

Articles

“Heritage” Revisited: Documents as Artifacts in the Context of Museums and Material Culture

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Résumé

Concevoir des documents comme des artefacts les met en relation avec les musées et la culture matérielle. Les offrir en montre comme preuve peut avoir un puissant impact sur la société. Le présent article démontre que les archives regorgent également des signes sémiologiques. La conception populaire du patrimoine est nettement identifiée à l’impact de ces signes. Les institutions archivistiques ne peuvent prétendre au monopole de la “mémoire collective” laquelle embrasse tous les témoignages qui ont survécu du passé. Un sens de plus en plus aigu de “l’endroit” et le concept de patrimoine biorégional vont nécessiter de nouveaux moyens par lesquels les institutions d’archives rendront accessibles une information locale disponible ailleurs. La manière dont le patrimoine populaire peut à la fois entretenir et créer des mythes à propos du passé est aussi envisagé. Le présent article suggère que les relations entre les musées et les institutions archivistiques méritent d’être examinées de manière plus complète en cet âge qui est rapidement en train de devenir dépendant de l’image, de l’icône, et de la réalité virtuelle où les archives joueront un rôle de plus en plus grand.

Abstract

The role of documents as artifacts places them in a relationship with museums and material culture; their display as evidence can have a powerful impact on society. The article points out that archives also abound with signs in the semiotic sense. The popular view of heritage is clearly bound up with the impact of these signs. Archives should not imply that they have a monopoly on “the collective memory,” which spans all surviving evidence from the past. An increasing sense of place and the concept of bioregional heritage will require means by which archives can locally make available information that exists elsewhere. The way in which popular “heritage” can both preserve and create myths about the past is also explored. The article suggests that the relationship between museums and

archives deserves to be examined more fully in an age that is fast becoming dependent on the image, icon, and virtual reality--where archives will increasingly play a part.

At this time, when our attention is on the challenge of the Twenty-First Century in terms of automation, other technological change, and the relation of archives to information, we should not lose our awareness of the cultural impact through what has come to be termed "heritage." I do not wish to set culture over against technology, for clearly they are not separate. All are embraced by "heritage," which is a difficult term to pin down.¹

Our heritage, in a profound sense, is all that has gone before and still survives to inspire or haunt us. In the popular sense, however, it is generally restricted to all that we *like* about the past as celebrated through displays in historic buildings, archaeological sites, museums, art galleries, libraries, archives, halls of fame, and the performing arts. In addition, we now have a government department bearing the name; there is a Heritage Fund in Alberta as a buffer against the exhaustion of oil, and the ultra-right wing Heritage Front. The natural heritage is now receiving attention as never before.

Efforts to present the dark side of heritage have often resulted in vigorous opposition, as with various Holocaust exhibits, documentaries such as *The Valour and the Horror*, and, most recently, the Smithsonian Museum's display about the dropping of the first atomic bomb, which had to be drastically modified in the face of angry public opinion. The destruction of forest ecologies continues, and even balanced presentations on this theme are regarded by many as simply the propaganda of "tree huggers" and their kind. The *display* of evidence by means of a rhetorical presentation seeking to persuade is greatly enhanced by emotive media such as maps and artifacts that trigger powerful responses from the right side of the brain that are not always based on the limitations of reason.

I would like on this occasion to explore the field of material culture (another term with a wide range of meanings), which I will extend to the limit so as to embrace much more than the bounds imposed by museologists. I want to discuss archives not only as artifacts principally in relation to museums but also as a branch of our heritage that is so often taken for granted, perhaps because we see the documents we handle as simply providing reliable information in support of other material culture, and therefore materially "invisible." I believe this problem also applies to the general run of books in libraries viewed as heritage (I am not including here the rare and the beautiful, which have self-evident artifactual value); again, because literacy objectifies and detaches us from what we read, information becomes almost rootless, floating away from the artifact in which it was anchored.

When we think of material culture, images of arrowheads, bowls, pots, and tools may come to mind as instruments whereby early humans made their way in the world. I like to see archival materials as not just configurations on various media, but as tools that include not only those wonderful legal "instruments" designed for very specific juridical responses that the study of diplomacies helps us to clarify, but any archival material which, being the record of an action, produces a response in another person or even the same person. It becomes an "instrument" for the conduct of affairs or relationships, as do the artifacts in museums. Our documents have, in one way or

another, made an impact on the lives of people to whom they were directed. They become powerful “signs” in a semiotic sense, and they can move us if we can only enter fully into the context of their creation, which we endeavour to do as part of our profession. Our records are more than a source for research, a means of ensuring accountability or as evidence in contradistinction to information without context. They are an extension of ourselves.

