

orientation of archives. The task is to integrate elements of our traditional perspective into our work with contemporary records and expand that perspective for the benefit of all those who would use archives now and in the future. Appraising and revealing the information contained in archives, to name but two of the challenges facing us, require that we work out a corpus of ideas (some would say theory) on which to base our practice. Historical study might help us articulate those ideas, but it cannot be a substitute for their study and development. Of course, the outcome of all of our thinking about archives ought to serve historical scholarship or else it is seriously flawed. The archivist is indeed in a vital position vis-à-vis historical scholarship. Only archivists today can extract the record of enduring value and place it in the context in which future historians will use it. In *Archivaria* 17, Don Page nibbles at the edge of that idea, but he assumes that the way to its realization is through a relationship between institutional historians and archivists, much as historian C.P. Stacey did in his address on the centenary of the PAC in 1972. In fact we ought to be developing better management programmes for records all along the way — the archivist's bread and butter. It is true, however, that all such critiques of current arrangements are in effect a challenge not only to what we do but also the basis on which we do it. It is not enough to dismiss the challengers as being irrelevant because they do not share our perspective and our burdens.

Finally, the last thing we need is “two solitudes” — one concerned primarily with lofty ends, the other with everyday means. The art of being a good archivist is surely to be found in linking effective means to agreed upon ends. That, in short, is our professional agenda. On that much I hope we can agree. If we can, there is a place for scholars to reflect on ends and means, and a place for practitioners to try to bring the two together in an awkward and often hostile world. The ethos Bolotenko speaks of so passionately and the tenor of the debate he has engendered do not seem to me to be likely to solve the problem of matching ends and means.

**Terry Eastwood**  
School of Library, Archival, and  
Information Studies  
University of British Columbia

### ***Bolotenko, the Debate, and the Future***

As a Master of Archival Studies student at the University of British Columbia, I have followed the debate initiated by George Bolotenko in *Archivaria* with some interest. To a certain extent both this debate and the 1984 ACA Conference programme reveal a developing rift within the profession as we witness the increasing crystalization of attitudes dividing those who believe that archivists should be first and foremost historians and those who stress the need for information management skills.

Interestingly, this debate has tended to fracture along predictable lines with those from some of our larger institutions supporting the notion of the archivist-historian. This attitude was particularly evident during the first half of the ACA

programme which featured a number of historical papers on the development of the Ontario Agricultural College, Dominion Power and Transmission Company, and Labatt's Brewery. These papers caused some in attendance to wonder openly whether they had mistakenly wandered into a meeting of the Canadian Historical Association. While the topics of these papers readily lent themselves to archival discussion, which might have centred on the strengths and weaknesses of the arrangement of the records mentioned and its implications for historical research, none was forthcoming. The papers were little more than exercises in the production of narrative histories. The presumable rationale for including these papers in the programme was to exhort those in attendance to return to their own repositories with a renewed sense of purpose to study the records in their care as historians, and, in so doing, become better professionals.

To emphasize that archivists ought to study, understand, and appreciate the records in their care seems to me to belabour the obvious. Such a message is, however, more relevant to those working with medieval manuscripts or, perhaps, nineteenth-century closed *fonds* with prescribed limits which allow the archivist the luxury of indulging in historical research. Consequently, the archivist-historian held up by many as a shining model for the profession may be more useful in certain institutions than in others. Many in the archival community have begun to face a new reality — one in which institutions are beginning to establish archives to serve their own needs and to manage vast quantities of information. What skills does historical training provide an archivist to meet the challenge of establishing a new archival programme?

Some observers have suggested that the historian *versus* information manager debate is a healthy intellectual interchange which will serve to stimulate the archival community and benefit the profession. Unfortunately, this may not be the case. Many of the issues, interesting as they may be, have little relevance for most archivists. For them the question of the ideal background for an archivist has little bearing on their work. The energy spent on this debate might have been better utilized reconciling the divergent views which could result in a lamentable split in the profession. The possibility of such a rift developing largely depends on one's view of future archival development.

Future growth will likely occur in corporate archives created by unions, businesses, universities, hospitals, and cities since the capacity of our public archives to absorb ever larger volumes of material continues to decline. The total archives concept of the larger repositories will slowly give way to an increasingly specialized and decentralized system of archives. This shift in emphasis, necessary to ensure the preservation of our documentary heritage, is contingent on a number of factors. The most important of these is the willingness of the archival profession to assume an active role in persuading institutions that their records are worthy of preservation. It must also be prepared to provide archivists with the expertise necessary to meet this challenge.

The emerging institutional archivist will have to justify the existence of his or her programme to the sponsoring agency. Therefore, offering tangible services to the institution will become the primary goal of the archivist rather than directly serving the needs of the historian. In this environment one may argue that the

archivist will be much better equipped with the tools of information management than knowledge of the most recent historiographical trends.

Some may continue to delight in this debate but I find it not only unproductive but also potentially damaging to the archival community. It is dangerous to argue steadfastly that people with particular educational backgrounds will naturally fare better in the profession. Some historians will make good archivists while others will not. The same holds true for information managers. The Master of Archival Studies Programme is a prime example of the need to look beyond dogmatic arguments for one particular background. Although the majority of the students in the programme have a background in history, other fields represented include sociology, classics, and music. Students are judged on the basis of their individual personalities and aptitudes.

Perhaps the intellectual debate over the necessary attributes of archivists ought to be left to the coffee table discussions at the PAC while the rest of the archival community moves on to more pertinent topics which will allow and encourage greater diversity within the profession. We should be able to draw from many professions (including history, records management, librarianship, and computer science) any techniques which will better equip us to keep pace with the ever-changing demands placed on modern archives.

To argue dogmatically that archivists ought to be first and foremost historians is wrong. A debate which focuses on this topic is bound to become divisive. Instead, we should be looking to the needs of the future and searching for some common ground which can be shared by archivists of diverse backgrounds.

**Christopher L. Hives**  
Master of Archival Studies  
Programme  
University of British Columbia

### ***Provenance and the Vancouver Island Project***

One of the interests we had when writing "The Vancouver Island Project: Historical Research and Archival Practice" for *Archivaria* 17 was to engage in a dialogue with archivists over issues of importance to researchers and archivists alike. We therefore welcome the initiatives of Terry Cook ("From the Editor," *Archivaria* 17) and Gordon Dodds and Richard Berner ("Letters to the Editor," *Archivaria* 18).

Three points concerning our perspective should be underlined. We are not, as Richard Berner depicts us, attackers laying siege to the archival castle; nor, as Terry Cook says, are we "throwing down the gauntlet to archivists;" and we certainly are not attempting to issue edicts for unthinking archivists to implement, which, if that were the case, should indeed, as Gordon Dodds puts it, "grate a little." Rather we are exploring ways to improve both aspects of archival practice and research possibilities for historians, sociologists, political scientists,