

# Articles

## Taking Stock: The Evolution of Archival Science in Québec<sup>1</sup>

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**RÉSUMÉ** Dans ce texte l'auteur retrace les trente dernières années de l'archivistique québécoise en identifiant sept événements-jalons qui ont marqué le développement de la discipline au Québec : la création de l'Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ) en 1967; l'*Affaire des manuscrits* en 1972; la politique culturelle de Jean-Paul L'Allier en 1976; la mise en place de la *Loi sur l'accès aux documents des organismes publics et sur la protection des renseignements personnels* (1982) et la *Loi sur les archives* (1983); la mise en place de programmes de formation dans les universités à compter de 1983; la création du Conseil canadien des archives (CCA) en 1985; et la tenue du XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des archives à Montréal en 1992. L'auteur démontre que chacun des ces événements a produit des éléments essentiels à la création d'une discipline en tant que telle, et qu'au bout de trente ans, l'archivistique québécoise a su se distinguer des autres, répond aux attentes de la société et continue d'évoluer.

**ABSTRACT** The author looks back over the past thirty years of archival science in Québec, identifying seven milestone events which have marked its development: the creation of l'Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ) in 1967; the *Manuscript Affair* in 1972; the Jean-Paul L'Allier Cultural Policy of 1976; Québec's 1982 *Act respecting Access to Documents held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information* and the 1983 *Archives Act*; the creation of university archival education programs beginning in 1983; the creation of the Canadian Council of Archives in 1985; and the XIIth International Congress on Archives, held in Montréal in 1992. The author demonstrates that each of these events contributed elements essential to the creation of the discipline, and that in the past thirty years archival science in Québec has developed its own unique character, responds to the needs and expectations of Québec society, and continues to evolve.

What is the state of archival science in Québec? We usually attribute the evolution of the archival discipline in Québec to two sources: European and American archival science. While archival science in Québec has indeed

1 This article is taken from a text prepared for the 29<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Association des archivistes du Québec entitled "Pour que survive la mémoire vive," presented in Montréal, June 2000. It was first published in the journal *Archives* 32, no. 1 (2000–2001), pp. 37–48, under the title "Un bilan de l'évolution de l'archivistique québécoise."

benefitted from the rich and fertile evolution of the discipline in Europe and America, it is distinguished by three important characteristics: 1) the archivist in Québec occupies a privileged place, benefiting from and adapting to his or her advantage traditions for the management of historical archives developed by European scholar-archivists; 2) like their colleagues, American record managers, archivists in Québec have been concerned with the document life cycle, that is, the management of active and semi-active records; and 3) the discipline has sought to gain influence in the field of information management. Archival science in Québec focuses on the content of records, which it situates within the larger information management context and the knowledge and technologies relevant to this wider environment. Consequently, the archivist in Québec is a professional who is well-versed in the management of recorded information – irrespective of its age or medium – and the knowledge these particular records hold.

The program committee for the 29<sup>th</sup> conference of the Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ) proposed a session wherein participants would take stock of the evolution of archival science in Québec and outline future directions. The challenges facing archivists were to be identified. With respect to taking stock, the focus here, we have chosen to explore the factors which have shaped the distinctive characteristics of archival science in Québec and which will help us to answer the following question: on the basis of current archival practises, can the archivist in Québec “take charge” in a proactive, efficient, and credible manner in the management, processing, and preservation of the living memory that is archives? With thirty years of practical and professional experience on which to draw – during which time attention has been devoted both to the theoretical and practical aspects of the discipline – the author will attempt to answer this question. Seven milestone events are identified which have significantly influenced the evolution of archival science in Québec, and explain its nature, since the creation of the AAQ. A parallel is established between these landmark events and the lessons learned during these events, knowledge that has broadly shaped the development of the discipline in Québec. These steps should allow us, through a stock-taking of the evolution of the discipline, to ascertain if in fact archival science in Québec can participate efficiently and competently in the management of our living memory.<sup>2</sup>

### **First Milestone Event: Creation of the Association des archivistes du Québec (AAQ)**

Certainly archival science in Québec is older than the creation of the AAQ.

2 The ideas expressed are those of the author – hence the expression “stock-taking” – and do not in any way presume to be an exhaustive and/or scholarly study of the evolution and development of archival science in Québec. In fact, this text could be described as “impressionistic.”