Archival “instruments” may be as plain and direct as a scribbled note that could change the course of history, the finely wrought work of a topographical artist, or a map on a projection that emphasizes the extent of the old British Empire on which the sun never set. As with all material culture, the tools may become obsolete, but we fail to do them justice if we do not perceive them as the powerful implements they once were. I hasten to point out that I am *not* tampering in any way with the value and administration of archives as presently understood, but rather exploring a further dimension that may help to bring us closer to the cultural world of the museum and related disciplines as we strive through convergence to shed ourselves of our Cartesian mindset, our scientific reductionism, and our defensive disciplines.

As examples of records as “instruments,” I would like to bring to your attention the work of those cartographers who have done so much to deepen our perceptions of what a map is all about.² On the surface, maps are material instruments to aid us in getting from A to B, and are regarded as more or less accurate in the information they convey. However, J.B. Harley has pointed out that “less frequently are they considered as offering crucial insights into processes of social history.”³ In short, maps as material culture broadcast a complex series of “messages.” Maps are not mirrors of geographic reality removed from factual science, but a welter of signs, symbols, and rhetoric devoted to the art of persuasion (as with so many archival materials), which might, for example, be military or economic.

What the map meant to the society that first used it is a question of crucial interpretive importance. A recent issue of *Cartographica* was given over to the growing interest in cultural and social geography. In the introduction, Robert Rundstrom points out that cultural cartography interprets maps and mapping in terms of the specific *meanings* the objects and practices have for individuals and, conversely, the ways in which people individually or in large numbers invest symbolic meaning in the cartography they produce.⁴ The growing interest in bioregionalism has given rise to the map as an instrument of empowerment for those seeking recognition by seats of power that those regions having a natural integrity of environment and community should be allowed to maintain this state of affairs or enhance it.⁵ The maps are created by local groups observing the situation as it is, overlaying existing maps and recording resources and biological relationships, including biodiversity, essential for the survival of the region’s viability. These maps are of prime importance as archives, to which the archivist can contribute much of value in other sources. Much more will be heard of them in the future. The Nunavut Atlas, in support of northern land claims, is a prime example. Doug Aberley, who has written extensively about these empowering instruments, has asserted that

in our consumer society, mapping has become an activity primarily reserved for those in power, used to delineate the property of nation states and multinational companies. The making of maps has become dominated by

specialists.... We have lost the ability ourselves to conceptualise, make and use images of place as our ancestors did.⁶

Surely this last is in the tradition of simple, hand-made material culture entirely appropriate to its purpose.

Up to now, I have used specific documents as illustration of their cultural quality, but what of the series or fonds as a whole. I remember several years ago seeing the photograph of an ancient wall, each stone of which bore a white serial number preparatory to its demolition and structural restoration. It seemed to me that this exactly expressed the original order or structure maintained in a series or fonds, without which there can be no integrity as evidence. A properly preserved fonds is an impressive structure, like a wall--or like a building, with the wall serving as a series.

It is interesting that the term architecture is used to describe complex software governing the effective movement of information--reminiscent of the "rooms" in the memory conceived of as a structure through which the mind moved to recover such information. The French word *fonds* is related to a specific herediment of land above which structures may rise. While this may be somewhat fanciful, it helps to emphasize the cultural, artifactual importance of archival structures and the manner in which they were built at the time, whether it be by a family, an industrial bureaucracy, or a non-government organization. The documentary elements of these fonds are the product of functions and, when active, were instruments for carrying out these functions. With the increasing emphasis by archivists on the functional approach, perhaps there are ways of displaying to the public how these instruments were used in the conduct of affairs, instead of always reserving selected documents to grace an encased theme. Our thousands of shelves and containers mask from the public how documents that are now archives *worked* when they were "active." Museums are rather better at this kind of thing. Perhaps we can learn from them. Why not show how the *old* systems worked and how inappropriate they now are? "People need to see technology in action and new methods demonstrated before they are ready to change."⁷

The failure to relate documentary material culture to other forms of evidence of social activity and function has caused archivists to give undue significance to the concept of the "collective memory" residing in the archives. I realize we use the term analogously, but it is still somewhat arrogant (especially when only national archives are conceived of in this way). The notion has arisen, I think, from our old ideas of emphasizing content, the preservation of which is based on several standards of value in the Schellenberg tradition: a mountain of documentary "facts" in evidential context.

