

Canadian Archives and the Corporate Memory

by GRANT MITCHELL*

Publicly funded archival repositories in Canada lack the resources to cope with the enormous volume of records annually created by large corporations. Archivists writing about the preservation of business records have acknowledged this fact, and have concluded that companies should be encouraged to establish in-house corporate archives.¹ But are corporate archives the only realistic means of preserving business records? Preoccupied with the idea of corporate archives, North American archival literature has paid little attention to the issues of preserving the records of the wide range of *small* businesses which still constitute a substantial part of the contemporary business world, and of preserving records of companies that cease to exist. It is in these areas that Canada's public archival repositories have a role to play.

Repositories in this country have broad mandates to acquire records, including business records, of cultural and historical importance to their respective communities. Unfortunately, most of the business records that have been acquired by archival institutions constitute small, fragmentary collections of doubtful value to researchers. To fulfill their mandates to preserve records documenting the various aspects of the culture and history of their communities, repositories should develop and implement programmes to acquire the records of small businesses within their regions on a more systematic basis. By examining their existing acquisition policies and the business records they have already acquired, repositories will be in a better position to develop effective strategies for preserving business records of value.

Canadian public archival institutions have broad mandates. They not only receive the records of their respective governments, but also acquire personal papers and the records of private organizations:

From their inception the federal and provincial archives have played a dual role: preserving the official records of their governments and seeking to preserve all records relevant to the history of their region.²

Despite broad mandates, however, archivists interested in acquiring business records realize they have neither the manpower nor the space necessary to handle the vast amounts of records created by large companies.³ In 1980, the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives echoed sentiments expressed by North American archivists

since the 1930s in stating that: "realistically the public and university archives are not capable of carrying the full potential burden" of preserving business records.⁴

Recognizing the difficulty of processing and storing the enormous volume of records created by large corporations, both the report of the Commission on Canadian Studies in 1975 and the report of the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives in 1980 recommended that Canadian archival institutions assist and encourage companies in setting up corporate archives.⁵ The Association of Canadian Archivists subsequently established a business archives committee for this purpose. Archivists have thus attempted to raise the historical consciousness of businessmen and have emphasized the economic benefits of corporate archives. These provide companies with research material to help solve current problems, documents that can be used as legal evidence, and material which can be used in public relations and advertising. Efforts to persuade Canadian companies to establish corporate archives, however, have not been very successful.⁶

In the meantime, how have archival repositories coped with their broad mandate to "preserve all records (including business records) relevant to the history of their regions"?⁷ Canadian archival literature contains only a handful of articles pertaining to the acquisition of business records.⁸ These articles document the historical neglect of business records in English Canada and the attempts undertaken to preserve business records in a methodical fashion, such as those made by the Business Archives Council (1968-1973)⁹. A decade ago, archivist Roger Hall concluded that "few Canadian archives, including the most senior, adequately maintain, let alone actively solicit, business or commercial records."¹⁰ The literature suggests that repositories in this country have not drawn up acquisition policies with particular regard to business records, and have not implemented strategies to obtain business records.

Since the Provincial Archivist of Ontario announced in 1903 that he had begun "a collection of papers, maps, pamphlets, reports, surveys, etc. in connection with the promotion and construction of railways and canals in Ontario,"¹¹ the collection of Canadian business records has proceeded in piecemeal fashion. In the early twentieth century, Canadian archival institutions that collected private archives and personal papers inevitably collected business records, since prominent public figures were often also businessmen, and their personal papers sometimes included their business records.¹² According to John Archer:

every public archival institution at one time or another collected or was given the records of businessmen and the reports of business firms. But at no time was there any effort made to get more. Business records did not fit easily into the pattern of archival institutions developed in Canada.¹³

To obtain more detailed information on the acquisition policies and strategies adopted by Canadian repositories that collect business records, and to determine the nature of the business records collected by Canadian archival institutions, a questionnaire was sent to thirty repositories across Canada in November 1985.

The information gathered by the questionnaire has been supplemented by a more detailed study of collections of business records at the National Archives of Canada (NA), the Provincial Archives of British Columbia (PABC), the City of Vancouver Archives (Vancouver), and the Special Collections Division of the University of

British Columbia Library (UBC). Close analysis of the inventories of these four repositories was undertaken to obtain a picture of the state of archival holdings of business records at the national level and within one province, in greater detail than the respondents to the questionnaire could reasonably be expected to provide.

The survey population was selected by identifying those repositories which indicated in their entries in the *Directory of Canadian Archives* (1978) that they collect business records. The thirty institutions to which questionnaires were sent consisted of the National Archives of Canada, the provincial and territorial archives, excluding the French-language Archives nationales du Québec,¹⁴ seven municipal repositories, ten university repositories, and the Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives (Glenbow). Twenty-six of the thirty questionnaires were completed and returned (see Appendix A).

