

## LOCAL ARCHIVES AND THE STUDY OF GOVERNMENT

THE increasing province of government and the intensity of its activities made necessary by the progressive complexity of society have raised new problems and brought new solutions.<sup>1</sup> Despite the unsolved problems involved in the task of bringing to the electorate an understanding of the complex and often highly technical instrumentation of government today, the people of the United States still cling to their faith in popular control. Based upon popular education, when it began to increase in complexity, democratic government applied the remedy of more education. Today its fate may lie in research.

Happily, achievements already made, in progress, or projected, point toward a new era in local political studies, and so in local government which is the backbone of democratic government generally. These developments include new agencies for research, new sources of information opened up through the production of new tools for research, the creation of new techniques and methods in research, and the invention of mechanical devices by which the raw materials or the finished products may be disseminated.

New institutions for research in matters pertaining to government may be endowed, privately supported, organized as adjuncts to institutions of higher learning, or they may be official governmental agencies. The latter may be organized as a part of a particular established agency of government and designed primarily to serve its needs; or they may be organized independently to perform tasks in the interests of government generally and of the public at large. It is with this latter type and especially with the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration that this discussion deals, because scholars generally are less familiar with this new type of activity than with others.<sup>2</sup> The latter will be considered only

<sup>1</sup> "Government is getting much wider in scope, we shall want men of great ability, a knowledge of social affairs and in touch with life. But the kind of training and temperament and the *class* rather than the degree of ability are nowhere worked out." Sir Josiah Stamp, "The Administrator and a Planned Society," *Public Administration*, xvi (1938), 3-22. See also Dr. Robert C. Binkley, "The Cultural Program of the W.P.A.," *Harvard Educational Review*, ix (1939), 156-174.

<sup>2</sup> John Van Male in "Union Catalogs and the Point of Diminishing Returns," a paper read at the meeting of the American Library Association at Kansas City, June, 1938, emphasizes the point that research scholarship in the United States is no longer exclusively academic, and that governmental research, business and industrial research, and the growth

in so far as may be necessary to fix the Historical Records Survey in its historical and social setting in an attempt to assess the potential significance of the factors which may shed a new light on the problems of government, especially of local government.

Let us begin by looking backward some three centuries to the time when Da Vinci, Galileo, and Francis Bacon undertook to renovate knowledge with a view to its practical application to human affairs by building anew on the basis of observation and experiment. This method lent itself more readily to the physical sciences than it did to the social sciences. In time there arose new social conditions and new political concepts which resulted in what we call the industrial revolution and in political revolutions. These combined to bring about profound changes, especially in local government, beginning with the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>3</sup> By 1909 in England the justice of the peace had been shorn of all except his judicial duties, and greatly expanded administrative duties had been vested in a council and special boards. Similarly, in the United States the earlier functions of

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of a class of amateur scholars are now important factors. This same point was stressed by Dr. E. G. Nourse, the Social Science Research Council's representative at the ninth annual meeting of the Social Science Research Conference of the Pacific Coast in his address on April 7, 1939. The Bureau of Public Administration of the University of California publishes an impressive list of *Governmental Research Organizations in the Western States* (Berkeley, 1935). The National Archives, the Society of American Archivists, the Library of Congress, the American Library Association, the Association of State Libraries, the American Historical Association, the American Bibliographical Society, the American Documentation Institute, and numerous other agencies maintain a high degree of co-operation with WPA projects engaged in research. Dr. Solon J. Buck has stated that the Joint Committee on Materials for Research "serves in effect as an advisory committee for the Historical Records Survey." XIVth Conference International Federation for Documentation (1938), *Transactions*. The American Library Association has a special Historical Records Survey Committee of which Dr. Henry O. Severance of the Library of Congress is chairman, and the director of the Historical Records Survey serves on its committee on archives and libraries. Appropriate committees of the American Historical Association co-operate directly and intimately with this and other WPA projects. *American Historical Review*, XLII (1937), 614-615; Am. Hist. Assoc., *Annual Report*, 1936, I, 52-59. Historians early recognized the quality of the research being carried on. In a letter to the Works Progress Administrator dated September 20, 1937, the executive secretary of the American Historical Association, Dr. Conyers Read in speaking of the Historical Records Survey stated:

I know of no other survey of national records in the world to compare with this one. . . . I used to think that the British Historical Manuscripts Commission furnished the pattern which we would do well to copy in America, but nothing the Historical Manuscripts Commission has ever done can compare in scope or accuracy with the work of Mr. Evans and his colleagues.