Our collective memory would be sadly deficient without printed material in libraries, the artifacts in museums, or the findings of archaeology (for which the context within the site and soil is crucial). We might speak of *a* collective (albeit very fragmented) memory in archives, but the human mind must grapple as best it can with the totality of all these forms of evidence as it brings to bear the complementary but contrasting methodologies from both the left and right sides of the brain. Historians, for the most part, have in the past relied upon documentary sources, and textual ones at that, which is understandable for a number of good reasons. Scholars moving into cultural history have been more eclectic and have revealed for us a collective memory

extending far beyond the archives and embracing the whole range of material culture, besides treating myth--which derives from the collective archetypal memory beyond our consciousness--to all the serious study it deserves, as we reflect on cosmic realities.

This element of reflection and research practised by staff and public in the sacred space of the museum dedicated to the nine muses has always been a continuing tradition, which is now threatened by the tyranny of the turnstile and the efforts to be all things to all visitors.⁸ The great museums of the past strove, and continue to strive, to exemplify the value of knowledge and wisdom through research and display of the widest possible range of cultural artifacts. These imposing buildings and their contents are also monuments to national power and acquisitiveness on a grand scale worldwide, and are cultural treasures in their own right as the product of their day and age. Likewise, the National Archives of Canada which at one time exemplified the centrist values of a country intent on nation building--has gradually adapted to the presence of major archives in the provinces seeking to keep their documents on their own soil. Today we must find other means of resolving the dilemma posed by an increasing sense of place as expressed in, for instance, bioregionalism: where possible, cultural artifacts should remain or return to where they were created, especially those that might be described as "site specific."

Behind the control of cultural artifacts in museums, libraries, and archives is the search for order, without which there is no control.⁹ Brien Brothman reminds us that this artifactual order creates values beyond the value of the individual items. When he says that there is nothing "natural" about the ordering of documents, he is referring to the grouping of material by creators and archivists so that evidence can be retrieved in context.¹⁰

The weakest part in the archival chain of orderly sequence is the clerk who returns a document to the wrong file. In short, flowers in the wrong place become weeds. The wilderness garden is still a contradiction in terms. The organic analogy is the closest we can get to describing the preservation and accumulation of contextual evidence in documents, and is perfectly valid. It is interesting that, when decisions are being made, documents on the desk of an executive that fuel these decisions may have been drawn from a wide range of series. When these documents are returned, the *context* of the *decision* may be lost in the tangled garden of the executive's mind. This problem will be further exacerbated when virtual documents for decision making, assembled from a number of relational databases, will themselves lack context and the ability to retrieve them. We will need to document more rigorously the evidence used by the decision makers.

The tangled garden of the cybernetic age may replace the order of our present documentary world as we learn (through chaos theory?) to live within, and derive life from, some kind of a controlled free form wilderness analogous to a wilderness garden, devoid of the neat geometric flower beds of our presently dominant linear thinking. Jock Macdonald's great painting *A Tangled Garden* in the National Gallery, hoed in tension, structure, and chaos, makes the point wonderfully well.

The contrast between literate and non-literate societies, in the manner in which information is set in order and organized for retention in the memory, has been examined by Jack Goody and others. In a recent article, Michael Rowlands quotes S. Kuechler:

Instead of a literate/non-literate distinction she makes one between a mode of transmission from one generation to another through the creation of material culture and another where objects are not preserved and transmitted but are reproduced so that "each is reminiscent of another seen in the past."¹¹

Quintillan used rooms in a house of memory to store information as a mnemonic device to further the art of rhetoric. Rowlands further quotes Mary Carruthers as arguing that "medieval culture in the west was fundamentally memorial, to the same profound degree that modern culture is documentary.... A book was a way of remembering, not a way of making texts."¹² This could be one reason why medieval texts and documents were so heavily abbreviated: they were not used in a strictly literate way. Rowlands further notes that

The reason therefore why heirlooms, souvenirs and photographs have this particular capacity to evoke and establish continuities with past experience is precisely because, as a material symbol rather than verbalised meaning, they provide a special form of access to both individual and group unconscious processes.¹³

Images found in both archives and museums are of course a rich source of this kind of cultural transmission, especially those that relate to commonly experienced events, from World War II recruiting posters to the old advertisements that surrounded our visits to the stores. As textual documents, as we presently understand them, become less and less familiar with the onslaught of automation, they may have a similar kind of impact. When the ink flowed and the paint spilled on the Proclamation of the Constitution, the document became rooted in an age of bizarre protest resulting in conflicting emotions and memories.¹⁴ It is this non-literate awareness extended to the large and small artifact of the past (whether originals or reconstructions) which is the stuff of "heritage." Our present understanding of heritage is being extended by adding the surviving *biota* of the natural world, especially those threatened with extinction.