Numerous articles that have appeared in the journal *Archives* and elsewhere<sup>3</sup> should be consulted on the roots of the management of archives in the province and the world.<sup>4</sup> We should not however confuse the archival discipline and archival practice – they are two distinct realities. Archivists were already involved in the management of archives well before the creation of the AAQ; however, it was not until its creation that the distinguishing features of the archival discipline in Québec became clear.

The organization of the AAQ in 1967 marked the appearance of those distinctive characteristics that will later set the archival discipline in Québec apart from elsewhere. There is no need to review here the history of the AAQ's creation; it is not this article's objective – it has been done by others.<sup>5</sup> The AAQ's birth is important because it allows us to begin to identify the distinctive qualities of archival science in Québec. Suffice it to say that the AAQ was created from a need felt by certain archivists – by the 1960s – to discuss shared issues with colleagues. In fact, it was during the conference of the Society of American Archivists held in Santa Fe<sup>6</sup> that “tipsy” Québec archivists began to explore the idea that it would certainly be advantageous to bring Québec archivists together in one association. This was the era of the Quiet Revolution, when all was possible. Jacques Mathieu, François Beaudin, and others decided to take up the challenge and thus was born, on 9 December 1967, the Association des archivistes du Québec.

The creation of the AAQ sheds light on a significant characteristic of the development of a field of activity: professional association. It was important to bring a substantial number of people together, working for a common cause, and sharing similar professional interests based on a common scholarly foundation. Professional association is recognized as one of the first signs marking the professionalization of a domain of activity.<sup>7</sup> The creation of an association marks in fact the beginning of the consciousness necessary to the

3 Bernard Weilbrenner, “Les archives provinciales du Québec et leurs relations avec les archives fédérales, 1867–1920,” *Archives* 15, no. 3 (1983), pp. 37–55; *Archives* 16, no. 2 (1984), pp. 3–26; *Archives* 18, no. 3 (1986), pp. 3–25; *Archives* 18, no. 4 (1987), pp. 3–21; Gilles Héon, “Bref historique des Archives nationales du Québec,” *Archives* 70, no. 2, pp. 22–27; Louise Gagnon-Arguin, *L'archivistique: son histoire, ses acteurs depuis 1960* (Québec, 1992); “Les archives, les archivistes et l'archivistique,” in Jean-Yves Rousseau and Carol Couture, *Les fondements de la discipline archivistique*, Coll. “Gestion de l'information” (Québec, 1994), pp. 7–40.

4 Paul Delsalle, *Une histoire de l'archivistique*, Coll. “Gestion de l'information” (Québec, 1998).

5 Gagnon-Arguin, *L'archivistique: son histoire, ses acteurs depuis 1960*.

6 François Beaudin, “Née à Québec... mais conçue à Santa Fe, New Mexico (USA)... et à Québec!,” *La Chronique* 12, no. 4 (December 1982), pp. 5–6.

7 Gagnon-Arguin, *L'archivistique: son histoire, ses acteurs depuis 1960*, pp. 103–172; Carol Couture, “Les acquis et les perspectives de développement de la discipline archivistique: XII<sup>e</sup> Congrès international des archives,” *Archives* 25, no. 1 (1993), pp. 3–29.

existence of a profession and of a discipline. We must first recognize ourselves before working for recognition from the general public and especially from professionals in other fields or specialists in allied disciplines. What is the point of trying to convince others of who we are and of what we can contribute if we are not ourselves convinced of our identity, our particular qualities, and the merits of our services? The creation of the AAQ was such a sign, illustrating that we had reached this stage of consciousness and were ready to offer an essential and unique service.

