# Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming

## by TERRY COOK

A new approach to public service and public programming is very much present in the world of archives.[1] Many of the changes inaugurated by this approach were no doubt overdue and welcome. For the most part, they aim at making the incredible richness of archival holdings available to more users, and to a greater variety of users, in more interesting and effective ways. As well they seek to elevate the profile of archives and to educate the public, or at least to make it aware that archives are essential societal institutions worthy of its support.

Yet some advocates of this new approach would go much further. In so doing, they have posited a premise which may actually undermine both archival theory and the very richness of that documentary heritage which the new public programming would make available. While such advocates would doubtless deny vigorously that this is their intent, the result of their premise is nothing less than a major, and dangerous, reorientation of some of the central aspects of archival work. Somewhat surprisingly, this premise has not been widely debated; indeed, it seems rather to be enunciated with increasing frequency as archival dogma. Yet the premise should not only be challenged, but rejected by archivists as detrimental to their profession.

These reflections were first stimulated by my viewing the programme for the 1990 annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists. The thematic slogan of the conference, "Facing Up and Facing Out," was designed to address reference, access and public programming issues. The Programme Committee justified their choice thus: "Recent developments in information technology, the emergence of new user groups and new uses for archival records, increasing sophistication of public service delivery systems, and generally increasing public demand are among the factors which necessitate a thorough reconsideration of our dealings with our users."[2] As a result, archivists were told to "face up," presumably to these factors, and "face out," through improved reference and public programming services, presumably to a different, larger and more demanding user community.

Browsing through the programme before the conference, one was confronted with many sessions the intent of which seemed clearly designed to support this underlying assumption. Do archivists serve the "general public" or "cultural elitists?" Should archivists think more about genealogists, who are termed their "best customers," rather

than about academic and professional researchers? Are archives and historical researchers shunning each other, as the profession moves "toward a new focus of archives for the people?" Elsewhere one found archives and archivists encouraged to consider their role as part of heritage tourism, as a cultural industry, as entertainment or as entities, already noted, serving "customers."

This new face of archives was best summarized at the conference in Gabrielle Blais and David Enns's address, which appears in revised form elsewhere in this issue of *Archivaria*.[3] Blais and Enns urged that, through the four phases of image, awareness, education and use, new directions be sought for public programming to place greater emphasis on the "public face" of archives. Arguing that there is a pressing need to make archival reference tools "respond to the needs of users rather than the expectations of archivists," Blais and Enns concluded that "an effective reference programme must be based on a solid understanding of two things: users and use." Sympathetic to the tactics used in market analysis, they argued that the types of researchers, their information needs and their patterns of research should be the central driving forces behind reference and public programming activities in archives. While there should be few objections (certainly none from me) to these enhancements to reference and outreach service, Blais and Enns extend the implications of their approach to the other two main archival functions — appraisal and description. In other words, archivists should describe records to meet researchers' needs, once these are known. And archivists' approach to appraisal may require a "radical rethinking" as "questions of use impinge on appraisal and acquisition decisions." These last two points are, in fairness, only mentioned briefly by Blais and Enns, but they reveal the tip of a deep and dangerous theoretical iceberg.

Their paper is also, as was the general tenor of the conference sessions and the justifying statement of the Programme Committee itself, a reflection of an archival reorientation in the 1980s which to date remains largely unchallenged. This reorientation itself mirrors the rhetoric, and approach, of market and customer analysis that the corporate world of Reaganite America championed throughout the decade. Following such management gurus as Tom Peters, whose *In Search of Excellence* and *Thriving on Chaos* were not only international bestsellers, but also media events and corporate buzz-words, the management injunctions became *know thy market, know thy customer*. To do otherwise in the rough-and-ready, yet highly specialized, free-market economy envisioned by Reaganomics courted ruin. Customers' needs and perceptions, combined with "extraordinary responsiveness" to both, were seen as key ingredients in the fast-moving corporate world.[4] "With everything up for grabs in every market, we must become customer-obsessed," Tom Peters admonished. ". . . To do this, the customer, in spirit and in flesh, must pervade the organization — every system in every department, every procedure, every measure, every meeting, every decision." Peters concluded that "the customer responsiveness prescriptions [which fill ten of his chapters] add up to a revolution in corporate life — the wholesale external orientation of everyone in the firm, the achievement of extraordinary flexibility in response to what in the past would have been called customer whims."[5] Indeed, this idea, among others, of extraordinary responsiveness to clients spawned the one-minute manager phenomenon, which since its beginning in 1982 now fills five guidebooks.[6]