<sup>3</sup>D. Ellis speaks of the "growth of the idea that local government was more than a presentment of nuisances before amateur lawyers" during this period. "The Development of Local Government Administration since the Eighteenth Century," *Public Administration*, XV (1937), 215-226.

local government have been increasingly absorbed by the state and federal governments, while the counties and other local governments have been taking on new social duties and have been creating special authorities.<sup>4</sup>

To cope with the situations thus created, extra-legal associations have been formed, state-wide, national, and even international in scope.<sup>5</sup> But the amount of aid that such agencies can give is limited in the absence of solid statistical information from local sources.<sup>6</sup> Academic interest in local government has broadened in scope and increased in intensity, and has now spread outside the field of political science.<sup>7</sup> But as rapidly as interest has increased, the rate at which the bulk of the sources of information has increased has been even more rapid.<sup>8</sup> Special schools in public administration and associations of these agencies have been formed to instruct and do research. Recently the Social Science Research Council formed a special committee on public administration. The problem of controlling factual

<sup>4</sup> H. P. Jones, "Progress in County Government," *National Review*, xxiii, 502; C. M. Kneier, "Development of Newer County Functions," *American Political Science Review*, xxiv (1930), 134-140; L. D. Melton, "The Elimination of Township Government in Oklahoma," *National Municipal Review*, xxvii (1938), 405-407; J. E. Pate, "Trends in County Government," *Social Forces*, xvi (1938), 418-426; P. W. Wager, "County Government," *Municipal Year Book*, 1936, 120; Clyde F. Snider, "County and Township Government in 1935-1936," *American Political Science Review*, xxxi (1937), 884-913. Among the special authorities may be mentioned districts which, in California, for example, include those for water supply, irrigation, drainage, reclamation, water conservation, fire protection, health, sanitation, schools, highways and roads, harbors, airports, public utilities, regional planning, and others.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the International City Managers' Association, the Civil Service Assembly of the United States, the American Municipal Association, the National Association of Assessing Officials, the Municipal Finance Officers' Association, the Council of State Governments, the Public Administration Clearing House, the Governmental Research Association, and the like. The International Union of Local Authorities, created in 1913, has offices in Brussels where it maintains a library. It plans an international exchange of information and research. It publishes in London an organ called *Local Government Administration* and, jointly with the International Institute of Administrative Sciences, a periodical called *Tablettes Documentaires*. The Union has an American committee and American public officials attend its conferences.

<sup>6</sup> "We have been one of the backward peoples of the world in the organization of localized information," and "Our municipal statistics today are worse kept and less published than they were in 1880." Robert C. Binkley, as cited in note 1.

<sup>7</sup> A cursory examination of periodicals and of indexes to periodical literature indicates that during the past decade the amount of attention paid to local government has roughly doubled, that the field has expanded, the number of periodicals devoted to political science has increased, and that interest in local government has spread to legal, philosophical, and business magazines. In 1938 the *American Political Science Review* devoted 25 per cent of its pages to local government and administration, and about 2.5 per cent to research. Report of the managing editor, xxxiii (1939), 99.

<sup>8</sup> Solon J. Buck, as cited in note 2; G. E. Milward, "The Collection and Distribution of Information," *Public Administration*, xv (1937), 226-229.

information, revealed quite frankly in bibliographies and book reviews, is one of the acute problems facing such groups and agencies. Treatises on government, especially local rural government, and periodicals reveal a curious apathy toward archival materials, in contrast with the active interest which historians and librarians have so long shown in unpublished source materials.<sup>9</sup>

This is the more curious since "the problem of publication no longer exists, if by publication we understand the servicing of things . . . to those who wish to read them."<sup>10</sup> This reference is to the near-print processes which are making source materials increasingly accessible. Of the fifteen hundred entries for California in Hodgson's *The Official Publications of American Counties. A Union List*, the greater part are mimeographed.<sup>11</sup> The Hayes Memorial Library has photographed on 16-mm. film a series (a hundred thousand exposures) of the Rutherford B. Hayes papers, many of the items in which bear on foreign policy. Bibliofilm Service was established in November, 1934. Major micro-copying laboratories may soon be set up in England and France also. In 1936 the American Library Association created a committee on photographic reproduction and, two years later, the *Journal of Documentary Reproduction* began publication under the editorship of Dr. Vernon D. Tate of the National Archives.<sup>12</sup> Dr. Robert C. Binkley as chairman of the committee on photographic reproduction of the American Library Association speaks of equipping universities with blueprint processes for the publication of theses, and gives specifications for their preparation for publication by this method. The National Research Council recently appointed Dr. James B. Conant, president of Harvard University, to head a committee on scientific aids to learning; and this committee is now engaged in studying the application of micro-photography to scholarship. Today one might replace the word

<sup>9</sup> The public archives commission of the American Historical Association began its activities in this field in 1900. The National Association of State Libraries also has long labored in this same vineyard. The committee on archives and libraries of the A.L.A., mentioned in note 2, has been very active of late. See J. K. Wilcox and A. F. Kuhlman, eds., *Public Documents, 1938, with Archives and Libraries* (Chicago, 1938).

<sup>10</sup> Robert C. Binkley, "Typescript Formats for Blueprint Reproduction," *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, 1 (1938), 75-78. See also *ibid.*, "Techniques and Policies of Documentary Reproduction," a memo issued by the Joint Committee on Materials for Research, 1938.

<sup>11</sup> Fort Collins, Colorado, privately published, 1937.

<sup>12</sup> The information in this paragraph unless otherwise indicated is drawn from the *Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, 1 (1938). A bibliography of materials on photographic reproduction is contained in 1, 87-123.



"French" by the name of any social science in the statement<sup>13</sup> that French science must make general use of near-print processes if it is to retain its rank.