The AAQ's creation also brought about the creation of another important element in the evolution of the discipline: a professional learned journal. Such a publication is a sign as well as a tool of a discipline. It conveys the discipline's scholarly corpus, essential to its existence and continuation. The establishment of the journal *Archives* in 1969 reflects the emerging awareness of the need to acquire and to generate knowledge pertinent to archival science in Québec as well as to disseminate and share that knowledge.<sup>8</sup> In fact, a professional journal is the favoured method of talking and listening; telling others what we do and what we accomplish, and listening to what our colleagues and colleagues in other disciplines have to say. We adapted those listening and talking skills within a context conducive to the scholarly development of archival science. It was at this time that our French colleagues published one of the first – if not the first – comprehensive volumes on the archival discipline.<sup>9</sup> It was also at this time that the Université Laval became the first and only Québec (in fact Canadian) university to offer an archival science program.<sup>10</sup> During this period an important number of young graduates became professional archivists; these young professionals wanted to look beyond the everyday tasks of archival practice. The reading they did and the knowledge imparted by their professors convinced them that archival science is more than a series of repetitive tasks: it is endowed with a corpus of scholarship, and engenders research questions that require definition, development, and dissemination to a wider audience. The launch of *Archives* in 1969 marked therefore the adoption of a scholarly tool, an important component of the development of the archival discipline in Québec. From the outset, the journal has been a medium where one can learn, teach, and exchange. It participates – to the extent it can – in the development of a corpus of knowledge, built on archival development in the province, but also reflecting ideas and progress elsewhere.

8 From 1968 to 1969, *Archives* quickly developed from a newsletter to a scholarly journal, increasingly focussed on research questions. Consequently, in order to keep members informed on more general issues, the AAQ launched the newsletter *La Chronique* in 1971.

9 Association des archivistes français (AAF), *Manuel d'archivistique: théorie et pratique des archives publiques en France* (Paris, 1970).

10 The university offered a Certificate of Graduate Studies in Archival Science within the Department of History.

## Second Milestone Event: The 1972 *Manuscript Affair*<sup>11</sup>

For the benefit of those younger than twenty years of age in 1972, the *Manuscript Affair* originated in an administrative quarrel between the Archives nationales du Québec (ANQ) and the Bibliothèque nationale du Québec (BNQ) regarding jurisdiction over the archival fonds of Québec writers. On 9 June 1972, the minister of Cultural Affairs, Claire Kirkland-Casgrain, issued a directive stating that henceforth the ANQ would be responsible for the management of all archival documents, including the archives of writers. The BNQ was outraged to discover that its mandate had been restricted to published material. The events that followed were heated: Georges Cartier, the director of the BNQ, resigned, and archivists, librarians, writers, and many others expressed their indignation through the media – newspapers, radio, and television – as well as in scholarly and professional journals. Positions polarized and fiery declarations were issued. But put starkly, the *Affair* prompted archivists to ask themselves the following questions: Who are we? What do we do? What skills do we have? Numerous publications attempted to answer these questions. One article however seemed to encapsulate the situation, and underline what archivists learned from this debate. André Biron, archivist of the Université de Montréal (until the spring of 1972) and a library science graduate, wrote a pamphlet denouncing the government's actions: "... librarians and even library technicians receive considerably more theoretical training than archivists ... Québec archivists will need to organize themselves in a serious manner instead of underhandedly coveting the accomplishments of others if they ever wish to rise to the level of competence of librarians and information managers – and everyone will benefit."<sup>12</sup> One can certainly get a clear picture of the tone of the discussions taking place on the issue! The *Manuscript Affair* was an illuminating milestone, when archivists in Québec came to realize that they would need to develop a "scholarly-existential" argument in order to justify their continued existence. Biron's musings on whether a truly autonomous discipline really existed, while pertinent, was a challenge to archivists; it was clear that archivists were not as well trained as they should have been and changes had to be made in order to make the practice a professional discipline. It was time once again to ensure a solid and recognized place for archival science in universities (the Université Laval had abandoned its Certificate of Graduate Stud-

11 The *Manuscript Affair* was the subject of numerous articles. Newspapers such as *La Presse*, *Le Devoir*, *Le Soleil*, *Montréal-Matin*, and the *Montreal Star*, dedicated a number of pages, as well as open letters, to the issue. The opinions of librarians and some writers were expressed in *L'affaire des manuscrits ou la dilapidation du patrimoine national* (1973). The position taken by archivists was expressed in issue 1973 (2) of *Archives*.