It may be useful to distinguish between the subconscious revival of a memory arising out of an event experienced personally, or through a family tradition, and the secondhand re-creation of an event resulting from an historical account or explanation provided by a museum's story line, or a monumental plaque, which is the usual experience of the tourist. Ian McKay has made a case whereby an intensive campaign to "manufacture" historical awareness through the use of plaques both energized the residents of Nova Scotia in regard to their past, and attracted tourists anxious to feed off this energy as an imagined Golden Age is re-created--as recreation:

One aspect of our present condition of post-modernity -- that is the experience of a capitalist modernity transformed by globalization, cybernetics and the transformation of most traditional systems of meaning, is the "mode retro." Images of the past are used to honour everything from political parties to breakfast cereals; this "flourishing" of the past appears as an immense catalogue of arresting images. Vivid simulacra perfect copies of non-existent originals call up times past: theme parks, historical reconstructions, historically "themed" community events surround us as never before.¹⁵

This is now a common phenomenon, but to what extent were Nova Scotians historically conscious prior to the campaign of Will R. Bird and others dating from the 1930s? Would these “mnemonics” have been effective without an inherent sense of memory for the past? Was the campaign itself a complex mnemonic trigger or was this anglophone Golden Age an ideological fabrication in contrast to the last days of the industrial age in Nova Scotia? The province could boast Canada’s first Record Commissioner in 1857 and a strong authentic sense of place was clearly articulated before the days of Will R. Bird’s popular history and Thomas Raddall’s historical novels, which between them created a continuous “story,”¹⁶ the basis of all myths by which a people identifies itself, which may not be closely related to history as presently defined. The skein is a tangled one and this example is given to illustrate the power of material culture as mnemonic for better or worse. The storyline is far from being wildly inaccurate and the archives were made use of in the traditional manner.

In the small community museums and archives that spread rapidly across Canada as a result of the centennial celebrations, archival materials as triggers for local memory were viewed by the public as very similar to museum accessions. It is here that the document as cultural artifact or “instrument” was most fully appreciated. Fonds were generally very small or non-existent (the larger ones, for want of space, tended to go the provincial archives). Photographs in particular, but also documents, reflected pasts still in the living memory of local residents and therefore had a strong personal appeal that went far beyond a vague nostalgia. In contributing to these archives, the residents were sharing a part of themselves and their families with others; but always the tendency was to emphasize the good times and suppress the bad, along with the records of them, as being personally hurtful to self and family. This is the world the tourist sees, and is probably most comfortable with, but it is a disappointment to the residents concerned with preserving a multifaceted account of their community.

Mary Tivy has given us a well researched study of tourists and their response to heritage, which is similar to the Nova Scotia experience:

The past is the most popular tourist destination on earth.... A significant proportion of the population are local folk. Almost all these people occupy a romantic rural or pre-industrial landscape, in which they engage in both unique and traditional tasks.¹⁷

For most tourists, the past is an anti-modernist refuge, viewed in the light of nostalgia, and a source of confidence in uncertain times, through idealized values. Tivy’s reference to archives, although used metaphorically, shows how closely related they are, in terms of heritage, to the museum functions: “The museum is at once the archivist and editor of local history. Its historiographic furnace is the collection of artifacts.”¹⁸ Documentary artifacts are caught up in this approach, which is not usually academic history based on scholarly research in an archives. Tivy later speculates that “perhaps the pioneer myth in Ontario is finally being replaced by one more powerful; that of a multicultural society in a global village” where “the historical storyline is ancillary to contemporary discussions of cultural tradition and expression.”¹⁹

Since it may now be conceded that archival documents, irrespective of their primary value, may to some extent be viewed from a museological perspective, what, then, is

our present relationship with museums and related institutions? Probably not as close as it could be, but there have always been stimulating "cross-overs" and analogies to remind us of the common purpose of our endeavours to understand our past.²⁰ Many archives contain small museums, and museums often manage the archives of their own operation. Cuneiform clay tablets reside in museums, for obvious reasons. The Edmonton City Museum is still, I believe, called "The Archives."

Historic sites often have both archival and museum materials, photographs are to be found everywhere, and the British Museum curates everything. Museums are quick to recognize the iconic nature of many of our holdings, as is evident in joint exhibitions. Likewise, our own exhibitions are often enlivened by items borrowed from a museum. Ian Wilson has shown that we have much we can learn from museums in the way material is displayed, making the interesting point that "in a sense, the archival finding aids are our exhibits,"²¹ displaying the range of our resources, and then, with the results of research by our users, being further "displayed" as our materials are interpreted in, for instance, books and other forms of publication:

There is however no reason why archives cannot emulate museums and provide structured, even entertaining historical experiences for visitors.... Where is it written that the major national or provincial or community heritage interpretation centre must be a large museum? Given the range, variety and intrinsic interest of archival material, could not this function reside equally well in the archives?²²