This approach to corporate life has had a major impact on archives, especially in the United States. The 1990 ACA conference indicates that it is making inroads into Canada, too. I do not for a momemt wish to imply that archivists in either country are

consciously Reaganites or even cheerleaders for Tom Peters's squad of corporate marketeers. But the pervasive and evidently persuasive corporate undercurrents of any period have subtle, often unrecognized influences on the intellectual trends of professions quite removed, one might have thought, from the original articulation of the ideas involved. The notion of the one-minute manager, for example, is not really so foreign to much of the rhetoric now heard from some archivists, but expressed perhaps in terms of the one-minute researcher: serve her instantly, serve her well, give her what she wants on a silver platter rather than force her to work through allegedly arcane archival finding aids, and at all costs send her away happy so that she will come back with all her friends. The strongest advocate of this approach indeed criticizes archivists for expecting "users to spend enormous amounts of time panning for gold when their work schedule, in fact, requires a quick strike."[7] If not a one-minute "strike," then certainly the next best thing to it seems to be the new ideal.

There are, in fact, definite echoes in recent archival thinking of Tom Peters's gung-ho approach to management, markets and customers, as a few examples will make clear. The editors of the influential *Modern Archives Reader* write that "the goal of an archival institution, therefore, must be to identify its potential users and to match its service to their needs."[8] David B. Gracy's stirring keynote address to the ACA in Winnipeg in 1986 exhorted archivists to consider less the uses of the future and turn more to identifying the users and uses of today — especially those users, following upon the SAA's Levy Report, who are also resource allocators.[9] In a special double issue of the *American Archivist* in 1988 devoted entirely to identifying the appropriate "research agenda" for archivists in each of their key functions as they enter the 1990s, Lawrence Dowler contended, in his major article on the use of records,

> ... that use, rather than the form of material, is the basis on which archival practice and theory ought to be constructed. For this reason, the study of the uses and users of archives must be the goal of a research agenda for the profession .... The aim of archival research should be to study systematically the relationship between the use of information and the ways in which it is or can be provided; it is from this relationship *that the value of records and the information they contain will be determined and archival practices defined.* Highest priority must be given to a national study of use in order to establish a baseline of information against which to measure and compare access and retrieval, reference service, acquisitions, management, appraisal guidelines, and documentation strategies.[10]

An even more extreme statement of the new user-driven focus to archival work appeared a year later, when Randall Jimerson told archivists to redefine their professional identity, unless they wanted to become irrelevant in the modern information society, by adopting "a more user-friendly approach to marketing their services." In a phrase that would warm the cockles of Tom Peters's heart, Jimerson explained that the marketing he advocated meant "focusing on customers and their needs."[11]

The clearest statement of this new approach, however, is by Elsie Freeman, whom most of these authors acknowledge as a key source of their ideas.[12] Writing in the *American Archivist* in 1984, Freeman urged archives and archivists, in her since oft-quoted phrase, to become "client-centered, not materials-centered." She told archivists to develop "an entirely different set of imperatives from those now before us" —

imperatives based on "the identity and the research habits of our users — who they are, how they think, how they learn, how they assemble information, to what uses they put it . . . ." There are, in her view, four reasons for thus reorienting the profession. First, "historical information delivered in bulk, as we now deliver it, will become increasingly less attractive to users who have neither the deep historical commitment nor the time or training to burrow for it." If we who cherish the historical perspective in society want to see that perspective (and thus our records) continue to have a role in public policy and in the formation of national identity and culture, we must make it easy rather than difficult for researchers in all walks of life to discover that perspective in our holdings. Secondly, we can develop through our users "at least one verifiable frame of reference" in terms of discretionary acquisition outside the records of our sponsoring institutions and governments. Thirdly, the enormous investment archives are making in standards development and automation will be wasted if the products so created, as Freeman believes already to be the case, "do not supply what users want or, far more important, what they will actually use." And, finally, if users, current and future, are thus alienated from archives, their relevance declines and budget cuts and other administrative penalties will follow. Freeman is not merely calling for improved sensitivity towards users in archival reference, access and public programming activities — to which no thinking archivist could object — but rather changing the underlying imperatives or driving force of the whole profession. Freeman asserts, for example, that "a look at how and why users approach records will give us new criteria for appraising records." Her proposal of user-centred archives would, in her own words, turn almost all archival practices "upside down."[13]

