

Archivists and Records Managers: Variations on a Theme

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“IN today’s situation we find ourselves with archivists and records managers,” observed a Federal records officer in a paper delivered a few years ago at this Society’s annual meeting. “I suppose,” he continued, “that an archivist is a records manager who has specialized or that a records manager is an archivist who has become a general practitioner. Whatever the difference is, there is need for a closer relationship between the two.”¹ Not all of us need agree with our colleague’s differentiation between archivists and records managers, but we must emphatically endorse his proposal for a closer relationship between the two. This plea has been one of the basic themes in our professional literature for more than two decades, and, as a contribution toward that closer relationship we all seek, I should like to examine that theme and its variations. Certainly we “second generation” archivists and records managers have much to learn from what we too frequently dismiss as simply the “ancient history” of our profession.

Records management, as a professional activity of government archivists, received its first formal recognition by this Society in 1941 when the Society’s existing Committee on Reduction of Archival Material was renamed the Committee on Record Administration. The then committee chairman, Emmett J. Leahy, continued to serve as chairman of the renamed committee.² Behind this development was the formal establishment by the National Archives, early in 1941, of a “records administration program” intended “to assist in developing throughout the Government principles and practices in the filing, selection, and segregation of records that will facilitate the disposal of or transfer to The National

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¹ J. J. Hammitt, “Government Archives and Records Management,” in *American Archivist* (hereafter cited as *AA*), 28:219 (Apr. 1965).

² *AA*, 4:136 (Apr. 1941); cf. *AA*, 3:123 (Apr. 1940). The following year the name of the committee was given as “Records Administration”; see *AA*, 5:59 (June 1942).

Archives of records as they become noncurrent.”³ The basic justification for this program was the need within the Government for planned programs of records disposal and for beginning as early as possible in the life history of records the process of selection for preservation and elimination.⁴

The archivists who thus became involved, on however limited a scale, in the administration or management of current records did not regard themselves as creating a new profession, or even as adding a new dimension to an existing profession. In reviewing the situation late in 1942, Philip C. Brooks, one of the new archivist-record administrators, observed that “the present-day interest of archivists in records before they become archives represents the florescence of a phase of archival economy that has been manifested without such clear recognition for some time.” Dr. Brooks refuted the “occasional implication of a skeptic that we [archivists] have no concern for the way in which government agencies currently make and file records” by referring to eight articles, written by leaders in the profession and published in earlier issues of the *American Archivist*, in which “some responsibility of the archivist for records before they reach his custody” had been recognized. He found further evidence of this responsibility in the provisions of several State laws dealing with the inspection and control of inks, paper, and filing equipment; in the uniform State Records Act proposed by the Society in 1940, under which the head of the State archival agency would have supervision over the “making, administration, and preservation” of “all public records” in a State; and in the National Archives Act of 1934, which empowered the Archivist of the United States to inspect records in Federal agencies.⁵

Addressing himself directly to the relationship between archives and records administration, Brooks noted that “records have usually been a concern of management engineers, even though they have not always taken archival interests into account.” Nevertheless, “archivists have been equally prone to ignore the interests of current administration. Yet the two cannot help affecting each other,” he concluded, “and they can work together to mutual advantage. . . . Certain basic tenets of archival faith are being developed in

³ Philip C. Brooks, “Current Aspects of Records Administration: The Archivist’s Concern in Records Administration,” in *AA*, 6:160 (July 1943).

⁴ See particularly Emmett J. Leahy, “Reduction of Public Records,” in *AA*, 3:31-38 (Jan. 1940); and Philip C. Brooks, “The Selection of Records for Preservation,” in *AA*, 3:221-234 (Oct. 1940).

