

Obituary

Kent Haworth, 1946–2003



Kent Haworth was an archivist for more than 30 years and made important contributions to the archives of Canada, the archival profession, and the institutions that he served. He left standing achievements at the local, provincial, and national levels – achievements that helped build the current foundations of Canada’s archives.

Kent was born on 11 February 1946 in Vancouver, British Columbia. His first homes were in Horseshoe Bay and Vancouver and he spent most of his growing-up years in West Vancouver. He graduated from the University of British Columbia in 1968; and later, while working as an archivist, he completed his Master’s in History at the University of Victoria with the thesis “Governor Anthony Musgrave, Confederation and the Challenge of Responsible Government.” Upon his graduation from UBC, he served as a volunteer with CUSO (Canadian University Service Overseas) in Sarawak, Malaysia where he taught English.

Upon his return from Malaysia, he took his first archives job, a temporary assignment at the Vancouver City Archives. But there was nothing ever temporary about Kent’s involvement with archives, and in 1972 he assumed his first full-time position as Archivist for the Provincial Archives of British Columbia’s (PABC) Manuscripts and Government Records Division. Here he played the leading role in developing a new system of accessioning and describing archives in the division. Others helped and supported this effort, but Kent’s passion and drive were vital to getting it done. These were to

become hallmarks of Kent's career in archives – passion, dedication, drive. In 1979 he was appointed Chief of PABC's Aural and Visual Records Division and was responsible for management of non-textual records, including photographs, documentary art, and sound and moving image records.

In the early 1980s the British Columbia Government had no records management programme. Chaos and inconsistency abounded, and the PABC was one of the main victims of this situation. Kent saw that records management was essential to a government archives and led the way in having a program established. He was appointed BC's first Director of Records Management and spearheaded the development of two initiatives that at the time were unique on the Canadian scene: the use of private-sector contracts for all records centre storage services and an integrated records classification/records retention plan. This integrated system (*ARCS – Administrative Records Classification System*) combined a classification system for active records based on the function of an office with records retention schedules that highlighted archival records.

Kent then shifted his archival focus and came "East." In 1984 he became University Archivist at the University of Toronto where he was responsible for directing a comprehensive, integrated records management/archives service. He also developed a revised Presidential Policy on Records and Archives for the Governing Council in consultation with University of Toronto Registrar, Dr. Dan Lang. But the easterly move was not yet over. In 1989, he moved to Halifax as Public Records Archivist for the Public Archives of Nova Scotia. Here he implemented a new descriptive system to improve user access to archival holdings and worked closely with Nova Scotia Records Management to establish a records classification and scheduling system (*STAR/STOR – Standard for Administrative Records/Standard for Operational Records*) similar to the one developed earlier in British Columbia. In 1993 Kent went to York University and from 1994 to 2002, he held the position of University Archivist and Head of Special Collections at the York University Library.

Kent was a strong supporter of the formation of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA) in 1975 and over the years served in leadership roles as President, Vice President, and Chair of the Publications Committee. To honour his long-standing contributions, the ACA presented him with the first-ever Membership Recognition Award in May 2002. In 1979–1980 while Vice President of ACA, he was involved in responding to the Applebaum-Herbert study on cultural policy and in helping find a niche that increased national support and funding for archives across Canada. During his term as President of ACA and afterwards, he stood with others and assisted in gaining support and funding for archives through the federal-provincial ministers responsible for culture. This materialized in federal-provincial archives meetings and the establishment of the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) in 1985. There was

now a national organization to foster the evolution of archives in Canada, to identify national priorities, and to promote better communications between the various components of the Canadian archival system and among all regions of the country.

Kent was also active in provincial archives associations, especially in British Columbia and Ontario. In 1974 he was a co-founder of the Association of British Columbia Archivists, predecessor of British Columbia's current provincial archives organization. He was always a strong supporter of local and community archives and of the principle that institutions should preserve their own records in their own archives. He matched this deeply held belief with deeds. For example, he persuaded the Anglican Diocese of British Columbia to establish an archives, proposed the conversion of the Bishop's Chapel into an archives and diocesan meeting room, worked on the design, and studied preservation needs. He then helped raise the funds for the work, obtained the support of church officials and secretaries to manage records and get them to the archives, did the initial foundation work for the manual for Diocesan archivists, and presented workshops to diocesan and parish staff.

There is one achievement in particular that all archivists remember when thinking of Kent. This is his leadership role in creating and establishing a national standard, the *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)*. This standard, established under the auspices of the CCA, has remade archives in Canada. Kent's vision and support for descriptive standards came out of his wish to improve access for Canadians to the records of our nation. It was not to develop rules *per se* that he took on the immense task of developing these standards, but to highlight our documentary heritage and to make it more accessible.

