address, head of institution and special contacts, hours, restrictions, facilities, mandate, holdings, and publications.

The cost of the *Guide to Archives in the Toronto Area* is $7.00 for members of the Toronto Area Archivists Group, $8.50 for non-members, plus a postage and handling charge of $1.75 for Canadian orders. For further information, or to purchase copies (prepaid), write *Guide*, Toronto Area Archivists Group, Box 97, Station F, Toronto, Ontario, M4Y 2L4. Cheques should be made payable to the Toronto Area Archivists Group.

The Video Disc Project: An Update

In 1978 the Public Archives of Canada decided to investigate the possibilities of video disc technology as a means of handling some of the access and conservation problems of a modern archives, given the variety and unusual nature of archival material and the special needs of archives users.

A feasibility study concluded that technology was developed sufficiently to allow off-the-shelf purchases for a pilot video disc system. The system consisted of a video disc player manufactured by Thomson CSF of Paris, France; a vectographic MZ 80 microcomputer; a Hewlett Packard 2645A keyboard and terminal; and a Sony 12-inch television monitor.

Demonstrations in October 1979 and January 1980 showed the video disc's excellent colour and audio qualities as well as its enormous storage capacity and convenient access capabilities.

Since then a video print unit has been added to the PAC system. This unit provides the capability of producing hard copy printouts, in either black and white or colour, of images stored on the disc.

In a recently printed report of the pilot project, the subject of recording information in a digital format was discussed. This technology has now been greatly developed, and by January 1984 digital optical recorder systems will be available for the commerical market from Thomson CSF, N.V. Philips of Holland, and McDonnell Douglas and Storage Technology Incorporated, both of the United States. The Library of Congress in Washington has awarded a contract to Teknekron Controls Incorporated for a large-scale optical disc system based on the Thomson CSF recorder/player.

The Thomson and N.V. Philips technologies are quite similar; both use a 30-cm disc with a metallic recording medium and both are worth about $20,000. The McDonnell Douglas recorder disc is 33 cm and is a photographic film. This system is capable of recording analog, digital, or video, and has nine audio tracks with a facility for thirty seconds of audio with each still frame. The photographic image is protected by a plastic coating and the company claims an archival life of 99 years. These and other developments are being followed closely by the Public Archives. A number of other governments are also interested in this technology.

The PAC has formed a video disc committee and established a departmental policy. The first two applications of the system will be to have a computer tape from

Machine Readable Archives converted onto an optical disc and then regenerated back to a duplicate tape, and to have a film from the National Film, Television and Sound Archives converted onto a disc and then regenerated back to a film. The computer tape transfer should be completed early in 1983, and the film portion should be completed by May 1983. Once these applications have been evaluated, a decision can be made as to which technology we will adopt. Requisitioning procedures can then begin for delivery in 1984.

Dennis Mole
Technical Services
Public Archives of Canada