

# Articles

## Explaining Ourselves: 40 Years of *Archivaria*



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RÉSUMÉ En 2015, *Archivaria* et la *Association of Canadian Archivists* fêtent tous deux leurs 40 ans d'existence. Cet anniversaire coïncide avec un autre événement marquant de 1975 : la publication de *Se connaître*, le rapport de la Commission sur les études canadiennes (aussi connu comme le rapport Symons), qui identifia les études canadiennes comme un outil crucial dans la quête pour comprendre l'identité canadienne. Conformément à l'appel de connaissance de soi lancé dans le rapport Symons, cet article panoramique explore quatre thèmes spécifiques abordés entre les pages d'*Archivaria* au cours des quatre dernières décennies : dans un premier temps, le rôle de l'éducation en archivistique et la question à savoir si un archiviste a, en fait, besoin d'une éducation formelle, et si oui, ce qui devrait être à l'étude; dans un deuxième temps, la nature de la profession archivistique et le débat à savoir si l'archiviste était et devrait être historien, gestionnaire de documents, bibliothécaire, ou autre; dans un troisième temps, la nature et la pertinence de la théorie archivistique et la discussion à propos d'en quoi consiste ce champ théorique et si la théorie est définitive ou non à l'ère postmoderne; et dans un quatrième temps, l'histoire de la profession au Canada et dans le monde, et l'exploration des façons dont les documents d'archives, les centres d'archives et les archivistes ont évolué au Canada et ailleurs dans le monde sur plusieurs siècles. Cet article se termine en lançant un appel pour une étude plus poussée de ces mêmes thèmes qui demeurent tout aussi valides aujourd'hui qu'ils ne l'ont été au courant des quatre dernières décennies, dans le but de permettre aux archivistes au Canada et à travers le monde de « se connaître ».

- 1 My thanks go to Heather MacNeil and to the anonymous *Archivaria* reviewers for insightful comments that helped streamline this article. Let me also take this opportunity to extend my deepest thanks to Catherine Bailey, Duncan Grant, Judy Laird, and Robert McIntosh, and more than a baker's dozen other ACA volunteers, who undertook the overwhelming but indispensable task of converting *Archivaria* to digital format. Without the efforts of this dedicated and detail-oriented crew, who laboured tirelessly to achieve the official launch of *e-Archivaria* in 2007, I would not have been able to complete this article in time for the anniversary issue, as the bulk of the research and writing took place as I travelled in and out of various countries around the world over several months in the spring of 2015.

ABSTRACT In 2015, *Archivaria* and the Association of Canadian Archivists both celebrate 40 years of existence. This anniversary coincides with another milestone from 1975: the publication of *To Know Ourselves*, the report of the Commission on Canadian Studies (also known as the Symons Report), which identified Canadian studies as a critical tool in the quest for an understanding of Canadian identity. In keeping with the Symons Report's call for self-knowledge, this overview article explores four specific themes addressed in the pages of *Archivaria* over the past four decades: first, the role of archival education and the question of whether an archivist in fact needed a formal education, and if so, what should be studied; second, the nature of the archival profession and the debate about whether the archivist was and should be a historian, information manager, librarian, or other; third, the nature and relevance of archival theory and the discussion of what such theory comprised and how definitive it might be in a postmodern age; and fourth, the history of the profession in Canada and internationally, and the exploration of how records, archives, and archivists have evolved in Canada and elsewhere in the world over many centuries. The article concludes by calling for more exploration of these same themes, which remain as valid today as they have been over the past four decades as a means of helping archivists in Canada and around the world "explain ourselves."

**Caterpillar:** Who ... are ... you?

**Alice:** I – I hardly know, sir. I've changed so many times since this morning, you see ...

**Caterpillar:** No, I do not see. Explain yourself.

**Alice:** I'm afraid I can't explain myself sir, because I'm not myself, you know.

**Caterpillar:** I do not know.

**Alice:** Well, I can't put it any more clearly, sir, for it isn't clear to me.

**Caterpillar:** You? Who are you?

From Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865

## Introduction<sup>2</sup>

This special issue of *Archivaria* celebrates 40 years of both the journal itself and the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA). It is an anniversary that coincides with another milestone: the publication in 1975 of *To Know Ourselves*. The report of the Commission on Canadian Studies examined the role and importance of Canadian studies to Canadian society and identity.

2 The overwhelming majority of citations for this article are for *Canadian Archivist/L'Archiviste Canadien*, published from 1963 to 1974, or for *Archivaria*, published from 1975 to the present. To facilitate readability, these publications are cited within the text with the abbreviations CA or A, followed by issue number, year, and page number as appropriate. More detailed citations are provided as circumstances require.

As Commission Chair Tom Symons wrote in his introduction to what became known as the Symons Report,

the most valid and compelling argument for Canadian studies is the importance of self-knowledge, the need to know and to understand ourselves: who we are; where we are in time and space; where we have been; where we are going; what we possess; what our responsibilities are to ourselves and to others.<sup>3</sup>

The Symons Report, and the formation of the ACA, took place at a time of heightened awareness of Canadian society – and Canadian scholarship, history, and professional identity – as distinct realities, separate from our colonial roots in England and France and also separate from the history of our closest neighbour, the United States. Building on the perspective of the Symons Report, this article examines the history of *Archivaria* specifically through the lens of self-knowledge: considering how *Archivaria* has reflected, and contributed to, our understanding of the nature of the archival profession, the place of archives and archivists in time and space, and the responsibilities of archivists, to ourselves and to others.

The history of *Archivaria* is an honourable one: hundreds of articles from authors around the world; published in 80 issues over 40 years; in a journal that has been recognized internationally as one of the leading sources of professional discourse in the field of archival studies.<sup>4</sup> *Archivaria's* 19 editors, dozens of editorial board members, and scores of technical editors, proofreaders, production assistants, and other contributors over four decades deserve the warmest congratulations from the members of the ACA, and from the Canadian and international archival community, for producing a journal of such consistent depth and quality over so many years.<sup>5</sup>

Along with the ACA's annual conference (and it must not be forgotten that many of the contributions to *Archivaria* started life as conference

3 T.H.B. Symons, *To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies* (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975), 1:12.

4 As noted on the "Advice to Authors" page at <http://www.archivists.ca/content/advice-authors-submissions-archivaria>, *Archivaria* has been given an A+ status by the Australian Research Council. *Archivaria* is also one of the top 20 journals in North America in library and information studies, as ranked by the SCImago Journal and Country Rank Portal, which provides scientific indicators, including ranking of journal literature as measured through the SCOPUS scholarly database. The North American rankings for 2013 (the most recent year for which data are available) can be seen at [http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=0&category=3309&country=Northern+America&year=2013&order=sjr&min=0&min\\_type=cd](http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php?area=0&category=3309&country=Northern+America&year=2013&order=sjr&min=0&min_type=cd) (accessed 3 July 2015).

5 To learn more about the different editors of *Archivaria*, along with other contributors to the journal, readers are directed to the ACA web page, which includes historical information about the ACA and *Archivaria* and provides access to digital copies of all *Archivaria* articles. See in particular <http://www.archivists.ca/content/aca-editors-archivaria-bulletin-website>.

presentations), *Archivaria* has long served as a tool for disseminating not just facts and statements but also, more importantly, ideas and opinions. As Gordon Dodds, the first president of the ACA, argued in *Archivaria* 17, the “prospect of being without the unique facility of *Archivaria* would condemn the profession to archival writing in Canada of a kind suited to newsletters, reports, and manuals” (A 17, Winter 1983/84, 38).

