Studies in Documents

Towards Total Archives: The Form and Meaning of Photographic Records

by **LORRAINE O'DONNELL***

A recent letter to the *New York Times* by art gallery director J. Carter Brown spoke of the "logocentrism" of art custodianship. In a logocentric regime, he argued, words dominate: "the catalogue, and especially its footnotes, are what is of significance in an art exhibition, and the experience of original works of art...is of secondary importance."[1] The problem Brown identified is that while observing an actual work of art stimulates the senses and emotions as well as the intellect, describing art is limited to "logos," or words and reason. In this context, the term logocracy questioned the extent to which words can or should be used to convey the full range of meaning of a physical object.

As a critical term, however, logocentrism can be used in a broader sense, and applied to more than art galleries. Despite the reputation of the Canadian archival tradition as the leading practitioner of "total archives,"[2] it could also be called logocentric. Words are generally taken as the standard, while other modes of information configuration such as graphics have less status.[3] This is the case in theoretical treatises such as Luciana Duranti's series of articles on diplomatics (which identifies the need for diplomatic terminology for image-based documents but makes few other concessions to them), as well as to practical guides such as the *Rules for Archival Description* (which requires archivists, when formulating titles, to privilege written descriptions on graphic records over the actual images).[4]

At the same time, the dominion of word-based records is evolving: in modern usage, their physical support is as likely to be a computer disk as paper. Partly under the pressure of this change, some Canadian archivists are at least going as far as thoughtfully exploring different aspects of the relevance of record form. Recent writing on the fonds concept and archival terminology, as well as Duranti's series, are examples of this.[5]

This article attempts to bring the archival exploration of record form further in the direction of problematizing the "normalcy" of word-based records, by considering the example of photographic records. The first part of the paper discusses the

so-called "total archives debate" of fifteen years ago, which usefully summarized many of the issues of incorporating non-word-based archival documents into Canadian archival theory and practice. I will argue that although the participants in the debate were very interested in alternative record types, including photographs, they did not succeed in providing a theoretical basis for the inclusion of these records in any total archives project.

In the second section of the article, I shall attempt to develop such a theoretical foundation by reconsidering the debate in light of more recent cultural and archival thought. My method of proceeding will be to discuss the relationship between form and meaning in photographs, focusing on the case study of family photographs. Although family pictures, being private and spontaneous, may seem to be far outside the domain of mainstream archives concerns, in fact their very specificity helps tease out a crucial truth: each kind of record not only contains specific historical information as well as evidence about its creators, but also possesses a form that reveals something unique about the larger history of structured social relations. This is why the total archives project of documenting the history of all of society must be based on a theoretical and practical openness to all record forms.

In the third section of the article, the relevance of photography to concrete issues in contemporary archival theory and practice will be briefly considered. The general goal of the article is to reformulate the definition of total archives so that it adequately deals with the full variety of record forms, and thus becomes less logocentric; I believe that to do so requires a return to the fundamental issue of record form and meaning.

I. The Total Archives Debate

"Total archives" refers to a set of principles and practices particularly important to Canadian archivists. When the Public Archives of Canada was established in 1912, its legislated mandate was to acquire archival material in its various forms. This multi-media goal was carried out more thoroughly after World War II.[6] By the 1970s, total archives was declared to be "Canada's single most important contribution to international archival theory."[7] The discussion about total archives up to the early 1980s culminated in a heated debate which clattered through the pages of *Archivaria*.[8] One of its aims was to address what some archivists saw as a weakness on the home front of the concept. The history, management, theory, and practice of total archives in Canada were criticized as inadequate, contrary to the situation in the United States,[9] and Terry Cook complained that archivists here had not even properly defined total archives. In an attempt to do so, Cook summarized its four main tenets: archivists should document the history of all society, and not just its elite; archivists should acquire all different forms of archival material; they should control the entire life cycle of records; and they should create archival networks.[10]

Alongside patriotism, a preoccupation with non-textual materials fuelled the total archives debate. The New Social History was influential in its call for research on a wider variety of social groups using more kinds of archival sources.[11] For instance, Terry Cook wrote that the goal of total archives was "documenting all aspects of human endeavour at every level of society irrespective of medium."[12]

Moreover, "media," in the sense of records resulting from modern mass communication techniques, were thought to be of special social importance. Archivists were "awed by the 'Age of McLuhan.'"[13] Hugh Taylor, for instance, believed that "Marshall McLuhan articulated much that archivists can feel in their bones: the elemental power of the media in their care."[14]

If a shared interest in special media records stimulated the debate, so did differences of opinion over managing them. The total archives debate reflected institutional dynamics: it consisted of short articles written by employees of the (then-named) Public Archives of Canada expressing their views on the way their workplace should be organized. The PAC was divided by medium, so that there were separate departments for textual documents, sound and moving image documents, photographic documents, and so on. The debaters disagreed over the appropriateness of this division. Ironically, because the positions taken in the debate reflected media divisions, the institution was said to reflect "media solitudes."[15]

