by any standards. Its London Office has assiduously copied the papers of prominent politicians, military men, and colonial administrators as well as major portions of the relevant documentation in the Public Record Office, the British Library, church archives, and businesses like the Hudson's Bay Company. There still remains, however, a mass of relevant material often little known to its potential Canadian users. The PAC took the obvious and sensible course of concentrating for the first century of its copying on the papers of the most prominent British individuals and institutions associated with Canada where documentation would be available in very significant quantities; our national archives was perhaps less wise in focusing its interest so very heavily on London. Almost 80 per cent of the copying has come from the Public Record Office and over 90 per cent from the metropolis.

Beyond the major and/or London-centred collections, much remains. As of November 1983, after two years of listing, the archivists working in the London Office, Anita Burdett and myself, have visited 315 repositories and identified 2,600 collections of relevance. About 40 per cent of those collections have more than one volume of relevance, and 15 per cent have more than five volumes. We estimate the final total will be about 4,000 collections, excluding the Public Record Office. The material identified covers a wide spectrum. Most of it does not fit into the major traditional category of our copying: the papers of prominent political and military figures, although such material is certainly not absent and much particularly in the way of late nineteenth- and twentieth-century papers of politicians and administrators has been listed. Although the PAC has done its work very thoroughly in locating such material for the nineteenth and earlier centuries, some startling discoveries are still being made. We have recently opened negotiations to list and film the remarkably varied papers of a governor-general of the United Canadas still in private hands. Church material abounds both in major repositories where we have previously filmed and in other repositories like the Methodist Archives and Research Centre at the John Rylands Library, Manchester, the Library of the Religious Society of Friends, London, and, very notably, Roman Catholic archives such as the Westminster Diocesan Archives and the Scottish Catholic Archives. Regimental museums and libraries are yielding up treasures as are collections like the Royal Air Force Museum and the Naval History Library. An area where little work had been done previously was special interest and professional collections. We have listed the papers of physicians, surgeons, lawyers, botanists, geologists, astronomers, meteorologists, architects, and others involved in the development or study of Canada in such institutions as the Royal Colleges of Physicians and

Surgeons, the Royal Botanical Gardens, the British Museum of Natural History, the Royal Astronomical Society, the Institute of Geological Science, the Linnean Society, the Inner Temple, the Royal Institute of British Architects, and the Royal Anthropological Institute.

Business collections have surfaced with great regularity, although they often entail special problems of identification to which I shall return. Exploration still remains a fruitful area; we have identified, for instance, approximately 180 collections of interest in the Scott Polar Research Institute. Emigrant societies were very active in the late nineteenth century and we have examined records of such organizations in Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, and Liverpool as well as London.

The most relentless flood has been of family collections and the multitude of letters, diaries, journals, and logs of emigrants, travellers, and residents, of military men, clergy, and business men describing conditions they have encountered in Canada. These materials are found virtually everywhere, notably in the various national, district, university, and municipal repositories. One of the most strikingly diverse agglomerations of such material is in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland which holds literally hundreds of letters from Canada ranging from the letters of an army sutler describing military operations on the Lake Champlain-Richelieu River route after the fall of Quebec in 1759 to heart-broken accounts of disease and death in the famine migrations, from thirty-five letters of a former Dublin policeman telling of his career on the Canadian Prairies in the North West Mounted Police and then the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, to the descriptions of his episcopal duties to his mother and sister in Belfast by the Bishop of Ottawa in the late 1940s.

Given the bewildering diversity of possible sources relevant to Canada in Great Britain, we, like Moir, often experience difficulty in identifying likely manuscripts from existing lists. Granted, many British archivists are well attuned to Canadian research interests because of the frequent requests they receive from our genealogists and scholars; granted as well that the majority of documents relating to Canada do not pose the problems of unfamiliarity and complexity that those relating to Scottish legal and administrative structures often do for Canadian archivists. Still there are major problems even with basic recognition of relevant material. One could cite business records where the general practice of describing records by type (cash books, board of directors' minutes, etc.) rather than content makes it extremely difficult to determine the geographical areas of a business' concern. It is often only from an almost chance mention in a listing of an agent's letterbook or a cash book of overseas sales that one learns that a business had a strong Canadian involvement. Likewise, in the papers of statesmen and administrators, references can easily be lost. A reference to a diary described only as relating to "a tour of the Prince of Wales in 1860" can easily elude the unwary and without the aid of a knowledgeable archivist, we would never have found a group of correspondence within a large prime ministerial collection identified only as the letters of an Ulster MP, but in fact containing first-hand reports on Canadian Orangeism.