⁵ Brooks, in *AA*, 6:158-159. The citations in Brooks’ article are especially useful.

the meetings and publications of this Society through the years. I believe the legitimate interest of the archivist in records administration should become one of them.”⁶

To overcome whatever skepticism still existed among his archival colleagues, Brooks added one final justification for his proposal and a warning:

Current record administration is to the archivist of today what the study of diplomatics was to the archivist of earlier times—and more. Authorities on the qualifications of archivists say that archivists, in order to apply the principle of provenance, should know the methods by which records in their custody are produced. The complexities of modern administrative documentation have so multiplied the technical facets of filing that many persons regard it as a mysterious cult to be either feared or blandly ignored. Neither attitude is consistent with the principle that the whole life history of records is an integrated continuous entity. No period in that history can be ignored. It is inevitable that the iniquity of omitting care for records as they accumulate shall be visited upon the third and fourth generations of later administrators, archivists, research students, and society as a whole.⁷

Evidence of the success of this appeal assumed a variety of forms. Sessions on current records administration became a regular feature of the Society’s annual programs; studies of current records administration programs in various Government agencies were published in the *American Archivist*; books and manuals on current records administration were reviewed in the journal; and the section on “Filing Techniques and Administration of Current Records” in the journal’s annual bibliography continued to expand. In 1944 Brooks succeeded Emmett Leahy as chairman of the Society’s Committee on Records Administration,⁸ and for the next several years this committee, convinced that the most urgent need of the profession was “to arouse the intelligent interest of administrators in the importance of economical records administration,” devoted itself to the task of preparing a pamphlet on the subject based upon the experience of the Federal Government and intended for the use of State and local governments.⁹ In reporting to the Society on the completion of this pamphlet in 1949, Committee Chairman Brooks explained that the purpose of the committee was “to state common denominators of guidance for public officials in any way concerned with or responsible for records” and that the “common interests of records officers and archivists” had been recognized

⁶ Brooks, in *AA*, 6:161, 164.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

⁸ *AA*, 8:160 (Apr. 1945).

⁹ *AA*, 10:78 (Jan. 1947).

throughout the pamphlet.¹⁰ The product of these labors many of you will recognize as *Public Records Management*, by Philip C. Brooks, published by the Public Administration Service in 1949. In a very real sense this publication marked the close of one era and the beginning of another in the professional relations between archivists and records managers.

According to our records management colleagues in the National Archives and Records Service, records administration in the Federal Government during this period generally meant the beginnings of what we today call correspondence management, with the emphasis on form letters, files management, mail management, records storage, documentation, and surveys and audits, but with the emphasis in all of these activities on records disposition.¹¹ State archivists were increasingly hard pressed to keep pace with this rapidly developing Federal example, but many of them continued to hold to the ideal of rendering "advice and assistance to other departments in meeting their current records problems. We will not, of course, understand in detail all the procedures of filing and records handling with which the different departments have to deal," admitted one State archivist, "but through our contacts with many departments, with varying functions and problems, we will be in a position to develop a broad point of view and perspective which . . . [may] prove valuable to each department in solving its own problems."¹²

The only dissenting voice in the pages of the *American Archivist* during this period is in a 1948 article, "The Archival Profession in Eclipse." Explaining that his was "an essay in de-emphasis, an attempt to show that the archival profession is moving away from fundamental objectives because of the excessive influence of the management specialists who have become increasingly involved in records work, particularly since World War II," the author maintained that the result of this "disproportionate emphasis on management activity" was the "exclusion of the pursuits that ultimately justify the archivist as a member of a true profession."¹³ Recount-

¹⁰ *AA*, 13:67 (Jan. 1950).

¹¹ Lecture by Arthur J. McCarrick, Oct. 21, 1963, in National Archives and Records Service Workshop on Records Management Principles and Techniques. See also National Archives, *Disposition of Federal Records: How To Develop an Effective Program for the Preservation and the Disposal of Federal Records* (Washington, 1940).

¹² Christopher Crittenden, "The State Archivist Looks to the Future," in *AA*, 8:190-191 (July 1945); see also Henry Howard Eddy, "The Responsibility of the State Archivist to the Other Officers of His State Government," in *AA*, 11:28-35 (Jan. 1948).