At the same time, there is the danger in this kind of archives/museum setting of too much interpretation, which can drown out the "voices" of the artifacts themselves. For Francis Landry, museums can provide "a conversation not only between present and past, this culture and others but, as the name suggests, between muses; a museum is a meeting places of muses. And for musing [including] ... that experience of conversation, of listening in."²³ The public, says Landry, is not always as ignorant and passive as we think but are often sensitive people who value an old tradition of sacred space and sacred time. He mourns the loss of "the moral and spiritual place of museums in our culture"; this leads him to "the responsibility of the community for its museums, for its part in the conversation. Responsibility is in fact the capacity to respond, to use memory and imagination."²⁴ This could apply equally to archives, in the way we and the users relate to our resources. Surely this is what interacting with evidence of material culture is all about, as opposed, in our case, to viewing archival materials purely in terms of their content. Since we preserve records as evidence, those items identified for their outstanding *cultural* value in the museum sense have, in addition, all the weight of that evidence in context to support their integrity.

There is always the danger that a conservative professionalism can be too directive, requiring the public to fit the mould of the archivist or curator *primarily interested in their most responsive "publics."* Kenneth Hudson muses that "there have been not a few times when visiting archaeological museums and galleries, that I have longed for the warmth and enthusiasm of the pioneers who knew so little and felt so much,"²⁵ perhaps accounting for the fact that "the most significant changes and improvements have come not from the British Museum and from museum giants but from more modest establishments."²⁶ It is hard to know in what way the "giants" can be "deconstructed" to exhibit a more holistic approach.²⁷ They are backed into categories

of display and expertise according to their various specialized functions. According to Hudson:

It is no longer sufficient to hang paintings around walls, to fill galleries with machines raped from the surroundings where they made sense, to arrange natural history dioramas without an obvious passion to safeguard the environment from its human predators, to display the Elgin marbles as if the political controversy surrounding them did not exist, to split up zoos from natural history museums and museums concerned with technology from museums whose purpose is to present local history.²⁸

I have quoted this passage at length because archives, too, are struggling with this problem of context, of site-specific authenticity,²⁹ of materials of national importance remaining in the locality of creation, of “theme” archives drawing material from across the country. Museums rarely show the impact of human culture on nature, yet this is what gives meaning to our lives. Indeed, this interface could well bring archival records into the picture when indicating the extent and complexity of the problem. Of course we can admire the pioneer settlers; yet they unwittingly sowed the seed of our present dilemma. While such presentations would be controversial and rob displays of their comfortable image, perhaps the public is more ready for this than we realize, especially at the local level where the specifics of disaster are present all around. Division makes for tidiness, for order and control; dare we risk the wilderness garden? Neil Postman in his article “Museum as Dialogue” asserts that “a good museum conducts an argument with society,” each providing a partial answer to the question “What does it mean to be a human being?” according to the emphasis of its collections. The answer “must be given within the context of a specific moment in history and must inevitably be addressed to bring people who as always are struggling with the problems of moral, psychological and social survival.... A museum after all tells a story....” Postman goes on to suggest that “a museum, then, must be an argument with its society. And more than that it must be a *timely* argument.”³⁰ Can archives not conduct “arguments” of this kind?

What then of the future? The great museums, art galleries, and archives have become quite literally department stores, on the one hand housing the accumulated riches of conquest, colonialism, centralization, and cultural acquisition within nation states, in a world of intense competition for prestige; on the other hand there is the contribution of professionals who, through their care and research, have brought understanding and meaning to this wealth by adding greatly to our store of knowledge. Such institutions must remain a part of the cultural scene--if only because, in spite of their limitations, which can change over time, they can by their very existence provide a record of the age that created them.

For the rest, I can only point to a sampling of experiments and ideas that seem to me to have a valid place in the future scheme of things, in particular bioregionalism. The ecomuseum has no direct connection with ecology, but derives its name from the Greek *oikos*, a house or living space. The Ecomuseum Heritage Region project for the “living space” of the Cowichan and Chemainus Valley in BC³¹ aims to blend “heritage” with the economic development of the region so that the two become indivisible, as each grows out of the other. The museum has entered into partnerships whereby the forests and working lumber mills will be open to visits by the public,

who will be able to talk directly with those employed there. The local environment is a big concern, and the possibility of a community forest is being explored. Small businesses of all kinds are being encouraged, and the whole adds up to a strong sense of place and community where a local museum and archives could "connect the present with the recent past,"³² as David Bearman urges us, preserving both context and continuity. In this way, the cultural impact of the record created by the residents would become a part of their lives and not just objects of nostalgia for a never-never past. The experience memorialized in the records would help guide the community and avoid the re-invention of wheels. Again, Bearman's suggestion that the keeping of records should increasingly become, with archival supervision, the responsibility of the various entities in the community is a sound one.³³ Each entity could be encouraged to use the local archives only as a deposit of last resort.³⁴