On Terry Cook's side of the debate were archivists from textual and audio departments. They argued that the two important Canadian archival ideas of total archives and provenance were harmonious in principle but not in practice at the PAC, where fonds were broken up in order to be distributed among the different departments. The result, they complained, was that information about the original context of documents was lost. According to this argument, a better arrangement would be to divide the PAC administratively by provenance, with archivists responsible for all records in their division regardless of physical format.[16] Andrew Birrell, a visual records archivist, stood more or less alone on the other side of the debate. He believed that the existing PAC departments were acceptable and that the reorganization suggested by Cook *et al.* would be a "tyrannical and fundamentalist application of the principle of provenance."[17] Impatience and a focus on operational concerns characterized the discussion of workplace organization.

This tone also affected the way participants in the debate treated the theoretical question of the nature of image-based archival records. Cook's side, which chose provenance over physical format as the criterion of administrative organization of records, valued the intellectual content of graphic archival records over their physical appearance and form. Cook outlined a coarse division of two types of graphic records: realistic ones appropriate for archival acquisition, and records in which the content was obscured in some way due to the appearance of the image. For instance, he said that it was possible and necessary for archivists to mark "a firm line between documentary and aesthetic art." The latter type of art included "abstract or non-representational works of Picasso—or any other artist," which, Cook argued, had "no place in an archives."[18] Acquiring abstract art would not only duplicate museum and gallery work, Ernest Dick and his audio archives colleagues added, but it would also force archivists into the role of art interpreters.[19] Because of its approach to graphic records, I will call this side of the debate "realist."

When this realist side of the debate focused its attention on photography in particular, it argued that only the "documentary" type was appropriate for archival acquisition. Documentary photographs were portrayed as unproblematically realistic and transparent carriers of "the past." In this belief, Hugh Taylor suggested that archival institutions commission photographers to produce "record photography,"

that is, objective, non-artistic shots of chosen subjects.[20] It was this attitude that also led Terry Cook to call for an end to what he felt was a preoccupation by Birrell and others at the PAC with the history of the photographic medium. Cook complained that this elevated photographic history over other subjects of cultural history, such as sports, that the PAC could also document.[21]

The other side of the debate will be called the "critical" side, because it problematized the realists' division of graphic records into two types. "The line is by no means clear-cut and points up the dilemma of a culture that distinguishes art from record in an uneasy dichotomy," wrote Hugh Taylor (who contributed to arguments on both sides of the total archives debate).[22] For those on the critical side, not only abstract art,[23] but theoretically even pottery could be archivally acceptable because it provided some physical evidence of their creators' activities.[24] For this reason, Andrew Birrell supported the existence of special art archivists at the PAC to interpret more abstract works. However, Birrell denied that his interest was in the artifact itself. He explained, "all archival media [departments] are concerned primarily with the product of the mind behind the instrument, not with the mute instrument that was used, be it pen,...paintbrush,...or camera." From Birrell's perspective, records could never simply mirror reality, regardless of their means of representation. Even photographs express a point of view.[25]

There was, however, an ironic similarity in the attitude to record form expressed by writers on both the realist and critical sides of the total archives debate. Whether emphasizing that all archival documents including photographs were expressive (critical side) or that photographs could be as neutral and documentary as other kinds of records (realist side), at the theoretical level the writers tended to minimize the differences between photographs and other records. Participants in the total archives debate, concerned as they were with documenting all of the past, developing a Canadian theory, and defining PAC practice, tended to be more eager to assert their openness to all record types than to explore the actual properties of the different types. Especially with photographs, an attractive and accessible record format, they displayed what Brien Brothman has called a "documentary/informational mentality," whereby archivists believe that with more documents kept, more of the past is preserved.[26]

II: The Debate Reconsidered: Form and Meaning in Archival Photographs

Away from the heat and operational concerns of the debate, a review of its main arguments thus reveals that it only barely touched on a central issue of the total archives project, which is dedicated to documenting the past more fully with record forms. The issue is: how exactly could a record's form contribute to its meaning?[27] With the advantage of the availability of more recent cultural and archival theory (especially diplomatics as presented by Duranti), both the way this question was framed in the total archives debate and a new approach can now be discussed. My method will be to consider how the meaning of photographic records is affected by the historical context in which their particular form was generated and used, understanding "form" in Duranti's sense of including a record's extrinsic or physical aspects, as well as its intrinsic or intellectual aspects (that is, its content).[28] I will argue that the *particular* form of photographs gives them a

unique documentary value. It is this uniqueness that makes them essential to total archives.

