

In conclusion, I want to assure readers of *Archivaria* that in Saskatchewan great quantities of court records have been preserved and losses over the years have been minimal.

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“Navel Gazing” in Archival Literature

Archivaria 17 is a substantial achievement: the careful organization, attractive layout, sharp and pleasing illustrations, erudite editorial, lively letters, and “special feature” on history and archives are all worthy of praise. The articles have been well chosen for their varied appeal and most were well written and timely. However, I am driven to write by Gordon Dodds’ navel-gazing piece of self-congratulation which was inexplicably found to be not only worthy of inclusion but of being placed as the issue’s lead article. (See his “Canadian Archival Literature: A Bird’s-Eye View”.)

There is no doubt that Dodds can write. His style is energetic and ornamented with finely crafted adjectives. One must question, however, whether what almost amounts to a page-by-page synopsis of *The Canadian Archivist* and *Archivaria* from 1967 to 1983 (with, it seemed to me, particular concentration on the role played by one Gordon Dodds in steering the archival flagship) needed to be written at all. Is it really imperative for the profession to be told, for instance, that the inaugural issue of *The Canadian Archivist* contained a piece on the procedure for cleaning glass negatives? Is it essential for us to know that *Archivaria* 13 is much smaller than the previous nine issues or important to trace reverently the variations in the journal’s binding size? Surely, with only sixteen issues to survey, the specialist can locate the wisdom on glass negatives unassisted; and Dodds’ observations on cosmetic changes rightly belong to some yet-to-be-created archivists’ version of *Trivial Pursuit* not a lead article.

Although most of Dodds’ survey, particularly when it deals with the years of his own editorship, is suffused with an air of rosy nostalgia better befitting the somewhat inebriated reminiscences of a grizzled pioneer, the author wields a sharp knife when discussing the contributions of his fellow trail-blazer, Hugh Taylor. While it is undeniable that in the impressive body of Taylor’s *oeuvres* there are some contributions which fall short of the high standard he has usually attained, the importance of his contribution to archival lore lies partly in his willingness to investigate, in his unfailingly witty and elegant prose, areas which other Canadian archivists have for too long left untouched. Eloquent testimony to Taylor’s continuing importance, if such were needed, is provided by citations of his writings in no fewer than three other articles in *Archivaria* 17.

But to leap to Taylor’s defence (and I am sure he is more than capable of leaping to his own) is to grace Dodds’ self-serving piece with more credibility and significance than it deserves. When the grandiloquently dubbed “Canadian Archival Literature” consists of little more than a survey of sixteen issues of

a single journal, any article on the topic, especially a lead article, must be considered frivolous in the extreme. To accentuate one's irritation, Dodds' contribution, when it is not self-congratulatory or vindictive, is, one can only assume, simply wrong when he asserts, for example, that comment critical of *Archivaria* has been kept out of the journal by "the eye of the editor." If this was true of the Dodds era I am optimistic enough to believe that it is not true of *Archivaria*'s present policy. I remain confident that the "editorial portcullis" will not be lowered upon this particular piece of unsought criticism.

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Gordon Dodds Replies

Kathleen Garay is perfectly entitled to express her opinion on the merits or otherwise of my article. I do, however, resent most strongly the imputation that it sprang from any wish to aggrandise myself. Even more offensive do I find her assertion that I have been vindictive towards anyone, especially Hugh Taylor whom I have known for twenty-five years. My respect for his archival contribution to Canada is well recorded and my admiration for his fertile mind, with its leaping imagery, is undiminished.

Gordon Dodds
Provincial Archives of Manitoba

General Editor Replies

While Dr. Garay's opening words about *Archivaria* 17 are pleasant to read, her subsequent attack on Gordon Dodds' lead article as a "navel-gazing piece of self-congratulation" must be challenged.

Before defending the article's lead position, I want to question several of her assumptions for, if they are correct and the piece was thus indeed only "self-serving" of its author, I would never have published it. Is it true, as Garay asserts, that Dodds' article really "consists of nothing much more than a survey of sixteen issues of a single journal" and that even this slim offering contains a "particular concentration on the role played by one Gordon Dodds in steering the archival flagship"? A breakdown of Dodds' twenty-one pages reveals the following: eight on the early history and evolution of the archival profession and the important role of *The Canadian Archivist*; eight on *Archivaria* (despite having twenty times the material of *The Canadian Archivist*); one on Hugh Taylor's book; almost two on the Wilson Report and the proceedings of the Kingston Congress on Archives; and almost three pages of conclusions dealing with such central concerns as the search for an archival identity, archival education, and the needed development of a corpus of archival theory.