Twenty of the respondents provided data on the quantity of business records they held (see Table I). As could be expected, the National Archives of Canada, by far the largest repository in the country, held the most records. Some university archives

TABLE I
Repositories Ranked by Volume of Business Records Holdings, 1985

Rank	Repository	*Linear Metres	Microfilm Reels	**Microfilm in Linear Metres	Total Metres
1	NA	1,356.6	412	187.3	1,552.9
2	Dalhousie	1,000.0	100	45.5	1,045.5
3	New Brunswick	1,000.0	48	21.8	1,021.8
4	Newfoundland	600.0	30	13.6	613.6
5	Glenbow	568.0	19	8.6	576.6
6	UBC	303.0	264	120.0	423.0
7	Alberta	336.4	106	48.2	384.6
8	Ontario	200.0	0	0.0	200.0
9	PEI	184.0	9	4.0	188.0
10	Queen's	147.0	7	3.2	150.2
11	Nova Scotia	109.0	0	0.0	109.0
12	McGill	107.31	0	0.0	107.31
13	Unidentified	102.0	5	2.3	104.3
14	Vancouver	94.0	2	1.0	95.0
15	Manitoba	89.0	1	0.5	89.5
16	Mount Allison	75.0	0	0.0	75.0
17	Yukon	26.55	17	7.7	34.25
18	Ottawa	9.7	0	0.0	9.7
19	Victoria	4.0	0	0.0	4.0
20	Peterborough	2.5	0	0.0	2.5

* Due to differences in the units of measure used by repositories to report the volume of their holdings, the figures and ranking are approximate.

** Linear metres of records on microfilm is calculated using the figure of 1.5 linear feet of documents per roll of film (obtained from Precision Micrographics Ltd., Vancouver), and converting the result to linear metres.

held more business records than did provincial repositories. Archival institutions in small provinces have acquired more business records than have repositories in larger provinces. With the exception of the National Archives of Canada, it is clear that the size of a repository is not a factor in determining its importance as a collector of business records.

Seven repositories reported that they have purchased business records or, in the case of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, are prepared to do so (see Table II). These repositories held approximately 57 per cent of the total volume of business records reported, and although none of the seven repositories is likely to spend its entire acquisition budget on business records, the figures indicate they have made particular efforts to acquire business records.

TABLE II
Repositories Prepared to Purchase Business Records

Provincial Archives of New Brunswick	Dalhousie University Archives
Provincial Archives of Newfoundland	University of British Columbia, Special Collections
Provincial Archives of Manitoba	Unidentified
Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives	

Eleven of the repositories responding to the questionnaire provided copies or descriptions of their acquisition policies, and four institutions cited legislation governing their activities. None of the archival institutions surveyed has a separate written acquisition policy for business records, but the acquisition policies of six repositories make specific reference to the records of businesses or to records that document economic or industrial development (see Table III).

TABLE III
**Repositories from Which Copies or Descriptions of Acquisition Policies
or Legislation Were Received**

No Specific Mention of Business Records	Specific Mention of Business Records
Alberta	Ontario
Manitoba	Ottawa
New Brunswick	Vancouver
Nova Scotia	McGill University
Prince Edward Island	Queen's University
Saskatchewan	University of British Columbia
Yukon	
Mount Allison University	
Glenbow Alberta Institute	

The provincial and Yukon repositories have broad legislative authority or acquisition policies for the collection of non-governmental records, the only limitations being that the materials they acquire should have some relevance to the province or territory in question. The legislation governing the Saskatchewan Archives Board, for example, states:

The Saskatchewan Archives Board may acquire by gift, devise or in any other manner and place in the archives printed documents, manuscripts, records, private papers, and any other material, to whomsoever belonging, having a bearing on the history of Saskatchewan.¹⁵

The Archives of Ontario and the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick have somewhat more elaborate acquisition policies than the other provincial repositories, for their policies state that archival materials primarily of local interest should not be acquired by the provincial repository if these materials can be kept and preserved by local repositories or organizations.

The acquisition policies of the municipal repositories of Ottawa and Vancouver are similar to the legislation and policies of the provincial institutions, restricting them to archival materials of significance to the region governed by their sponsoring bodies. However, the policies of these municipal archives are more detailed because they specify that the municipal repositories acquire the personal records of elected civic officials and the records of individuals, organized bodies, and businesses that have made an impact on the municipality.

Each of the four universities that provided a copy of its acquisition policy confines its collecting activities to the region in which the university is situated. "Region" is defined as the entire province of British Columbia in the case of the University of British Columbia, but merely as Kingston and its surrounding area by Queen's University. The Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives has an acquisition policy which requires the Institute to "build on the strengths of its collections" and "provide a context for areas of strength" in its holdings.¹⁶

As noted, the acquisition policies of only six repositories make explicit reference to the collection of business records (see Table III). The policy of the Archives of Ontario, for instance, is to acquire records "that have value for research on any aspect of Ontario's political, social, economic or industrial development."¹⁷ Queen's University Archives "acquires material related to the present research strengths in Canadian public affairs, business, literature, art ..." ¹⁸ and the City of Vancouver Archives collects "records of organizations and businesses that reflect the social, cultural, and commercial life of Vancouver."¹⁹

The fact that an institution's acquisition policy specifically mentions business records as a field for collection is not an indication that the institution is in fact an important collector of business records. Between them the six repositories having such acquisition policies held only 985.21 metres of business records. The Provincial Archives of New Brunswick (PANB) had more business records (1,021.8 metres) than did the Ontario, Vancouver, Ottawa, Queen's, McGill, and the University of British Columbia archives combined, though the acquisition policy of the PANB makes no mention of business records. Furthermore, although the six repositories represent 30 per cent of the twenty institutions reporting the size of their holdings, they account for only 14.5 per cent of the total volume of business records held by the twenty repositories.