12 Luc-André Biron, "L'affaire des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque nationale," in Gaétan Dostie, compiler, *L'affaire des manuscrits ou la dilapidation du patrimoine national* (Montréal, 1973), pp. 51–56.

ies in Archival Science). Institutes of higher learning would become catalysts in ensuring that the budding discipline had a place in Québec. Simply stating that the discipline existed and affirming that archivists were professionals was not enough. These affirmations had to be supported by facts and by actions. Archivists had to believe it themselves before they could express it to others. It was essential therefore that university programs be created in order to support and develop scholarly bases that in turn would advance archival science. Only then could archivists answer, with any amount of credibility, the following questions: Who are we? What do we do? What skills do we have? Archivists had to act quickly and “rise to the level of competency of librarians and information scientists [and many others].”<sup>13</sup>

In terms of its impact, the *Manuscript Affair* was the catalyst for the development of a scholarly argument that would explain the essential nature of archival work. It was clear to many archivists that there was an urgent need to find a niche within the university community and more importantly, to keep it – the very future of the discipline depended on it.

### **Third Milestone Event: The Jean-Paul L’Allier Cultural Policy of 1976**

One only need examine the *Politique du patrimoine culturel du Québec* currently being developed by the Groupe Arpin to find the roots of the third milestone event. In fact, the AAQ presented a brief to the Groupe Arpin in April 2000 which underlined the importance of archives and archivists in cultural heritage.<sup>14</sup> Archivists have always been concerned with heritage and culture. In Québec in particular, advances in the development of culture and its management can be traced back to the early 1960s. In 1965, Pierre Laporte, while minister of Cultural Affairs, tabled a white paper on culture that recognized the province’s need at an early date for legislation on archives. Roughly ten years later, in 1976, Jean-Paul L’Allier, then minister of Cultural Affairs, tabled a green paper, followed in 1978 by Camille Laurin’s *Politique québécoise du développement culturel*. Each document emphasized the urgency of archival legislation. L’Allier’s document (*Pour l’évolution de la politique culturelle*) had a particularly important impact on Québec’s archival community. The AAQ underlined the dual objective of archival practice: administration and research. To understand this position, one must remember that in 1969 and in 1972 respectively, two laws had been adopted: the first rescinded the Provincial Secretariat (*Loi abrogeant le Secrétariat de la Province*) and the second concerned cultural assets (*Loi sur les biens culturels*). The former

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The AAQ’s brief, entitled *Les archives: une composante à part entière du patrimoine culturel*, was presented to the Groupe Arpin on 28 April 2000. (The text was published in volume 32, number 1 of *Archives* [2000–2001].)

shifted archives from the administrative to the cultural sector by transferring responsibility for the management of archives from the Provincial Secretariat to the newly-created Ministry of Cultural Affairs. The latter law reaffirmed the cultural role of archives. Consequently, Québec archivists began to reflect on whether their role focussed on administration, or culture, or both simultaneously. It was during this time of epic debates that three currents of thinking on the discipline emerged in Québec: some archivists wanted to concentrate their efforts on *records management*; some wanted to concentrate their attention on the management of historical archives; others saw their role as revolving around the life cycle of archives and defended what was to become known as *integrated archival practise*.

The third milestone event engendered three new developments: a new administrative-cultural paradigm that catapulted archival science into reflection on its professional and disciplinary position; at a time rich in cultural political debate, the development of what became the law on archives; and the proposals expressed in L'Allier's document that challenged archivists in Québec to define their role in the management of cultural heritage.

**Fourth Milestone Event: The Implementation of a Legislative Tandem: The 1982 Law on Access to Documents held by Public Bodies and the Protection of Personal Information, and the 1983 Archives Act**

In 1982, the Government of Québec enacted the *Loi sur l'accès aux documents des organismes publics et sur la protection des renseignements personnels*, following the report of the Commission d'étude sur l'accès du citoyen à l'information gouvernementale et la protection des renseignements personnels, entitled *Information et liberté*. During the period surrounding the adoption of the legislation, there was considerable reflection and discussion about the information held by public institutions in Québec. The debate led to wide scrutiny of the management of public information, to which little attention had been previously paid, except a vague attempt to ensure preservation and appropriate use by creator organizations. Today, we can understand how difficult it was to ask public institutions to allow citizens access to their documents while at the same time protecting the personal information of these same citizens. They were asked to profoundly alter practices and customs solidly entrenched within their organizations. Within public institutions, senior management responsible for enforcing the new legislation quickly realized that information would have to be much more rigorously managed and better organized. Basically, the principle is simple: in order to grant access to information or to contest it using the exceptions provided by the law, and in order to protect the information, the content of the information must be known and an efficient system for managing documents must be put in place. Responsibility for these management systems fell to archivists, many of whom gained access to