Extrinsic Form: Technology and History

In her survey of Canadian and American archival literature, Debra Barr argues that photographs were previously misunderstood as records, and concludes that archivists, including T.R. Schellenberg, have emphasized informational over evidential value of photographs. Such a belief gave rise to acquisition policies emphasizing certain amateur photographers, subjects, or technological developments, and encouraging research to centre on conservation, description, copyright, etc., rather than on the administrative or other values of photographs to the creators.[29] Following Barr's interpretation, the total archives debate could thus be identified as advancing an understanding that photographs provided evidence about their creators. Writers on both sides of the debate made the important point that photographs possessed evidential value, either as documents belonging in provenance-based fonds (realist side) or as artistic expressions revealing the creator's "mind" (critical side).

The realist side of the total archives debate was akin to the earlier approaches, however, in portraying photographs as capable of directly conveying the look of the past. As the previous section showed, for the realists, a photograph could potentially be a more direct, pure, or transparent conveyer of the past than other records. Ostensibly concerned with intellectual content, realists actually ended up idealizing its extrinsic form (its medium, physical support, format, and type of information configuration).[30] This was the case when they considered the capacity of the photograph to mirror its subject.[31] They would have agreed with an American contemporary who wrote that photographs "more nearly capture the reality of an instant than any other type of picture."[32] As Barr has written, photographs are powerful because they appear to be objective.[33] Another aspect of the extrinsic form of photographs to be romanticized by the realist side of the debate was their type of information configuration, which is (for the purposes of this discussion) graphic rather than word-based. For instance, Hugh Taylor contrasted the "all-at-once" understanding allowed by graphic records with the "linear stress" of literary communication.[34] Realist archivists implied that because graphic records appeared simpler, they were less entrenched in historically specific discursive systems.

In contrast, the critical side of the total archives debate, like more recent "post-modern" cultural theorists outside the archives domain, believed that photography was much less innocent. Photography was recognized to be an expressive, and thus social, record. Cultural critics describe all machinery (including the camera) as "social before being technical,"[35] that is, as embedded in history. In this view, optical devices are said to be "points of intersection where philosophical, scientific, and aesthetic discourses overlap with mechanical techniques, institutional requirements, and socioeconomic forces."[36] They are interpreted by cultural critics as physical manifestations of the paradigm called realism, that specifically modernist mode of interpreting and representing the world.[37] Jean Baudrillard has described this modernist social and historical context as "the adaptation to the order of bour-

geois rationality and, ultimately, the age of advanced industry, which was made by the eye when it accustomed itself to perceiving reality as a reality of objects and hence basically of commodities."[38] In other words, the critical cultural perspective understands photography as the product of a distinctly modern social, cultural, and scientific conception of vision and the observer, one that is related to image consumption and social control.[39]

Such an approach argues against Terry Cook's complaint, mentioned above, that studying the history of photographic technology privileged one small aspect of cultural history. Instead, it places the elements of extrinsic form of photographs within a larger system of representation tied to modern social realities. From this point of view, the technical history of photography is not only relevant, but essential, because it supposes that the meaning of a photograph *must* be considered within a particular historical context. A critical method helps unearth "an 'archaeology of knowledge', ... treating the production and the diffusion of the text as a historical event in its own right."[40] It is necessary for the development of a theoretical basis and a methodological approach for truly "total" archives.

The Effects of Extrinsic Form on Intrinsic Form: Family Photographs

The historical context in which the technology and thus the extrinsic form of photographs developed affected their intrinsic form or intellectual content. Has photography tended to focus on certain subjects? My goal here is to try to identify the typical products of a given record-producing technology, hoping to see how it could contribute to the total archives project. This is in line with Luciana Duranti's belief that the special diplomatist "has the specific purpose of identifying the 'typical' transactions of a given administration and describing their ideal structure and interrelationships, so that the entire functioning of the administration can be made evident."[41] In this light, the comment of a well-known archival appraisal manual that certain subjects (such as middle class people) are over-represented in photographic records[42] could be seen not so much as a problem, but as a way of seeing how the history of photographic technology affected the history of its intrinsic form.

The industrial revolution, which produced photographic technology, was accompanied by a consumer revolution that targeted families as buyers of photography and cameras. The early Kodak Brownie publicity, for instance, focused on family snapshots.[43] Not surprisingly, then, the family photograph is another typical genre. It will be the type to be discussed here.