The existence of a business records acquisition programme at an archival institution provides a more clear indication that the institution is more important as a collector of business records. Eleven repositories across Canada stated they have

established programmes to acquire business records. (See Table IV.) These eleven repositories represent 55 percent of the twenty repositories which reported the extent of their holdings and account for 74.6 percent of the total volume of business records held. Of the eleven repositories that have established business records acquisition programmes, only one, the University of British Columbia, has an acquisition policy which specifically mentions the records of businesses.

TABLE IV
Repositories with Business Records Programs

Rank Order by Volume of Holdings	Repository	Volume of Holdings in Linear Metres	% of Total Volume	Date Program Established
1	NA	1,552.9	22.9	1972
2	Dalhousie	1,045.5	15.4	1970
4	Newfoundland	613.6	9.0	1958
5	Glenbow	576.6	8.5	1955
6	UBC	423.0	6.2	1960s
7	Alberta	384.6	5.7	Unknown
8	Ontario	200.0	2.9	Unknown
13	Unidentified	104.3	1.5	1970
15	Manitoba	89.5	1.3	1984
16	Mount Allison	75.0	1.1	Unknown
	Edmonton	<u>Unknown</u>	<u>Unknown</u>	Unknown
		5,065.0	74.6	

Of the repositories that do not have programmes to acquire the records of business, Queen's University Archives reported that it acquires business records only upon the request of the university's teaching and research staff. McGill University Archives encourages businesses to establish corporate archives and records management programmes, reflecting a view commonly held among North American archivists that companies should shoulder the burden of caring for their own archives. The Public Archives of Prince Edward Island reported that its staff did not have the time to establish and implement a business records programme. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia stated that it lacked the space to engage in such a programme and has found business records to be a relatively low priority in terms of demand by researchers.

All of the repositories which reported that they held business records acquire the records of defunct companies, and all but the archives of Prince Edward Island, the City of Vancouver, the City of Victoria, and Mount Allison University acquire records of active companies. The questionnaire asked archival institutions to indicate what methods and strategies they use to acquire records of defunct and active companies. The responses to these questions are shown in Tables V to IX. While these tables do not show the frequency with which archival institutions use these various methods and strategies, they do indicate the means by which English Canadian repositories acquire business records. It is interesting to note that despite the view repeatedly expressed in North American archival literature that repositories

cannot possibly cope with the massive amount of records generated by modern companies, ten of the repositories have engaged in agreements to receive accessions of records of active companies on a periodic basis.

TABLE V
Sources of Records of Active Businesses

Source	Repositories Receiving from this Source	% of Repositories (18) Which Acquire Records of Active Businesses
From company as a single accession	15	83.0
From company under an agreement to receive accessions on a periodic basis	10	55.5
From individuals who took records when they retired or left the company	6	33.3
Other	5	27.7

TABLE VI
Strategies Used to Acquire Records of Active Businesses

Strategy	Repositories Using this Strategy	% of Repositories (18) Which Acquire Records of Active Businesses
Contacting the company or individual	16	88.8
Responding to approaches by the company or individual	15	83.0
Advertising	2	11.1
Other	6	33.3

TABLE VII
Sources of Records of Defunct Businesses

Source	Repositories Receiving from this Source	% of Repositories (22) Which Acquire Records of Defunct Businesses
From the liquidator of a company	15	68.0
From individuals or their heirs who kept records when a company ceased operations	22	100.0
Other	10	45.5

TABLE VIII
Strategies Used to Acquire Records of Defunct Businesses

Strategy	Repositories Using this Strategy	% of Repositories (22) Which Acquire Records of Defunct Businesses
Contacting the liquidator or individual	17	77.0
Responding to approaches by the liquidator or individual	17	77.0
Advertising	1	4.5
Other	6	27.2

TABLE IX
Methods of Acquisition of Business Records*

Method of Acquisition	Number of Repositories Using this Method	% of Repositories (21) Which Acquire Business Records
Purchase	6	28.6
Donation	20	95.2
Donation for tax credit	17	80.9
Other	3	18.0

* *City of Edmonton Archives did not answer this question.*

Several repositories described "other" methods and strategies for acquiring the records of active or defunct companies. The Yukon Archives has received collections of records of active and defunct companies from historical societies and museums. The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland looks for announcements of company anniversaries in newspapers and often approaches firms that are celebrating a fiftieth or hundredth anniversary. The National Archives of Canada receives corporate records from departments of the federal government. Parks Canada, for instance, has acquired the records of businesses that once operated in areas that have become national parks. Once Parks Canada has finished using such records for its own historical research, the records have been transferred to the Manuscript Division of the National Archives of Canada.

The archives of Newfoundland, the Glenbow Institute, and the University of British Columbia have acquired business records from demolition or construction crews who discover documents in the buildings they are working on, and from new tenants who find the records of previous tenants on their property. This implies some public relations efforts on the part of these repositories to make construction workers and others aware both of the value of the documents they discover and of the existence of the archival institution. The University of British Columbia and

Glenbow Institute archives have placed advertisements in the news media. The Saskatchewan Archives Board uses speeches to service clubs and business organizations, radio and television interviews, and newspaper stories to solicit the records of active and defunct businesses. The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland offers to issue press releases on behalf of the company or individual donating material.