Before considering the deeper implications of being turned upside down, it is useful to return to basics. It is a truism that the arrangement and description of archives do not — at least on the surface — serve most researchers' needs. As a corollary, in the opinion of any one or any number of researchers, archivists often do not acquire the perfectly complete set of holdings. Leaving aside for the moment the more straightforward issue of those researchers desiring only to locate a single document or item — the land patent, the record of immigration entry, the single photograph, a war diary, a computer file — research in archives involves relating two or more documents in a complex blend in order to illuminate some past reality. User surveys and reference studies reveal that that reality for researchers almost always concerns a name or subject or theme; only rarely is it the administrative history of an agency or institution. Most researchers face the cold truth that archives are not organized, that is, arranged and described, in the first instance by subject or by theme or by name. It is thus no exaggeration to say that, traditionally at least, archivists and researchers approach records in radically different ways. That being the case, archivists have struggled for many years to make the archivist-researcher relationship work better, to bring together the two ends of this intellectual continuum somewhere near the middle. In the rush to produce more sophisticated and more comprehensive finding aids better to assist the researcher, turning him or her into a one-minute expert, grave risks present themselves to archivists and researchers alike. These risks threaten the theoretical underpinnings of the profession.

It is no exaggeration to add that most archival concepts of public service have been developed in isolation, divorced from acquisition/appraisal and arrangement/ description, and this augments the confusion and the possibility for real disaster in the profession. And yet, who can blame those who work in the reference and public

programming areas of archives for feeling alienated from the professional mainstream, and thus developing their own theoretical approach based on users rather than materials? Virtually all accepted archival theory is based on material and its arrangement and order; the theoretical giants of the profession, such as Jenkinson and Schellenberg, virtually ignore the reference function in their *magna opera*;[14] almost all writing on archival training and education overlooks reference activities, let alone public programming;[15] and the impression exists widely that the central theoretical thinking in archival circles relates to either appraisal or description — public service being a mere end-stop where the products of appraisal and description are handed over to the user. Elsie Freeman feels alienated enough by this state of affairs that she in turn diminishes the theoretical grounding of appraisal and description by terming them mere "rules of order and practice (sometimes called principles) . . . ."[16] Small wonder that there is a call from those involved with reference and public programming for a reorientation. They want to be seen as an integral part of "line" archival work — not, in Blais and Enns's words, "to be viewed primarily as a luxury" out on the "periphery" of the profession. While those in reference and public programming understandably do not want to be the tail unthinkingly following the appraisal and description dog, it is no healthier that that same public programming tail should wag the entire archival dog. The profession needs less to be turned upside down than to walk upright with better vision in a clearer direction. Marketing and user statistics should not obscure the archival mission; new means and media of communication must not obscure the archival message. In short, archives must not be turned into the McDonald's of Information, where everything is carefully measured to meet every customer profile and every market demographic — and the only things left on the shelf, behind the jar of Big Mac sauce, are quality and excellence.[17]

A clearer direction for the profession might be found in focusing on the missing ingredient in much of the conceptual discussion about users and reference and public programming. At the top of any list of factors influencing the reconsideration of archival professional theory and practice in the early 1990s should be the records themselves — or, more starkly, a deep concern over the exploding volume of information being created in society.[18] For it is the overwhelming amount of information and the recording media carrying it that is the common challenge of appraisal, description *and* reference, as well as conservation, in archives. In this common challenge may be found a sound approach to all archival functions — and one with theoretical integrity.