In truth, *Archivaria* has never been a “how we do it in our shop” kind of journal. As Peter Bower, *Archivaria*’s first general editor, noted on the occasion of *Archivaria*’s 20th anniversary, *Archivaria* was a welcome home to “controversy and debate,” a tradition he hoped would continue. Bower wanted *Archivaria* to become even “more demanding of its authors and readers, more provocative and evocative in its directions, more aimed at users, but still dedicated to finding the cutting-edge in archival practice, ideas, and theory” (A 49, Spring 2000, 16).<sup>6</sup>

How does one reflect on 40 years of such a dynamic journal in the short space available in the journal’s own pages? How can one capture in a succinct fashion some essence of the purpose, scope, and flavour of this far-reaching and multi-faceted publication? As the member of *Archivaria*’s editorial board who raised her hand to attempt the formidable task of considering the journal’s history, I was daunted by the innumerable threads that could be followed.

One option would be to trace the broad historical outlines, considering the subjects addressed in different decades. How did the journal address topics such as appraisal, for example, or arrangement and description, access and privacy, or reference and outreach? A chronological history, while appealingly systematic, would no doubt result in a superficial treatment: broad strokes would not do the different subjects justice.

Another option would be to focus on matters of production and editing. How did contributors to *Archivaria* write, edit, and shape the content? Such an analysis, while fascinating to those, like me, with a keen interest in the history of publishing, would also risk a descent into details. Another option would be to examine one or another particular component of the journal, such

6 One of the ways in which the Association of Canadian Archivists encourages the highest quality submissions is by awarding three prizes for journal contributions. In 1983, the W. Kaye Lamb prize was inaugurated to honour the author of an *Archivaria* article that “by its exceptional combination of research, reflection, and writing, most advances archival thinking in Canada.” In 2006, the ACA instituted the Hugh A. Taylor Prize, which honours articles that present “new ideas or refreshing syntheses in the most imaginative way, especially by exploring the implications of concepts or trends from other disciplines for archival thinking and activity, and by extending the boundaries of archival theory in new directions.” In 2011, the Gordon Dodds Prize was established to recognize “superior research and writing on an archival topic by a student enrolled in a master’s level archival studies program at a Canadian university.” To learn more about these awards, readers are directed to the ACA web page at <http://www.archivists.ca/content/history>.

as only the main articles, or only the Counterpoint contributions, the notes and communications, or the book reviews. While interesting, such focused examinations would not by themselves paint a picture of the journal as a whole, which was the task before me.

In the end, these options were abandoned, reluctantly, it must be said, for anyone with a passion for the past will be drawn to the myriad stories that inhabit any historical analysis. Instead, I determined that a textual study – an overview of journal content, pure and simple – was the best strategy. In order to sharpen the boundaries of this still broad analysis, I took as my guidepost Symons' search for identity: in his case, Canadian; in mine, archival. Who are we? Where are we? Where have we been? Where are we going?

I based my analysis on a review of the contents of *Archivaria* over four decades, particularly the main articles. I conducted no oral history interviews of *Archivaria* editors, enjoyable though that would have been. I undertook no investigations into the ACA's archives, despite my longing to dig into the records in search of hard evidence. And I performed no complex statistical analyses of journal content, though I am in awe of the data that can be gathered from the analytical tools available in this digital world. Instead, I set myself a smaller yet no less challenging goal: to search for different threads that wound through the journal, as evidenced in the articles themselves, to see what they revealed about the identity of Canadian archivists – to see how we have used *Archivaria* to explain ourselves.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, where possible I have used the words of the authors themselves, rather than my own summaries – in defiance of my instructions to students not to rely on quotations – precisely in order to allow this article to serve as a useful starting point for more detailed studies of the topics introduced.

In my reading of 40 years of *Archivaria*, it was still difficult to keep my focus on the question of self-knowledge. Many threads emerged, each pulling me in dramatically different directions. For instance, one of the major topics that has waxed and waned over the years has been arrangement and description.

7 Inevitably, such an introductory approach results in deficiencies. There are “back stories” to any publication, which cannot be gleaned from a review focused only on the final product. For instance, I found a titillating reference made by Peter Bower to the strong support for the journal offered by the Public Archives of Canada in the early years. According to Bower, PAC staff often contributed pages of content on demand, particularly when there was a noticeable dearth of submissions in hand (see A 49, Spring 2000). I also enjoyed glimpses into the editorial and production process, which left me feeling there was a real “kitchen table” approach to journal production – in the best sense possible – in the first decade or so. Early editorial credits included the names Marietta Dodds, wife of Gordon; Anna Eastwood, wife of Terry; and Anne Brandak, wife of George, in supporting roles. To pursue these threads would be wonderful, but the research necessary to do justice to these aspects of *Archivaria*'s past fell far outside what was possible for this anniversary issue. The stories are there, though, and ready for others to pursue.

Another core topic has been archival appraisal. Reference and outreach have been examined many times over the decades, and other articles have focused on public programming, the use of archives by the public, and the care of different types of archives, from hospital to military to personal to literary. All these are worthy subjects indeed, but they did not fit easily into my remit: to read the journal through the lens of Symons' search for self-knowledge.

Instead, by focusing on the question "Who are you?" I discerned four themes, each weaving into another. These four themes offered insights into the evolution of our Canadian archival profession. Tracing the progression of these themes across four decades has allowed me to consider how Canadian archivists have defined ourselves through the pages of *Archivaria*.

The first theme, which emerged even before the first issue of *Archivaria* was published, revolved around the question of whether the archivist should have a formal education versus on-the-job experience or more practical training. It was a topic addressed repeatedly – and often heatedly – over many years. That theme continued until the late 1990s, after which it diminished, in large part, one suggests, with the establishment of formal university-based archival studies programs. As the academic path to an archival career became a reality (at least for those practitioners considered the primary audience for *Archivaria*), debates about the value of that path faded away.

The second theme emerged in concert with the first. Questions of training versus education were interwoven with a larger discussion about the nature of the archival profession. What was the essence of the "true" archivist? What should the archivist know, and who should the archivist be? This conversation, which began simply enough with a debate over whether it was better to manage archives according to provenance or to focus more on the needs of different archival media, turned into a protracted argument over archival identity. Was the archivist a historian, a technician, a librarian, an information manager, or all or none of the above?

The third theme grew from the second. The historian-versus-technician-versus-other debate evolved into a more sustained deliberation about archival theory. What was the theoretical basis for archival practice? Was archival theory firm and fixed, as many believed theories ought to be? Or was archival practice open to interpretation and reinterpretation, as argued in the dawning postmodern age? Was there even such an animal as "archival theory" in the first place?

The fourth theme may not have been a direct consequence of the third, but it did arise just as the discussion of archival theory seemed to quiet down a bit. As with any profession, the act of defining the discipline, establishing formal educational requirements, and articulating specific principles and theories can prompt a desire to examine more deeply the historical underpinnings of that discipline. The history of records, archives, and the archival profession became a topic of interest, and many more recent contributions to *Archivaria* have focused on aspects of archival history.

Over 40 years, these four themes have become woven together, like the warp and weft of a fine piece of cloth, and so I have used them as the pattern for this particular retrospective. What should the archivist learn? Who should the archivist be? What should the archivist believe? Who had the archivist been? By looking at these particular themes through four decades of *Archivaria*, we may perhaps follow a story – one story, and admittedly not the only story – that brings us a little closer to Symons’ goal that we “know ourselves.” As Alice would explain to the caterpillar, if indeed she could, Canadian archivists can reflect on these themes in our quest to explain ourselves.

### Setting the Stage

Before we consider the four themes, we must first recall the origins of *Archivaria*. The Archives Section of the Canadian Historical Association was established in 1953. A decade later, Hugh Dempsey, the first editor of *Canadian Archivist*, argued that “the Archives Section feels it would perform a useful service by publishing selected papers and bringing information on archival techniques, policies and practices to the attention of its members” (CA 1963, 18).