There is, moreover, a typical look to this typical genre of photography. For one thing, family photographs generally display what could be called a bourgeois aesthetic. One reason for this is the strong traditions of bourgeois representation. For instance, the habit of family members representing each other in miniature paintings and silhouettes was continued in family snapshots.[44] Even when processes in the 1850s such as tintypes and ambrotypes made studio photography available to the working class,[45] the bourgeois pictorial conventions already firmly in place assured the continued representation of the family in contrived tableaux.[46] Furthermore, certain objects conforming to middle class notions of well-being are likely to be pictured in family photographs. As Patricia Holland noted for the

twentieth century, "the camera is part of a lifestyle based on house, garden and car which moulds the aspirations of the suburban nations of the prosperous west."[47]

Another predictable aspect of the appearance of family photographs is the portrayal of things in a positive light. One writer noticed that in his own family's pictures, "family friends are permissible, if sober and happy, but not mistresses, abandoned wives, distressed children or recalcitrant servants."[48] The outcome of an album of such photographs is to present an image of a united extended family that may really be scattered and inharmonious.[49]

The Meaning of Family Photographs

The diplomatic method of identifying the typical record helps reveal the meaning of family photography. Those believing that art "attempts to represent, explore, and criticize human experience as fully and honestly as possible ..."[50] would argue that in censoring negative images, in its lack of criticism of its subject, family photography is not artistic. Susan Sontag, for instance, has written that, "like every mass art form, photography is not practiced by most people as an art. It is mainly a social rite, a defense against anxiety, and a tool of power."[51] However, the pictures of cars, holidays, and happy families are creative fantasies. In this sense, showing the family smiling and united in pictures may not be dishonest as much as a sign of a family effort at positive self-construction. If we broaden our definition of art to mean "a cultural activity, and culture as the arena in which a society produces those representations that make sense of its world,"[52] this could include family photographs. Perhaps a compromise term could be used—*family art*[53]: this term includes the sense of both a finished representation and the creative process of people making "representations that make sense of its world." With this expression, the dichotomy between documentary and artistic photography proposed by realist archivists breaks down.

Not only the appearance, but also the presentation of family photography is part of family art culture, a physical sign of the family cultivating or constructing itself according to a certain image. For instance, arranging photographs into albums makes connections between individual photographs, thus providing narrative coherence to people's understanding of their personal family histories.[54] It is often during the process of preparing family photo albums that any stray pictures which do not portray the family positively are weeded out.

Showing photographs involves story telling, another narrative act in which the family makes its own history and image. Describing vacations or other events is a part of the process of family culture with which many people are familiar. When stories are being told, families go beneath the appearances of their photographs; for example, a picture may remind its viewers of unhappy circumstances behind it.[55] The story teller will say, "there we are on our camping trip. We're smiling, but we were very tired and had had a lousy day." One writer aptly calls photographs "mirrors with memories."[56] This point recalls a cultural historian's argument that historians in the time of the Renaissance assumed their audiences would go beyond reason and logic to use aesthetic judgment and feeling to understand their texts: "it was imagination that recovered events from the cistern of the readers' memory and found in them their invisible content and affective power."[57]

Thus, family photography is part of a system of representative practices, visual and oral, that are intimately tied in with the way the family is constructed. The family is not a stable objective reality that can simply be reflected in a photograph, as a realist might have it. A family is a process, and its history is actually made *with and through* photography. In other words, the family does not just look a certain way in photographs, but is a certain way because of photographs. The family constructs itself in its self-representations. This is to recognize a key epistemological insight of contemporary critical cultural theory: we cannot know a subject except through representations of it. One critic has explained this concept as follows: "Since reality can be known only through the forms that articulate it, there can be no reality outside of representation .... It is a fiction produced by its cultural representations, a construction discursively shaped and solidified through repetition."[58]

This is not to say, however, that the family is free to represent itself any way it chooses. As we saw in the discussion of typical family photographs, the way families have represented and continue to represent themselves visually has been influenced by, and to some extent limited to, the dominant social forms of expression available to them. Families take pictures that will look like the others they have seen, that conform to their idea of what families *should* look like. They reveal an internalization of community values. The fact that families are shown smiling, united, and enjoying glamorous possessions reveals the hegemony of middle class priorities. The process of construction of the bourgeois ideal of the family is a social ideal; *anyone* looking at family photographs is an "observer," that is, "one who is embedded in a system of conventions and limitations."[59]

There are, in other words, social rules affecting the creation of family photographs. To put this concept into the terminology of diplomatic analysis, the relationship between the individual (family) and society is mediated through social rules of representation, and manifests itself in specific documentary form.[60] In my critical, cultural reading of family photographs, the diplomatic notion of rules of intrinsic form, usually applied to public and corporate records, also applies to private family records.[61] Both the meaning and the form of family photography are social and public. Photography can be understood as the point of intersection between private experience and social discourses.[62]

Family photographs are thus doubly important historical sources, for not only are they revealing of the construction of a particular family, but, taken collectively, they expose aspects of the enduring and evolving social structure called "the family." Following this interpretation, any archival institution attempting to document the history of society would be doubly obliged to acquire family photographs: as I stated in the introduction, not only do they contain specific historical information as well as evidence about their creators, they also possess a unique form that reveals the history of structured social relations. The camera that determines the extrinsic form of the photograph is not just technology, it is social technology; similarly, the family photograph album possesses "meanings [that] are social as well as personal."[63]

The method of relating a document's meaning to its form by considering its historical context is the essence of Luciana Duranti's definition of diplomatics as "the

discipline which studies the genesis, forms and transmission of archival documents, and their relationship with the facts represented in them and with their creator, in order to identify, evaluate, and communicate their true nature."[64] It is also an insight of contemporary cultural theory. Taken together, these approaches allow us to see the family photograph as a product of a specific kind of technology lodged in a certain ideological system and as a form of visual expression mediated through ideological rules of representation.

