Documentation Strategy

by **TERRY COOK***

I was delighted to have been chosen to comment on Helen Samuels' plenary address delivered to the Association of Canadian Archivists Annual conference at Banff in May 1991. The conference theme concerned that most difficult of archival challenges, appraisal. It was entirely fitting, therefore, that Helen Samuels was invited as a distinguished guest speaker, for over the past decade she has made the single most important North American contribution to a growing debate on appraisal theory, strategy and methodology. Single-handedly, she has initiated a rethinking of how archivists approach appraisal. In a series of articles and books on documentation strategies, science and technology records, and now college and university records, she has challenged us to change our old ways — which a growing number of critics have rightly found to be inadequate — so that we can better cope with appraising complex modern records created by complex modern institutions.[1] Where others have criticized without solutions, however, Helen has had the courage to advance practical methods and approaches along with her critique of past practice. In this endeavour, she has been joined by a growing number of colleagues, such as Richard Cox, Tim Ericson, Joan Warnow-Blewett and Larry Hackman, who have co-authored with her or published separate but related pieces. Yet the key question remains: is Helen Samuels right? Does her pioneering concept of "documentation strategy" help archivists appraise modern records? Is it appraisal theory, appraisal criteria, or a strategic appraisal planning tool?

Before answering these questions, I want to reflect briefly on the origins of this session, by way of demonstrating that for a commentator Helen Samuels is a difficult person to isolate. She and I proposed, for the ACA Conference in 1990, that we should stage a debate on the role of the user (which was the conference theme that year) *vis-à-vis* appraisal. She would argue for a strong role for the user in forming appraisal decisions; I would argue for no role. Following her articles, she would argue in a related way for a thematic or subject focus for appraisal; I would argue for an institutional or provenancial focus. While not particularly subtle, these dichotomies seemed fairly based on her earlier articles on documentation strategy and on my own work, then in press. Because of other commitments, we did not stage that debate in Victoria, and so I thought we would do it a year later at Banff — and more appropriately as the Conference theme

was appraisal. Helen would give the plenary address summarizing her ideas, and thus present for the first time to a Canadian conference audience the essential elements of the documentation strategy for which she is acclaimed and then, as commentator, I would give the other half of the dichotomy.

Matters did not work out that way, however. As we talked on the phone and exchanged letters and manuscripts over the past year, we found that the hard edges of that original dichotomy between us were melting down. In the notes she sent me on which her Banff talk was largely based, the dichotomy had almost disappeared. By joining the new notion of the institutional functional analysis to the earlier one of the documentation strategy, Helen Samuels not only undermined the heart of my planned commentary, but also blunted the criticisms which David Bearman and I and others have levelled against her work in the past.[2]

Samuels' Banff presentation (and subsequent article) does add significant and major subtleties to her past arguments. She attempts to combine provenancial functionalism and thematic strategies much more closely than ever before; the institutional functional analysis, as she calls it (presented for the first time at Banff), represents a major modification of the previous thematic or subject-based emphasis of the documentation strategy. In her new work (and forthcoming book) on colleges and universities, she has moved in substance and rhetoric from an artificial (in my view) theme/subject focus to an organic, functional one based on the activities of the records creator. She, moreover, joins European archival theorists — and some Canadians — in very greatly diminishing the role that researchers/users should have in determining what records an archives will retain. If she had not made these changes, I certainly would have criticized her. In that she has, I can only say, "Bravo!" I agree with all of them. However, despite this, my commentary on her Banff paper is not totally uncritical, for there are still certain ambiguities in Samuels' ideas and examples that, to my mind at least, need further clarification.