In the main, English Canadian archival repositories have acquired small collections of business records, primarily of defunct companies. Over three-quarters of the business records collections held by the respondents were less than one linear metre in extent (see Table X). The more detailed examination of the holdings of the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia (The Library, Special Collections Division), and supplementary information received from Queen's University Archives and McGill University Archives revealed, first of all, that many business records collections consisted only of a few centimetres of looseleaf paper or a couple of bound volumes of accounts and thus constituted fragmentary records of company activities and, secondly, that the majority of the business collections in these six repositories were of thirty centimetres or less in extent (see Table XI). A letter from the Provincial Archives of Manitoba stated: "The vast majority of the 122 collections in MG 11 (Industry and Commerce) and the business thematic guide are small collections under 12.5 cm. (5")."²⁰

TABLE X
Dimensional Characteristics of Business Records Collections

Repository	<i>Number of Collections of Each Size (in Linear Metres)</i>					Total
	<1	1-9.9	10-99.9	100+	Microfilm	
NA	230	48	25	4	48	355
Alberta	365	36	8	0	17	426
Manitoba	114	6	2	0	0	122
New Brunswick	110	23	10	1	13	157
Newfoundland	130	10	10	1	0	151
Ontario	41	100	9	0	0	150
PEI	83	5	4	1	9	102
Yukon	35	2	1	0	2	40
Edmonton	1	1	1	0	0	3
Vancouver	72	15	3	0	1	91
Victoria	2	0	1	0	0	3
Ottawa	3	3	0	0	0	6
Peterborough	0	4	0	0	0	4
UBC	40	8	3	2	3	56
Queen's	71	15	2	0	2	90
McGill	44	9	1	0	0	54
Glenbow	337	33	11	0	0	381
Unidentified	3	8	4	0	1	16
TOTAL	1,681	326	95	9	96	2,207
Per cent	76.2%	14.8%	4.3%	0.4%	4.3%	100.0%

TABLE XI
Proportion of Business Records Collections of
30 Centimetres or Less in Extent

Repository	% of Business Collections <1m in Extent	% of Total Holdings
NA	88.7	57.5
British Columbia	91.5	64.9
Vancouver	91.7	72.5
UBC	92.5	66.1
Queen's	80.3	62.6
McGill	90.9	74.1
AVERAGE	89.3	66.3

The questionnaire solicited limited information on the characteristics of business records collections held in Canadian archival institutions. Given the likelihood (see Table X) that over 75 per cent of business records collections in English Canadian archival institutions only partially document business activities, the contents of business collections of one metre or more in extent held by the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia (The Library, Special Collections Division) were examined to see to what extent larger collections adequately document the activities of businesses.

This figure of one linear metre was chosen as a benchmark in determining the research potential of a collection of business records because it seemed apparent that a collection of records that would document adequately a business operating for more than a decade or two would exceed one linear metre in extent. Even the partial records of a small business may easily exceed one linear metre in extent, as is shown by the J.B.M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. collection (MG 28 III 103) held at the National Archives of Canada.

J.B.M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. was a family business that ran a general store in rural Quebec for ninety-seven years. Of 10.4 metres of material received by the repository, 2.08 metres were kept and the rest, consisting of duplicates, invoices, receipts, and cheque stubs, was destroyed. The collection only partially documents the activities of the firm. Journals usually constitute "the principle accounting record of original entry"²¹ and permit a chronological examination of a company's transactions. Here, these records exist for only twenty-seven of the firm's ninety-seven years of existence. Ledgers are "the principal record of final entry for all financial transactions" and permit the examination of a firm's activities "by way of the type of transaction involved."²² Here, they exist for only twenty years. Similarly, the collection contains correspondence for only twenty-five years.

J.B.M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. had a simple organizational structure, never expanding beyond a two-man operation, yet even the incomplete records of the firm's affairs exceed one linear metre in extent. From this example one may infer that an archival collection documenting in full, or even in a substantial fashion, the activities of a business which operated for more than a couple of decades will normally be greater than one linear metre in extent.

Table XII lists the major types of business records that archivists and others have described as being worthy of preservation, and for each repository indicates the percentage of collections of one linear metre or more which contained each type of record.²³ The business records most commonly found in such collections at the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia (The Library, Special Collections Division) were detailed financial records of original or final entry (journals and ledgers), minutes of board of directors' meetings, and operational correspondence and reports. While minutes of board of directors' meetings contained in a collection were usually complete (or nearly so), journals, ledgers, and correspondence were almost always present as incomplete runs, as in the case of the J.B.M. St-Laurent et Fils Engr. collection.

TABLE XII
Types of Records Contained in Business Collections >1m: Percentage
of Collections Having Each Type of Record, by Repository

	UBC %	Vancouver %	PABC %	NA %	Total %
Journal	53.3	47.4	27.9	29.7	33.3
Voucher Register	13.3	5.3	2.3	3.3	4.2
Ledger	53.3	47.4	34.9	32.9	36.9
Balance Sheets	20.0	21.1	9.3	7.7	10.7
Audit/Annual Accounting Sheet	13.3	10.5	9.3	10.9	10.7
Articles of Incorporation	6.6	5.3	9.3	6.6	7.1
Liquidation Papers	6.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6
Constitution	6.6	0.0	2.3	1.1	1.8
Bylaws	6.6	0.0	2.3	6.6	4.8
Stock ledger/list	6.6	10.5	13.9	14.3	13.1
Stock transfer ledger	0.0	5.3	0.0	1.1	1.2
Board of Directors' Minutes	20.0	42.1	18.6	25.3	25.0
Shareholders' Minutes	0.0	0.0	6.9	7.7	5.9
Committee Minutes	6.6	5.3	2.3	1.1	2.4
Departmental Minutes	6.6	5.3	0.0	0.0	1.2
Policy/Procedure Manuals	0.0	0.0	2.3	2.2	1.8
Annual Reports	20.0	15.8	6.9	13.2	12.5
Operational Reports	53.3	21.1	23.3	30.8	29.8
Executive Correspondence	6.5	36.8	11.6	7.7	11.9
Operational Correspondence	86.6	52.6	65.1	78.0	72.6
Personnel, Payroll and Labour Relations	33.3	26.3	16.3	9.8	15.5
Drawings/Plans	26.6	21.1	9.3	12.1	13.4
Photos	20.0	21.1	4.7	21.9	17.3
Maps	26.6	10.5	2.3	6.6	7.7
Catalogues	6.5	15.8	0.0	4.4	4.8