The two aspects of the total archives approach from the 1970s that have been considered in this paper, documenting more of society and using more media records, should therefore be refined. The meaning of a record is determined by the social and historical aspects of its form. Archivists must accept that the history of each physical form is central to understanding the meaning of records, including private records and records not based on words. Recognizing this relationship of form and meaning is central to the total archives project.

III. Conclusion: Contemporary Archives Theory and Practice

Below are a few of the many questions that arise in response to the critical method adopted above of relating form to meaning of archival documents.

1. In the specific case of family photographs: it would be interesting to compare photography with that newer technological means of self-representation, the video recording. Is the social function of family photo albums—that is, maintaining the social structure of the family, through the activity of telling stories while displaying the pictures—being carried over? Or do videos, having their own movement and sound, take over the story telling? Archivists could investigate whether people have exploited this new technology to portray a more rounded image of the family, at play and at work.[65]

2. Do archivists adequately take into account the social determination of images and image technology? Cultural theorists argue that not only the family, but also the social categories of race and gender, have been constructed partly on the basis of appearances and thus through photographic representation.[66] Archivists should be sensitive to how the records in their custody contribute to the construction of these categories.[67]

3. Duranti focused her attention on what she calls "the concrete record with its stable form" that is a tangible evidence of a finite activity.[68] Yet what activity is being documented, and who is the creator, with family photographs? A family photograph involves documenting a certain activity (such as a birthday party), a creative act of framing and shooting a certain picture, and the larger act of family self-production as it discusses the printed image at a later date, perhaps with sympathetic outsiders. Can archivists isolate the first act as the thing being documented? This question is being asked by other archival theorists. For instance, Terry Cook has proposed that archivists should try to acquire documents that will communicate the *response* to creative works like films, as well as the creative works themselves. This asks archivists to assess material for its potential to render new kinds of understanding of society.[69]

4. And finally, do the archival practices of acquiring records, putting them in boxes, and describing them using *Rules for Archival Description* really preserve original meaning? Looking at the social discourses involved in records production and use leads to an awareness that there is an archival discourse adding a new layer of meaning on records. As Brien Brothman has said, archivists need "to situate the cultural embeddedness of archival practice" itself.[70]

For instance, to return to the point made in the introduction of this paper, there are limitations to the way written information, including this paper, can ever convey the full meaning of photographs. As an art critic wrote, "it is a question of particular practices of writing, of the gaps, omissions, and points of emphasis through which certain images are outlined and others erased. The authorial discourse (organizer, critic, or artist) constructs a pictorial textuality which pertains more to the readable than to the visible."[71] From living works of family art to pieces of information described in a computer, photographs change their meaning. They are converted "from dramas into documents."[72]

Notes

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1 J. Carter Brown, letter to the editor, *New York Times*, 21 March 1993. Brown could be praised for using language creatively in order to build a critical history of his profession, something Brien Brothman calls on archivists to do in "Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), p. 79. Logocracy is a rarely used word. The *Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 7th ed., does not define it, although it does define its root, the Greek word Logos, as "word, reason, account." It has been used, however, in the field of cultural criticism, where its meaning is more precise yet more wide-ranging than for Brown. For instance, semiotician Jacques Derrida uses "logocentrism" to criticize the idea in Western metaphysics that speech precedes writing. On this point, see the introduction to Jacques Derrida, in Peggy Kamuf, ed., *A Derrida Reader: Between the Blinds*, (New York, 1991), especially pp. 31-32. (I am grateful to Professor Thomas Keirstead for pointing this out to me.)

2 Hugh A. Taylor, "Canadian Archives: Patterns from a Federal Perspective," *Archivaria* 2 (Summer 1976), pp. 3-10.

3 Regarding this terminology, see note 30.

4 Bureau of Canadian Archivists, *Rules for Archival Description* (Ottawa, 1992), rules 1.1B and 4.1B. Luciana Duranti, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science, Part III," *Archivaria* 30 (Summer 1990) p. 14. For the rest of Duranti's series, see "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science," *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989), pp. 7-27 (hereafter cited as "Diplomatics [Part I]"); Part II in *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989-90); Part IV in *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91), pp. 10-25; Part V in *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), pp. 6-24; and Part VI in *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 6-24.