This survey is intended to suggest that for all the associations of public officials and of scholars, and for all the various agencies devoted to research, and in spite of the mechanical devices for the economical transmission of information (especially in unpublished source materials), practical public office holders, academic theorists, and the electorate alike suffer from a dearth of sound and necessary information. This want is now being filled by the labors of the Historical Records Survey of WPA and allied agencies,<sup>14</sup> so that it is important to scholars that they should understand the program and achievements of the survey.

While the scope of the tasks it has undertaken is extremely broad, embracing the preparation of inventories of public and private archives, manuscripts, early printed materials, and portraits, the primary task is the inventorying of public records, particularly those of federal agencies, states, counties, cities, and towns. It is not this alone that makes the undertaking of high importance to the study and administration of government: It is also the manner in which the task has been approached and the form in which the inventories appear. They are far more than mere directories to unpublished source materials. When completed for the 3,066 counties, the innumerable cities and towns, the federal agencies, and the forty-eight states, they will constitute a veritable encyclopaedia of government, particularly of local government, in the United States.<sup>15</sup> The manner in which the plan was arrived at, in which the work was organized and directed, and the system according to which the results are presented, should go far toward removing the initial handicap under which political science has labored as a result of its tardiness in taking account of the archival field.

<sup>13</sup> Jean Hubert and Charles Perrat, "La photographie au service des archives et des bibliothèques," *Archives et Bibliothèques*, II (1936), 17-28.

<sup>14</sup> The public archives commission of the American Historical Association has been succeeded by a committee on historical source materials with subcommittees on public archives and historical manuscripts, and "the survey of state and local historical records [the HRS] is carrying out a number of the functions assigned to the committee on historical source materials." *Am. Hist. Assoc., Ann. Rept.*, 1936, I, 53. See note 2 also.

<sup>15</sup> A *Bulletin* of the American Library Association, XXXII (1938), 804, speaks of "The development of a set of guides to source materials that should enable political scientists to prepare a definitive study of the agencies and functions of county government in America."

For this monumental undertaking was not arrived at haphazardly. Behind it lay a generation of experience and recent experiments, the fruits of which it inherited through the advice and co-operation of experts in the Library of Congress, the National Archives, and learned societies.<sup>16</sup> Dr. A. R. Newsome as chairman of the public archives commission, Dr. Jean Stephenson, chairman of the genealogical records committee of the D.A.R., Dr. Francis Philbrick of the American Legal History Society, and Dr. Robert C. Binkley, chairman of the joint committee on materials for research of the Social Science Research Council and the American Council of Learned Societies gave of their experience and time; and the latter served for several months as a field supervisor to assist in organizing the project. The director, Dr. Luther H. Evans, is a political scientist, with ten or more years of teaching and research experience at Stanford, New York University, Dartmouth, and Princeton. The consequence is that the products are designed to meet the standards of scholarship and the needs, not of any single learned field, but of public officials, archivists, librarians, social scientists, and the public at large.

Scattered experiments during the years 1933-1935 in the use of relief labor for inventorying local records were successful enough to justify the establishment of a national program, and at the same time emphasized the weaknesses of isolated and sporadic local undertakings. The desirability of a uniform system of reporting and editing standard information on a national basis was clearly indicated. This has been achieved under the nation-wide project, which began operations early in 1936. Methods and procedures fixed by the national office have been enforced uniformly by means of rigid inspections from Washington and within the states themselves. While

<sup>16</sup> Solon J. Buck (as cited in note 2) speaks of government projects in bibliography as resulting from a desire to help unemployed "white-collar" workers, and "also a result of realization by a few people that there is need for projects too vast to be financed except by the government and that it is possible to carry on such projects with 'relief labor' under competent direction." The proposal to use relief labor appears to have originated with Dr. Jean Stephenson in a letter to Dr. Garrison, the archivist of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, in December, 1930. Dr. Garrison early organized a relief project to survey local archives, and during the winter of 1933-1934 co-operated with the American Legal History Society, the American Historical Association, the American Military History Foundation (now the American Military Institute), the National Guard Bureau of the War Department, and other agencies interested in surveying source materials, and with the assistance of a grant from the Social Science Research Council tried to initiate surveys in all states, but were unable to continue co-ordination of the work.

the workers were being trained and the data was being gathered, inspected, and verified, the national office was busy devising editorial plans and experimenting with them in one state or another. Two years of organizing, training, and experimentation followed before the kind of inventory now being produced was fixed upon and approved. Now they can be produced rapidly as well as accurately.