¹³ Irving P. Shiller, "The Archival Profession in Eclipse," in *AA*, 11:227 (July 1948).

ing the circumstances that led to the development of records administration within the Federal Government and tracing that development during the World War II and post-war years, the author readily admitted the many practical, immediate, and tangible benefits of records administration. He professed alarm, however, at what he termed the "heavy price paid" for these benefits:

Among American archivists the cost has been the abandonment of the tradition of scholarship and research, desertion of historiography, and renunciation of a broad intellectual comprehension of the records, particularly an understanding of how they relate to the world of reality beyond the walls of the repository. The professional archivist is atrophying. At one time, he was coming to be recognized, on a coequal status, as the research partner of the historian, the economist, the administrator and the scientist. It was considered of primary importance that the archivist should be able to render his documents, however complex and specialized, available and usable. Now it appears to be sufficient to house the records safely, to mechanize reference service on the documents, and to keep storage and maintenance costs down to a minimum by means of wholesale records destruction.¹⁴

Claiming to speak for "many others" who had "noticed and deplored" this tendency, the author admitted "that it would be folly to deny categorically the contributions of a records management program," and instead he advocated better training of archivists and greater "opportunity for advancement and for intellectually challenging work, commensurate with the training and talent demanded."¹⁵ It had already become necessary to recall, in his judgment, "that the archivist has along with his obligations to save money for his institution, an intellectual mission of at least equal importance."¹⁶

The temptation to comment—at length—on these observations and recommendations is almost irresistible, but in the interests of concluding this survey I forgo the pleasure. At the time this critique of the evolution of archives administration in the United States made its appearance, the First Hoover Commission—the President's Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government—was already deeply involved in its studies, and it was particularly appropriate that the next statement of the relationship between archivists and records managers, as they had now come to be called,¹⁷ was written by one of the leaders of this movement.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 229–230.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 231, 232.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

¹⁷ In addition to the areas of activity previously indicated under "Records Administration," the Navy Department had developed programs in forms management and

In an article on "Modern Records Management" Leahy acknowledged that "aggressive and wide-spread destruction of records" presented a "critical problem," and he maintained that "any destruction of records must provide maximum insurance that the essential core of recorded experience in the form of modern records is preserved." Such insurance he found adequate in the Federal Government and in some States, but inadequate in many States and totally lacking with regard to the essential records of American private enterprise. "Management must be prevailed upon," he insisted, "to utilize the archivist's experienced counsel and the historian's expert training." He advocated the establishment of records centers as "extraordinarily effective in making substantial savings" but added that without the counsel of the professional archivist and historian "there is no insurance that the essential core of records will be preserved, made available, and the experience recorded therein put to work."

"It is not enough," he concluded, "that the archivist, the historian, and the analyst give their unsolicited *nihil obstat* to . . . attacks on unnecessary record making. It can be readily conceded that a record which need not be created for the purposes of management cannot legitimately be expected by the archivist, the historian or the analyst. There is little danger on this score, therefore, but there is a substantial loss in the degree of potential gain because there is not available to management the valuable help and guidance the archivist and the historian have to give."¹⁸ The author of this manifesto on modern records management and of these observations on the essential relationships between archivists and records managers, Emmett J. Leahy, was director of the National Records Management Council, which had been established in 1947, and also director of the First Hoover Commission's "task force" reviewing records management in the Federal Government.¹⁹

At the Society's annual meeting in 1950 the Archivist of the United States, Wayne C. Grover, informed the profession regarding "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities." These included, in rapid chronological order, the publication of the Hoover Commission recommendations on records management; the transfer of the National Archives to the new General Services Administration; the passage and signing by the President of the Federal

the management of office equipment and supplies. These were included under the new term "Records Management"; Lecture, Oct. 21, 1963, NARS Workshop on Records Management.