Few British repositories have the resources to publish a continuing series of up-to-date inventories of their collections and it is an exceptional archives that notes more than a fraction of its actual Canadian references in its topographical card indexes. Some archives, especially those of scientific and professional bodies, have

only correspondent-recipient indexes to their collections with no mention of place. This from our perspective is most unfortunate as a specialist knowledge of a particular field and its Canadian practitioners is then necessary to locate more than the most obvious material. The problems entailed in listing Canadian material in British archives is unlikely to improve in the near future. Most cultural institutions, and archives not least among them, are undergoing vicious cuts in funding which make Canadian problems pale to insignificance by comparison. Very often we encounter archives suffering major staff cuts, being forced to decrease their opening times, often by a day or two a week, and unable to cope with incoming research demands, let alone growing accessioning, listing, and indexing backlogs.

For work in Great Britain, there is as well an entire level of difficulty less evident in the identification of material relating to Scotland in Canada: the extent and diversity of the British archival network. Canadian archivists who have long discussed the problems of “networking” should readily appreciate the even greater British problem. The recent guide to repositories, *British Archives: A Guide to Archives Resources in the United Kingdom*, lists 708 repositories — municipal, district, national, specialist, university, *et al.* — and while not all of them are relevant to our project, we are making at least initial approaches to several hundred more museums, galleries, and specialist collections as well as charitable organizations, clubs, and associations which have their own holdings, but do not appear on major lists.

Even the configuration and relative significance of different types of repositories vary from area to area so that while both Scotland and Northern Ireland have strongly centralized archival systems, dominated by Public Record Offices which hold both public and private material, Scotland has a significant number of museum and university collections and a young but growing network of district archives, while Northern Ireland has very few significant repositories outside of Belfast. In Scotland, a number of large collections remain in private hands, a situation the Scottish Record Office deals with by maintaining a very thorough listing, the National Register of Archives for Scotland. In Northern Ireland, many papers also remain in private hands but collections tend to be smaller than those of the great families of Scotland and PRONI photocopies or microfilms collections whenever possible, an effective system for their situation. In Wales, there is no central listing or dominant collection, the National Library of Wales being more the first among equals than a dominating, centralizing influence. To compile a list of Canadian collections, one must, in Wales, work carefully through a variety of libraries, museums, university collections, and county record offices. Even more challenging are Oxford, Cambridge, and above all London, each with its welter of international, national, local, and regional collections which defy systematic description. Eire has several major institutions in Dublin — the National Library of Ireland, the State Paper Office, the Public Record Office, and the Genealogical Office — with a much weaker system outside, while England in general has a strong system of well-established county record offices, although historical circumstances may have led to the dominance of a university or municipal collection in a specific area. In the larger cities like Leeds, Liverpool, or Birmingham, several major repositories often co-exist happily and profitably.

Many problems can be overcome and complexities understood by the use of the London-based Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts' National Register of Archives. It can give a searcher a great sense of reassurance to sit down amongst the

Register's 25,000 handlists prepared by institutions all over the country, an incomparable resource further supplemented by the Commission's publication of an annual list, *Accessions to Repositories*, and a growing series of guides to specific subject areas. Certainly, the core of our listings have come from the NRA; I spent four months just working through their listings at the beginning of our project. The solidity and extent of the NRA's resources can, however, be deceptive and no doubt more than one dazzled Canadian searcher has come away from it convinced that there could not possibly be more material of interest to him beyond its massive listings. It must be kept in mind that participation in the register, however, is voluntary — institutions do tend to send lists only of the collections they consider most significant or send only their "best" lists which have been carefully prepared. A number of repositories do not participate on a regular basis. Coverage is best for England and a copy of the national register for Scotland is kept. Wales and Northern Ireland are less completely represented. Moreover, the NRA has ceased attempting to compile a thorough subject index — an impossible task for the amount of material involved — but the absence of such an index is a definite drawback, especially for overseas researchers. The Register does have indexes both by title and repository of all collections. Its listing of correspondents within collections is, however, limited to figures of "national significance" meaning, in the main, British national figures and to groupings of not less than ten letters within a collection. Although prominent Canadians are included and indeed extensive entries have been prepared from the ULM and the published manuscript inventories of the PAC and the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, many figures a Canadian searcher might wish to locate would not be represented and often a searcher is seeking a type of documentation — emigrant letters, travellers' journals — which will not turn up consistently in any of the indexes. These observations are not intended as criticism of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts — it is making a reasonable use of the resources available to it and rendering a major service — but a researcher should be aware of its necessary limitations. The arguments for an extensive survey to locate as much manuscript material relevant to Canadian researchers as possible is certainly a strong one.

Any attempt to classify and describe in detail the collections we have found, a matter which constitutes the heart of Moir's article, will have to wait less hectic times than our project is presently experiencing. It is planned ultimately to produce a published guide from our work. For the present, I can only hope that my comments will convey that we share with Moir a strong sense of the importance and an enthusiasm for inventorying projects which will help to unravel the complex interrelationships between the British Isles and Ireland on the one hand and Canada on the other.

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### ***The Corporate Piper Calls the Archival Tune***

I read with interest the papers on "Masters in our Own House" by Mr. Rees and Professor Osborne in *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983).