The techniques developed by the Historical Records Survey are in themselves significant to scholarship because they point the way toward methods by which ultimately the mass of unpublished materials to which guides and other aids are being prepared may be exploited successfully by scholars. Briefly, the processes may be described as the application of the assembly line system to scholarship.<sup>17</sup> Routine and mechanical operations are carried out by workers who at first may be without special skills, but who generally develop under expert technical supervision the aptitudes required for the successful performance of these tasks. The extent to which this learning process goes on and the heights it often reaches are a source of constant surprise and gratification. While the workers' background of theoretical knowledge is not as full as that of the academically trained man, and while their knowledge of governmental operations may not equal that of the holders of public office, they can furnish valuable information to the professorial scholar, and have on many occasions given practical instruction in their duties to public officials.<sup>18</sup>

This they are able to do because of the amount and quality of the

<sup>17</sup> In a *Memorandum on Agenda for Meeting of WPA Officials and Representatives of Learned Societies*, January 7, 1939, Dr. Binkley stated:

The difference between the kind of work that is here involved and the kind of work that goes on in graduate schools and research institutions is comparable to the difference between factory production and the production of craftsmen. . . . Scholars who think that they can make but little use of clerical labor have closed their eyes to the vast quantity of clerical labor that underlies their supply of information, whether it is in the form of statistical reports or the dictionary catalogue of a great library. . . . The development of our great library system out of the organized work of a vast corps of cataloguers whose operations were essentially clerical is enough to show us that factory labor has its place in the intellectual world.

<sup>18</sup> The following is quoted from a recent letter by the state editor of the survey in a Western state:

A Mr. ——— was recently elected a member of the . . . board of county commissioners. As Mr. ——— was unfamiliar with his exact duties, powers, and responsibilities as well as those of other county officials he must supervise, he recently called at our . . . office and requested a copy of our latest county inventory and asked . . . our . . . supervisor, if he would call at his home that night and go over the inventory section by section so that he might become familiar with the duties of each office and the records required of it.

research that goes on as a preliminary to the editing of the inventories; for these books contain not merely a description of the records of every governmental agency of the county, but even larger in bulk are the essays and the finding aids. The volumes are divided into three parts. The introductory section contains a table of contents, a brief historical sketch of the county, a general essay on the organization and functions of the county government, past and present, a chart or charts of the governmental organization, and an essay on the housing and care of the records. The second section of the inventory contains a detailed essay on each office of county government and a detailed listing of its records. The third section contains topical and chronological indexes which add to the reference value of the volumes.

But it is not these features alone that give these inventories their special value for comparative studies in local government. It is the extent<sup>19</sup> to which and the manner in which the introductory matter and the finding aids are introduced, and the method in the sequence of the offices and the arrangement of the records that give these volumes their special value to archivists and students of local government. The offices and their records are arranged in such an order as will reflect their relationships and the processes by which public business is transacted. The inventories heed the archival principal known to the profession as *provenance* or *respect des fonds*. The records are arranged according to the office of origin rather than of deposit, with the understanding that a record begun in one office and carried through one or more others belongs to the office which completes the record by taking final action on it, unless by statutory provisions legal custody is placed elsewhere.

As regards sequence, generally legislative functions come first, followed by the county clerk, recorder, then judicial and law enforcement agencies, financial agencies, and finally administrative agencies such as are concerned with health, education, engineering, and agriculture. Variations may be necessary as between states or classes of counties or individual counties within a state, but the principles of arrangement remain the same. Minor agencies are arranged accord-

<sup>19</sup> According to an A.L.A. *Bulletin*, XXXII (1938), 804, county archives inventories average 132 pages; historical essays, 3; essays on housing and care of records, 2.5; and essays on governmental organization, 31. The entries take up an average of 48 per cent of the space, indexes 15 per cent, and essays 37 per cent.

ing to function rather than according to constitutional or statutory responsibility to a major subdivision.<sup>20</sup>

The significance of these principles in a study of the organization and functioning of county government past as well as present is self-evident. But there is another aspect of equal importance. Grounded in these principles, workers have been able to arrange records in county courthouses according to archival principles, either before inventorying them or afterwards, especially when the records were being moved to a new courthouse. Lost or forgotten items or collections have been found and important documents rescued from destruction. Such services tend, temporarily at least, to attract the attention of custodians to the value of their records.<sup>21</sup> In many states the activities of the survey are leading toward movements to revise the legal provisions regarding public records.<sup>22</sup> Published inventories in the hands of officials will tend to provide a safeguard against abuses including capricious destruction. This tendency will no doubt become increasingly evident as investigators form the habit of doing research in local archives.

The extent to which such research is already being done by workers of the Historical Records Survey is not widely understood. The office essays are now tending to become digests of much of the most important materials in the records themselves. The basic idea of these essays on county government as a whole and those relating to particular offices is to make comparative studies of the past and present organization and functioning of government. The evolution of each office whose records are listed is set forth accurately and in detail in

<sup>20</sup> Sample entries which illustrate the arrangement within a series, together with detailed descriptions of cross references, the treatment of prior and subsequent records, and the like, will be found in "The Analysis of County Records" by Luther H. Evans and Edythe Weiner in *THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST*, 1 (1938), 186-200.

<sup>21</sup> "A new local archival economy should grow out of it." *A.L.A. Bulletin*, xxxii (1938), 804. In at least one state workers from the survey have been employed as county archivists. The former governor of Nevada stated that the inventorying and the results are "of vital interest to every public official and those interested in public affairs." The survey files in Washington and in the states are full of similar indications that a general improvement in local archival economy has been achieved.