¹⁸ Emmett J. Leahy, "Modern Records Management," in *AA*, 12:233-235 (July 1949).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

Records Act of 1950; the establishment of a Federal records management staff, "separate from the staff of the National Archives but within the single organizational entity now called the National Archives and Records Service"; and the establishment of a system of Federal Records Centers in various regional areas of the country.²⁰ In explaining the circumstances attending these developments, Grover, at least indirectly, addressed himself to those who feared the archival profession was "in eclipse." He cited "the increasing amount of time and energy and thought" the "most experienced and best qualified archivists in the professional custodial branches of the National Archives were having to give to records problems in other agencies of the Government, at the expense of archival work within the National Archives." While affirming his belief that archivists should not "retreat to the cloisters," he explained that the National Archives "was at the point where some balance and stability had to be achieved: Some turning back, within the branches having custody of records, . . . toward the traditional functions that had had to be neglected during the war."²¹

As for the relationship between the new records management staff and the archival staff of NARS, Grover added:

There is and always will be, I hope, much overlapping between current records management and archival activities. But each has a basically different emphasis and requires different qualifications, no matter how closely the activities and individuals involved are related to each other in common purpose.

Speaking by and large, academic qualifications in history and the social sciences are essential for an archivist, if he is to develop subject-matter competence in the areas of documentation for which he is responsible. I believe he must develop such competence if he is to perform his professional chores intelligently. On the other hand, management outlook and experience are essential to the records management specialist, if he is to develop as a member of the management team—and it is only as a member of that team that he can ever hope to be effective in the long run. In a word, the whole field of dealing with records has progressed sufficiently to demand a certain amount of specialization.²²

The president of the Society that year, 1950, was Philip C. Brooks, and he devoted his presidential address to the topic: "Archivists and Their Colleagues: Common Denominators." Admitting his hesitancy to address his audience as "fellow archivists" because of the "variety of professional activity" they represented,

²⁰ Wayne C. Grover, "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," in *AA*, 14:3 (Jan. 1951).

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 6-7.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 7-8.

he nevertheless reminded his listeners that he had "argued strongly for years that variety is both stimulating and essential to our being an alert, useful organization," and that the membership clause of the Society's constitution had been carefully phrased to include a wide variety of specialists and activities.²³ "There must be a difference between the broad concept of an archivist as we use it in defining the membership of this Society and the more precise view that must apply in civil service categories," he insisted. "One is a matter of interest, the other of occupation. We all have a concern for the preservation and effective use of valuable evidence of human activity in the form of records. We should focus on that common denominator." Referring to the theme he had stated a decade earlier, Brooks again reminded us that archivists had "entered the records administration field because economical administration of records at all stages is closely akin to the specialized activities of archivists, and because the results of good or bad records administration affect the job that archivists can later do with the records."²⁴ His views on the other common denominators of archivists and their colleagues in the fields of librarianship and private papers lie beyond the scope of this paper, but I recommend his entire article to your rereading.

The Federal Records Act of 1950 defined records management in the Federal Government as including records creation, maintenance, and disposition. Forms management and the management of office equipment and supplies had already been added to the activities formerly encompassed by the term "record administration," and this rapidly developing field received further impetus as a result of the recommendations of the Second Hoover Commission, 1953-55. This Commission popularized the term "paperwork management" and the concept of solving paperwork problems in the Federal Government through the creation of still other specialists within the framework of a broad administrative control program. The result was the addition of new programs and the creation of new specialists in directives management, reports management, paperwork quality control, and clerical work measurement. In brief, records management had evolved rapidly into a specialized phase of general management dealing with the origin, use, and control of records.²⁵

And the implications of these developments for our Society and

²³ Philip C. Brooks, "Archivists and Their Colleagues: Common Denominators," in *AA*, 14:34-35 (Jan. 1951).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 36, 39.