My commentary has four sections. First, I want to extend considerably Samuels' critique of the old ways. While she mentions Gerald Ham's early observations and notes, the impact on appraisal of the changing nature of modern institutions and modern records, she does this almost in passing. I feel it is **essential** that Canadian archivists realize that the traditional approach to appraisal no longer works, that some new way — if not Helen Samuels' way, then some other way — must be debated and adopted, for we can no longer plod along as we collectively have been. I hope that this section helps to underline as well the significance of Samuels' contribution, if only in contrast to what went before.[3] Secondly, I want to review the highlights of Samuels' arguments in order to emphasize the significance of what she has said — in effect, the strengths of her proposals. Thirdly, I shall suggest certain weaknesses or ambiguities in her approach, or at least what seems so to me. Finally, to stimulate debate, I want to conclude by noting some of the choices that Helen Samuels presents to the archival profession. Individual archivists must hereafter decide which choices they want. What I will **not** do is offer an appraisal model and strategic approach alternative to hers. While she is aware from our exchanges over the past year that I have such an approach, there is not time to go into it.

Any reassessment of appraisal theory must start with the premise that behind the physical record is the "very act and deed" it symbolizes. Behind the actual document is the "function or activity" that lead to its creation. These insights, taken from Hugh Taylor's recent

series of stimulating articles, have profound implications.[4] To start with, they indicate that the usual concentration of archival appraisal on groups of records and on the search for "value" in them may well be misdirected. Moreover, they imply that the focus of appraisal should shift from the actual record to the conceptual context of its creation, from the physical artifact to the intellectual purpose behind it, from matter to mind. While good archivists have always considered context more important than content, they have traditionally used context to explain or situate the physical record. It is now time to focus much more centrally on context, or on a conceptual version of provenance, if appraisal theory is to be redefined to meet the challenges of the twenty-first century.

There may soon be no alternative to such a conceptual approach to provenance, for the very notion of an original, physical record is becoming, to quote Taylor again, "increasingly elusive and could almost disappear. Electronic communication, especially in its interactive mode, can become a continuous discourse without trace, as both act and record occur simultaneously with little or no media delay or survival."[5] In compound, virtual, or "smart" documents, for example, which combine information extracted from many other electronic sources (data, text, and/or graphics), the "actual" document is but a fleeting image on the screen. The "document" can only be recreated with difficulty, for the attribute or feeder data on which it is based continually changes.[6] In such interactive transactions, Taylor perceives "a return to conceptual orality in the wake of automation," that is to say, a return to a state where words or documents gain meaning only as they are "closely related to their context and to actions arising from that context." In the oral tradition, Taylor notes, meaning "lay not in the records themselves, but [in] the transactions and customs to which they bore witness as 'evidences.'"[7] The compound document displayed at the computer terminal might exist in a given year in 2,000 versions, all with different values. Such a "document" — i.e., **one** of those 2,000 views — might well render less meaning as "evidence" than could be gained by studying its broad "evidential" or functional context: why each component, and the system as a whole, was created and what functions it serves, the character and purposes of its attribute data, the nature of and reasons for data flow or migration to other systems, the relationship of the system to the institution's organizational structure and mandated functions, the evidential characteristics embedded in the software, and who was using the system and data, when and why. Given the growing centrality of these "evidential" or contextual actions, both to the very existence of the record (especially the electronic record) and to any subsequent understanding, let alone appraisal, of it, Taylor wisely concludes (and Tom Nesmith reinforced the conclusion in his own remarks at Banff) that archivists "need a new form of 'social historiography' to make clear how and why records were created; this should be *the* archival task . . . ."[8]

Unfortunately, research such as Taylor, Nesmith and others have advocated is usually **not** seen as "*the* archival task," and appraisal among other archival functions is the poorer for it. Indeed, because of such neglect, Gerald Ham asked of appraisal, in his famous, but too-little-heeded critique, "Is there any other field of information gathering that has such a broad mandate with a selection process so random, so fragmented, so uncoordinated, and even so often accidental?"[9]