Indeed, concern over information overload puts the case rather too mildly. Richard Saul Wurman termed it "information anxiety" in the title of a recent book that received much notice in the popular press.[19] He asserts that "the information explosion has backfired, leaving us inundated with facts but starved for understanding." His examples are stark. One weekday edition of the *New York Times* contains more information than the average person was likely to come across in an entire lifetime in seventeenth-century England. Each edition uses 580 tons of newsprint, or the equivalent annually of 692,000,000 hard-cover books. Even the *Times* can outdo itself; its biggest edition to date (13 November 1987) had 1,612 pages containing more than 12,000,000 words. Moving away from the *Times*, there are 1,000 books published internationally every day; there are 9,600 different periodicals published in the United States alone every year. On this basis, the world's total amount of printed information doubles every eight years; there has been more new information produced in the past thirty years than in the

previous 5,000. Even more awesome figures could be advanced for unpublished, broadcast and computerized information, but these no archivist needs to hear: he or she confronts that dimension of the information explosion daily. To take but one example: it was once calculated that if merely the *current* paper records of the Government of Canada were laid end-to-end, they would circle the globe 144 times or complete eight round trips to the moon. This is the equivalent of 60,000,000 books, or roughly 2,000,000 books per archivist to appraise — and that total (which does not even consider electronic records) is about equal to the entire holdings of a very large university library for *each* government records archivist![20] Wurman estimates that a senior professional in most fields should be reading fifty periodicals and more than 100 books annually, just to keep up with his or her speciality in the field, to say nothing of conference papers, operational memoranda and the daily diet of newspapers, magazines, radio and television — and non-specialist reading.

Such overwhelming quantities of information in people's professional and personal lives, the sheer impossibility of keeping on top of everything they should, even in their own fields, hobbies and avocations, leads to information anxiety. When the field of work itself also deals with information and the records themselves — as in those round trips to the moon for archivists — that anxiety can only deepen. This is ironical to a degree. One commentator observed that "more information should presumably present more oportunities for broader vision and understanding. Yet the sheer volume of the data amassed makes almost inevitable the reduction of our focus to what is in the end a very narrow endeavour." The solution advanced to this information overload makes good sense: "If we are to retain any kind of perspective on the role of humankind in the future," the same observer continued, "we must sometimes stand back and view the landscape, not merely a tree."[21] The long-time futurist, Theodore Roszak, put the matter this way: "Information is not knowledge. You can mass-produce raw data and incredible quantities of facts and figures. You cannot mass-produce knowledge, which is created by individual minds, drawing on individual experience, separating the significant from the irrelevant, making value judgements."[22]

This comes right back to the archival heartland. Some years ago, I wrote that

> the quest for knowledge rather than mere information is the crux of the study of archives and of the daily work of archivists. All the key words applied to archival records — provenance, *respect des fonds*, context, evolution, inter-relationships, order — imply a sense of understanding, of 'knowledge,' rather than the merely efficient retrieval of names, dates, subjects, or whatever, all devoid of context, that is 'information' (undeniably useful as this might be for many purposes). Quite simply, archivists must transcend mere information . . . if they wish to search for, and lead others to seek, 'knowledge' and meaning among the records in their care.[23]

Archivists are indeed searching — and leading their users — through the grand archival forest, with all its fascinating paths and interesting byways, rather than focusing on that isolated tree. And all those key contextual words underlying archival knowledge gain importance because they are applied to archival records; that is, to archival "material," and not to "users." This knowledge is shared with users, but it is not derived from them nor is it based in the first instance on their interests, needs, research methods or intellectual presuppositions.

In assessing this problem of use in relation to new archival media at a landmark plenary session of the International Congress on Archives at Paris in 1988, Eric Ketelaar of the Netherlands said that for new archival material, as much as for old, the provision of the most sophisticated automated finding aids to meet user needs — while desirable — does not satisfy the needs involved. "Retrieval of information," he said, "is not merely a logical, analytical and linear process. The archivist and the searcher equally make use of holistic, intuitive, and creative perceptions.... There should always be a mediator with sufficient old-fashioned knowledge and scholarship capable of refining, reformulating and resolving enquiries by trial and error.... As automated retrieval becomes more sophisticated, there is an urgent need for mediators of high calibre." He goes on to say that "fragmentation" of the "organic relationship" of archives "would endanger the coherence ... the user expects to be the determining factor of all archival sources." He concludes with this clarion reminder of our central strength as archivists: "In the holistic exploitation of their holdings — conventional and new archival materials alike — lies the answer to T.S. Eliot:

> 'Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge?
> Where is the knowledge we have lost in information?'[24]

I think neither Eric Ketelaar nor T.S. Eliot would object to my completing the refrain:

> Where is the information we have lost in facts?