²⁵ Lecture, Oct. 21, 1963, NARS Workshop on Records Management.

profession? Dr. Grover in his 1954 presidential address replied directly to this question as follows:

The disturbing issue of recent times in this Society and in the archival profession has been the proper relationship of archivists and archival agencies to what is variously called "records management," "records administration," or if you like, "record administration." What is involved is the extent of the archivist's interest, or lack of interest, in the administrative procedures and techniques that result in the creation and maintenance of records in current files.²⁶

While admitting that "there is room for debate on this subject and even more room for misunderstanding," Grover made quite clear the view of the National Archives and Records Service and the situation in the Federal Government. The common link between records managers and archivists, he asserted, "is their interest in improving the quality and decreasing the quantity of an organization's records. But they [records managers] are not archivists. They are specialists in their own right, usually placed near the top in the organizational hierarchy and able to demand fair pay. Like archivists, they are intent upon raising their professional standards and improving their training." But, although these specialists are not archivists, "they were developed under the auspices of archivists" to fill an increasingly obvious and basic need: the need of administrators for "the continuous, intelligent, and practical day-to-day assistance of specialists on their own staffs." Records managers "contribute to and improve the administrative methods and actions out of which archives are formed. In the Federal Government they are becoming quite numerous," he added. "They are spreading into business organizations and into State Governments. The question is, then, is it time for the archivists and the records managers to part company?"²⁷ After reviewing the origin and history of the archival profession in the United States and of the Society and its purposes, Grover concluded:

My answer to the question of whether or not the time has come to part company—with anybody—is no. On the contrary, we need to bring more company into our ranks, to become imbued with the missionary fervor of the Public Archives Commission, and to combine it with fervor for good records management that is attracting the attention of administrators in Government

²⁶ Wayne C. Grover, "Archives: Society and Profession," in *AA*, 18:3-4 (Jan. 1955).

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 4-5. See also Robert H. Bahmer, "The National Archives After 20 Years," in *AA*, 18:202 (July 1955), in which Dr. Bahmer observed that "the farther records management has moved into the field of current records maintenance and handling and into the more uncertain field of record creation, the less the professional archivist, as an archivist, can contribute."

and out. It is folly for archivists even to think of parting company, literally or psychologically, from the newly developed specialists in records management; and no less folly on the records management side than on the archival side. Our numbers are too few; our common interests too important.²⁸

As you know, in the following year, 1955, both the Association of Records Executives and Administrators and the American Records Management Association were organized. That fall this Society's president, Morris L. Radoff, also chose for his address the theme of "What Should Bind Us Together." While agreeing in principle with Grover, he questioned Grover's reasons for his conclusion.

We do not share *common interests*, we have only *one interest*; namely, the guardianship of records. And surely if we have one interest we belong together, and we should be called by the same name. There is nothing between heaven and earth to prevent an American records management specialist from being called an archivist or *vice versa*. . . . Why could not the same man be both archivist and records manager? Is the care of the written word so complex that no man has science enough to master it? Is it so abstruse that it requires the combined efforts of obstetrician, pediatrician, geriatrician? Or is the humble general practitioner all that is needed? Are we, in other words, creating specialists where specialties do not exist; are we thinking too much of the record as a living organism requiring special care at various stages of its life history, when in fact it is inanimate and of the same texture and form from beginning to end?²⁹

Dr. Radoff's answers are implicit in the questions themselves. For the present, he advised, "Those of us, records management specialists and archivists alike, who trained ourselves in *our* fields must do what we can to understand the other. The archivist," he warned, "must not continue his stiff-necked aloofness, nor must the records management expert despise the deliberate approach of the archivist." He then turned to the problem of the preparation of new archivists entering the profession and proposed an education and training that would make them "masters of the whole records field." Above all, he concluded, "we should strive to give our profession the dignity, the unity, the opportunity for service that can come only from the mastery of a body of learning. And this body of learning should by all means include the whole art and mystery of records. This surely will bind us together."³⁰

At that same annual meeting in 1955, Robert A. Schiff, president of the National Records Management Council, presented his views

²⁸ Grover, in *AA*, 18:9-10.

