

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).

I find myself in agreement with Professor Osborne's sentiments, but unable to escape Mr. Rees' facts and logic. If, indeed, "the general public" is our "true sponsor," where is its money?

Professor Osborne dismisses too easily the old adage that "Whoever pays the piper calls the tune." We cannot expect that corporate sponsors will support archives work that goes far beyond their narrow and immediate management service needs. (It is usually difficult to persuade them to do even that much!) It is inevitable, if the corporate sponsor has to find all the money, that, as Professor Osborne fears, "Public user access must be qualified, if not excluded, while such questions as historical significance, social responsibility and heritage become esoteric luxuries".

The benefits of an archives project should accrue to both the corporate sponsor and the general public. If this is to happen, however, we must have a system of public subsidy of the corporate sponsor's archival work. And to bring that about, we need pressure and resources, in particular, from academe. Universities and colleges support libraries and laboratories as essential aids to their research. Their support for archives, both on campus and beyond, must be raised to a comparable level.

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Archivists' Lib: A Response to "Whose Handmaiden?"

Don Page's "Whose Handmaiden?: The Archivist and the Institutional Historian" in *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983-84) espouses the virtues and values of institutional historians, and suggests that archivists are ignorant about the functions and benefits of such historians. He displays an equal ignorance about the functions and benefits of archivists.

Once archivists were the handmaidens of historians just as advertising was the handmaiden of business. As the corporate archivist of a major advertising agency, I can attest to the fact that neither notion remains true today. Corporate archivists make their archives work for the company. Page admits our primary users are senior management, lawyers, corporate public relations departments, and clients, not the occasional historical researcher. He, nevertheless, seems to think we are waiting for historians to pick out bits and pieces of information for the archives to "inherit." Neither he nor I would last long in a corporation if we operated in such a fashion.

Historians and archivists venturing into the corporate world must recognize some major differences between a private and public institution. Corporate archives or history departments, rarities in North America, are of recent vintage and generally sparsely staffed. They offer great opportunities for an aggressive person who has good communication skills as well as the necessary experience and training. A history background is not enough. Anyone entering such a corporate job is a pioneer, creating a new function that has not been defined adequately by either employer or university. One must be a team player as well as a salesman. The job exists to serve the institution, and it is up to historians and archivists to prove their value. Mumbling about historical heritage does not work.