5 Ibid. Duranti's articles discuss the interrelationship of physical form and intellectual content. See also Terry Cook's theorizing of fonds as a tool of analysis created by archivists rather than a physical entity, in "The Concept of the Archival Fonds: Theory, Description, and Provenance in the Post-Custodial Era," in Terry Eastwood, ed., *The Archival Fonds: From Theory to Practice* (Ottawa, 1992); and Brien Brothman's speculations on order and archives ecology in "Orders of Value."

6 Taylor, "Canadian Archives," pp. 3-10.

7 Peter Bower, "After the Dust Settles," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-80), p. 221.

8 The debate consisted of the following articles: Andrew Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," *Archivaria* 10 (Summer 1980), pp. 249-52; Peter Bower, "After the Dust Settles"; Terry Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on Total Archives," *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979-80), pp. 148-49; Terry Cook, "Media Myopia," *Archivaria* 12 (Summer 1981), pp. 146-57; Ernest Dick et al.,

"Total Archives Come Apart," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980-81), pp. 224-27. I also consider the following articles to be part of the debate by virtue of their subjects and dates of publication: Tom Nesmith, "Le Roy Ladurie's 'Total History' and Archives," *Archivaria* 12 (Summer 1981), pp. 127-33; Taylor, "Canadian Archives"; and Hugh A. Taylor, "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist," *American Archivist* 42, no. 4 (October 1979), pp. 417-28.

9 Bower, "After the Dust Settles," p. 221.

10 Terry Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium," pp. 141-42.

11 The work of Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie was one example, which Tom Nesmith brought to the attention of *Archivaria* readers in "Le Roy Ladurie's 'Total History'." American archivists were also interested in different aspects of "new" or "total" history. For instance, see Maynard Brichford, "Historians and Mirrors: A Review Essay," *American Archivist* 36, no. 3 (July 1973), p. 401, and Jerome M. Clubb, "Quantification and the 'New' History: A Review Essay," *American Archivist* 37, no. 1 (January 1974), pp. 15-25.

12 Cook, "Media Myopia," p. 150.

13 Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium," p. 142.

14 Taylor, "Canadian Archives," p. 10.

15 Dick et al., "Total Archives Come Apart," p. 227.

16 See Cook's "Media Myopia" and "The Tyranny of the Medium," and Dick et al., "Total Archives Come Apart."

17 Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," p. 251.

18 Cook, "Media Myopia," p. 149.

19 Dick et al., "Total Archives Come Apart," p. 226.

20 Taylor, "Canadian Archives," p. 17.

21 Cook, "Media Myopia," p. 150.

22 Taylor, "Documentary Art," p. 425.

23 Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," pp. 250-51.

24 Taylor, "Canadian Archives," p. 14.

25 Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," p. 250-51. Terry Cook tells us that Richard Saul Wurman has made the same point about maps. For Wurman, maps are representations following certain patterns, leaving some information out: "despite their appearance of scientific objectivity, maps are metaphors. They are not 'mirrors of reality,' but rather 'a means of understanding it.'" Richard Saul Wurman, *Information Anxiety* (New York, 1989), cited in Terry Cook, "Rites of Passage: The Archivist and the Information Age," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91), p. 174.

26 Brothman, "Orders of Value," p. 86.

27 Approaching the subject in this way reverses Helen Samuels's documentation strategy procedure, which involves first choosing the subject or activity to be documented, and then considering what each type of physical format can contribute to the historical coverage. Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *American Archivist* 49, no. 2 (Spring 1986), especially pp. 4, 12, 13.

28 Duranti, "Diplomatics [Part V]," p. 6. This definition of the term "form" is broader than the traditional one. For instance, Schellenberg calls form a physical attribute of records. T.R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York, 1965), p. 119.

29 Debra Elaine Barr, "Analyzing Photographs in Archival Terms," (Master of Archival Studies Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985), chapter 6 especially pp. 64, 69-77.

30 In the total archives debate, the words "medium" and "media" were used loosely, referring to both "means by which something is communicated" (e.g., the mass media, for instance television), and "material or form used by artist, musical composer, etc." (e.g., television records such as video tapes); (definitions from the *Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, 7th ed., s.v. "Medium.") For the purposes of this paper a more precise working definition of **medium** is the technique of recording, transmission, or reproduction, e.g., photography, print, even handwriting. The medium determines the artifact or **type of document**, e.g., photographic print, poster, film, or diary. Schellenberg uses "type" in this way. (Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives*, p.119.) Each document has a **physical support** which is not specific to the document type, so that for instance a paper support could be topped with ink in the case of a letter, or with emulsion in the case of a photographic print. Different **processes** (involving specific chemicals, and supports) create different **formats** of photographs. For a discussion of photographic methods, processes and formats, see Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler et al., *Archives and Manuscripts: Administration of Photographic Collections* (Chicago, 1984), pp. 32-41. Different media use a variety of **forms of information configuration,** such as cartographic, word based (textual, spoken word), or graphic. (Schellenberg uses

the term "classes" to explain this general idea, although he refers to "text" rather than "word-based record," thereby omitting spoken documents. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives*, p. 66.) The term "information configuration" is Duranti's; see "Diplomatics [Part VI]," p. 7. Each form of information configuration tends to be present more in some media than in others. For instance, a photograph usually has graphic configuration, but it may use words as well, if it pictures a sign or a book. A tape recording may use words or music or natural sounds. And finally, documents **communicate through different senses**, generally either visually (texts, graphics) or aurally (tapes, films) although it can also be through touch (Braille). This term has also been called "sensory information modality" by David Bearman. (Cited in Duranti, "Diplomatics [Part VI]," p. 7.)