<sup>22</sup> Notably in Vermont where the survey co-operated closely with a commission under the chairmanship of Mr. John Spargo which was appointed by Governor Charles M. Smith in accordance with the provisions of Joint Resolution 306, Acts and Resolves of the Legislature of 1935, to investigate into and report on the condition of local records in the state. *Report of the Commission to Make a Survey of Early Records of Counties, Towns and Villages of the State* (Mimeographed pamphlet, Montpelier, September 1, 1936).

such a way as to show how each fits into the general pattern of county government. The original organization, subsequent additions, subtractions, and combinations are fully described. The sources and the methods used are such that students of local government need have no hesitation in accepting the results.<sup>23</sup>

The most usual sources are constitutions and charters, acts of territorial and state legislatures, judicial decisions, and in some instances the opinions of attorneys-general. The processes by which completeness and accuracy are secured involve laborious steps and are formidable undertakings. They involve a page-by-page examination of all pertinent matter in constitutions, acts, and digests. The information secured as a result of this step is organized by offices and thereunder by structure, powers, duties, and records required to be kept.

This gives the legal requirements; but that is not enough. It is necessary to discover how the legal provisions have been carried out. In some states instructions have gone forth to search certain series of local records page by page and to abstract or transcribe information relating to past and present practices which may illuminate the essays. New appointments, changes in the form of government generally, variations in practices among counties, and similar information is sought, and when it is used, precise citations are made to the record by title and entry number in the inventory. A rigid and complete documentation shows where to seek further information. As a result of these methods much basic research data for county government has been assembled and will be accessible even if the original records should be destroyed, as frequently happens from fire, flood, and other hazards.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> The testimony of scholarship as revealed in book reviews, news notes, and correspondence, is overwhelming on this point:

In the historical sketches of the parish and its offices there are literally thousands of citations to constitutions, codes, acts, and revised statutes, and to the most authoritative secondary sources. A careful check reveals that research has been accurate, exhaustive, and meticulous. *The Journal of Southern History*, IV (1938), 128.

In a letter dated January 23, 1939, Mr. R. W. G. Vail, permanent secretary of the Bibliographical Society of America, wrote:

This project, though it employs many previously unskilled assistants, is under the direct supervision of a group of the most skilled specialists in this field in the country. I have worked with them and assisted them since the inception of the project and I know that their work is careful, accurate, and of the utmost value to the historian and the bibliographer.

Mr. A. V. Judges, an English scholar who visited the project in Massachusetts, wrote to the director: "My impression is that the work being carried on in Massachusetts, particularly on the legal side, is of quite remarkable quality."

<sup>24</sup> A point emphasized by Dr. Binkley in a letter to Dr. Evans dated February 18,



Sources of information on county government are not confined to published and unpublished materials; often it comes from the officials and the people themselves. This is a precious source, and the more so because it is of a kind that ordinarily (at least on any considerable scale) escapes the notice of the cloistered scholar. The files of the Historical Records Survey are filled with curious lore that sheds light on the ways in which local government is and has been carried on, especially in the more remote rural regions. This is information gathered at first hand and by observation in every county in the United States, and which could not be duplicated by any scholar or group of scholars however active and vigilant in view of the variety of the sources and their dispersed character. Sometimes it sheds a fresh and important light on the political genius of our people.

In illustration, there is a mountain community in Utah where the law enforcing agencies have long lain dormant, having been succeeded by a kind of informal social pressure which leaves the bench undisturbed and the jail untenanted. When no records could be found in a certain rural county in Oregon, the responsible official was questioned. The official was a lady of sensibility who occupied her time with embroidery and with the improvement of her mind. She explained that she considered it unladylike to keep public records; and the community was apparently content. In the same county no court records could be found. The explanation was simplicity itself: "They just didn't pay no attention to the county court!" Searches for the records of justices of the peace have often been arduous, even adventurous, and to no avail. One justice had no records for the sound reason that he had never had an opportunity to function in his official capacity; and it was a cross he had to bear that the only case ever to have been brought before him—a charge of murder—for reasons still a mystery to him, had been summarily removed from his jurisdiction. Many of the records reflect curious procedures in American judicial administration and local government in general under frontier conditions, from the seventeenth century down to the present time.

By describing local governments and their records the archives inventories are bringing together much basic information for com-

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1938 in connection with the series of county histories prepared in Oregon and published in the *Commonwealth Review*. Only a short time before a county seat in Oregon had been destroyed during a forest fire.

parative studies, but to do a thorough and complete job of research, students of local government will have to go beyond the inventories to the original sources themselves. Here the inventories will prove to be basic tools for research. They can tell the researcher what series of records, of what dates, in what amounts, form, and condition, existed as of the date of the inventory, and what their contents are in general. The reasons why gaps occur must be explained if possible. The search for such information often brings to light missing materials and strange archival practices, such as keeping records at home under the official's bed. If records have been discontinued or consolidated the fact is stated.<sup>25</sup>

The by-products of these processes are often valuable in themselves. The checklists of records required or allowed by law to be kept, and the compilations resulting from legal research have their practical uses. In some states checklists have been made of all incorporated towns that have ever existed. Research in county boundaries has been necessary. The state of Utah found it important to study county government under the provisional state of Deseret and to make a checklist of the records required to be kept by its county officials.