Ecomuseums probably work best in rural settings, but bioregionalism also embraces heavily populated areas, where at least some of the above principles could be brought to bear. The growth of bioregionalism can only come about as a necessary shift in the way we view life on this planet as we experience an epiphany, the revelation of a post-modern relationship with all creation. When this occurs we will place more value on the records of our own families, who will be playing a much more direct part in their environment. Our leisure will come to be seen as much more than the absence of mere work: "Great creative cultures and civilisations have fully and unambiguously comprehended leisure and cherished museums to give meaning to the past."³⁵

Work itself will gradually break loose from the tyranny of jobs--suffered under duress and driving the era of industrial bureaucracies and the production line--to become an extension of deeply satisfying leisure, so that both lead to personal and social fulfilment as we embrace the new paradigm of the post-modern revolution. Utopian? There is really no viable alternative.³⁶

As a more intimate example of imaginative change, the Art Gallery of Peel presented an exhibition of works by Gary Spearin entitled "Living on Credit," which refers both to the local Credit River and the implication that people have over-extended themselves into the watershed at the cost of the environment. The exhibit brochure notes that "portrait drawings made from archival photographs were photographed by the artists in settings at the river and within the walls of long abandoned homes, placing these forebears in both an historical and contemporary context"³⁷--a good example of creative merging of the records as a commentary on the present environmental danger.

There is a certain irony in the fact that, although in the past we have been mostly concerned with the content and context of information in archives rather than their artifactual properties, it has been this last that has brought us almost to our knees as our profession attempts to process world-wide thousands of tons of records from the public and private sectors abandoned in attics, warehouses, and overcrowded offices, often isolated and detached from the creators who brought them into being. In all cases the records were created prior to our involvement with them. They just sat there as we went at them for better or for worse, in a manner that is still very labour-intensive. In North America we appraised series according to orders of value devised by Schellenberg as a means of justifying the massive destruction of what were

predominantly papers. The whole archival profession has grown, and our work has been structured out of our struggle to deal with, preserve, and dispose of *things*. But now this is beginning to change.

With the automated record, we begin to reduce our dependence on documents as material culture in the sense discussed above. David Bearman, Terry Cook,³⁸ and others have written extensively on a "top-down" approach to appraisal that leaves the records as artifacts lying on the floor, as it were, and asks us to consider first the value of the activity creating them, and whether they should be retained at all. Bearman asks such questions as: do we need to keep the originals, and how long should accountability require retention? And so we move from material culture into etherealized acts and deeds displayed on a screen, their power and value infinitely increased by their accessibility, mobility, and speed of transmission. In accordance with the new paradigm, records will be preserved which serve the needs of the present, are moved forward into the future, and are so programmed in advance by archivists working in close cooperation with administrators and other professionals to find human solutions to our cosmic dilemma in all fields of human activity.

David Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom both insist that archival management should shift from an emphasis on "outputs"--which measure, for instance, the volume of material generated by the creator or processed by the archivist--to the concept of "outcomes" as the personal and social impact of the activity documented by the creator and the consequences of accession by the archivist.³⁹

For example, governance based on a bioregion and the need for biodiversity will require extensive and meticulous record-keeping as the slow tempo of natural change is observed and assessed,⁴⁰ quite apart from the usual records of administration and the insistence on accountability, as humans within these regions respect ecosystems hitherto ignored. Striving for a nurturing lifestyle, we will preserve the records of our material culture as an evolving expression of the new way, to which we will all have to be committed.

I believe only a mindset under-girded by a sense of spiritual reality can bring this about. All archives will then be viewed not just as legal and social evidence, but as material instruments fashioned by a culture bent on the survival of the whole creative process, which will be infinitely more aware of the humans who created these materials, even as we etherealize the record through automation, render it virtual, and continue to preserve the evidence of our pilgrim journey.⁴¹

Notes

* This article is based on a presentation to the annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists held in Regina, Saskatchewan, 17 June 1995. Special thanks are due to Jane Turner of the University of Victoria Archives for her very helpful comments and suggestions as she wrestled with my dreadful handwriting.

1 "It is widely felt that a broader definition of heritage is needed, both to recognise the importance of 'non-traditional' heritage sectors and to extend special status and support to heritage conservation efforts involving the built environment, natural resources, material culture or non-physical components such as behaviours, traditions and values." Ministry of Culture and Communications, Ontario Heritage Foundation, *Ontario Heritage Policy Review: Summary of Public Submissions* (April 1988).