Besides the business records listed in Table XII that archivists have singled out as generally being worthy of preservation, the business collections of one linear metre or more examined at the four repositories contained a wide variety of other records, many of which are also worthy of preservation (see Table XIII). These included businessmen's personal papers, which were sometimes more voluminous than the business records they accompanied. The personal papers of businessmen and their families are of value as they complement the records of the enterprises with which the businessmen and families were involved. Such papers may shed light on the personalities behind the business activities, and on the motives behind particular actions.

TABLE XIII
Further Types of Business Records Preserved by Repositories

Personal Papers	Business Records	
	Column 1	Column 2
correspondence	customer lists	day books
diaries	price lists	waste books
wills	contracts	daily sales sheets
articles (press clippings)	tenders	receipt books
speeches	specifications	invoices
bank books	budgets	orders
household accounts	inventories	cancelled cheques
	deeds	freight bills
	mortgages	
	leases	
	licenses	
	insurance policies	
	diaries, daily logs and field notebooks	
	scrapbooks	
	company publications	
	administrative correspondence	
	administrative reports	

Diaries, company publications, and contracts (see Business Records: Column 1 in Table XIII) may contain information on company policies and procedures, and records such as budgets and tenders for contracts often indicate the priorities of a firm and the plans it had for future endeavours. These records often complement the documentation provided by the records listed in Table XII.

Column 2 of Table XIII lists business records whose contents may be duplicated or summarized in a more compact form. Day books, freight bills and other papers whose contents are recorded in accounting records of original or final entry need not be preserved. However, there are often gaps in runs of journals and ledgers, and as Table XII indicates, for many business collections accounting records of original or final entry do not exist. When journals and ledgers exist only in incomplete runs or are non-existent, an archivist appraising a body of business records must decide whether the amount of information that can be extracted from day books, freight bills, invoices

and the like justifies sampling or preserving such bulky records in their entirety. For example, invoices and freight bills may document purchases of supplies and equipment which would provide information on a manufacturing plant's facilities and techniques.

In some cases invoices or freight bills which would otherwise be discarded because the financial information they contain is recorded in journals and voucher registers should be preserved due to the pictorial information they contain. Many invoices of the nineteenth and early twentieth century are imprinted with a drawing of the factory or office of the firm issuing the invoice. A file of such invoices may contain images of buildings that have since been altered or no longer stand, and could therefore be a valuable record of the architectural heritage of a town or region.

TABLE XIV
Types of Records Contained in Business Collections >1m
Percentage of Collections Having Each Type of Record, By Status of Creator

	Defunct Firms*	Active Firms
Journal	33.6%	32.7%
Voucher Register	5.3	1.8
Ledger	37.2	36.4
Balance Sheets	9.7	12.7
Audit/Annual Accounting Sheet	11.5	9.1
Articles of Incorporation	7.1	7.3
Liquidation Papers	0.9	0.0
Constitution	0.0	5.5
Bylaws	2.7	9.1
Stock ledger/list	11.5	16.4
Stock transfer ledger	1.8	0.0
Board of Directors' Minutes	23.0	29.1
Shareholders' Minutes	2.7	12.7
Committee Minutes	0.0	7.3
Departmental Minutes	0.9	1.8
Policy/Procedure Manuals	0.0	5.5
Annual Reports	9.7	18.2
Operational Reports	28.3	32.7
Executive Correspondence	11.5	12.7
Operational Correspondence	76.9	63.6
Personnel, Payroll and Labour Relations	11.5	23.6
Drawings/Plans	12.4	16.4
Photos	13.3	25.5
Maps	5.3	12.7
Catalogues	4.4	5.5

* Of a total number of 168 Business Collections >1m at UBC, Vancouver, PABC and NA, 113 collections were the records of defunct firms, and 55 the records of active firms.

Table XII indicates that the majority of business collections of one linear metre or more in extent held at the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections only partially documented a firm's activities. Table XIV indicates that this is the case for both collections of records of defunct firms and collections of records of active businesses.

A greater percentage of business records collections of active firms contained shareholders' meeting minutes, annual reports, personnel, payroll, and labour relations records, and photographs. Similarly, more collections of records of defunct firms contained operational correspondence. However, the difference between the number of collections of active and defunct firms containing these types of records was only in the order of 10 per cent, and for the other types of records was even smaller. From Table XIV one may conclude that the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia (The Library, Special Collections Division) generally have not acquired comprehensive collections of records of defunct or active firms.