While the production of inventories of the records of counties and other units of local government has been given priority, considerable progress has been made by the Historical Records Survey in other fields which contain materials for the study of local government: state archives, records of federal agencies in the states, church records, manuscript collections, early imprints, etc. To date the field and preliminary editorial work on county archives may be considered to be completed for about one half of the 3,066 counties, and volumes covering more than two hundred counties have been published, usually in mimeograph form.<sup>26</sup> The surveying of state archives has been completed in only a few states, and only one provisional volume without essays has been published.<sup>27</sup> Although this is a mere list of records, and those of a young state, it is astonishing how much light a mere enumeration of records in 275 mimeographed pages throws

<sup>25</sup> In this connection, see note 20.

<sup>26</sup> In North Carolina where the historical commission prints the inventories, two volumes containing the inventories of the records of 66 counties have been published. The third volume for the remaining 34 counties, is now in the hands of the printer.

<sup>27</sup> *A List of Records of the State of Oklahoma* (Oklahoma City, Historical Records Survey, 1939).

upon the organization and functioning of government when the archives are listed in a logical sequence.

The Survey of Federal Archives, begun under the sponsorship of the National Archives and under the direction of Dr. Philip M. Hamer of its staff, is now in some states an integral part of the Historical Records Survey, and in others its work is carried on by local projects, the Historical Records Survey furnishing the necessary editorial direction and co-ordination. To this end Dr. Hamer has been appointed associate national director of the Historical Records Survey.<sup>28</sup> This survey of federal records is about half completed. It also has useful essays and special publications.<sup>29</sup>

The bibliographical undertakings of the survey when completed will provide a valuable implement for scholars. The farthest advanced is an annotated continuation of Larned's bibliography of American history, which is about ready for publication, except for checking and verification. The critical evaluations of the works listed are taken largely from the reviews of them which appeared in scholarly publications.<sup>30</sup> The work of the National Association of State Libraries in the field of state documents having come to a halt when its grant of funds was spent,<sup>31</sup> negotiations were begun with the Historical Records Survey to continue the work, and an experimental beginning has been made in Illinois, to list the state documents for a single decade.

However, the most ambitious undertaking in the bibliographical field is the inventory of American imprints which is continuing and expanding a field in which great individual bibliographers have long labored under heavy handicaps. Through their labors the period prior to 1800 was reasonably well covered for the Atlantic Coast states, though locations were often missing. The period from 1800

<sup>28</sup> A description of this undertaking, its progress and present status will be found in the annual reports of the archivist of the United States: *Second Annual Report, 1935-1936*, 88-103; *Third Annual Report, 1936-1937*, 93-110.

<sup>29</sup> As the essay in which are described the territorial courts in the Northwest Territory in *Series II. The Federal Courts. No. 21. Michigan*, and *A Directory to United States Government Agencies Maintained and Operating in the State of Wisconsin* (Madison, Historical Records Survey, 1938). This volume gives 77 pages of agencies and has a 30-page index. A map shows the location of federal agencies by means of red dots.

<sup>30</sup> The Librarian of Congress in his *Annual Report for 1937* (p. 45) stated:

Among the major checking undertakings conducted during the year may be mentioned that of the W.P.A. Historical Records Survey supplement to the Larned project, which searched more than 25,000 titles, with a location average of better than 97 per cent.

<sup>31</sup> *A.L.A. Bulletin*, XXXII (1938), 993-996.

to 1876, when the *United States Catalog* began, was generally neglected, and in the South and West the surface was hardly scratched. Here again co-operative methods have shown their superiority to such an extent that Dr. Solon J. Buck speaks of the day of the individual bibliographer as a thing of the past.<sup>32</sup> This must be so. The individual bibliographer cannot hope to cover collections in remote communities, even by the questionnaire method, and cannot go through old newspaper files systematically for publication notices or wade through archives for imprints attached to reports as exhibits or which otherwise may have come there.

Under the expert editorial supervision of Mr. Douglas C. McMurtrie, long and widely known for his activities in the field of early American imprints, the deficiencies in earlier lists are being remedied. Titles, many of them new, others of them with new locations, flowed into the editorial office in April, 1939, at the rate of sixty thousand per week. The co-operative methods devised are interesting in themselves; but the most significant factor is the progressive technique evolved. A beginning is made in some cases through an informal short-title memorandum of imprints for each state, designed to serve as a guide to the workers. The second stage is the publication, usually by mimeograph, of a preliminary checklist for each state, containing all information available at the moment of issue. This product is a substantial contribution to bibliography, though experience suggests the desirability of going beyond it to the third stage of a thoroughly rechecked and amplified product of unassailable accuracy and inclusiveness. To date some half dozen checklists have been published which have received very favorable notice; and a dozen more are well advanced toward publication.