Ham believes that archivists fail to deal with appraisal on any "coherent and comprehensive basis," because of the "nuts and bolts" or craft or custodial traditions still dominating the profession. That tradition was set in an earlier "custodial era," when the volume of records was relatively small and the technology of records creation, storage,

and retrieval fairly straightforward. As a result, archivists "assumed a passive role in shaping the documentary record." They were, in Ham's view, "too little aware of the larger historical and social landscape" that surrounded the record and too content to be gatherers of records no longer needed. By contrast, they should have been active documenters probing how society records, uses, stores and disposes of information and, even more importantly, determining what larger functions these acts of recording serve. This does not mean that archivists interpret the **content** of documents as do historians, sociologists, geographers and other users, but they do interpret the significance of the **context** of document creation. Rather than address these broader contextual issues, however, archivists have concentrated their appraisal activities on the resulting end-product, the actual record and on the research values possibly evident in it. In determining such values, archivists relied on researchers' interests and in turn soon became, in Ham's words, "too closely tied to the . . . academic marketplace," with the ultimate result "that archival holdings too often reflected narrow research interests rather than the broad spectrum of human experience. If we cannot transcend these obstacles," Ham warns, "then the archivist will remain at best nothing more than a weathervane moved by the changing winds of historiography."[10]

With the exception of Samuels' work and that of her disciples, transcending this old approach will find little support, however, in most contemporary appraisal theory published in North America. Of course, the European archival tradition as exemplified by Hans Booms and Siegfried Büttner is a different story — and only slowly being appreciated by North Americans. In fact, North American appraisal theory has rarely advanced beyond the "taxonomic" stage, that is to say, beyond a systematization of the various values of records (such as evidential and informational, legal and fiscal, primary and secondary, etc.), and of the various characteristics relating to records (their uniqueness, age, authenticity, manipulability, time span, extent, etc.). Quite aside from the philosophical difficulties of defining "value," that Terry Eastwood outlined in the opening address for the Banff Conference, even within this "values" framework, archivists since Schellenberg have in effect appraised in a circular fashion. They have studied certain sets of records, determined that certain types of values and characteristics were found in them, codified these as appraisal criteria and subsequently applied the same criteria to other groups of records, in isolation, series by series, medium by medium, as these records became available to archivists at the end of their period of active administrative use. Those records reflecting these codified "values" are declared to be archival; those which do not are rejected as non-archival. Locked into this cyclical "values" framework, North American appraisal theory has rarely embodied concepts of societal and institutional dynamics in a working model for appraising that "broad spectrum of human experience" to which Gerald Ham refers. The goal of such a new appraisal model would not be the search for research value per se, but rather the attainment within the collective archival record of a comprehensive reflection of the most important societal functions, records creators and records-creating processes.[11] Such a "macro"-level model would posit certain generic characteristics of the records creators and the records-creating process likely to produce records of high archival value, **before** the resulting records themselves are actually appraised using more traditional criteria. As a result of this serious conceptual vacuum, Richard Berner, the author of the major study of archival theory in the United States, lamented as recently as 1983 that appraisal must be deliberately excluded from his book, and further asserted that the development of "a body of appraisal theory is perhaps the most pressing need in the archival field today."[12]

The central flaw in this traditional taxonomic approach to appraisal is that there are altogether too many records "at the bottom" for archivists to appraise: more government records produced in France for the years 1945-1960 than in the previous four centuries combined; more case files for a moderately-sized Canadian federal government programme since 1945 (immigration) than **all** archival records for **all** federal departments **ever**; more records for recent governors of Illinois than was accumulated by their nineteenth-century predecessors, by a multiple of seventy-five. To provide a specific, personal example, in addition to the one Pat Burden gave at Banff regarding the extraordinary record legacy of the recent National Energy Program, one archivist at the National Archives of Canada faces as one-third of her/his appraisal responsibility (among other duties) the single federal function of job creation and employment services:. This function alone operates out of 1,004 offices, is manifested through more than fifty separate programmes, creates approximately 3,000,000 case files and 30,000 linear metres of records **annually** and maintains twenty-three national and 108 regional databases with an estimated 60,000 computer transactions **daily**.[13] In such circumstances, to which records in which offices at the bottom does the archivist even begin to apply his or her taxonomic appraisal guidelines in order to isolate those records having archival value?