²⁹ Morris L. Radoff, "What Should Bind Us Together," in *AA*, 19:4-5 (Jan. 1956).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 7-9.

on "The Archivist's Role in Records Management." According to Shiff, "The functions of the archivist and records manager are not only closely related but, in many instances and to a growing extent, they are interchangeable." His organization, he maintained, had been unable "to maintain any viable distinction between archivists and records managers. We find it necessary to be both archivists and records managers at the same time." Because of the corporate name, however, his council preferred the terminology "records management" and "records manager."³¹ After reviewing the situation with regard to business records Shiff concluded:

There are some who contend that because the archivist serves the scholar and the records manager serves the administrator, the two functions require different disciplines and therefore cannot be fulfilled by the same person. We do not believe that this is uniformly true. Certainly, if it is true, then most of the business world will remain outside the sphere of archival influence. Few companies, if any, can reasonably maintain two separate positions, one for an archivist and one for a records manager. If we are going to have a general archival and records management consciousness in business it must be in conjunction with the ability of the archivist or the records manager to serve the combined need.³²

During the next 2 years not one article—indeed, not even a passing reference that I could find—appeared in our journal on the subject of our theme. But by 1958 we find the beginning of a new quest for a solution to the basic problem. The manager of a records division of one corporation, speaking at our annual convention on "The Relation Between Archivists and Records Managers," asserted:

We record managers are primarily businessmen, who pursue efficiency and economy. . . . There are probably records of importance among those we throw away, but we have no way of knowing. Perhaps this is where the experience of archivists could help us.³³

His appeal was that we "explore the possibility of a closer relation between the archivist and the record manager—coexistence, if you wish." Explaining that record managers "are subject to somewhat different pressures than archivists," he insisted that "the differences

³¹ Robert A. Shiff, "The Archivist's Role in Records Management," in *AA*, 19:111 (Apr. 1956).

³² *Ibid.*, p. 120.

³³ Robert H. Darling, "The Relation Between Archivists and Record Managers," in *AA*, 22:214 (Apr. 1959).

between us—and Heaven knows there are some—are almost all due to lack of communication between us.”³⁴

This appeal was echoed by the other speakers at the panel session in which he participated. A records manager at the State level, speaking on “Archivists and Records Managers—A Partnership,” asserted:

If there is competition between . . . [the two groups] it is one between two branches of a common profession. If this emphasis on differences is pursued with vigor, the entire profession will be the loser; and the entire profession will bear responsibility for the loss. . . . Take away one—records management—from its relationship to the other—archives administration—and you remove a vital link. Combine the two branches and you present a united front whose total impact toward professional betterment is many times greater than the sum of efforts separately pursued.³⁵

Finally, a State archivist, later president of the Society, expressed her conviction that “archivists and records managers must resolve not to continue on divergent paths but rather to join together in fostering the objective of closer alignment, combining their knowledge and efforts to bring about an integration of interests.”³⁶ Two years later, however, Mary Givens Bryan, in her presidential address to the Society, while disclaiming any intention of attempting to define the terms “archivist,” “records manager,” and “records administrator,” rather pointedly reminded us that “far more has been said than done about our being one and the same.” Her own views were indicated by her later reference to “the special area within archives administration called records management.”³⁷ Here, for all practical purposes, the matter still stands.

What conclusions can be drawn from this survey, and of what value are they for the development of our one—or two—professions? At the outset I readily acknowledge the inadequacies of this historical reconstruction of a theme. Like all essays in contemporary history it suffers from a too heavy reliance upon the printed word,

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 211.

³⁵ LeRoy DePuy, “Archivists and Records Managers—A Partnership,” in *AA*, 23:49 (Jan. 1960).

³⁶ Dolores C. Renze, “The State Archivist—3-D Public Servant,” in *AA*, 23:275 (July 1960).