The principal importance of these progressive bibliographies is to create a great reservoir of titles from which scholars in any particular

<sup>32</sup> As cited in note 2, Dr. Buck stated:

In 1868, when Sabin began the publication of his great *Biblioteca Americana*, and even as late as 1903, when Evans issued the first volume of his *American Bibliography*, it was thought to be possible for a single individual to carry out a comprehensive project in the field; but it is significant that Sabin's work, after standing still for many years, was completed under the auspices of the American Council of Learned Societies and that Evans' project, suspended with his death, will probably never be continued.

In his *Official Publications of American Counties* (cited in note 11) Mr. Hodgson states that he questioned 325 libraries and received replies from 194. A co-operative project could have covered 100 per cent of the libraries instead of 60 per cent, and have searched in other repositories also.

field may draw materials for critical and selective bibliographies. But in addition there is a considerable amount of information of interest in the study of government to be gathered from the mere description of titles. This takes the form of descriptions of published compilations of laws, statutes, and legislative journals, legal treatises, political pamphlets and broadsides, and the like. The Kentucky checklist (1787-1810), for example, contains locations for the hitherto unlocated Kentucky laws and statutes of 1797.<sup>33</sup> In the same checklist we find described a broadside of 1797 containing resolutions drawn up by the farmers and planters of Fayette County against "the bellowings in favor of a convention as not originating among the people," and another of the same vintage urging a constitutional convention and the abolition of slavery.

The manuscripts program of the Historical Records Survey is also of significance to archivists and in the study of local government. Traditionally in the United States noncurrent public records have commonly been looked upon as of merely historical interest. This is everywhere reflected, and especially in the state legislatures which have frequently provided for the administration of archives as adjuncts to libraries or historical societies. Public records have frequently turned up in university libraries, in private historical societies, and even in private collections of manuscripts. There is one state capital in which public records are on display as part of a collection of curios in a public barroom. But in justice to the proprietor who is more of a publican than a sinner, it must be added that they are kept in a glass cabinet under lock and key.

The question whether or not public records in semipublic or private collections are archives has been debated with much wit and learning; but what concerns us here is the practical consideration that they fill gaps in archival materials and otherwise supplement them. In 1938 the Historical Records Survey published as its experimental entry into the manuscripts field *A Guide to Depositories of Manuscript Collections in the United States: 100 Sample Entries*. This virgin effort was well received. The survey program in manuscripts embraces: (1) a list of depositories of manuscripts, (2) a descriptive list of collections of manuscripts, and (3) calendars and other detailed inventories of manuscripts.

<sup>33</sup> *Acts Passed at the First Session of the Fifth General Assembly for the Commonwealth of Kentucky* (2 vols., Lexington, James H. Stewart, Printer to the Commonwealth, 1797).

Even a cursory examination of this initial selective list of depositories reveals a wealth of material of interest to archivists and students of government. The official correspondence of governors often finds a way into nonarchival depositories, as the library of Rutgers University. Sometimes, as in Connecticut and Florida, state papers are divided between two or more institutions. In the latter instance territorial and state records are divided between the state library and the Florida Historical Society. The Kentucky State Historical Society, the Wyoming State Library and Historical Department, and the Department of Archives of Louisiana State University have large holdings of county, town, and parish records. Territorial papers have often found their way into historical societies, as in Oregon and Colorado. In Oklahoma materials relating to the government of the Five Civilized Tribes are to be found in the state historical society and in the Phillips Collection at the state university. The latter contains also materials on territorial and early state government; and the state historical society has been enriched by the acquisition of tons of local records which for the most part would have been destroyed or lost except for the zeal of the Historical Records Survey in that state. Materials on national affairs (1814-1926), on outlying possessions (1867-1900) including the annexation of Hawaii, and on William Jennings Bryan, are reported in the Pettigrew Museum, Sioux Falls, South Dakota.

Today, for all the associations of public officials and scholars, and for all the elaborate paraphernalia of scholarship, research in government still lacks accurate tools and methods. Present research methods depend largely upon concentrations of published materials which are often inadequate and need to be submitted to a critical appraisal. The larger accumulations are contained in a few research centers and are incomplete.<sup>34</sup> The greatest of libraries, though filled with the appallingly great output of the printing presses and served by a multiplication of library controls, give but a sampling of the records of civilization with which to meet the demands of modern science and the needs of modern society. For all the ingenuity of librarians, these vast collections can throw their feeble beams so far

<sup>34</sup> In order of amounts and in the order named, the greatest concentrations of printed materials for research are in New York, California, Massachusetts, and the District of Columbia. New Mexico is the poorest state in printed source materials, followed in order by Idaho, Nevada, Wyoming, and the Dakotas. Except for the excellent State Law Library in the small and remote capital town of Carson City, Nevada would rank lower. The statistics are from *School and Society*, XLVI (1937), 122-123.



and no farther. They can serve adequately only a limited number of metropolitan areas. Outside in the shadows are thousands of competent scholars and scores of thousands of potential scholars capable of useful service to the social sciences and who need only equipment, material, and contacts to generate light of their own. Facilities for the ready exchange of information exist but are still unorganized and are cumbersome. These deficiencies are in the way of being remedied. What may become in effect a second great library system for unpublished source materials is in the process of creation. When this will have been accomplished, great and hitherto untapped sources of information will be available for research. But the bulk of the materials will be so great and their repositories so widely scattered, that their exploitation will be beyond the powers of individual academic scholars alone, and new co-operative techniques will have to be devised or adapted for the employment of "auxiliary scholarship."