The traditional approach of moving from the bottom up, from the record to the function, from the information to the contemporary user/creator, from the specific to the general, from the matter to the mind, simply breaks down in the reality of modern bureaucracies and contemporary records. That diplomatic approach was perhaps suitable for older documents, where the surviving information universe is very limited or the functional context is largely unknown and thus the archivist has no other choice but to extrapolate it from the surviving artifact. That is emphatically no longer the case: contextual information is readily available (if the archivist will but look for it), and the volume of records is overwhelming. Of course, as Barbara Craig eloquently argued at Banff, the records themselves must be allowed to speak; of course, they contain evidence of transactions and realities that may modify, even contradict, the functional and structural paradigms "above" them. Yet there are billions and billions of records. To which ones does the archivist listen? Amid the resulting cacophony, some top-down, holistic perspective is required to separate the sweet music from the meaningless noise. It is precisely to this point of information overload and the archival method, that Hugh Taylor wisely addresses the question, "Do archivists see their work as essentially empirical, dealing with individual documents and series . . . or are we concerned with the recognition of forms and patterns of knowledge which may be the only way by which we will transcend the morass of information and data into which we will otherwise fall?" Archival activity should be seen as "an intellectual discipline based on the philosophical study of ideas, not an empirical discipline based on the scientific study of fact."[14]

Against this sorry background, Helen Samuels takes us a very long distance. Her documentation strategy first and foremost seeks to answer Ham's charge that archival appraisal is fragmented, uncoordinated, random and haphazard. By the documentation strategy mechanisms outlined more fully in her other works, Samuels would actively seek — through conscious planning and coordination and research into the collective documentary heritage — to end the fragmentation of which Ham and others complain: fragmentation by medium; fragmentation by individual archival institution; fragmentation by distinctions between heritage sources that are archival and those that are not (such as publications, oral history, museum artifacts, etc.); and fragmentation by the barriers

between public and private archives. The last barrier Samuels attempts to destroy, as she first outlined at Banff, by uniting an organic institutional functional analysis, familiar to public and corporate archivists, with the documentation strategy based on subject or theme more familiar to private manuscript archivists. In short, by concentrating on the entire information universe rather than a portion of it, by advocating a top-down approach based in functional analysis rather than a bottom-up, empiricist analysis based on the search for "values," Samuels provides the tools, a sense of direction, a strategy, for coping with the voluminous records of complex modern organizations. Furthermore, by diminishing the role of the researcher or user in making appraisal decisions based on isolating research "values" archive by archive in the old taxonomic approach, Samuels effectively answers Gerald Ham's "historiographical weathervane" critique; especially so, as she substitutes for it a research agenda for archivists concerning the context of records creation, functional analysis, and organizational structure. (As an aside, in this regard, no one should miss the article she co-authored with Richard Cox in the special double issue of the *American Archivist* [Vol. 51, 1988] devoted entirely to the new research agenda for archivists in all their key functions; their article regarding appraisal is entitled "The Archivist's First Responsibility: A Research Agenda to Improve the Identification and Retention of Records of Enduring Value.") In summary, Samuels would turn archivists from passive custodians to active documenters, whose principal contacts in records-creating (and resource-allocating) institutions would be with the information creators at the top, not the information custodians and records managers at the bottom, and whose appraisal work as active documenters would be based on solid research and linked to other archivists in cooperative appraisal networks. All of these changes are to my mind "excellent; they are impressive and courageous proposals; they represent, since she penned her first article on documentation strategy in 1986, her most significant contribution to the archival profession.