*Canadian Archivist* transformed from a newsletter into a journal in 1969, when then-editor Hugh Taylor outlined his intention to model the form and structure of the publication more closely on *American Archivist*, which had been published by the Society of American Archivists since 1938. Reflecting on colleague John Archer’s belief that “we are slowly moving towards a Canadian archival methodology,” Taylor proposed that “our journey should go on record” (CA 1969, 3).

By the time Ian Wilson took on editorial duties in 1973, *Canadian Archivist* regularly stretched to more than 100 pages. Much strictly professional news was moved to a new *Bulletin*, while the journal focused on scholarly and research articles in both French and English, along with book reviews, conference notices, and regional news. As of its last issue in 1974, *Canadian Archivist* surpassed 145 pages and included 10 articles, 2 book reviews, and 5 regional reports.

In 1975, the Association of Canadian Archivists was formally established. Less than a year later, in the winter of 1975–76, the first issue of *Archivaria* was published. The editorial framework established by *Canadian Archivist* continued in *Archivaria*: the first issue included 6 articles, 10 regional reports, 9 book reviews, a Counterpoint article, and several shorter contributions.<sup>8</sup> (The very appearance of a “counterpoint” piece in

8 According to Robert Gordon, the name *Archivaria* came out of a meeting between Gordon and Peter Bower in May 1975. Having discarded *Canadian Archivist* as too prosaic a title, they considered options for conveying the anticipated international reach of the journal, believing that the flight of the “new phoenix,” as Gordon called it, “should not stop at

the first issue of the new journal seems to be unquestionable evidence of the deliberate continuity between the old and new publications.)

### **Archival Education: What Should the Archivist Learn?**

Of the four themes considered here – education, profession, theory, and history – the first emerged even before the appearance of the first issue of *Archivaria*. The pages of *Canadian Archivist* included several calls for more formalized educational opportunities, ideally but not exclusively within a university environment. Contributions included Alan Ridge’s “What Training Do Archivists Need?” (*CA* 1965) and Wilfred Smith’s “Archival Training in Canada” (*CA* 1969). Smith also published “A Report on Archival Training” (*CA* 1969), which detailed Carleton University’s 1968 summer course in “archival principles and administration.” Smith suggested this course ought to be offered every two years, to support John Archer’s call for “a teaching base where we can inculcate professional techniques and a professional attitude” (*CA* 1969, 48).

In “The Compleat Archivist,” in *Archivaria* 1, Gordon Dodds – by that time serving as the first president of the ACA – argued that the best education for archivists should include the study of history, library science, case law and legal practice, archival conservation, administration, and teaching. He added two specialties to the list of desirables: records management, which he called a “vivid neon light” that was too often “only incidentally connected to archival programs,” and computer science, which he felt was critical to helping archivists avoid the loss of valuable records “by our groping ignorance” (*A* 1, Winter 1975/76, 83–85). Dodds expressed his displeasure with the idea that archivists should be “trained,” believing instead in the value of “a richer and more satisfying education in the beginning” (83).

In his Counterpoint piece in *Archivaria* 1, Terry Eastwood, then a member of the staff of British Columbia’s provincial archives, argued that university education was not the only path to knowledge. Offering a rebuttal not only to Dodds but also to comments made by Edwin Welch and Shirley Spragge in the final issue of *Canadian Archivist*, Eastwood suggested that, while archivists might place great faith in the value of university education and in the power of formal credentials, they should “resist the pressures to compete for professional status.” As long as training is “seen and is promoted *as a means to* improved professional status, our working environment and lives will suffer,” he suggested, adding that archivists are in a “fortunate” position

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the borders of Canada” (*A* 20, Summer 1985, 4). In the end, they conceived of the word “Archivaria,” a combination of *archivum* and *varia*, denoting archival records. The title, they felt, could also represent the plural of *archivarius*, “stressing the voice of archivists” (5).

since “we do not have the millstone of a university course around our neck” (A 1, Winter 1975/76, 107, emphasis in original).

Eastwood did not dismiss university education entirely. He conceded that “I do not deny the place of university courses designed for working or would-be archivists, so long as much needed improvement in this direction does not blind us to the great potential for training elsewhere in our working and professional lives.” Rather, he hoped to see “great advances” in the future in “on-the-job learning” (108).

Despite Eastwood’s reluctance, the idea of university-based archival education was gaining traction. In *Archivaria* 4, Edwin Welch reviewed educational models in other parts of the world, particularly the United States and England, in order to present options for consideration by Canadians. Believing that “one of the first goals of the ACA was to improve the quality of archival education in Canada,” Welch argued that the best course of action was not to “allow archivists to be trained by librarians, historians or any other academic looking for extra student fees.” He also rejected the idea of adopting the “one-year programme composed exclusively of archival subjects, as in Britain.” Instead, he argued, Canada should develop its own program: a comprehensive course of studies in archival science (A 4, Summer 1977, 57, 59).

Welch’s piece prompted further Counterpoint rebuttals in *Archivaria* 5. Janet Fyfe, professor at the School of Library and Information Science at the University of Western Ontario in London, suggested that Welch’s attempt at university education would be hampered by the absence of qualified academics to teach the proposed courses. She declared, “I doubt if candidates with experience acceptable to Dr. Welch and academic qualifications acceptable to the universities will come out of the woodwork in overwhelming numbers” (A 5, Winter 1977/78, 186).

Laurenda Daniells, University Archivist at the University of British Columbia (UBC), corrected what she felt was Welch’s misunderstanding of the status of planning for archival education, pointing out that UBC was in the midst of developing the curriculum for an archival studies program, based on draft educational guidelines developed by the ACA (187).<sup>9</sup> In fact, UBC did found Canada’s first graduate program in archival studies in 1981, following one of the recommendations in the Symons Report from 1975, an achievement Tom Symons later applauded as an “encouraging first step” (A 15, Winter 1982/83, 68).

9 In 1989, as a matter of record, *Archivaria* 29 published a copy of the ACA “Guidelines for the Development of a Two-Year Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies Programme,” as well as a description of educational initiatives at l’Université de Montréal and an outline of Alberta’s five-year plan for post-appointment and continuing education. *Archivaria* 30 included “Guidelines for the Development of Post-Appointment and Continuing Education and Training Programmes.”

After UBC's program was launched, the discussion about archival education changed, focusing less on whether such programs should exist and more on what courses should be offered and how well such programs might do in the goal of producing qualified archival professionals. In 1983, Terry Eastwood, by then the first director of UBC's Master of Archival Studies program, wrote an article outlining the "origins and aims" of the program, suggesting that an understanding of its nature and scope was a matter "of no small concern to Canadian archivists and archives" (A 16, Summer 1983, 35).

Over time, more and more educational programs developed across Canada. In Winnipeg, the Department of History at the University of Manitoba began offering a master's program in archival studies in 1991. A specialization in archives was introduced to the University of Toronto's Master of Library Science program in 1993, evolving into an integrated Master of Information Studies degree in 1996. Other universities, including Dalhousie University in Halifax and McGill University in Montreal, later added archival courses to existing library studies programs, expanding the English-language opportunities across the country. French-language programs were developed at L'Université de Montréal and at L'Université Laval in Quebec City.

As these different archival studies programs matured, their graduates also began to look back on their own educations, perhaps acutely aware that their experiences had been something quite new and different. The impact of archival education became a new theme. In 1989, for example, Elizabeth Eso and Robin G. Keirstead published the results of a survey of UBC students from 1981 to 1988, showing – among other findings – that the population of UBC students and graduates was not homogeneous, that there was a disproportionate representation of students in the program from the western provinces, and that not a single graduate from UBC had secured a permanent archival position anywhere east of Ontario (A 29, Winter 1989/90, 104–27).