As may be expected from remarks in the archival literature on the problems associated with collecting the voluminous records of contemporary businesses and on the reluctance of businessmen to open their records to outsiders, collections of records of active companies constitute a small proportion of the business records holdings of English Canadian archival institutions. Of the business records collections greater than one metre in extent held by the National Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections, 113 out of 168 consisted of the records of defunct companies. Table XV indicates that 83.6 per cent of the business holdings of these four repositories were records of defunct businesses and only 14 per cent were the records of active enterprises. It seems likely, given the situation at the National Archives of Canada and in the province of British Columbia, that less than 20 per cent of the business records collections held by English Canadian repositories consist of records of businesses currently in operation.

TABLE XV
Status of Businesses Whose Records are Housed in Selected Repositories

Repository	Status of Business			Total
	Defunct	Taken Over	Active	
NA	296	10	49	355
British Columbia	355	5	38	398
Vancouver	66	2	23	91
UBC	35	5	16	56
TOTAL	752	22	126	900
Per cent	83.6%	2.4%	14.0%	100.0%

The economic activities of the businesses whose records are housed in English Canada's repositories are shown in Table XVI. Although respondents were asked simply to indicate the number of business records collections that fell into each of

three categories (primary, secondary and service industry), it should be borne in mind that a particular business and its subsidiaries, especially if it is an integrated corporation, may be involved in two or three sectors of the economy. Aside from the archives of Newfoundland and the University of British Columbia, the repositories surveyed held a preponderance of collections of records created by businesses involved in service industries. In view of the reputation Canada has had as a country of hewers of wood and drawers of water, it was interesting to discover that almost two-thirds of the reported business collections documented service industry activities, while just over one-quarter of the collections documented primary industrial activities.

TABLE XVI
Number of Business Records Collections Documenting Each Economic Sector

Repository	Primary	Secondary	Service	Unknown	Total*
NA	52	65	236	2	355
Alberta	62	15	349		426
Manitoba	5	5	112		122
New Brunswick	20	27	60		107
Newfoundland	81	50	20		151
Ontario	90	10	50		150
PEI	14	20	68		102
Edmonton	1	0	2		3
Vancouver	9	11	70	1	91
Victoria	0	0	3		3
Ottawa	0	1	5		6
Peterborough	2	2	0		4
UBC	25	12	19		56
Queen's	12	16	63		91
McGill	17	9	28		54
Glenbow	148	29	204		381
Unidentified	0	0	16		16
TOTAL	538	272	1,305	3	2,118
Per cent	25.4%	12.8%	61.6%	0.1%	99.9%**

* For some repositories, the total figure reported for the number of collections in each economic sector does not equal the total figure reported for the number of collections of each size (Table X).

** Does not equal 100% due to rounding of the figures.

Reference to figures on Canada's gross domestic product (see Table XVII) between 1870 and 1970 confirms that service industries were disproportionately represented in the business records holdings of English Canada's repositories. Canada's average gross domestic product between 1870 and 1970 is divided between the industrial sectors as follows: 27.1 per cent for primary industry, 29.3 per cent for secondary industry, and 43.6 per cent for service industry. Of the business collections

held by the repositories surveyed, 25.4 per cent comprised the records of businesses active in primary industries, 12.8 per cent the records of businesses engaged in secondary industries, and 61.6 per cent the records of businesses active in service industries. Allowing for the fact that some collections of business records predate 1870, when primary industries accounted for a greater proportion of Canada's economy, it is evident that in terms of their relative importance within Canada's economy, secondary industries were greatly under-represented and service industries substantially over-represented in the holdings of English Canada's archival repositories.

TABLE XVII
Percentage of Canada's Gross Domestic Product Produced by
Each Industrial Sector

	Year	Primary	Secondary	Service
	1870	46.2	22.6	31.2
	1880	44.2	23.0	32.8
	1890	36.6	28.1	35.2
Average, 19th C.		42.3	24.6	33.1
	1900	36.7	25.1	38.2
	1910	30.3	27.8	41.9
	1920	27.2	30.2	42.6
	1930	17.8	29.3	52.9
	1940	21.2	32.5	46.3
	1950	17.6	36.8	45.6
	1960	11.2	34.7	54.0
	1970	8.9	31.9	59.1
Average, 20th C.		21.4	31.0	47.6
TOTAL AVERAGE		27.1	29.3	43.6

Source: M.C. Urquhart, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, Series E 214-244, p. 141; F.H. Leacy, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, 2nd ed., Series F 56-75.

Canadian archival literature suggests that repositories in this country have not made significant efforts to acquire business records. Of the collections of business records reported by English Canadian archival institutions, three-quarters were reported to be less than one metre in extent. Probably two-thirds of the business collections reported were less than thirty centimetres in extent. The value to researchers of such small and fragmentary collections is doubtful. On the whole, collections of business records over one metre in extent were not very comprehensive. They tended to document the daily operation and administration of businesses but not the policymaking and executive actions of businessmen. Financial records and correspondence were seldom preserved in complete runs in business collections over one metre in extent.

Several writers have discussed the steps that must be taken to ensure the preservation of business records in corporate archives,²⁴ and these efforts are certainly worth pursuing. The Canadian economy, however, does not rest entirely upon large

corporations capable of sustaining a corporate archive. Unfortunately, many businesses, and especially small firms, do not have the funds, space, or staff to establish corporate archive programmes. Canada abounds in family businesses and small companies employing a few dozen workers, enterprises whose survival often depends upon the skill and resources of individual businessmen. There is a danger of leaving to future generations a distorted view of our society's economic structure if archivists concentrate on promoting the establishment of corporate archives and neglect the records of small businesses. By also working to acquire, in a systematic manner, the records of small businesses, Canadian archivists will be closer to fulfilling their mandates for preserving comprehensive collections documenting the various aspects of the history of their respective regions.