This holistic perspective, this search for the forest whole rather than the isolated tree, has been adopted by archival theorists in recent years to address other major problems caused by the information explosion. For example, the importance of the archival fonds has been amplified by its being placed at the very heart of arrangement and description by the Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards of the Bureau of Canadian Archivists. The very first recommendation in its influential report, *Toward Descriptive Standards*, makes this clear:

> We recommend that, as a priority, Canadian archivists describe and index holdings at the level of *fonds*, regardless of the form or medium of the records.[25]

As description proceeds, as it must, from the general to the specific,[26] the importance of the fonds comes from its being the first and highest level of professional operation performed by the archivist in arranging and describing records.[27] Leaving aside for now whether the fonds is primarily a physical unit of records or a conceptual entity to be described,[28] the fonds is in either case "a dynamic and organic collection of ... series; a series consists of files; and a file consists of items. Each of these units becomes (or has the potential of becoming) an object of description"; each is intelligible only as it is clearly identified as a component of a part-to-whole relationship; and of these "the *fonds* represents the top, or highest level" of that relationship.[29] From such a perspective, therefore, the fonds is the central focus of archival description and the *sine qua non* from which all other descriptive work must flow. Items and files removed from this descriptive context, a "bottom-up" approach in other words, will be rendered relatively unintelligible, no matter how insistently researchers may be clamouring for such an approach.

Similarly in appraisal, a global, holistic perspective has finally begun to replace the traditional approach where appraisal was done in a random, fragmented,

uncoordinated even accidental manner, producing a biased and distorted archival record.[30] To correct this, appraisal theory, based on research into concepts of societal dynamics, has articulated new theoretical models. One such promising approach is the American "documentation strategy," which focuses on "macro-appraisal" of first understanding societal functions before appraising particular groups of records.[31] Of course, European archivists have advocated for a much longer period the need for the archivist to understand how society functions and how it creates records before the archivist appraises the actual records *per se*.[32] From this perspective, the accurate reflection of societal images in archival records should be the central concern of appraisal. While recognizing that the subjective and even idiosyncratic nature of appraisal cannot be eliminated, European archivists believe that it is better for archivists to speculate less on possible uses for records tomorrow and to concentrate more on developing objective criteria to ensure that the records acquired reflect the values, patterns and functions of society today, or, for older records, of the society contemporary with the records' creators. Records are not appraised and acquired to support use; rather, they are acquired (as far as the archival institution's mandate and resources permit) to reflect the functions, ideas and activities of records creators and those with whom they interact. Following such an approach, all kinds of research will be supported. Acquisition, in other words, should *never* be dictated by the transient whims of users, whether these are the latest "in" topics in graduate schools, the popular heritage pursuits of railway and postal enthusiasts, or the passionate interests of genealogists, no matter how well articulated any or all of these may be through user surveys.

Even archival users at their most sophisticated are adopting the same holistic approach that informs the new archival thinking about appraisal and description. They are moving away from the content of records to consider the context, the linguistic patterns, the signs and symbols — in effect, the evidential value that the records exhibit by their internal structure and simply by existing, rather than by what they explicitly say (although naturally that is not ignored). Patterns of thought, the power of words and rhetoric, the structural (or diplomatic) influences, a consciousness of the values embedded in social book-keeping systems of the past and in societal metaphors and myths — this concern with the nature of "discourse" is certainly similar to archivists' own work of unravelling the provenance, context, records-keeping environments and the original "order" or pattern of the records in their care.[33]

It is possible to reconcile the contextual archival theory based on records with public programming's desire to enrich the user's experience in archives. The most difficult problems facing archivists, or indeed, as Wurman shows in *Information Anxiety*, all information professionals (including archival users), can only be solved by adopting a holistic and contextual perspective. Archivists must search for forests, not trees, or, in archival terms, they must maintain provenance, order and context front and centre over facts, figures and content. They must continue, indeed enhance, their top-down rather than bottom-up perspectives in *all* archival functions, or, put another way, idealism and a sense of holistic vision rather than utilitarianism and a sense of market imperatives must prevail.