In 1994, Roy Schaeffer examined the history of archival education and theory in North America, urging his professional colleagues to "accept the student as more than an embryonic archivist" and to look at the university environment as "a wellspring of energy and imagination for the profession" (A 37, Spring 1994, 32). In 1995, Richard Klumpenhouwer considered the effort involved in translating archival theory into practice in "The MAS and After: Transubstantiating Theory and Practice into an Archival Culture," and Robin Wylie assessed the impact of student research in "Student Archivistics: The Contribution of Master of Archival Studies Theses to Archival Professional Literature" (A 39, Spring 1995).

*Archivaria* 42 included a special supplement on "Perspectives in Archival Education in Canada," with contributions from representatives of each of the major Canadian educational programs along with a critique by an American

archival educator. From UBC, Terry Eastwood discussed the need to reform archival education to meet contemporary needs, particularly the need to equip archival practitioners with an understanding of the management of all records, analog and electronic. He noted that actual changes in curriculum to reflect digital requirements were, of necessity, going to be gradual, not immediate. "In time," he wrote, "questions of arrangement and description, appraisal, and reference as they apply to electronic records will have to be incorporated into courses which already exist on those subjects. For the time being, however, electronic records deserve a special course of their own" (A 42, Fall 1996, 86).

Carol Couture, writing about l'Université de Montréal, acknowledged that archival education was being transformed by technology and argued that archival management must be accepted as a legitimate discipline and profession. Barbara Craig, of the University of Toronto, urged an increase in the level and nature of archival research both within the archival studies classroom and through partnerships between educational and archival institutions. Tom Nesmith, director of the archival studies program in the University of Manitoba's Department of History, outlined his wish list for the ideal professional archival education, stating unequivocally, "I place historical knowledge about archives, records creators, records administration, and records at the head of that list" (93).

In his critique, American archival educator Timothy L. Ericson suggested that, as valuable as the other contributors' perspectives were, they represented the views of educators only. He wondered what kind of vision might be offered by archival studies graduates or by the employers of those graduates. Ericson got an answer in *Archivaria* 45 when Evelyn Peters presented the findings of another survey of archival studies students at UBC, assessing their satisfaction with the program and their perspective on its relevance to professional needs (A 45, Spring 1998). She noted, in particular, that graduates placed more value on opportunities for practical experience than on academic exercises such as thesis writing. Indeed, for many reasons, UBC had ceased to make the completion of a thesis a course requirement as of 1994 (92–93).

Despite the reduced emphasis on writing theses, articles by archival studies students were increasingly important contributions to the literature. Many students mined their academic research for *Archivaria* articles: the first such was Richard Stapleton's "Jenkinson and Schellenberg: A Comparison," which was based on his UBC MAS thesis and appeared in *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983/84). In 2003, recognizing the value of this scholarly research, *Archivaria* published abstracts of all theses completed to date in the archival studies programs at UBC and the University of Manitoba, along with introductions from both Terry Eastwood and Tom Nesmith (A 55, Spring 2003).

Since the early 2000s, specific discussions around archival education have more or less faded from the pages of the journal. A notable exception was Patricia Galloway's 2011 article outlining her course at the University of Texas

at Austin on digital archives and recordkeeping (A 72, Fall 2011). Otherwise, the topic of archival education has not been a distinct thread in *Archivaria* for some years.

### **Archival Profession: Who Should the Archivist Be?**

A second thread that began weaving through *Archivaria* in the early years related to the nature of the archival profession. Who was the archivist? Was there an archival theory or even an archival profession? Was the archivist a scholar, historian, records manager, or other? Some contributors to *Archivaria* claimed there was no question: archival management was its own professional speciality. Others believed that the best qualities of archival practice derived from an appreciation of allied subjects, history foremost among them.

This discussion of the profession began in *Archivaria* 1, with Dodds' "The Compleat Archivist" and Eastwood's "Education and the Profession." In *Archivaria* 2, Dodds returned to the theme in "Back to Square One: Records Management Revisited," arguing that the archivist would only really "come of age" when formal and in-depth educational opportunities were in place. Formal education would allow archivists to "confront more keenly the objectives of archival operations, establish a code of principles and accordingly equip themselves with the tools and know-how" to be effective in all aspects of records and archives management (A 2, Summer 1976, 91). These early conversations about professional identity were but the opening act, however; the real debate began in 1979.

The discussion began simply (if provocatively) enough, with an article in *Archivaria* 9: Terry Cook's "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on 'Total Archives.'" Cook – at the time an archivist with the Public Records Division at the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) – said simply but decisively that archivists ought to pay more attention to provenance. He argued that the principle, which ought to be "universally venerated," was instead being "steadily eroded by another, almost equally august dictum, that of 'total archives.'" Cook acknowledged that total archives and provenance were not, as he put it, "mutually exclusive principles." Indeed, he argued, "they should be entirely complementary." He claimed, though, that "it is the way total archives is interpreted or administered that creates difficulties" (A 9, Winter 1979/80, 141, 142).

Even though the total archives concept had never been defined adequately, as Cook explained, it had become an accepted principle of archival practice in Canada. And it was a particular force within the PAC. Unlike government archival institutions in many other parts of the world, the PAC had a mandate not only to acquire and manage government archives but also to collect and preserve non-government archives of national significance from any and all sources and in any and all media. In the 20th century, Cook explained, this broad remit meant that the PAC was receiving an increasing variety of "new"

media materials: photographs, sound recordings, audiovisual materials, and even a small but growing collection of machine-readable archives.

Rather than manage those new multimedia collections as whole units – fonds, as they would be called in later years – the PAC had established separate media units, each of which took responsibility for different media holdings. Acquisitions were separated and materials distributed to different offices across the institution for arrangement, description, and ongoing care. Cook contended that this format-oriented approach disrespected the need to manage archives so that their evidential value was protected. His solution was clear:

We must first define in principle and reconcile in practice the nature and application of provenance and total archives, the role of the archivist as scholar or administrator, the relationship of the archivist to his own institution and his wider profession, the organization of our repositories by administrative or archival criteria. Only then can we begin to solve such a fundamental issue as the most effective form of education for archivists. (149)

Cook's suggestion to respect provenance, then, was really part of a deeper challenge: archivists needed to define their principles and clarify their identity.

Despite Cook's call for more consideration of the theoretical underpinnings of professional practice, the response in the short term focused on the question of total archives and on the management of media materials. In *Archivaria* 10, Andrew Birrell, then in charge of the PAC's photography collection, countered that, far from a tyranny of the medium, there was a "tyranny of tradition." What Cook saw "as a growing erosion of a sanctified tradition" was in fact, Birrell argued, "merely a practical difficulty of operation as we expand our concepts of what constitutes archives" (*A* 10, Summer 1980, 249). Birrell suggested that, "by all means, let's articulate our first principles anew, but let this articulation not be a tyrannical and fundamentalist application of the principle of provenance" (252).

In *Archivaria* 11, Ernest J. Dick, Jacques Gagné, Josephine Langham, Karen Lohead, and Jean-Paul Moreau – all specialists in the management of sound recordings – urged archivists to avoid the "simplistic polarization of the debate into the 'us' of the more recent audio-visual media and the 'them' of the traditional textual manuscripts and records" (*A* 11, Winter 1980/81, 224). To them, the challenge of respecting provenance while managing media was best managed by addressing archival requirements separately during the different stages of archival management, from acquisition and conservation to public service. While provenance ought to be acknowledged at all stages, they agreed, the separation of archives by media offered great benefits when carrying out tasks such as duplicating and preserving sound recordings.