But while Samuels has gone a long way towards "improving our disposition," she does not go all the way. It strikes me that she has given us a strategy, a methodology, and much useful practical advice, but not a new appraisal theory. She has not wrestled entirely successfully with some of the implications of what Gerald Ham and Hugh Taylor have called for, or of what she herself advocates. More specifically, I do not think she has really integrated organic (or provenancial) functionalism and structuralism, as regards each other or her recurring subject/theme emphasis, into a working model of societal and institutional dynamics. Does structure or function have the greatest impact on societal dynamics? How are they inter-related? What is the role (and impact) of ideology on both, compared to "blind" socio-economic forces? How is function or structure altered by time, space, memory and change? Which has primacy or first sequence in the "macro-appraisal" approach Helen advocates? Despite her significant movement away from the thematic emphasis of the earlier free-standing documentation strategy to the more provenancial, structural basis of her new institutional functional analysis, which would now be supplemented by the documentation strategy, strong traces of the old approach still remain.

In this regard, some of Samuels' examples make me very nervous. When dealing with colleges and universities — which after all are organic, provenance-based structures — her analysis of functions on which to base a documentation strategy plan seems sounder. She also talks, however, about strategies for the documentation of modern physics and chemistry, for the pharmaceutical industry, for the computer and aerospace

industries, for evangelicalism, or for specific geographic areas such as western New York state. That is a subject or thematic approach which I cannot accept as the **prime** focus for appraisal. Not only is it unarchival; it also carries with it, unless applied on a very narrow and local basis, the threat of enormous overlapping of themes/functions, and thus the very real possibility of duplication of archivists' research work and record acquisition. How does one decide which few of the hundreds, rather thousands, of possible subjects, themes or geographic areas will be the subject of the intense work and resource commitments of building a documentation strategy? The themes, and sometimes functions, will always be in dispute as regards the number to be chosen, their priority, their extensive overlapping, and the *a priori* nature of the approach itself. In many ways, the documentation strategy is most appropriate for the world of private manuscripts rather than government or corporate institutional records, or as a complement or supplement to the latter. Now in fairness, Samuels alludes to this, but some of her examples seem to deny it. Even so, she does not integrate the functional institutional analysis and the documentation strategy. They sit uneasily, side-by-side, as she tries to have it both ways at once. The very nature and even degree of complementarity and supplementarity remain undefined. That may be alright strategically in order to get some work done, but it does not wash theoretically. I might add, at the risk of my job — and here the views I give are mine and not those of the National Archives of Canada — that the acquisition strategy model of the National Archives is currently no different, but that does not make it right either.

Indeed, even **within** the organic functional framework of colleges and universities, rather than the more troublesome purely thematic or subject ones, such as evangelicalism or aerospace, I think Samuels needs to state more explicitly how her functions are to be defined. Are they chosen arbitrarily and artificially — as seems to be the case — by the documentation strategy team members, or are they to be the official, mandated, stated functions of the records-creating organization? The latter is closer to the provenance context familiar to archivists — notwithstanding a conceptual rather than a physical version of it; the former betrays a more thematic or subject-based emphasis. In other words, in the institutional functional analysis, are Samuels' functions for colleges and universities — such as confer credentials, convey knowledge, sustain, promote culture — imposed by archivists or have they evolved organically from the institution at hand. If the latter, then they are closer to Hans Booms' provenance-based approach. If the former, are they not then merely the documentation strategy under another name? The difference is subtle, but central to archival work. In other words, I would like Samuels to clarify the criteria, or theory, by which functions are to be isolated or defined. Once that is defined, moreover, she must state clearly what the difference is between a function so defined (such as to *evangelize*) and a theme or subject (such as *evangelicalism*)? The distinction is fundamental, but she tends either to blur it or indeed to equate function and theme.