³⁷ Mary Givens Bryan, “Changing Times,” in *AA*, 24:5, 8 (Jan. 1961). See also Robert W. Garrison, “Maximum Records Management,” in *AA*, 23:415-417 (Oct. 1960). The latter article defines maximum records management as “the complete utilization of scientific techniques for records control, creation, reduction, and reference” (p. 416) and maintains: “The records management analyst researcher, thrown into a sea of business and/or nonbusiness records the classification of which often demands knowledge of both library and archival sciences, knows that greater *camaraderie* must develop among the archival, library, and records management fraternities” (p. 417).

and will, I hope, someday be rewritten, corrected, and elaborated upon through the use of official and personal records and taped interviews not now available to the researcher. But with all its inadequacies, I believe we have much to learn and ponder as a result of this brief journey we have taken.

I shall not attempt simply to draw the logical conclusions. Instead, I would call to your attention the continuing fact of mutual misunderstandings. No one conversant with modern paperwork management as it exists in the Federal Government—it has now expanded still further to include source data automation, automatic and electronic data processing, and information storage and retrieval—can realistically expect the same staff to function effectively in conducting a fully developed records management and a fully developed archival program. Where archival programs have not developed much beyond accessioning records antedating the New Deal and beginning arrangement and description work, and where records management programs have progressed little beyond inventorying and scheduling records for disposal and operating records centers, the archivist-records manager can and does exist. The extent to which most archival and records management programs in our States fit this description is amply documented in Dr. Posner's valuable study of State archives.³⁸ And there is much evidence that a similar study of archival and records management programs in our business, religious, and educational institutions would not reveal too many well developed programs in both these fields. All of us have too much to do in fully accepting our own responsibilities, and in learning from each other, to spend time arguing over our differences.

Theodore R. Schellenberg, writing nearly a decade ago, defined "Archival Interest in Records Management" largely in terms of the experience of the Federal Government. His point of reference was the archivist's interest and concern in the management of current records, but his observations are equally applicable to the creation of records and to records of private as well as of public origin. Records managers, he reminded us, determine the quality of our archives, quality in the sense of the completeness or adequacy of the documentation, its integrity (including its freedom from useless material), and its accessibility or serviceability for reference and research purposes. In a very real sense records managers also determine the nature of our work with archives, for upon the success of

³⁸ Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago, 1964). See particularly Chapter 3, "A Summary of Findings," and Chapter 4, "Standards for State Archival Agencies."

their efforts depends the ease or the difficulty with which records can be appraised for disposition and can be selected for preservation; the ease or difficulty with which they can be physically preserved; the ease or difficulty with which they can be arranged and described; and the ease or difficulty with which they can be made accessible and available for use.³⁹ The interest of the archivist in records management is therefore not only legitimate—it is essential. Conversely, it is the recognition and full acceptance of his responsibilities in these matters that distinguish the professional records manager. Like the archivist he too is ultimately responsible to society at large and thus to posterity.

Regardless of the particular routes we may travel in our need for professional betterment, we share the common problems of the need for education, training, and closer relations with all of our colleagues in the fields of information and documentation.⁴⁰ Our common interests and our common problems—these are our “common denominators,” to use Brooks’ characterization; these, to borrow from Radoff, are “what should bind us together”; and, finally, these are what constitute the foundation, to borrow Grover’s phrase, of archives as a society and a profession.

³⁹ T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, p. 26–32 (Chicago, 1956).

⁴⁰ See particularly Thornton W. Mitchell, “The State of Records Management,” in *AA*, 24:259–276 (July 1961).

Behind the Prolixity

When in 1227 the young king began to attach his seal to charters and grants in perpetuity and to ask questions through his justices, he took a hand in a movement of infinite complexity. Parchment, then paper, has testified through the centuries to the interplay of social change and law. The struggle for rights, the anxiety to hand them on, the greed for possession, the desire for security, the devices of the strong, the concessions of the helpless, the detection of fraud and error, all the natural passions of man and the remorseless processes of order, lie behind the proluxity which has filled our record offices and muniment rooms. The debris of local and family history bears witness to the things which mortal man has most cared about.

—SIR MAURICE POWICKE, *The Thirteenth Century, 1216–1307*, p. 39 (Oxford, 1953). Quoted by permission of the Oxford University Press, Inc., New York City.