Cook shot back at all parties, suggesting that when they and others – including Theodore Schellenberg in what Cook called "a moment of weakness" – deny the importance of the principle of provenance, "they are simply

wrong. Provenance,” Cook insisted, “is not the echo of some distant war. It is the central core of the archivist’s craft” (A 12, Summer 1981, 148).

In *Archivaria* 16, French archivist Michel Duchein offered his interpretation of provenance in “Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems of *Respect des fonds* in Archival Science,” a translation from his French article originally published in 1977 in *La Gazette des archives*. Duchein suggested that difficulties arose when provenance was not framed within the wider context of *respect des fonds*, and he argued that the successful application of provenance would come from the essential task of analyzing “*the jurisdiction of agencies creating archival fonds and of their changes*” over time (A 16, Summer 1983, 82, emphasis in original). Implicit in Duchein’s message was that a historical orientation was necessary for the effective management of archival materials. As he stated, success would come through a detailed historical analysis of archival holdings, after which, he claimed, “all the difficulties associated with the application of *respect des fonds* are resolved” (82).

Duchein’s message must have been music to the ears of archivists who saw the deeper issue lurking beneath the debate about provenance. Who was the archivist? Should the archivist be defined as a historian? Or was the archivist more appropriately an administrator or technician? The ACA had emerged out of the Canadian Historical Association, and its ties to the discipline of history were strong. But many also feared being stereotyped as handmaidens of history. As *Archivaria* published more and more discussions of archival theory, it was perhaps inevitable that the journal would also become a forum for debates about professional identity.

To some, the archivist was and ought to be a historian. Tom Nesmith, at that time an archivist at the PAC, argued in 1982 that the issue was not whether or not archivists needed to adhere to any particular principle. More important was that archivists must understand many layers of history – social, cultural, administrative, and documentary – in order to perform archival tasks successfully. Nesmith believed that “archival scholarship,” which he defined broadly, was “an essential part of the day-to-day operation of an archive” (A 14, Summer 1982, 26).

In his “Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well,” George Bolotenko, also an archivist at the PAC, argued the same point more bluntly, stating simply that “the historian still makes the best archivist” (A 16, Summer 1983, 6). Bolotenko took particular issue with the English archivist Hilary Jenkinson, arguing that Jenkinson’s call for impartiality was impossible unless archivists were “sequestered like a jurymen” (10). And he criticized the perspective of American archivist Margaret Cross Norton, who argued that archivists should be concerned with business efficiency before history. As Bolotenko concluded, “given that an archivist’s ‘primary concern’ is ‘business efficiency,’ one shudders to think what harm this might do *provenance*” (10).

Bolotenko's call for a historical orientation spurred a strenuous debate in the pages of *Archivaria* 16. Mark Hopkins suggested that the distinctions between records managers and archivists would fade over time, but that archivists must still "equip ourselves with the requisite training and tools to get on with the job" (38). Anthony Rees argued that the "root of the problem lies with the modern archivist and with the nature of modern records" (57): the archivist must interpret public service as not just to the "university-level professional" but to a "full spectrum" of society. (55). John Smart suggested that the pending implementation of federal access and privacy legislation in Canada was going to demand increased professionalism on the part of all archivists responsible for public records. He argued that "matters of provenance and access which might have been handled on an *ad hoc* basis in the past must be brought into conformity with the act and its regulations" (140).

The conversation grew fierce enough to merit a special feature in *Archivaria* 17, on "The Debate over History and Archives." The divisive nature of the discussion was evident in the titles of different contributions: from "Bolotenko Applauded," to "Bolotenko Assailed," to "Bolotenko's Siege Mentality," to "A Wearisome Issue." Robert Taylor-Vaisey added a new dimension to the debate in his contribution, "Archivist-Historians Ignore the Information Revolution," contending that the greater danger, not fully addressed in the debate thus far, was the impact of new information technologies. Referring to Nesmith and Bolotenko, Taylor-Vaisey argued that

our two authors worry about our inability to communicate with and assist historians. I am troubled by the fuller implications today of electronic messaging and electronic mail, virtual storage and word processors. The ability with which people may create, manipulate, communicate, and destroy (or archive) information in digitized, non-textual form, without any direction from the archival community, is frightening. It should concern archivists that we are essentially not in control of tomorrow's archival resources. And what will our alliance with the historical profession be then? (308)

Taylor-Vaisey's concern about the impact of modern technology was reiterated by Richard Kesner in "Automated Information Management: Is There a Role for the Archivist in the Office of the Future?" (A 19, Winter 1984/85) and in "Whither Archivy?: Some Personal Observations Addressed to Those Who Would Fiddle While Rome Burns" (A 20, Summer 1985). The discussion also simmered in the "Letters to the Editor" sections of *Archivaria* 18 and 19 and in several other articles over the subsequent issues.

In *Archivaria* 18, Hugh Taylor echoed Taylor-Vaisey's concern for the modern record. In this piece, Taylor suggested that "old record keepers" in the middle years of the 20th century had been "caught up in a vast 'historical shunt'" and that it was time for the profession to leave this diversion and "enter once more the mainstream of record keeping" (A 18, Summer 1984, 27, 30). Reluctant to define the archivist only as a historian, Taylor believed that

the archivist, as keeper of the record, administers and communicates by means of insights which are not limited to those of the historian, and as time goes by the historical approach may itself seem more and more restrictive. This is no more crucial than in the field of documentary appraisal for preservation, which does not depend solely on historical principles. (36)

In “From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives,” in *Archivaria* 19, Terry Cook acknowledged that Taylor was “the deepest and most eloquent critic of Tom Nesmith, George Bolotenko, and others who defend the centrality of history to archivy.” In the end, though, Cook believed that Taylor was wrong. “His notion of the ‘historical shunt,’” Cook argued, “ultimately deals with procedural difficulties and technological challenges – all real and important – that are now facing archives, not with their very purpose of being ... Taylor confuses administrative means with cultural ends in his assessment of the historian-archivist debate” (A 19, Winter 1984/85, 29).

Nesmith – by this time the editor of *Archivaria* – contended that the debate, while painful, was fruitful. “Although major differences have been aired and remain,” he wrote, “Canadian archivists have never before had such thorough and articulate statements of the principal rival concepts of the profession” (A 19, Winter 1984/85, 16). Nesmith invited Bolotenko to offer further remarks on the debate, and so in *Archivaria* 20 Bolotenko reiterated his stand in “Instant Professionalism: To the Shiny New Men of the Future,” maintaining that archival methodology was “utilitarian” and that archivists “must remain first and foremost historians” (A 20, Summer 1985, 151).

Bolotenko did not get the last word, though. Nesmith looked for an upside, proposing that “if archivists cannot yet agree on the priorities they should establish in their work or on the means to achieve these goals ... they might at least agree on the central question facing them” (A 20, Summer 1985, 21). Eastwood was not so sanguine, arguing in *Archivaria* 21 that the “monumental debate” about history and archives was a sign of a rift in the profession (A 21, Winter 1985/86, 189). Taylor bemoaned the war of words, suggesting that “we have witnessed a classic pamphlet war of broadsides aiming their volleys from fixed positions and points of view, though not always on target” (A 21, Winter 1985/86, 180).

In *Archivaria* 25, Taylor offered a fresh argument, this time looking more directly at the impact of digital technologies on the archival role. In “Transformation in the Archives: Technological Adjustment or Paradigm Shift?” Taylor argued that digital technologies were leaving archivists “awash in a sea of mega-choice” (A 25, Winter 1987/88, 13). In the past, he suggested, there had in reality been very few records available to acquire and preserve. But “the search room of the near future,” he claimed, “will house not a city of scant entries, but a blizzard of information through which the researcher must find a way” (22). In the end, Taylor counselled, archivists must broaden the

concept of archival practice significantly, in order to address the fundamentally different nature of records creation.