Every user from the genealogist looking for a single fact or a copy of a single document through the most sophisticated researcher using "discourse" methodology would benefit from this materials-centred approach to archives. The genealogist should not just be handed the land patent or the record of entry relating to his or her ancestor,

even if such service can be a quick one-minute "strike." Rather, the user should also be led to information about the contextual significance of that document. What is a land patent; what was the process by which it was issued; what were the requirements that the settler had to meet in order to obtain this document; what is revealed by a diplomatic analysis of the patent form itself; what were the relevant provisions of the Dominion Homestead Act under which it was created; what was the nature of the Department of the Interior, and its local land agents who actually produced it; what other surviving relevant documentation exists to show this broader context? That is informed public service; that is exciting public programming; that is making archival users knowledgeable rather than loaded down, however efficiently, with facts and copies of detached documents floating around devoid of context. If it is true, as Freeman, Blais and Enns, Dowler and others assert, that the present systems of public service in archives do not deliver such a contextual message anyway, by all means change them, but do not undermine the message to be delivered by these improved systems by advocating theoretical handstands.

Let me insist on one central point. When I criticize the viewpoint of some advocates of the new public programming, I am not supporting cultural elitism, nor am I prescribing user-unfriendly archives. Rather, I am urging archivists to step back from being superficial McDonald's of Information or flashy Disney-Worlds of Heritage Entertainment, and to step forward to providing all researchers with relevance, meaning, understanding and knowledge. Do not abandon public programming — far from it — but rather use it to deliver the right message. Study and survey users not to give them merely the facts and names and narrow subjects they want, but to train them sensitively, according to their means and backgrounds, to understand what they find within, rather than wrenched out of, the contextual richness of archival holdings. Do not claim that such surveyed users should drive the appraisal and description functions: archivists do not (or should not!) want to acquire labour records this week, women's diaries next week, or scientific lab reports after that. Nor do they want to build subject and name indexes before or at the expense of fonds/series contextual descriptions. Let not dynamic (and welcome) outreach programming developments betray the organic integrity of archives by a trendy consumerism.

In all this, archivists would do well to remember Hugh Taylor's wisdom when he asserted that "pattern recognition in the face of overwhelming information fallout rather than a hopeless concentration on subject indexing of content" holds the key to knowledge and understanding. He added that the document "is not a passive container of 'content,' but [reflective of the] active processes" behind its creation.[34] Unless the focus of archival work in appraisal, description *and* public service and outreach is on the process of records creation and the creator, and the archival materials that result from both — a conceptual vision of provenance — archivists condemn themelves and their users to a diet of fast food, of quick hits of facts, names and dates without context and without much meaning.

Before archivists face up and face out, therefore, perhaps they need to reach in and research more: reach in to the unique power of provenance and research more into the contextual nature of records, their creators and the functions of both. In that manner, they will have something of substance to convey to all their users in the Information Age.[35] Rather than the new public programmers bending with every shift in market demand so that users' needs determine the very appraisal and description of archives, the

outreach advocates should use their skills to convince users that what archives have is worthy of their attention. Or, in the (regrettable) jargon of the market that seems to be in favour, archives should not stock on their shelves the goods which customers want; rather, they should convince customers to buy what is already there. The difference is subtle, yet fundamental, and presents archivists with an important choice to make as they approach the new millenium.

## Notes

1   This article is a reworking of my paper, "Stepping Back From the Brink: A Theoretical Approach to Public Service," which was delivered to the Association of Canadian Archivists in Victoria on 2 June 1990. That version and, more importantly, this one have benefited from helpful criticism and careful editing by Ed Dahl and Candace Loewen, both of the National Archives of Canada.

2   Association of Canadian Archivists, *Fifteenth Annual Conference. Facing Up, Facing Out: Reference, Access, and Public Programming* (1990), p. 5.

3   Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "Enhancing the 'Noble Dream': Public Programming in Canadian Archives," first draft, March 1990. I have not seen the revised version of their paper appearing in this issue; my comments are based on reading two drafts before the conference and hearing the "live" presentation.

4   See Tom Peters, *Thriving on Chaos: Handbook for a Management Revolution* (New York, 1987), especially Section 11 (containing ten chapters).

5   Ibid., pp. 184, 48.

6   See Kenneth Blanchard with Spencer Johnson, *The One Minute Manager* (New York, 1982). The latest, which lists the others in the series, is Kenneth Blanchard, et al., *The One Minute Manager Meets the Monkey* (New York, 1989).

7   Elsie T. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," *American Archivist*, 47 (Spring 1984), p. 120. I shall consider her views in more detail below.