Some years ago in "The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage," *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-83), pp. 118-130, I attempted to outline the cultural origins of these two disciplines, particularly in Canada, at a time when primary, evidential, and secondary information in defining the

built environment, museums, and related fields was "invisible" and taken for granted simply because it was information. Historians were considered the best people to speak on archives at a symposium organized by Heritage Canada and The Royal Society of Canada in October 1975, in a presentation entitled "Preserving the Canadian Heritage." Following a protest from Gordon Dodds, first president of the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Dominion Archivist was invited to make a presentation. Nothing was heard from the National Library, and the natural heritage was totally ignored. All this was in the Public Archives and National Library building!

- I have discussed archives in relation to works appearing in the heritage of art galleries in "Documentary Art and the Role of the Archivist," *The American Archivist* 42 (October 1979), pp. 417-28.
- 2 I am greatly indebted to Edward Dahl, Early Cartography Specialist at the National Archives of Canada, for being so helpful in directing my reading on these aspects of cartography.
 - 3 J. B. Harley, "Text and Contexts in the Interpretation of Early Maps," in David Buisseret, ed., *From Sea Charts to Satellite Maps: Interpreting North American History through Maps* (Chicago, 1990), p. 4.
 - 4 Robert A. Rundstrom, "Introducing Cultural and Social Cartography: Introduction," *Cartographica* 44, p. viii.
 - 5 W. Donald McTaggart, "Bioregionalism and Regional Geography: Place, People and Networks," *The Canadian Geographer* 37, no. 4 (1993), pp. 307-19; and Doug Aberley, ed., *Boundaries of Home: Mapping for Local Empowerment* (Gabriola Island, BC, 1993).
 - 6 Doug Aberley, *Boundaries of Home*, p. 1. It is interesting that a political pamphlet of the BC Green Party has one side showing Canada divided into possible bioregions, probably the first of its kind in a political statement. Likewise, Merrell Boots has sponsored a glossy sheet, "At home on the planet: 21 Ecoregions of the US and Canada ... we are citizens first of the landscape."
 - 7 David Bearman, *Archival Strategies* (Pittsburgh), p. 7.
 - 8 Once museums were temples; so their facades suggest. It is uncertain to which gods they were dedicated, whether to the gods of culture or of empire, but there was no doubt that in visiting a museum one was entering sacred space." Francis Landry, "Sacred Space and Public Pleasure," *Muse* (Spring 1993) p. 22. This was also true of the larger archives.
 - 9 "It is insufficiently understood that a museum's power lies not in the possession of objects and collections but in the acceptance of its authority to name them by both label and context." Duncan Ferguson Cameron, "Getting Out of Our Skin: Museums and new Identity," *Muse* X, nos. 2 and 3 (Summer 1992), p. 9. We use a different procedure and different terms, but it is the physical control of our documentary artifacts which lies at the heart of our work.
 - 10 Brien Brothman, "Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991), p. 84.
 - 11 Michael Rowlands, "The role of memory in the transmission of culture," *World Archaeology* 25, no. 2 (1993), p. 141.
 - 12 *Ibid.*, p. 143.
 - 13 *Ibid.*, p. 144.
 - 14 The signature of the Queen on the proclamation is a reminder of the power of the autograph to focus the mind on the famous and those known only to a more limited circle. Autographs, authoring, and authorship are probably synonymous in the collective mind with authenticity (which may not be the case, but has a way of grabbing the attention, and possible mutilation as signatures are cut from documents to become simply artifacts out of context.) After all, that was what the seal was designed to do in its hey-day as an imposing appendage of authority attached to unassailable diplomatic formulation, giving the instrument considerable iconic power.
 - 15 Ian McKay, "History and the Tourist Gaze: The Politics of Commemoration in Nova Scotia, 1935-1964," *Acadiensis* XXII, no. 2 (Spring 1993), p. 102.
 - 16 Dale Porter, discussing the ability of the historical novel to convey an authentic sense of history, believes that "so long as the reader senses the specific history of the period, its values, beliefs, mannerisms and customs, and the characters from out of their interaction with these circumstances, the historicity of the fiction is satisfied." Dale Porter, "The Gold in Fort Knox," *Soundings* LXXVI, nos. 2-3 (Summer/Fall 1993), p. 344. According to Porter, "Academic history used to provide a 'guaranteed' past - like the gold in Fort Knox" but constant revision of that history meant that "it could no longer balance the claims of fiction to represent truth" (p. 342). This enabled myths, which are essentially stories, to flourish in support of heritage.
 - 17 Mary Tivy, "Towards Museums and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario," typescript of a paper delivered at the Canadian Historical Association Annual Meeting, 30 May 1992, p. 1.
 - 18 *Ibid.*, p. 8.
 - 19 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