Over time, the debate about the archival profession had shifted gears, moving away from a discussion of whether or not the archivist should be defined as a historian to a more nuanced consideration of what, if any, theoretical framework might underpin archival practice, and how archivists might carry out archival duties effectively in an increasingly digital world. Intermingled with this debate was an increasing interest in the place of post-modernism in archival theory.

### **Archival Theory: What Should the Archivist Believe?**

The concept of postmodernism had been considered since the early 20th century, particularly in relation to art and music, but the movement really gained traction in the late 1940s in the realm of architecture, as a response to the dissatisfaction among critics of the minimalism of modernist architecture. Postmodern theory was, put simply, grounded in the argument that there were no objective truths, only interpretations, and that attempts to articulate “one” version of events – from history to architecture to art to music to literature – ought to be met with skepticism.

As archivists began to look at the profession from a postmodern perspective, questions of archival roles and responsibilities expanded into debates about whether – and if so, how – archivists can make definitive judgments, particularly about such socially significant archival tasks as appraisal. In a postmodern world, no decision, archival or otherwise, could be seen as objective, and no decision maker, archival or otherwise, could be considered a neutral authority. How can the archivist – whether historian or administrator or other – remain a trusted custodian of “the truth” if there was, in the end, no objective truth?

Among the first articles to consider archival theory and postmodernism was Hans Booms’ 1987 contribution, “Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage: Issues in the Appraisal of Archival Sources,” translated by Hermina Joldersma and Richard Klumpenhower from a 1972 German text. In his analysis of archival duties in a digital age, Booms (who had served as president of the German Federal Archives) argued that archivists “hold the monopoly” on selecting the documentary heritage of society. It was the archivist, he claimed, who “decides which events in social life are transmitted to us through the record” (A 24, Summer 1987, 78). Booms spoke frankly about the challenges of appraising government records in a socialist country, articulating his belief that archival appraisal was inevitably influenced by the social milieu. “In their personal behaviour,” he maintained, “archivists, as *animaux sociaux*, are ... unavoidably subject to the fundamental orientation of society” (106).

Addressing archival duties from the other end of the spectrum, Luciana Duranti – who had come from Italy to join UBC’s Master of Archival Studies program in 1987 – authored a six-part series on “Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science,” which ran from *Archivaria* 28 to *Archivaria* 33. In this series, Duranti made clear her perspective that North American archivists would benefit greatly from understanding the scientific discipline of diplomatics, which she claimed was a foundational element of European archival education (A 28, Summer 1989, 8). In presenting her arguments, Duranti took the position that there was indeed a scientific basis to archival work. Diplomatics was a “formative discipline,” she argued. “Its function is the same as anatomy for the medical doctor, physics for the engineer, and grammar for the linguist or any literate person” (A 33, Winter 1991/92, 7). Acknowledging that the application of diplomatics to appraisal was controversial, Duranti suggested that diplomatics still offered an obvious benefit to other archival tasks, particularly arrangement and description, by providing “conceptual and terminological rigour” and thus supporting the important goal of standardization (17).

In *Archivaria* 32, Brien Brothman offered a vigorously postmodern argument in “Orders of Value: Probing the Theoretical Terms of Archival Practice.” In his examination of “cultural meanings” of contemporary archival practice and the nature of archival theory, Brothman pleaded for archivists to appreciate the “historical and cultural consciousness” of their own position (A 32, Summer 1991, 79, 92). Brothman challenged Duranti’s position, arguing that she placed excessive emphasis on juridical status and legal competence, which belied a positivist orientation that Brothman felt archivists must learn to overcome.

Standing at two ends of the modernist-postmodernist divide, Brothman and Duranti used the “Letters to the Editor” section of *Archivaria* to engage in a forceful debate on the question of archival objectivity. Duranti took exception to Brothman’s perspective, arguing that, in fact, the application of diplomatics relied on social determination “at every step” (A 33, Winter 1991/92, 4) but that at the same time her goal was to illustrate the “concepts, principles and methods of a specific discipline,” not to present a personal perspective (4).

Brothman rejected the suggestion that any discipline, even diplomatics, could declare neutrality. Diplomatics, he felt, was particularly problematic; the subject itself rested on an assumption that it was possible to achieve an objective and definitive confirmation of authenticity. Even Duranti’s own account of the study, Brothman argued, was based on a subjective analysis: such was the biased and personal nature of all discourse as seen through a postmodern lens (A 34, Summer 1992, 7).

Others added to the postmodern debate. In *Archivaria* 32, Peter Russell suggested that neither history nor archives – nor any social endeavour – could be neutral and objective. It was no longer acceptable, he felt, for the archivist to “strike a pose as disinterested curator of the records” (A 32, Summer 1991,

132). In *Archivaria* 34, Barbara Craig reiterated Booms' argument that "put quite simply, we are part of society, not separate from it" (A 34, Summer 1992, 175). In the same issue, Terry Cook asked archivists if they saw themselves as "active or passive participants in the appraisal process" and wondered if archivists were "really ready to accept the theoretical implications of their own historicity and thus to abandon the myth of Jenkinsonian impartiality as a guiding light" (188–89).

In "Nailing a Little Jelly to the Wall of Archival Studies," in *Archivaria* 35, Terry Eastwood challenged the postmodern position, suggesting that "archivists properly leave questions of the meaning of the intelligence or information communicated by the archival document to posterity to investigate." As he explained, "archivists ensure the legitimate preservation of evidence first, and then and only then do they serve demands for the intelligence associated with that evidence" (A 35, Spring 1993, 244). Cook responded in *Archivaria* 37, proposing that Eastwood was refusing to acknowledge that archivists are "agents, conscious or unconscious, willing or unwilling, of the historical process in which they find themselves" (A 37, Spring 1994, 102).

In "Archival Theory and Practice: Between Two Paradigms," also published in *Archivaria* 37, Heather MacNeil acknowledged that the struggles archivists were facing were part of a paradigm shift, brought about in part by the changing nature of records and the increasing complexity of recordkeeping environments. These changes were forcing a re-examination of archival theories. She urged archivists to "listen, attentively and tolerantly" in the search for "mutual reconciliation" (18).

Other contributors to the postmodern debate included Preben Mortensen on "The Place of Theory in Archival Practice" (A 47, Spring 1999), Brien Brothman on the writings of Jacques Derrida (A 48, Fall 1999), and Joan Schwartz on "'Records of Simple Truth and Precision': Photography, Archives, and the Illusion of Control" (A 50, Fall 2000). Issue 51 of *Archivaria*, published in Spring 2001, was dedicated to "The Postmodern Archives," with half a dozen contributions specifically addressing the debate – from Verne Harris' "On (Archival) Odyssey(s)" to Martine Cardin's "Archives in 3D."

In his contribution to the special issue, Cook provided an overview of the concept of postmodernism, which he summarized, quoting Jean-François Lyotard, as "incredulity towards metanarratives." Cook argued that there was a place for postmodernism in the archival environment (22); postmodernists, he claimed, seek to "de-naturalize what society unquestionably assumes is natural," which he saw as a valuable challenge to status quo thinking (24).

In "Trusting Records in a Postmodern World," MacNeil agreed that "the narrative archivists have constructed around the concepts of reliability and authenticity is only one among many narratives." But, she countered, if archivists need to "adhere to some conception of truth in order to anchor the integrity of archival practice," perhaps that truth could be "pragmatic" (46). In "Let

the Ghosts Speak: An Empirical Exploration of the ‘Nature’ of the Record,” Victoria Lemieux explored various postmodern and other perceptions of the concept of a record, suggesting that a “critical reading” of the layers of meaning associated with records was essential to allow archivists to interpret and manage those records adequately (110).