8   Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, eds., *A Modern Archives Reader* (Washington, 1984), p. 279.

9   See David B. Gracy II, "Is There a Future in the Use of Archives?" *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987), pp. 3-9.

10  Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51 (Winter and Spring 1988), p. 74, and *passim*. [Emphasis added.]

11  Randall C. Jimerson, "Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society," *American Archivist* 52 (Summer 1989), p. 332.

12  Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder," pp. 111-123.

13  Ibid., pp. 112-113, 119.

14  See Sir Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration,* second revised edition (London, 1966); and T.R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York and London, 1965).

15  This is the central contention of Janice E. Ruth, "Educating the Reference Archivist," *American Archivist* 51 (Summer 1988), pp. 266-276.

16  Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder," p. 112.

17  I shall not push the metaphor unduly by accusing some archivists of wishing to erect a golden "A" outside their buildings that boasts of how many billions of pages and thousands of researchers they have served! Here seems an appropriate point to say that, while in this article I am challenging only the theoretical underpinnings of aspects of the new approach to public programming, it strikes me that no small number of the practical arguments used by some of its advocates also need to be questioned. For example, there is the concern that in relative terms archives are losing users and that, compared to such institutions as galleries, museums, libraries, and even historic sites, archives will get a shrinking piece of the cultural resource pie as a result. Several people at the Victoria ACA conference seemed to delight in noting that, at the national level, the Archives only had some 10,000 "customers" each year, while the Gallery and Museum of Civilization were nudging towards 1,000,000. The conclusion usually drawn at such recountings was that archivists must wake up, adopt aggressive outreach programming and entertainment motifs, and enter the cultural competitive sweepstakes. This is utter nonsense, for two reasons. The first concerns what those numbers actually mean. Are the three officials recently researching compensation cases on behalf of 20,000 Japanese Canadians for wartime redress settlements to be counted as three or 20,000? Are the perhaps 100 researchers in total working for Indian Bands and the federal government doing claims litigation research for 500,000 aboriginal people, the official 100 or the influenced 500,000? And the same goes for major ideas of national identity or historical interpretation originating from very few

researchers in an archives, that "trickle down" to appear in films or school textbooks seen or used by millions. The numbers game is very much one of apples and oranges. Are the three researchers working for many months for the Japanese Canadians really equal to three people who wander through a museum for two hours on a Sunday afternoon? The equivalent or appropriate comparison would be to the anthropologist who comes to the museum to do detailed research on the baskets or masks in the storerooms hidden behind the exhibits; with that kind of "customer" I have no doubt that archives compare very well in the numbers game. The second reason to reject the "body-count" conceptualization of archival work is that, unlike libraries, archives do not deal with digested, synthesized knowledge set in predetermined patterns, which could be user-influenced. With primary archival records, archivists must synthesize a large part of the knowledge themselves in terms of the often hidden patterns and relationships of the creator and the record itself. But false comparisons seem to have the day, and much hand-wringing results. Certainly, archivists must explain to their sponsors what their relatively "low" number of actual users really means, but that is a lot different from being stampeded away from their fundamental principles and essential work by scare tactics based on false comparisons and specious analogies.

18  The factors cited by the 1990 ACA Programme Committee as being responsible for necessitating a review of the profession's approach to public service and outreach activities, which were quoted earlier in this article, curiously omitted this factor.

19  Richard Saul Wurman, *Information Anxiety* (New York, 1989). This is a fascinating volume; for a fuller consideration of its significance for archivists, see the review article published elsewhere in this issue: Terry Cook, "Rites of Passage: The Archivist and the Information Age," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91), *passim*.

20  See Terry Cook, "Billions of Records: What to Keep? — What to Destroy?" *The Archivist* 13 (March-April 1986), p. 2.

21  Erik Sandberg-Diment, "The Executive Computer: How to Avoid Tunnel Vision," *New York Times*, 15 March 1987, cited in Wurman, *Information Anxiety*, p. 35.

22  Theodore Roszak, *The Cult of Information*, cited in Wurman, *Information Anxiety*, p. 32.

23  See Terry Cook, "From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-85), p. 49, and *passim*.

24  Erik Ketelaar, "New Archival Materials," bound offprint from the Third Plenary Session, XIth International Congress on Archives (Paris, 1988), pp. 14-15, 21, 23.