- 20 The eclectic nature of the museum tradition, which sometimes embraces archives, may spring from the Greek myth that the nine muses were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne and therefore imbued with the sense of power which memory through artifacts can confer!
- 21 Ian Wilson, "Towards a Vision of Archival Services," *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990-91), p. 94.
- 22 *Ibid.*, p. 95.
- 23 Landry, "Sacred Space," p. 22.
- 24 *Ibid.*, p. 23.
- 25 Kenneth Hudson, *Museums of Influence* (Cambridge, MA, 1987), p. 18.
- 26 *Ibid.*, p. 28.
- 27 The Glenbow Museum and Archives provides an example of change whereby "with the exception of Central Services there are no departments based on professional specialisations. For the most part, the internal organisation of each work unit is flat, with staff reporting to a Director for routine work and to project leaders for project work." Robert R. James "Beyond Strategic Planning: The Glenbow Example," *Muse* XI, no. 4 (Winter 1994), p. 14.
- 28 Hudson, *Museums*, p. 174.
- 29 Submissions from across Ontario sought "The establishment of local and regional archival facilities to allow for the maintenance of archival materials within their geographic context." *The Ontario Heritage Policy Review*, p. 75. Some works of art are becoming site specific, as they always have been when part of architecture.
- 30 Neil Postman, "Museum as Dialogue," *Museum News* (Sept/Oct 1990), pp. 55-58.
- 31 "The Cowichan and Chemainus Valleys Ecomuseums," *Muse* (Winter 1991), pp. 10-11.
- 32 David Bearman, *Archival Methods, Archives & Museum Informatics Technical Report* 3, no. 1 (Spring 1989; reprinted 1991), p. 59.
- 33 Bearman, *Archival Strategies*, p. 21.
- 34 For one model along these lines see Nipissing Archives, "Proposal for a Regional Archives System," *Ontario Heritage Policy Review*, pp. 90-93. Another model is the Nanaimo Community Archives.
- 35 Peter Heron, "Museums: Cultural Institutions and Islands of Hope," *Muse* (Autumn 1990), p. 52.
- 36 For a further exploration of this theme in a spiritual context, see Matthew Fox, *The Reinvention of Work: A New Vision of Livelihood for Our Time* (San Francisco, 1994). Without this reinvention, we are unlikely to experience the "epiphany" to which I have referred, or perhaps the reinvention will be the result of the epiphany. This may not be a cause and effect situation. The two will likely occur together.
- 37 From the exhibit brochure.
- 38 In particular, Terry Cook, "Mind Over Matter: Towards a New theory of Archival Appraisal," in Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa, 1992), pp. 38-70.
- 39 David Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom, "Reinventing Archives for Electronic Records: Alternative Service Delivery Options," *Archives & Museum Informatics Technical Report* 18 (1993), p. 89.
- 40 The Center for Holistic Resource Management in Albuquerque, New Mexico has developed a management style well suited to "helping people throughout the world restore the vitality of their communities and the natural resources upon which they depend" and would seem to be very appropriate to the management of a bioregion. The Center stresses the need for monitoring and documenting projects in the interests of research and development.
- 41 As texts to accompany us on our journey I cannot recommend too highly David Bearman's *Archival Strategies*, which is a sequel to his *Archival Methods*, and Margaret Hedstrom, ed., *Electronic Records Management Program Strategies*. In particular, I recommend the "Commentary" by Bearman and Hedstrom in "Reinventing Archives for Electronic Records: Alternative Service Delivery Options," *Archives & Museums Informatics Technical Report* 18 (1993), pp. 82-98. Both "Strategies" and "Commentary" offer suggestions, some of which are controversial to say the least, but they form a solid basis for continuing discourse. Bearman's point about the sale of original paper archives in the event of copies being made that will outlast the originals at much less cost and carry the same authority (*Archival Strategies*, p. 21), will raise some eyebrows into the stratosphere! In these circumstances the originals will exhibit their full artifactual value as ephemeral heritage after the manner of totem poles exposed to the weather! Bearman is well aware of the artifactual aspect of archives and has much to say about content migration and other strategies to deal with impermanence.
- Archives & Museums Informatics*, an extraordinary, rich journal of which he is editor and a significant contributor, bears the overarching subtitle "Cultural Heritage Informatics Quarterly." Spiritual reality is the necessary perception, but holistic processes can only be hammered out on the anvil of informations, as Bearman clearly demonstrates.