senior management previously unattainable to the profession. Archivists began to associate with company secretaries, legal counsels, vice-presidents responsible for information, and registrars. They were called upon to brief management and increase its awareness of the importance of instituting the measures necessary to comply with the law. Numerous archivists used this opportunity to promote the strengths offered by the archival profession in managing recorded information. The access law was invaluable to archivists in that it enabled them to secure access to senior management, as well as inform and make management aware of the advantages of sound records management practises.

The time was also opportune for archivists to address the information held by public institutions and to reflect on the place of archival science in information management. In enforcing this legislation, archivists sought increasingly to redefine archives on the basis of their content (information) and to identify the specific characteristics that would situate archives within the vast field of information science. It is at this time that certain concepts were defined: recorded information, verbal information, organic recorded information, and non-organic recorded information, concepts found today in the statutes of the AAQ.<sup>15</sup>

Following the adoption of access legislation, archivists became important actors in a variety of awareness and training workshops. There were numerous occasions when archivists were in a position to explain to the senior management of public institutions subject to the law, the benefits of archival science. These sessions had a snowball effect: senior management requested that their operational staff be trained in records management. The law engendered countless opportunities to promote archives. Many archivists developed the confidence necessary to advocate for their discipline in explaining and demonstrating to colleagues at all levels what they did and how they did it. In so doing, archivists developed further their scholarly and professional *raison-d'être*. Specialists whose professional recognition had to date been virtually non-existent seized the opportunity. They were well prepared to defend their point of view. This served them well when the debate on archives legislation began a few months later.

The Québec National Assembly adopted the *Loi sur les archives* in December 1983, legislation long-awaited by the profession. Much has been written on the events leading to the preparation and study of this law, which structures, articulates, and provides a foundation for archival practise in Québec.<sup>16</sup> The briefs and studies prepared with an eye to potential archives legislation revealed a dynamic, well-organized archival community, one able to construct

15 Carol Couture, Jacques Ducharme, and Jean-Yves Rousseau, "L'archivistique aurait-elle trouvé son identité?," *Argus* 17, no. 2 (1988), pp. 51–60.

16 See the special issue of *Archives* (vol. 15, no. 1, June 1983).



and plan a comprehensive argument to present to legislators. The archival community's stated objective was to ensure that the *Archives Act* encompassed an integrated archival system, one consistent with that promoted by the discipline and generally applied and practised in archives. The majority of briefs presented to the parliamentary committee<sup>17</sup> studying the issue agreed on the importance of a law on archives in the province that not only included the management of historical documents but also the management of active and semi-active records. As we know, archivists in Québec were rewarded for their work and the discipline took a major step forward as a consequence. Certainly the province's *Archives Act*<sup>18</sup> ensures the efficient management of records and facilitates the participation of archivists in standardizing archival practices in the public institutions subject to it. Archives are no longer solely responsible for the management of documents; in fact, records management is an integrated part of the day-to-day functions of the administration of public institutions subject to the law. The *Archives Act* is an essential link in the development of the discipline in Québec. The many discussions and forums prompted by the law have also greatly contributed to the discipline's level of scholarship and strengthened the intellectual vigour of archivists. There is increased self-confidence in their discourse, reflected in their public interventions. One need only remember the subsequent numerous briefs presented by the AAQ on other issues and the positive responses these have received. Both the archives and the access to information legislation set the stage for the creation of archival education programs – the fifth milestone event discussed below.

### **Fifth Milestone Event: The Creation of University Archival Education Programs<sup>19</sup>**

Université Laval offered an archival training certificate until the beginning of the 1970s. As mentioned above, the Certificate of Graduate Studies in Archival Science<sup>20</sup> was the responsibility of the Department of History. Many courses of varying lengths were also offered by numerous institutions to practising archivists.<sup>21</sup> Religious archivists were the first to establish their own training. These training opportunities were subsequently offered to a wider

17 Surprisingly, 41 briefs were submitted to the parliamentary commission: 17 were presented and 24 were deposited.

18 It is important to note here that Québec's *Archives Act* has served, and continues to serve, as a model for other archival legislation throughout the world.