31 In this vein, Brothman has noted that archivists, like nineteenth-century German historians, want "to extract some kind of objective unadulterated record of the past," a point especially applicable to some of the proponents of "total archives." Brothman, "Orders of Value," p. 86.

32 Walter Rundell Jr., "Photographs as Historical Evidence: Early Texas Oil," *American Archivist* 41, no. 4 (October 1978), p. 375.

33 Barr, "Analyzing Photographs," chapter 2.

34 Taylor, "Documentary Art," p. 418. In fact, writers have argued that modern computer capabilities such as hypertext allow text records to escape this stress, what Robert Coover has called "'the tyranny of the line.'" Cited in Jodi Daynard, "Floppy Disks Are Only Knowledge, But Manuscripts Are Wisdom," *The New York Times Book Review*, 28 March 1993, p. 27. Also see Taylor, "Documentary Art," pp .418, 426-27. Even literary texts may no longer be said to be linear in their creation. Paul Morgan points out that just like different releases of a film leads to different titles over time and place, modern word-processed literary texts have integrity at different stages in their creation, and a draft may be said to be as legitimate as a later version. Paul Morgan, "Hypertext and the Literary Document," *Journal of Documentation* 47, no. 4 (December 1991), pp. 373-88.

35 Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minneapolis, 1988), p. 13, cited in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer: On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990), p. 31, note 8.

36 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*.

37 On this topic, see Elizabeth Deeds Ermarth, *Realism and Consensus in the English Novel* (Princeton, N.J., 1983).

38 Jean Beaudrillard, *In Search of Wagner*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (London, 1981), p. 99, cited in Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 11, note 10.

39 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, pp. 27, 133. Susan Sontag puts it another way: "the 'realistic' view of the world compatible with bureaucracy redefines knowledge—as techniques and information. Photographs are valued because they give information." Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York, 1989), p. 22. Adopting a more radical approach, Donald B. Kuspit argues that photography has so pervaded the individual self-image that it removes our ability to feel separate or natural, and thus precludes our ability to keep a critical distance from society or to resist its control. "Photography can function this way because it represents the domination of social authority through its 'spying' on our existence." Donald P. Kuspit, "Flak from the 'Radicals': The American Case against German Painting," in Brian Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation* (New York, 1984), p. 146.

40 Raphael Samuel, "Reading the Signs: Part II," *History Workshop* 33 (Spring 1992), p. 239.

41 Duranti, "Diplomatics [Part IV]," p. 17.

42 William H. Leary, *The Archival Appraisal of Photographs: A RAMP Study with Guidelines* (Paris, 1985), chapter 4.

43 Philip Pacey, *Family Art* (Cambridge, U.K., 1989), p. 61.

44 Ibid., pp. 15-16.

45 Barr, "Analyzing Photographs," pp. 1-2; and Ritzenthaler, *Archives and Manuscripts*, p. 11.

46 A similar point has been made for other forms of visual imagery. For instance, John Berger argues that publicity photographs have been influence by painterly traditions. See John Berger, *Ways of Seeing* (London, 1972).

47 Holland, "Introduction," p. 5.

48 John Bentley Mays, "Travels with My Aunt through a Visual Paradise," *Globe and Mail*, 20 February 1991, p. C1.

49 Sontag, *On Photography*, pp. 8-9.

50 Robin Wood, "Creativity and Evaluation: Two *Film Noirs* of the '50s," *CineAction!* 22/22 (Summer/Fall 1990), p. 10.

51 Sontag, *On Photography*, p. 8.

52 Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women: Imagery of the Suffrage Campaign 1907-14* (London, 1987), p. xi. This definition rejects the idealist notions of artistic beauty or significance and suggests that these are categories societies create rather than discover. See Abigail Solomon-Godeau, "Photography After Art Photography," in Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism*, p. 76. Martha Rosler has noted that photographs deemed "documentary" in one period have sometimes been "recovered for art." Martha Rosler, "Lookers, Buyers, Dealers and Makers: Thoughts on Audience," in Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism*, p. 323. As one example of this, a recent biography of nineteenth-century scientific photographer Étienne-Jules Marey [Marta Braun, *The Work of Étienne-Jules Marey (1830-1904)* (Chicago)] discusses the aesthetic value of the pictures. See the review of Braun's book in Anthony Grundberg, "The Scientist Who Took Pictures," *New York Times Book Review*, 25 April 1993, p. 35. Another interesting example is to be found in an examination of New York City Police Department photographs, which author Luc Sante appreciates as "the traces of a forgotten master." Luc Sante, *Evidence* (New York, 1992), p. x.