25  Bureau of Canadian Archivists, Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards, *Toward Descriptive Standards: Report and Recommendations of the Canadian Working Group on Archival Descriptive Standards* (Ottawa, 1985), pp. 55-56.

26  Ibid., p. 8.

27  See Oliver W. Holmes, "Archival Arrangement—Five Different Operations at Five Different Levels," *American Archivist* 27 (January 1964), pp. 27, 25. The logic of this is clear enough: decisions above the fonds level relate to institutional mandates, internal institutional organization and interinstitutional cooperation, which are all the focus of senior administrators, while decisions and operations below the fonds level, which are the focus of professional archivists, all clearly depend upon the fonds.

28  This is the central concern addressed in Terry Cook, *The Concept of the Archival Fonds: A Discussion Paper*, to be published in 1991 by the Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards, Bureau of Canadian Archivists.

29  See Hugo Stibbe, "Main Entry: The Concept and its Applicability to Archival Description," a manuscript report of the Subcommittee on Main Entry, Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards, Bureau of Canadian Archivists, April 1988, pp. 11-12.

30  The charge, made effectively and in my view with justification, is Gerald Ham's, in "The Archival Edge," *Modern Archives Reader*, p. 326. He adds (p. 328) that archivists have failed to deal with acquisition policy on any "coherent and comprehensive basis," because of "nuts and bolts" or craft tradition dominating the profession over against its older custodial or curatorial emphasis.

31  The original statement is Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls The Past," *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986), pp. 109-24. The entire Winter-Spring 1988 double issue of the *American Archivist* (Vol. 51) deals with establishing a research agenda for archivists across all archival functions; for appraisal, see Richard J. Cox and Helen W. Samuels, "The Archivist's First Responsibility: A Research Agenda to Improve the Identification and Retention of Records of Enduring Value," pp. 28-42, and the commentaries which follow by Frank Boles and Frank J. Burke. The footnotes in this article contain useful additional references. See especially as well Larry Hackman and Joan Warnow-Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987), pp. 12-47; and Richard J. Cox, "A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York," *American Archivist* 52 (Spring 1989), pp. 192-200.

32    The most important statement (from 1972, originally, and reflecting in its text and notes the debate in
      Europe at that time) is Hans Booms, "Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the
      Appraisal of Archival Sources," *Archivaria* 24 (Summer 1987), pp. 69-107 (this is a translation by Hermina
      Joldersma and Richard Klumpenhouwer, who provide a brief introduction as well, of Booms's 1972
      original article, published in *Archivalische Zeitschrift*, Vol. 68). I have taken the same approach; see Terry
      Cook, *The Archival Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information: A RAMP Study With
      Guidelines*, (Paris, [forthcoming 1991]).
33    See Thomas McCarthy, *The Critical Theory of Jurgen Habermas* (Cambridge, MA, 1978). An excellent
      example of such work employing the concept of "discourse," and one containing a deep theoretical analysis
      of these issues as well, is Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, "Hearing Women's Voices: A Feminist Reconstruction
      of History," in her *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York, 1985), pp. 11-
      52. See also her superb and justly famous "The Female World of Love and Ritual: Relations Between
      Women in Nineteenth-Century America," in the same volume, for a practical application of the theoretical
      constructs outlined in "Hearing Women's Voices." On the need for social scientists to understand the social
      book-keeping systems and records-creating contexts of the past, see Jerome Clubb, "The 'New'
      Quantitative History: Social Science or Old Wine in New Bottles?", in Jerome Clubb and E.K. Scheuch,
      eds., *Historical Social Science Research: The Use of Historical and Process-Produced Data* (Stuttgart,
      1980), pp. 22-23. For a Canadian example, see George Emery, "Ontario's Civil Registration of Vital
      Statistics, 1896-1926," *Canadian Historical Review* 64 (December 1983), pp. 468-493.
34    Hugh A. Taylor, "'My Very Act and Deed': Some Reflections on the Role of Textual Records in the
      Conduct of Affairs," *American Archivist* 51 (Fall 1988), p. 468.
35    On the power of provenance and the unique position this contextual framework gives archivists among
      information professionals, see David A. Bearman and Richard H. Lytle, "The Power of the Principle of
      Provenance," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985-86), pp. 14-27; and Cook, "From Information to Knowledge,"
      pp. 40-49.