19 See the special issue of *Archives*, vol. 20, no. 3 (Winter 1989).

20 Gagnon-Arguin, *L'archivistique: son histoire, ses acteurs depuis 1960*; Jacques Grimard, "Université Laval. Les programmes de formation en archivistique: philosophie et développement," *Archives* 20, no. 3 (Winter 1989), pp. 11–18.

21 Gagnon-Arguin, *L'archivistique: son histoire, ses acteurs depuis 1960*, pp. 194–201.

group. General and vocational colleges (CEGEPs) integrated archival training in their programs of documentation techniques after 1975.

All these efforts, combined with the access law, the archives law, and the rapid growth in the need to manage administrative records, led to the creation of more enduring university archival education programs. From 1983–1984, three universities in Québec (Université de Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal, and Université Laval) established archival programs in response to a growing community need for well-trained individuals conversant with the life cycle of records. These institutions were aware that the permanent establishment of archival programs at the university level would have repercussions on the profile of future archivists and on the discipline's development.

The development of university programs is of major importance to the profession; archival science specialists redoubled their efforts in research; professionals interested in research (as attested by the evolution of the journal *Archives*<sup>22</sup>) were from that point on supported by university professors and students whose daily activities consist of study, reflection, and basic and applied research. University-level teaching draws a major portion of its distinctness from the fact that it must depend on research. A university education program will stagnate, even disappear, if it cannot rely on the research conducted by its professors and students, particularly those enrolled in graduate studies.

University programs ensure the sustainability of our profession, preparing future generations for the place they will occupy in the workforce and ensuring that they are appropriately trained and qualified. By virtue of university programs, professional archivists can rest assured that the profession will survive. University archival programs and courses also include a number of students who are destined to work in fields other than archives. These students can raise awareness among professionals in other disciplines of the issues faced by archival science, professionals who would otherwise not even have heard about archives management. In time, more and more people – some occupying major roles in society – will have a relatively accurate idea of what archives are.

The efforts currently made to ensure that future archivists are well-trained professionals also lead to the standardization of our work. Although not all university programs are alike – which is to be expected, even desirable – graduates have learned comparable skills. Students recognize the same foundations, the same basic principles, the same archival tasks. Training future generations of archivists ensures a healthy standardization of their skills. Once part of the workforce, they rely on the same scholarly skill set.

It goes without saying that the development of university archival education programs is essential to public recognition of archival science and to its vindication as an autonomous discipline. It would be wishful thinking to expect

22 Ibid., pp. 150–72.

that this autonomy will lead to the creation of archives departments or schools in universities. Realistically, we have yet to reach that ambitious goal and we must ask ourselves if this is actually an objective to strive towards. What is important is that what we have now allows the normal long-term development of the discipline.

### **Sixth Milestone Event: The Creation of the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) in 1985**

The creation of the CCA did not involve spontaneous generation. It was the result of many initiatives in both the cultural and scholarly sectors. From the early 1970s to the mid-1980s, it was increasingly evident that Canada needed a *Canadian archival system* that would facilitate the exchange and sharing of skills and knowledge among archivists in order to enhance the management of archives. From the Symons Report in 1975 to the Page Report in 1981, to the minutes of a seminal conference held in Kingston in 1983, to the two reports on the state of Canadian archives in 1980 and 1985,<sup>23</sup> we find a recurring desire to establish a comprehensive network of archival institutions throughout Canada. The CCA was created, among other reasons, to ensure the development of such a network.