53 Pacey, *Family Art*, p. 2. In another context, Lisa Tickner has described how developing a style of visual expression was an indication that a group had "acquired its cultural forms." This phrase could equally apply to the family. Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*, p. 57.

54 Holland, "Introduction," p. 1.

55 Pacey, *Family Art*, pp. 78-80.

56 Ibid., p. 61.

57 Karl F. Morrison, *History as a Visual Art in the Twelfth-Century Renaissance* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1990), pp. xix and 241.

58 Kate Linker, "Representation and Sexuality," in Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism*, p. 392. A similar point has also been made for a very different topic, a critique of pornography: "Sex or sexual practices do not just exist out there, waiting to be represented; rather, there is a dialectical relationship between representational practices which construct sexuality, and actual sexual practices, each informing the other." Susanne Kappeler, *The Pornography of Representation* (Minneapolis, 1986), p. 2.

59 Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, p. 6.

60 In a letter to *Archivaria*, Luciana Duranti explains that the focus of her articles was to show "the determinant influence of the juridical system on authorship or origination," but admits that a more accurate, modern term than "juridical system" would be "social system." Duranti, "Brothman on Authorship: The Diplomatic Perspective," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 4-5. However, in her series of articles, Duranti restricts her conclusions to records resulting from juridical acts. See note 61 below.

61 Although I am borrowing Duranti's concept of rules of representation, I am disagreeing with her findings as they concern private archival records. Duranti's main concern is with archival records resulting from juridical acts, which, in her terminology, are products of a juridical person acting according to administrative procedures. I have discussed private photographic "manuscripts" (Duranti's term) which she says result from non-juridical individuals acting according to their own will. (This is discussed thoroughly in the articles, but see especially Duranti, "Diplomatics [Part II]," p. 10, and "Diplomatics [Part I]," p. 15.) My conclusion is that it is useful to theorize that there are rules of representation for family photographs, in order to enrich our understanding of total archives. Duranti will only admit that private documents may be affected by "procedures," albeit unwittingly. Love letters or amateur photographs, products of "individual intentionality," will still likely reflect "social habits and routines" because, through social conventions, "'structure' penetrates all aspects of human life and limits our inner freedom...." However, she concludes that in the end most private documents "will not strictly adhere to rules of form" so that subjecting them to a diplomatic study may not reveal much about their nature. See Duranti, "Diplomatics [Part I]," p. 15, and "Brothman on Authorship," p. 5.

62 Holland, "Introduction," p. 9.

63 Ibid., p. 3.

64 Duranti, "Diplomatics [Part I]," p. 17.

65 As the commentator for session 10 of the Association of Canadian Archivists' annual conference in Banff in 1991, I argued that the papers presented, taken together, could provide the insight that photograph albums provide more evidence about their creators than videos, which are generally less manipulated (edited, arranged, and so on) and thus less personal. The papers presented were Leslie Mobbs, "Looking at Pictures: The Appraisal of Photograph Albums as Documents," and Krzysztof Gebhard, "The Negative and the Positive: Elements of History in the Home Movie."

66 For instance, historians argue that the history of the female gender as a social construction is closely related to the history of the appearance of women. See, for example, Georges Duby and Michelle Perrot, *Images de femmes* (France, 1992); Lisa Tickner, *The Spectacle of Women*; and Maud Lavin, *Cut With the Kitchen Knife: The Weimar Photomontages of Hannah Hoch* (New Haven, 1993).

67 At the "Eyes Across the Water: The Second Amsterdam Conference of Visual Sociology and Anthropology," (24-27 June, 1992) there were papers presented on ways that society constructs gender, race, and ethnicity using visual imagery. The papers included Nasko Krinar, "Visual Symbols of National Identity," Philip Kretsedemas, "A Study of Clothing Advertisements and Personal Identity," and Victoria Barreda, Lily Faas, and Maria Moya, "The Creation of the Third Gender in Argentina."

68 Duranti, "Diplomatics Part VI," p. 11.

69 As Cook argues, archivists must "boldly assert...they are in the *understanding* business, not the *information* business." Cook, "Rites of Passage," pp. 175-76.

70 Brothman, "Orders of Value," p. 90.

71 Mary Kelly, "Re-Viewing Modernist Criticism," in Wallis, ed., *Art After Modernism*, p. 101.

72 This quotation is drawn from a description of the transformation in history writing over the centuries. Morrison, *History as a Visual Art*, p. 250.