Establishing a programme to acquire records of small businesses involves several activities. The first step is to study the business community in the region served by the archival institution to determine what types of industries and companies are present, and to determine whether records of these industries and companies are already held by the repository. Comparing the results of its study of the business community with its holdings, a repository may discover it has documented in detail one industry but neglected other industries, or that it holds handfuls of records from many businesses, or that it has acquired extensive collections of records of defunct companies but no records from businesses currently active in the region.²⁵

Once a repository has drawn up a profile of the business community and compared this profile with its business holdings, the repository can determine what areas of the regional economy its acquisition programme will cover and devise strategies for implementing the programme. American archivists Robert Lovett and Nicholas Burckel have suggested that an archival institution should solicit especially the records of companies typical or significant in the development of a region.²⁶

Such activity would still leave the possibility that businesses common to all regions of Canada, such as corner stores, hairdressing salons, door and window manufacturers, and sheet metal working companies, would be disregarded. Preserving a cross-section of the economic activity of a region entails collecting the records of at least a sample of such common, and often essential, businesses.

By publicizing its aims and engaging in public relations activities, such as sending a representative to speak to a Chamber of Commerce meeting on the historical value of business records, a repository may succeed in overcoming the suspicions of businessmen wary of exposing their affairs to public scrutiny, and in encouraging firms to give their records to the institution — especially if it follows up such activities with visits to the businesses whose records it seeks to acquire. Only a few repositories reported undertaking public relations activities designed to encourage donations of records by the business community. A more widespread use of public relations activities could persuade more businessmen to donate their records and thereby increase holdings of business records within Canadian repositories.

Some businessmen may not be swayed solely by arguments for preserving business records for posterity. An archival institution wishing to acquire the records of a particular firm may have to offer a records management service as an inducement. Such a course of action is in the repository's own interest if it wants to acquire a comprehensive rather than a fragmentary record of a particular firm's activity. By working

with a firm to establish records retention and disposal schedules, a repository is in effect conducting an on-site appraisal of the firm's records. Rather than waiting for a business to donate records on a piecemeal basis and risk receiving unrelated bits and pieces of material, a repository which helps a business establish records retention and disposal schedules should be assured of acquiring in time a comprehensive collection of business records. Needless to say, any repository entering such an agreement should protect itself with a legally binding agreement guaranteeing regular transfers of records from the firm to the archival institution. Providing records management assistance may not be feasible in every case, but it ought to be considered when an archival institution is attempting to acquire the records of a firm that is of significance to the region served by the repository.

As some archivists correctly point out, the preservation of the voluminous records of large corporations is better left to the corporations concerned, suitably aided by the archival profession. Nevertheless, archival institutions can and should improve their holdings of Canadian business records by developing and implementing a programme to acquire records of small businesses and defunct firms. Such action by repositories across the country would result in an improvement both in the quantity and quality of archival holdings of records of small businesses, offsetting the fact that archival institutions in Canada cannot adequately house records of large corporations. The preservation of these corporate records is undoubtedly another but separate agenda for archivists and other interested parties.

APPENDIX A

Repositories that received questionnaires

National Archives of Canada
 Provincial Archives of
 British Columbia
 Provincial Archives of Alberta
 Saskatchewan Archives Board
 Provincial Archives of Manitoba
 Archives of Ontario
 Provincial Archives of
 New Brunswick
 Public Archives of Prince
 Edward Island
 Public Archives of Nova Scotia
 Provincial Archives of Newfoundland
 Yukon Archives and Records Service
 Archives of the Northwest Territories
 Victoria City Archives
 City of Vancouver Archives
 City of Edmonton Archives
 Hamilton Public Library,
 Special Collections
 City of Toronto Archives

Repositories that returned questionnaires

National Archives of Canada
 Provincial Archives of Alberta
 Saskatchewan Archives Board
 Provincial Archives of Manitoba
 Archives of Ontario
 Provincial Archives of
 New Brunswick
 Public Archives of Prince
 Edward Island
 Public Archives of Nova Scotia
 Provincial Archives of Newfoundland
 Yukon Archives and Records Service
 Victoria City Archives
 City of Vancouver Archives
 City of Edmonton Archives
 City of Toronto Archives

Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives City of Ottawa Archives	Peterborough Centennial Museum and Archives City of Ottawa Archives
University of British Columbia Library, Special Collections	University of British Columbia, The Library, Special Collections Division
Simon Fraser University Archives University of Manitoba, Department of Archives and Special Collections, Elizabeth Dafoe Library	Simon Fraser University Archives University of Manitoba, Department of Archives and Special Collections, Elizabeth Dafoe Library
Brock University Library, Decew Campus	
York University Archives	
University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library	University of Toronto, Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library
Queen's University Archives	Queen's University Archives
McGill University Archives	McGill University Archives
Mount Allison University Archives	Mount Allison University Archives
Dalhousie University Archives	Dalhousie University Archives
Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives	Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives Unidentified

NOTE: A separate return was received from the Hudson's Bay Archives Division of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. The Hudson's Bay Archives Division is in effect a corporate archives, housed within a public institution but having its own staff and budget. The Hudson's Bay Archives Division is therefore omitted from the calculations contained in this article.