As Hans Booms, Candace Loewen, and Brien Brothman also argued at the Banff Conference, Samuels also needs to confront explicitly — as indeed we all do, as appraising archivists — Jenkinson's hoary chestnut of the impartiality of the archivist. Samuels implicitly rejects this using her active documenter model, especially when she speaks of filling the gaps where original documentation is scarce. I think she is right. The slightest knowledge of deconstructionist theory quickly shatters the illusion of archival neutrality or impartiality, of archival work being a science. Indeed, recent students of science itself

have radically reconceived that discipline by recognizing its subjective nature, where previously it too — far more than archives — had been defended as objective, neutral, impersonal and disinterested. In fact, science was anything but neutral. Its choice of projects, methods and practitioners, its standards of acceptance and its reasons for exclusion, failure and rejection all reflected current needs and interests, as well as deeper social, linguistic, ideological, gender and emotional patterns.[15] There is an analogous lesson here for archivists. Like the scientist, archivists — despite the Jenkinsonian canons of strict impartiality — are (and always have been) very much a part of the historical process in which they find themselves. Like scientists, they should accept rather than deny their own historicity. Like scientists, they should reintegrate the subjective (the mind) into the objective (the matter) in their theoretical constructs. This admission of the subjectivity and bias of the archivist does not deny the validity of the principles of provenance or *respect des fonds*, nor is it a licence to collect willy-nilly whatever "hot" subject is currently fashionable. The sanctity of archival context is not necessarily incompatible with the evident subjectivity of the archivist, but the two issues must be addressed explicitly and their implications for our theory and practice carefully considered. Samuels takes us further than most North American archivists normally stray from the Jenkinsonian canons, but I would like to see her carry her points still further on this important issue.

Balancing my positive and negative comments concerning the contribution which Helen Samuels has made in her innovative Banff paper and in the past, what is my conclusion? I think the documentation strategy concept which she has pioneered should be seen clearly as a secondary, supplementary step to be used **after** corporate and institutional records have been appraised on the basis of provenance, a provenance rooted **conceptually** in the records-creators' mandated functions — not artificial functions — and by using a structural-functional matrix; how that is to be done is another story and another paper.[16] Along this line, however, I think she should develop further and make central the new concept of the institutional functional analysis, and relate function and structure more integrally. The documentation strategy itself should be used in order to **locate** (not appraise) private papers (and documents other media) of those significant individuals and organizations who have not been caught in the institutional functional records net, and whose records complement and supplement the institutional records within that net. As its name implies, the documentation strategy is a **strategic** approach useful for identifying such fonds (which then are appraised provenancially), but it is not thus far a successful **theoretical** integration of functionalism and structuralism into a model of societal dynamics. However, as for Samuels' general methodological proposal of more contextual research for archivists, of "top-down" appraisal starting with the records-creating context before looking at actual individual fonds and series of records, and of approaching all appraisal in a comprehensive, cross-media, cross-institutional, holistic manner, I can only signal the highest praise and support. She is absolutely right on all three counts.

I said I would leave archivists with a few questions or choices based on Helen Samuels' address. Do archivists see themselves as active or passive participants in the appraisal process? Are they managers of existing records placed before them or documenters of various societal concepts? If the latter, are those concepts which archivists focus on, in the first instance, primarily based on function, structure or subject/theme? If documenters, do archivists also fill gaps in order to meet the problem of scarcity of documentation, or do they only concentrate on the problem of abundance and on

destroying whatever they can before "taking" the rest? More theoretically, what is the social relationship between function and structure, between information and the medium of recording, between organic function and subjective theme, between institutional and private creators? What role if any should researchers/users have in determining appraisal decisions? And, finally, under the imperatives of the post-custodial era, are archivists ready to move from physical to logical paradigms, from the actual artifact to the conceptual act of creation? In that brave old/new world of "act and deed," are they really ready to accept the theoretical implications of their own historicity and thus to abandon the myth of Jenkinsonian impartiality as a guiding light?

If Helen Samuels has been able to raise such fundamental questions and so revolutionize the archival profession in five short years, then the quality of her work speaks for itself. The choices are now yours to ponder and make.