In 2006, in a “Special Section on “Archives, Space and Power” within *Archivaria* 61, Joan Schwartz reminded readers of the lingering impact of Derrida’s *Archive Fever*, lamenting that archivists were still “noticeably absent” from discussions about the nature, power, and impact of the archive (4). In the same issue, Malcolm Todd addressed issues of power and practice in his analysis of archival approaches to privacy, and Rodney Carter discussed the “power” in “archival silences,” proposing that archivists were “constantly confronted” with choices about what to include or exclude from their holdings. In the end, he claimed, archival actions allowed “for some voices to be heard while others are silenced” (219).

The message conveyed in some of these pieces was that, since archivists were not neutral, they should perhaps be taking deliberate steps to counter the imbalances resulting from different – and more positivist – approaches in the past. This notion of the archivist as activist expanded in *Archivaria* 67, in a special section called “Taking a Stand! Activism in Canadian Cultural Archives.” As guest editors Kathleen Garay and Christl Verduyn argued, the essays in the special section “clearly demonstrate the shared conviction that archives can, indeed must, provide an occasion for discourses of differentiated activism and hence, for social transformation” (61).

The postmodern debate, which had emerged out of a discussion about the proper place of archival theory, had evolved into a discussion about whether or not archival practice could be considered objective and neutral. Over time, though, the debate became less prominent in *Archivaria*. One might suggest that the postmodern ethos has infused itself into our professional discourse, and so the question of whether postmodernism even applied to archival thinking has become moot. In more recent years, the conversation has evolved into what for many in the profession is now a clarion call for activist interventions in the creation and management of records and archives. The archivist as activist is as distant from the archivist as neutral custodian as can be imagined, and the debate seems far removed from less political questions of whether or not archivists should be formally educated or whether the labels of historian or administrator fit more or less comfortably on archival shoulders.

### **Archival History: Who Has the Archivist Been?**

In the late 1990s, as debates about the nature and place of archival theory and about the relevance of postmodernism wove their way through the archival discourse, another thread emerged in *Archivaria*. Discussion shifted from

questions of who archivists thought they *ought to be today* to reflections on who archivists thought they *had been in the past*. As the archival profession matured, attention turned to the history of archives and archivists.

Among the first articles on archival history was Terry Cook's 1997 contribution, "What Is Past Is Prologue: A History of Archival Ideas since 1898, and the Future Paradigm Shift." In his comprehensive analysis of the history of archival thought, Cook began by examining the impact of the 1898 publication of Muller, Feith, and Fruin's Dutch *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives* and ended by considering the impact of electronic records on archival theory. In his piece, Cook reiterated the argument, introduced by MacNeil and others in earlier articles, that a new "conceptual paradigm" was emerging within the archival profession, as a result of digital technologies, which required a reconceptualization of traditional archival principles and a shift from a "product-focused to a process-oriented activity" (A 43, Spring 1997, 17).

Another historical study, focused specifically on Canadian archives, was my analysis of the evolution of the total archives, published in *Archivaria* 46. Beginning with an outline of the first stirrings of archival interest in Quebec in the early 1800s, I examined trends in Canadian archival practice into the mid-1990s (A 46, Fall 1998). I continued the analysis in *Archivaria* 47, looking to the future of the Canadian archival system and suggesting that three factors were holding back its success: a lack of clarity about the role of the archivist, insufficient coordination across the archival community, and poor public understanding of the nature and purpose of archives (A 47, Spring 1999). Despite our internal debates about professional identity, I suggested, we had not yet convinced the world at large of our value to society.

In 2004, Tom Nesmith's "What's History Got to Do with It?" – based on his 2003 keynote address to the ACA conference – examined how Canadian archivists viewed ourselves over time. Nesmith suggested that, even though the ACA had been founded through a desire by archivists to break free from our historical roots, he believed that "new priorities" for the profession would inevitably require archivists to draw on historical knowledge more than ever before (A 57, Spring 2004, 5).

The first international conference on the history of records and archives (I-CHORA) was held in Toronto in October 2003, and a special issue of *Archivaria* in 2005 included several articles stemming from the conference. As conference organizers Barbara Craig, Philip B. Eppard, and Heather MacNeil explained in their introduction to the special issue, the history of records making and recordkeeping "must be explored because it is integral to the nature of archives and to archival practices" (A 60, Fall 2005, 10). They noted the absence of a historical perspective within the archival profession, suggesting that "like the cobbler's children who are poor in the very products the cobbler purveys, archivists are discovering, or re-discovering

that their work, their institutions, and their materials have a rich history that is neither obvious, simple, transparent, nor beyond debate” (3).

Among the I-CHORA papers published in *Archivaria* 60 was Terry Cook’s “An Archival Revolution: W. Kaye Lamb and the Transformation of the Archival Profession.” In this piece, Cook examined the influence of Lamb, who had been the first National Librarian of Canada, from 1953 to 1968, and who had served as the Dominion Archivist from 1948 to 1968. Cook argued that Lamb transformed archival practice in Canada by developing more systematic and comprehensive approaches to archival appraisal, by emphasizing the importance of formalized government records management programs, and by significantly increasing the scope of research and reference services and public programs offered by the Dominion Archives. Cook ended by quoting Lamb’s prognostication (taken from Lamb’s 1984 memoirs) that “most modern archivists must be prepared to pass judgement on records, including the sentence of life or death.... This is a grave responsibility – indeed, rather a frightening one – but we must face it and discharge it to the best of our ability” (A 60, Fall 2005, 234).

The I-CHORA issue also included a range of articles from international contributors, a vivid sign of how far *Archivaria* had moved beyond its Canadian roots. For instance, Michael Piggott wrote on diaries in Australia; Peter Horsman on Dutch recordkeeping; Giorgetta Bonfiglio-Dosio on municipal archives in Italy; Susan Palmer on the State Paper Office in England; and Randall Jimerson on early American archives. As Craig, Eppard, and MacNeil suggested, the opportunity to consider diverse aspects of archival history opened the door to consideration of the “multiple contexts” in which records are created, managed, and used. As they concluded, exploring archival history is essential, as it is “integral to the nature of archives and to archival practices” (10).

This last thread in *Archivaria*’s discourse – archival history – seemed in many ways to take archivists back to the beginning: what do archivists need to know in order to do our jobs well? Thus, by exploring the four themes – education, professional identity, theory, and history – as they relate to Symons’ quest for self-knowledge, we can see that, as education is linked to professional identity, and as the profession must be defined in terms of theories, the future of the profession must be framed by an understanding of its past.

Discussions of archival history continue in the pages of the journal. It is time now for deeper studies of the nature and place of archives in society, from the beginnings of the written record thousands of years ago to the management of digital files today.

### Archival Future: Continuing the Conversation

In 2015, the archival literature in *Archivaria* is more sophisticated and nuanced than ever before. The journal invites and welcomes contributions on a vast range of topics, including, in the most recent issues, social networking, the relationship between archives and art, the management of financial electronic records, the admissibility of records as legal evidence, and the place of records within different workplace communities. More and more authors come from outside of Canada and from disciplines other than archives. The journal increasingly reflects the growing realization that the study of records and archives is a distinct topic, one worthy of examination not just by archivists concerned with professional practice but also by scholars from around the world interested in the relationship of information, records, and archives to diverse facets of society.

One might say that *Archivaria* has helped to “explain” archives and archivists very well – to ourselves at least and, I hope, increasingly to the world. I will be glad to see *Archivaria* continue to be a platform for conversations about the place of records and recordkeepers in society. After all, one should never stop questioning one’s purpose in the world, as an individual or part of a professional or social collective. Such is the responsibility of living an examined life: a life worth living.