Notes

- * This paper is based upon the author's thesis for the Master of Archival Studies Program at the University of British Columbia (1987), "Canadian Archives and the Corporate Memory: A Case of Amnesia?" A version of the paper was presented at the Second Canadian Business History Conference in Victoria, B.C., 4 March 1988. The author would like to thank Robin Keirstead for his helpful comments on the draft of this paper.
- 1 For discussions of the difficulties facing public archival repositories wishing to preserve business records, and of the benefits of corporate archives, see Christopher L. Hives, "Business Archives: Historical Developments and Future Prospects." M.A.S. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985; Christopher L. Hives, "History, Business Records, and Corporate Archives in North America," *Archivaria* 22 (Summer 1986), pp. 40-57; *Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives*, Ottawa: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1980 (hereafter *Canadian Archives*); T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies*, Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975.
- 2 *Canadian Archives*, p. 63.

- 3 Modern horizontally or vertically integrated companies require a form of management quite different from that of the traditional non-integrated firm. The owner of a non-integrated firm can personally oversee the activities of his employees. Non-integrated firms create relatively few records apart from bookkeeping records, for most activities can be organized and coordinated verbally between the owner/manager and his employees. An integrated company, on the other hand, employs managers to administer, monitor, coordinate, and plan the operations of its departments and branch plants. This results in the creation of large quantities of records. See Arthur Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977).
- 4 *Canadian Archives*, p. 92.
- 5 Symons, p. 79; *Canadian Archives*, p. 92.
- 6 Douglas Bakken, "Corporate Archives Today," *American Archivist* 45 (1982): pp. 279-86.
- 7 *Canadian Archives*, p. 63.
- 8 See John C.L. Andreassen, "Records of the Canadian National Railway," *The Canadian Archivist* 1, no. 4 (1973), pp. 42-47; John Hall Archer, "Business Records: The Canadian Scene," *American Archivist* 32 (1969), pp. 251-9; Doug Fetherling, "Thanks for the Memories," *Canadian Business* 53 (October 1980), pp. 129-33; Roger Hall, "Minding our Own Business," *Archivaria* 3 (Winter 1976-77), pp. 73-78; Christopher L. Hives, "History, Business Records, and Corporate Archives"; Douglas McCalla, "Accounting Records and Everyday Economic Life in Upper Canada, 1790-1850," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985-86), pp. 149-57; Bernard Weilbrenner, "Sources for Economic History in the National Archives of Canada," *The Canadian Archivist* 2, no. 3 (1972), pp. 9-14.
- 9 The Business Archives Council was formed in 1968 by a group of archivists and businessmen for the purpose of establishing a specialized repository for business records. Unable to attract sufficient corporate support, the Council disbanded in 1973. See Peter Rider, "Business Archives Notes," *Archivaria* 1 (Winter 1975-76), p. 94.
- 10 Hall, p. 78.
- 11 Archer, p. 251, citing *First Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1903*, p. 11.
- 12 *Ibid.*, p. 251.
- 13 *Ibid.*, pp. 251-52.
- 14 Although the questionnaire was not translated into French and sent to the Archives nationales du Québec, the records of many businesses run by French Canadians are held by the National Archives of Canada and have therefore been included in this study.
- 15 An Act Respecting the Archives of Saskatchewan, Chapter A-26, section 12, 1983.
- 16 Questionnaire return, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, 14 November 1985.
- 17 Questionnaire return, Archives of Ontario, 6 January 1986.
- 18 Questionnaire return, Queen's University Archives, January 1986.
- 19 Questionnaire return, City of Vancouver Archives, 13 November 1985.
- 20 Questionnaire return, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, 15 November 1985.
- 21 Dennis E. Meissner, "The Evaluation of Modern Business Accounting Records," *The Midwestern Archivist* 5, no. 2 (1981), p. 77.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 85.
- 23 For discussions on the appraisal of business records, see Francis X. Blouin, Jr., "A New Perspective on the Appraisal of Business Records: A Review," *American Archivist* 42 (1979), pp. 312-20; Oliver W. Holmes, "The Evaluation and Preservation of Business Records," *American Archivist* 1 (1938), pp. 171-85; Ralph M. Hower, "The Preservation of Business Records," *Bulletin of the Business Historical Society* 11 (1937), pp. 37-83; Arthur M. Johnson, "Identification of Business Records for Permanent Preservation," *American Archivist* 24 (1961), pp. 329-32; Laurence J. Kipp, ed., *Source Materials for Business and Economic History* (Boston: Baker Library Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967); Robert W. Lovett, "The Appraisal of Older Business Records," *American Archivist* 15 (1952), pp. 231-39; Dennis E. Meissner, "The Evaluation of Modern Business Accounting Records"; Larry Steck and Francis X. Blouin, Jr., "Hannah Lay and Company: Sampling the Records of a Century of Lumbering in Michigan," *American Archivist* 39 (1976), pp. 15-20.
- 24 Symons, p. 79; *Canadian Archives*, p. 92; Hives, "Business Archives," p. 121.
- 25 For a discussion of collection analysis, and of how collection analysis can assist repositories to refine their acquisition policies and strategies, see Judith E. Endelman, "Looking Backward to Plan for the Future: Collection Analysis for Manuscript Repositories," *American Archivist* 50 (1987), pp. 340-55.
- 26 Lovett, p. 233; Nicholas C. Burckel, "Business Archives in a University Setting: Status and Prospect," *College and Research Libraries* 41 (1980), p. 232.