Notes

* Commentary on Helen Samuels' plenary address to the 1991 Annual Conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists. A revised version of the paper on which this commentary is based was published in *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 125-140. In revising my original text for inclusion in *Archivaria*, I have tried to maintain the same tone and spirit of my commentary in Banff on 24 May 1991, including some repetition made for oral effect. I have, however, changed certain verb tenses and sentence structures to appeal more to the present reader rather than the original listener. My comments are based solely on the version of Helen Samuels' paper she gave in Banff, and may not reflect revisions she has made in a subsequent draft submitted to *Archivaria*. Intellectual honesty requires me to point out as well that I did not ever intend these remarks for publication, and several paragraphs of them (where indicated) are lifted almost verbatim from my forthcoming "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal," an essay written in early 1991 for the ACA's *Festschrift* for Hugh Taylor. The editor of that volume, Barbara Craig, has agreed to this partial republication, for the *Festschrift* should be available before this issue of *Archivaria* and the paragraphs involved are not at all central to the arguments in my essay in that volume. I thank her for this courtesy, thus enabling the General Editor to print all three Canadian commentators' remarks on the appraisal theses of three distinguished international speakers.

1 The original statement is Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls The Past," *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986), pp. 109-24. A recent article features an updated overview, and its footnotes contain useful additional references; 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," *American Archivist* 51 (Winter-Spring 1988), pp. 28-42, and the commentaries which follow by Frank Boles and Frank J. Burke. Two other oft-cited examples are 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. The working out of Samuels' approach, without the theoretical underpinnings, was first evidenced in Joan K. Haas, Helen Willa Samuels, and Barbara Trippel Simmons, *Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide* (Chicago, 1985).

2 See David Bearman, "Archival Methods," *Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report No. 9* (Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 13-15, and chapter 1 generally; Terry Cook, *The Archival Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information: A RAMP Study with Guidelines* (Paris, 1991), pp. 33-34, 36-37, and chapter 3 generally.

3 It is portions of this section which, as stated in note 1 above, draw heavily on a previous manuscript also being published.

4 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), pp. 456-69; Hugh A. Taylor, "Trans-

formation in the Archives: Technological Adjustment or Paradigm Shift?," *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 1987-88), pp. 18, 24.

5 Taylor, "My Very Act and Deed," p. 468.

6 See David Bearman, "Multisensory Data and Its Management," in Cynthia Durance, ed., *Management of Recorded Information: Converging Disciplines* (Munich, 1990), *passim*. The most recent analysis (at time of writing) of the new electronic technology and its impact on archives is United Nations, Advisory Committee for the Co-ordination of Information Systems, *Management of Electronic Records: Issues and Guidelines* (New York, 1990), in which Bearman also had the leading hand.

7 Taylor, "Transformation in the Archives," p. 24; Hugh A. Taylor, "The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries As Heritage," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-83), p. 118; and Hugh A. Taylor, "Information Ecology and the Archives of the 1980s," *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984), p. 25.

8 Taylor, "Transformation in the Archives," p. 24.

9 F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," in Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch, eds., *A Modern Archives Reader* (Washington, 1984), p. 326 (first published in 1975). Ham calls appraisal "our most important and intellectually demanding task as archivists." Appraisal has similarly been termed "the greatest professional challenge to the archivist" by Maynard J. Brichford, in his *Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal & Accessioning* (Chicago, 1977), p. 1.