One can easily see the advantages of such an organization. With the CCA, archives no longer needed to operate in isolation and staff in these institutions could share their daily experiences with their colleagues. After 1985, provinces created networks of participating archives. It soon became clear that vast differences and great diversity marked archival practice in Canada. Looking back, one can remember the discussions that ensued regarding the principle of respect des fonds, the basis of the *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)*. From the outset, the committee responsible for the rules (including members from the CCA and the Bureau of Canadian Archivists) realized that one could not assume that all Canadian archives defined or applied this fundamental concept in the same way. The principle of respect des fonds that we had considered a solid and valuable starting point, was not necessarily commonly understood. We needed to get consensus on this major issue before moving forward. The first advance the creation of the CCA brought was the standardization of practices – especially description – so as to link previously isolated archives. Examples of CCA-led standardization include both *RAD* for archival description and work on acquisition policies. From that day forward, archival standards, a major objective of the CCA, became irreversible and important fixtures in Canada. The willingness to standardize, linked of course to the use of new technologies, provoked a questioning in many contexts of operations

23 Ibid., pp. 53–58.

and a revision of work methods. It also contributed to a need for on-going professional development. The numerous workshops developed in response to this requirement contributed to improve archival practices.

### **Seventh Milestone Event: The XII International Congress on Archives, Montréal, 1992**

The XII International Congress on Archives, with the theme of “The Archival Profession on the Eve of the Information Age,” was held in Montréal in September 1992. The great majority of Canadian and Québec archivists worked diligently, with extraordinary enthusiasm, in preparing for this congress. More than 2700 archivists from five continents participated. The issues proposed to global colleagues can be resumed as follows:

What solutions can archival science propose to the problems caused by the multi-media information explosion over recent years? Are professional archivists well trained and prepared to confront the challenges inherent to the information age? Must they interact more with other disciplines and professions that contribute to the management of information? What are the best practices that have developed throughout the world that archivists can collectively use in order to improve their profession? Must we increase our efforts in standardization?<sup>24</sup>

Consequently, the four plenary sessions had the following themes: From occupation to profession: how does the archivist perceive his/her role?; Archival standards: an instrument of the information age; Archival education to respond to the needs of society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century; and Archival systems and organizations: working together for society.

At the very least, the congress was an excellent occasion for Canadian archivists generally and Québec archivists in particular to examine their discipline and their profession. An analysis of the congress, published in *Archives* in 1993, led to reflections on its impact.<sup>25</sup> In retrospect, we might conclude that one of the principal contributions of the congress was to define the core elements that form the basis of the archival discipline. Seven were identified: a more comprehensive and clearer definition of records as the object of our concern; the renewal of the discipline; the existence of the archival discipline and the archival profession; the refinement and broadening of the discipline’s mission; the strengthening of the basic principle of archives (respect des fonds); an increased knowledge of the arguments justifying our discipline; and a more effective framework for our actions.

24 Jean-Pierre Wallot, “Le mot du Président,” *Archi-med* 1, no. 3 (August 1992), p. 5.

25 Couture, “Les acquis et les perspectives de développement de la discipline archivistique.”

Archivists left the congress with the renewed confidence in their abilities of those who have measured themselves against others and ranked well. When the congress was over, we felt like the athlete who, at the end of the Olympic Games, is satisfied in the knowledge that his performance meets a world standard. We knew there was still a lot to do but we were confident in the future and in the knowledge that our development rested on a solid foundation of accomplishment.

The objective of this article was to present a vision of the evolution of archival science in Québec since the creation of the Association des archivistes du Québec in 1967. A number of milestone events were analyzed to identify the accomplishments which define archival science in Québec. We sought to answer the following question: in light of its evolution, can archival science in Québec really participate effectively and competently in the management of our “living memory,” as the congress organizers labelled archives? The seven milestone events identified here illustrate that archival science in Québec has endowed itself with a solid base to support our actions: a professional association; a learned journal, *Archives*, capable of conveying scholarly knowledge specific to archives; the development of reasoned arguments demonstrating the solid foundation of the discipline’s existence; the positioning of archival practice at the heart of public institutions and scholarly research; the contribution of archival science in Québec to the application of the access to information law and the scope of the *Archives Act*; the archival education programs available; the creation of archival networks and standards following the establishment of the CCA; and the advantageous comparisons arising from the XII Congress of the International Council of Archives held in Montréal. All are milestones for archival science in Québec since 1967. We believe that in this context, drawing on a well-developed scholarly and disciplinary corpus, archival science in Québec can continue to meet public expectations to manage the records entrusted to its care effectively and competently. While as mentioned earlier there is still much to accomplish, archival science in Québec has matured sufficiently over the last thirty years that we can look confidently to its continuing development.