In reality, though, the question of who the archivist is or ought to be is no more resolved than it was in 1975. The changeability of the documentary materials in our care, which were once so reassuringly static and are now so overwhelmingly mutable, means that archivists cannot rest on old assumptions about who we should be, what we should do, or what we should know. And so I cannot help but conclude this brief overview of various threads in *Archivaria* by speculating on where the archival conversation might go in future.

Let me begin by saying that I am under no illusions that this summary article offers any deep analysis of the themes under consideration, nor do I pretend that those themes are the only ones worthy of study. I have followed a specific and narrow trail; I call on others to expand on this primer and explore each thread – and others – more thoroughly. What is the real story of the origins of archival education in Canada? Do the comments provided for public consumption in *Archivaria* reflect the history behind the formation of UBC’s archival studies program, or Manitoba’s, Toronto’s, or others? What historical events underpin discussions of the nature of the archival profession, the place of archival theory, or the relative merits of postmodern or other movements? If this survey tells us anything, it is that understanding the history of archives and archivists is more important than ever, especially as we move further and further away from a time when we can capture the memories of those who were there at the start of our professional journey.

But we must also look to the future. Renewed debate is urgently needed about the direction of archival education, particularly but not only in Canada. On the surface, it might not seem necessary to question the value of university-based archival studies programs. Several such programs are in place across the country, offering both master's and PhD studies. But many of these are not flourishing, and some seem to hang on to their existence by a mere thread. There have been dangerous reductions in faculty numbers; severe limitations on course offerings; and growing tensions as the iSchool movement increasingly overshadows the more institutional-oriented custodial approach to archival management.

As more and more emphasis is placed on information governance and digital asset management, what is the best combination of knowledge, skills, and abilities for the records professional of the future? Will he or she even be "an archivist"? What will that term mean in 2020 or beyond? We need to foster a new debate about the best education for professionals responsible for protecting digital evidence. Patricia Galloway's 2011 article on teaching digital archives and recordkeeping is a valuable start, but only a start. Archivists in Canada – and, I believe, around the world – need to consider carefully and deeply the future of professional education. I hope that *Archivaria* remains an important vehicle for encouraging and disseminating such thinking.<sup>10</sup>

Similarly, one might also think that the archival profession is now well established, that questions about whether there is a profession, and how it may be defined, are long settled. This is far from true. The challenge of electronic records management is pushing the custodial archival role to the margins. To present archival work as a custodial occupation, in the service of history alone, is to risk marginalization. Decision makers, especially in the public sector, react to audit reports, not anniversaries. Archivists know that history means more – that our work relates more to the protection of evidence than the preservation of "old" treasures – but we need to transform the discussion. Electronic records will not wait to become historical, and we need to position ourselves so that we can protect digital records today, not a decade or more after they have been created and, potentially, lost.

Ian Wilson, now Librarian and Archivist of Canada Emeritus, helped start this conversation about the role of archivists and archival institutions in *Archivaria* 78, asking us to consider how memory institutions can remain

10 In 2011, the ACA formed an Education Guidelines Review Taskforce to consider the educational needs of future entrants into the profession. For a 2014 summary of its activities, see "Education Guidelines Review Taskforce," *ACA Bulletin* (Spring 2014): 22-23. The group completed its work in 2014 and the report was presented to the membership at the association's annual general meeting in June 2015. It is hoped that this important work will continue and will help the ACA find a path toward educational goals that meet the critical need for the management of documentary evidence in a digital environment.

“relevant as a trusted source of continuing information” (A 78, Fall 2014, 135). And in my article in *Archivaria* 77, I warned that traditional archival operations face obsolescence in light of technological transformations. To remain relevant in the future, I argued, archivists must abandon an outdated, custodial model, focusing instead on a risk-based approach to records and archives service (A 77, Spring 2014, 104). The future of archives – the profession, the institutions, and the materials – is a conversation that must continue, urgently, within the pages of *Archivaria* and across the archival community.

Is there still room for discussions of postmodernism, or has that conversation run its course? Whether one is “pro” or “anti” postmodernism, few could argue against the real and valuable outcome of the debate. There is now general acceptance that the archivist is not a passive player in the preservation of society’s documentary memory. While efforts at objectivity are necessary and desirable, no one in 2015 could reasonably argue that absolute neutrality is achievable. Consequently, as most archivists today seem to accept, the very least the archivist can do is to make his or her interventions as transparent as possible.

As Catherine Bailey argued in *Archivaria* 75, in her detailed examination of the evolution of the appraisal of Canadian federal government records, archivists not only have “a professional obligation to make the ‘right’ appraisal decision, but we also have a duty to explain to those who follow us just how the records that we kept came to be preserved” (A 75, Spring 2013, 47). This recognition of the power of archival decisions is a fundamental and welcome change. Perhaps now it is time to discuss how archivists can best use that power for the benefit of society as a whole – to preserve evidence of the past and support recordkeeping for the future.

There is a danger that the pendulum can swing too far. The postmodern debate has opened up new ways of thinking about archival responsibilities, but I for one am uncomfortable with blanket suggestions that archivists must focus their energies on documenting what we perceive as the marginalized or forgotten. What is the danger that, in bringing one topic into the light, we push another into the shadows? *Archivaria* provides a critical platform for such debates, and as we move into a “post-postmodern” age, I hope we will see more analysis of how the archivist can serve all of society by endeavouring, always, to avoid privileging any one group over another, instead supporting the protection of the wider story: good, bad, and ugly.

In the end, of course, we can never be finished with studying the past. That is the eternal joy of history. Archival history is a subject begging for study. *Archivaria* should encourage such studies, but there is tremendous room for book-length studies of the history of records, recordkeeping, archives, and archival management. The threads presented in this article – education, profession, and theory – are only a handful of the topics demanding historical reflection, from the evolution of arrangement and description, to the changing

nature of reference, access, and use, to shifting approaches to appraisal, records management, or preservation.

The wealth of recent publications about “the archive” – however that word has been defined – attests to the wider scholarly interest in what has long been “our” professional subject. We have much to offer, and much to learn, by engaging in a broader discussion about the nature of information and records over time. *Archivaria* should be a welcome home to such analysis, whether by archival professionals or others.

What, then, of the future of *Archivaria*? Will the journal as originally conceived by its founders four decades ago continue to be the primary vehicle for archival discussion? Or will our profession capitalize on the ever-expanding opportunities for digital discourse? Now that we publish *Archivaria* electronically, we should do all we can to enhance the value of our journal by adding more, and more diverse, avenues for conversation. I see great scope for transforming our journal into an interactive online resource, filled with value-added elements such as web links that would direct readers to additional information on a topic; online forums to facilitate the sharing of comments on topics addressed in the journal; and subject-specific blogs to encourage a less formal, more immediate exchange of ideas. There is tremendous potential for the future of *Archivaria*. The ACA is actively pursuing new digital opportunities for the association; we should continue to imagine this new future for our professional discourse and work together to achieve it.

Forty years ago, a handful of pioneers decided that archivists should break away from their historical roots, establish their own association, and share their ideas through their own journal. Today, that journal has both chronicled and fostered the transformation of our profession. Topics such as archival education, professional identity, the place of theory, and the history of records and archives are only four of the many threads that have woven their way through 80 issues of a journal that has served archivists in Canada and around the world with honour and distinction. They are threads that we can continue to pull, in order to help us explain ourselves – to ourselves and to the world.

Ten years from now, we will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the ACA and *Archivaria*. Where – and who – do we imagine we will be then? Let the conversation continue.

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