Already a beginning in this direction has been made under the leadership of the Social Science Research Council.<sup>35</sup> Already political scientists and others have been heard voicing their dissatisfaction with existing tools and methods. Dr. R. G. Tugwell recently complained<sup>36</sup> that Herbert Spencer's work gave only conclusions, whereas what political economists wanted was a tool for work. Felix Kaufmann recently wrote<sup>37</sup> that "the social scientist who deals with more general questions of his discipline soon meets problems which he cannot solve with the knowledge at his disposal and with the methods familiar to him." The dinner held by the American Political Science Association in honor of the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of James Bryce's *The American Commonwealth* brings to mind that scholar's dictum<sup>38</sup> that "however widely and carefully the materials may be gathered, their character makes it impossible that politics

<sup>35</sup> *Minutes and Proceedings of the Conference on Comparative Local History, September 23-26, 1937*, especially Appendix H containing Dr. Theodore C. Blegen's "Planning Local Research" and Dr. Robert C. Binkley's discussion of the cultural program of the WPA. Joseph Schafer of the Wisconsin Historical Society has issued a hectographed pamphlet, an *Outline for the Co-operative Study of Local History*. The Social Science Research Council's committee on public administration has a special committee on research materials which has adopted a program which aims at developing a science of public administration. William E. Mosher, "Case Studies in Public Administration," *American Political Science Review*, XXXIII (1939), 66-68.

<sup>36</sup> "Notes on the Uses of Exactitude in Politics," *Political Science Quarterly*, LIV (1939), 15-28.

<sup>37</sup> "The Significance of Methodology for the Social Sciences," *Social Research*, v (1938), 443-464.

<sup>38</sup> *Modern Democracies* (New York, 1921), I, 14.

should ever become a science in the sense in which mechanics or chemistry or botany is a science." But it is not necessary that politics should be a science in exactly the same sense as the physical sciences. Any set of facts are a fit subject for a science, which "comprises the entirety of conceivable ways to reach an ordered knowledge of the world."<sup>39</sup>

After pointing out some of the disabilities under which political scientists have labored, Professor Mosher declared<sup>40</sup> that "whatever the difficulties may be, the political scientist must retain his faith in the possibility of surmounting them and must devise ways and means of accomplishing this end." The opening up of hitherto relatively inaccessible unpublished materials and the sum of the means and processes by which this is being done, justify that faith and offer an opportunity for closing the gap between the methods of the physical sciences and the social sciences, and the possibility of keeping abreast of social developments and rendering a badly needed service to organized society. Henceforth public and private archives will lie open to the students of local government in the United States. Henceforth it will be possible in some fields of political science to use the historical method and the comparative method to greater advantage. Henceforth it will be a practical possibility to substitute scientific hypotheses for dogmas as a point of departure in political studies;<sup>41</sup> for what was it if not a lack of factual information that forced students of political theory to grope in the realms of speculation for a footing? But now new materials, new methods, new procedures are at hand.

Already a special committee on research materials has been formed by the Social Science Research Council to plan and experiment. Already there are thousands of relief workers throughout the United States who have been given a solid grounding in local governmental organization and administration, as well as in archival economy. When the social sciences shall have mobilized their legions for

<sup>39</sup> Kaufmann as cited in note 37. See also F. J. Teggart, *The Processes of History* (New Haven, 1918), 162; *ibid.*, *Theory of History* (New Haven, 1925), 155.

<sup>40</sup> As cited in note 35.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.* The author emphasizes the need for co-operative methods. David Owen in an article "Co-operative History" in the *Yale Review*, XXIV (1934), 420-422, recognizes that the opening of archives and the floods of monographs (and one might add, of periodical literature) have already overwhelmed the digestive powers of individual scholars. At the conference on comparative local history (see note 35) Dr. Wirth of the University of Chicago asserted that local research should provide social scientists with data necessary to set up and confirm hypotheses.

auxiliary research,<sup>42</sup> these as well as teachers, public officials, and graduate students, will be found enrolled. And who may tell what the repercussions may be upon them, upon scholarship, upon holders of public offices, and upon the electorate of the land? Herein may lie part of the answer to critics of democratic self-government. For, to quote Dr. Binkley:<sup>43</sup>

The way is now open to scholars in every field to take counsel together to see how far the kind of labor that is available when unemployed and needy people work intermittently at public employment can be made to enrich American culture.

And we might remember also that "the amount of money devoted to the cultural part of the relief program is so substantial that it should, if properly used, date an epoch in American development."<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> *Statement on Auxiliary Research*, a memorandum dated February 5, 1938, drawn up by Dr. Robert C. Binkley for the Joint Committee on Materials for Research. Dr. Binkley has elaborated on this theme in "History for a Democracy," *Minnesota History*, XVIII (1937), 1-27, and in *New Tools, New Recruits, for the Republic of Letters*, a memorandum dated November, 1934, to the Joint Committee on Materials for Research.

<sup>43</sup> As cited in note 1.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*