10 Ham, "Archival Edge," pp. 326, 328-29, 333; F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981), p. 207. For yet another and recent example of the weathervane mentality that Ham criticizes, see Elizabeth Lockwood, "'Imponderable Matters:' The Influence of New Trends in History on Appraisal at the National Archives," *American Archivist* 53 (Summer 1990), pp. 394-405. Public programming and "outreach" advocates, who claim too much for their otherwise legitimate activities in archives, fall into the same trap; for the most recent and comprehensive statement, see Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in the Management of Archives," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91), p. 109, and related endnotes. Despite the acuity of his critiques, Ham's solutions to take archivists from the custodial to the post-custodial era emphasize strategic rather than theoretical issues: the need for better planning, networks, cooperation, technologies, resource use, and so on. The implications of the post-custodial era for archival theory, especially moving from a physical to conceptual paradigm, are addressed more directly in David Bearman and Richard Lytle, "The Power of the Principle of Provenance," *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985-86), pp. 14-27; and in my "The Concept of the Archival Fonds: Theory, Description, and Provenance in the Past Custodial Era," (forthcoming 1992).

11 For a probing critique of the theory of values so applied to archival appraisal, see David Bearman, *Archival Methods, Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report No. 9* (Pittsburgh, 1989), pp. 9-16. I similarly reject the values approach in my *Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information*, and suggest an alternate appraisal model.

12 Richard C. Berner, *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis* (Seattle and London, 1983), pp. 6-7. This relatively undeveloped state of archival appraisal theory, at least in North America, is reinforced, although sometimes only implicitly, by two surveys of writing in the field: Harold T. Pinkett, "American Archival Theory: The State of the Art," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981), pp. 217-19; and Nancy E. Peace, "Deciding What To Save: Fifty Years of Theory and Practice," in Nancy E. Peace, ed., *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance* (Lexington, 1984), pp. 1-18. European development of appraisal theory is more advanced.

13 For these extents, see Carol Couture and Jean-Yves Rousseau, *The Life of a Document: A Global Approach to Archives and Records Management* (Montreal, 1987), p. 184 (English translation of *Les archives au XXe siècle*, 1982); Terry Cook, "Billions of Records: What to Keep — What to Destroy?," *The Archivist* 13 (March-April 1986), pp. 1-2; F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance," in Peace, ed., *Archival Choices*, p. 133; and National Archives of Canada, Government Archives Division, Registry File 9465-50/C35, Archival Appraisal of Employment and Immigration Canada, Canadian Job Strategy/Employment Services, April 1991 (which employment functions, it should be noted, do not include unemployment insurance,

a programme of equal complexity. It should be mentioned too that National Archives' archivists, unlike in some institutions, also do the descriptive and reference functions as well as appraisal within their portfolios). Other examples of these explosive trends are given in Felix Hull, *The Use of Sampling Techniques in the Retention of Records: A RAMP Study With Guidelines* (Paris, 1981), p. 2. For another, broader perspective and more examples, see Terry Cook, "Rites of Passage: The Archivist and the Information Age," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91), pp. 171-76. From an even larger perspective, see Bearman, "Archival Methods," pp. 7-8.

14 Hugh A. Taylor, "Towards the New Archivist: The Integrated Professional," paper delivered at the annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists, Windsor, June 1988, manuscript, pp. 7-8. The second passage, quoted approvingly by Hugh Taylor and asked of archivists, is from H. Curtis Wright, "The Symbol and its Referent: An Issue for Library Education," *Library Trends* (Spring 1986), p. 743. I have also made this point repeatedly; see for example my "From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-85); "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Under-pinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91); and "Rites of Passage."

15 Evelyn Fox Keller, *Reflections on Gender and Science* (New Haven, 1985), pp. 11-12, 5-9, 130, and *passim*. The pioneering work linking "pure" scientific theory, discoveries, and methods to their very "impure" contemporary social and intellectual context was T.S. Kuhn's *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, which in 1962 demonstrated that the alleged neutrality of science was more a product of ideology than reality. Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology, and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, 1980, new edition 1990), pp. xvii-xviii, suggests that the new thermodynamics and the latest chaos theory in mathematics also support similar conclusions.

16 For those who may be interested in these alternatives, they are presented in my RAMP study and the forthcoming article in the Hugh Taylor *Festschrift*, both cited in earlier notes.