When CCA's Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards was established in 1987, Kent was appointed Chair and served in that role between 1989 and 1996. The Planning Committee met six times per year during this ten-year period, managed ten working groups responsible for media chapters in *RAD*, was responsible for six publications, organized the delivery of *RAD* training throughout Canada, and promoted *RAD* nationally in sessions at professional conferences and archival institutions. At the International Council on Archives meeting in Montreal in 1992, Kent gave the plenary address and introduced *RAD* to the international archives community.

RAD now provides a basis for common archives development all across Canada, standardizes the description of archival holdings, facilitates the digitization of archives, and is important for effective web-based exchange of information. A recent example of the importance of descriptive standards to the dissemination of archives is Ontario's ARCHEION, a comprehensive, one-stop, searchable gateway to information about the documentary heritage of Ontario. A national grant program, the Canadian Council of Archives' Canadian Archival Information Network, or CAIN, now exists to encourage the

development of archival gateway systems. Kent not only played an important role in advocating and establishing both of these programs, but indeed, it is difficult to imagine ARCHEION or the Canadian Archives Information Network without a descriptive standard such as *RAD*.

Kent's role in the development of *RAD* was more than just committee chairperson. He was the builder, the inspirer, the infuser. He listened, counselled, advocated, nurtured, adapted, and facilitated with determination yet respect for others. He believed in this vision and its importance and could infuse others with this belief. When the *Rules for Archival Description* were finalized, Kent prepared an implementation plan and successfully advocated the maintenance and continuation of the descriptive standards work under the auspices of the Canadian Council of Archives. This saw fruit in the establishment of one of CCA's working groups, the Canadian Committee on Archival Description.

Kent's vision for *RAD* was to build it as a truly Canadian standard that could serve all of Canada's communities; thus the significance of its implementation across the country and in both French and English versions. This was typical of Kent's approach and his love for Canada. As an adult he learned French when living in British Columbia because he thought it important for all Canadians to know French; and his French was good enough that he was able to serve effectively as chair of bilingual committees. In addition to its national impact, Canada's *Rules for Archival Description* has been internationally recognized as a groundbreaking achievement for archives. *RAD* and Kent's participation have deeply influenced the development of international standards by the Committee on Archival Description of the International Council on Archives. *RAD* is also the foundation of a recent effort to standardize descriptive practice between the archives of the United States and Canada.

In the wake of the international recognition of Canada's standard for archival description, Kent was in demand for international conferences, workshops, and lectures. For example, he gave papers and lectures at the Dutch national archives school, Arezzo University in Italy, the University of Marburg, the 1999 Scottish Archive Networks Conference, the 2001 European Conference on Archives in Florence, and others. His commitment to descriptive standards and the encouragement of his close friend and colleague in standards work, Hugo Stibbe, led Kent onto the International Council on Archives' Committee on Descriptive Standards (CDS) in 1996, and from 2000 to 2002 he served as its Project Director and Secretary. One of his last professional achievements was a significant contribution to the revisions of ISSAR (CPF), a major project undertaken by CDS. Despite his failing health, this international work had all the hallmarks of Kent's career: vitality and infectious enthusiasm, intellectual passion, dedication to professional excellence, and inspiration to others.

In 1972, when Kent started his career, Canadian archives were undeveloped and uncoordinated. The archival profession was in its infancy and a stepchild to history and library science. There were no standards, no national organiza-

tions, few provincial associations, no professional journal, no graduate programs to educate new archivists, and no agenda for development. This has all changed now. Kent Haworth was not single-handedly responsible for this; many have contributed to the fruitful growth of archives in Canada. But his dedicated career and his accomplishments, in many ways, signify and symbolize this evolution. Indeed, his pre-eminent achievement, *Rules for Archival Description*, encapsulates it and is an essential underpinning for sustaining it.

Kent's impact has been significant on scores of Canadian archivists now in positions at all levels of the profession. He lectured in archival graduate studies programs, and publications he wrote or fostered are used in its courses. *Rules for Archival Description* itself is an essential element in archival education. But his influence was and is broader than just the formal, technical, educational or professional realms. Kent personally inspired many others to take up the profession and excel as archivists and records managers and to contribute to the building of Canadian archives. In his archival endeavours, Kent was always a builder and he inspired others to build too. A favourite expression was "let's just do it", and then he and those he had galvanized did it. He believed in and loved archives and his vision, passion, and caring inspired others to believe and act also. Archivists across Canada who knew him, worked with him, or were influenced by him will all remember that he encouraged us to believe in archives, our profession, our country, and in ourselves.

Reuben Ware

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