To Serve Scholarship

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FOR nearly half a century the Adams family papers remained virtually inaccessible to public inspection and research, largely because the family did not know how to make them available. After receiving expert advice, the Adamses decided that through microfilm they could put "the family manuscripts in the service of history."[1] When Bernard De Voto learned that the Adams family had authorized the filming, he exuberantly stated that he wanted to be present when the first frame was shot. As he put it, "Once a maidenhead is penetrated, who can tell what may follow?" Our concern this morning is with the implications of that penetration and, if we may extend the analogy, the reluctant virgins.

In approaching the question of whether or not administrators of archives and manuscript collections should permit the photocopying of their material, I think the foremost consideration should be service to scholarship. (Parenthetically I should add that throughout the paper I use "photocopy," its derivatives, and its synonyms generically to cover any form of photoduplication: microfilm, microcard, microfiche, microprint, photostat, Xerox, Thermofax, *et al.* I should also note that, though aware of the technical differentiation, I use "archives" and "manuscripts" interchangeably. Such differentiation would not alter my argument.) My fundamental assumption is that an institution develops a manuscript collection as a means of furthering knowledge through research. A logical corollary is that this aim is fulfilled in direct ratio to the amount of research and publication based on the institution's holdings. It follows, therefore, that if the scope and range of research can be extended by disseminating photocopies of the original sources, the service to scholarship will be expanded. This willingness to serve scholarship in its full dimensions seems far worthier than the policy of collecting manuscripts for the pride

The author was Director of the Survey on the Use of Original Sources in Graduate History Training when he read this paper before the Society of American Archivists in Atlanta, Ga., on Oct. 7, 1966, in a session of the Society's 30th annual meeting. Since September 1967 he has been a professor of history at the University of Oklahoma.

[1] L. H. Butterfield, "'Vita sine literis, mors est': The Microfilm Edition of the Adams Papers," in Library of Congress, *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*, vol. 18, no. 2, p. 53–54 (Feb. 1961).

of possession, as show pieces, to bolster an institutional image or to gratify institutional self-esteem.

In all fairness, we must acknowledge at the outset that private institutions are free to spend their resources as they think best, so long as they operate within the framework of the law—and there seems to be no legal question involved in granting or denying permission to photocopy. Similarly, private institutions, be they universities, libraries, historical societies, or museums, are free to do what they want with the materials they buy, unless they are so restrictive as to forfeit their tax-exempt status as educational or cultural enterprises. If an individual collector buys and hoards original sources just for the joy and pride of ownership, he is likewise within his legal rights in doing so, but he can hardly pretend that he is serving scholarship.

Without imputing proprietary instincts to institutions with restrictive photocopying policies, we should consider the most common reasons for these policies. Some institutions, with the avowed purpose of serving scholarship, do put various restrictions on photocopying their material. If we could establish that a restrictive policy on photocopying does indeed promote better historical scholarship, then archivists and historians should not concern themselves with the limitations that such institutions impose on photoduplication. On the other hand, if there seems to be reasonable doubt that the best interests of scholarship are served by such restrictions, an examination of the policies and rationale of restriction may enable us to assess their validity.

Frequently, collecting institutions have little or no funds to buy manuscripts. The growth of their collections depends on gifts, either of manuscripts or money. In the latter case the usual pattern is for the institution to identify a set of papers it wishes to add to its collection and then to seek an affluent friend or "angel" to buy the papers and donate them to the institution. More often than not, such an angel is an alumnus or someone else who wants a close identification with the institution. Presumably such a person's generosity is narrowly channeled to redound to the glory of one institution—be it alma mater or whatever. A donor would be reluctant, the argument runs, for the recipient to make photocopies of donated material available to other depositories because this would somehow dilute his contribution. But I wonder if donors or angels really are so particularistic in their generosity, for the scholarly value of their gift is not lessened but rather multiplied when photocopies are made available. And certainly an institution's

willingness to share its treasures with others through photocopy in no way diminishes the income-tax deduction the donor can take as a result of his contribution to an educational institution. There may be potential donors who feel such fierce loyalty to the single institution that they would be dissuaded from giving if they thought that any other institution would benefit from their largess. But surely those skilled enough to induce such donors to give in the first place could easily extend their eloquence to convince a donor of the further service to scholarship that would be possible if the donated material could be photoduplicated and thereby benefit even more scholars.

Of course the possibility exists that some institutions regard manuscript collecting as a branch of intercollegiate athletics and vigorously strive to beat the competition. One manifest fruit of this competition is the marked inflation of the manuscript market. The winners—those whose money speaks loudest—will jealously guard their unique trophies. They usually permit a qualified visiting researcher to study these acquisitions but are unwilling to risk damaging whatever prestige possession of the unique material may bring by making photocopies available to other research institutions. The question before us is whether such attitudes stem from a desire to promote scholarship or merely from institutional vanity.

One type of restriction that no scholar can question is that imposed by donors of documents. If a depository accepts material upon which the donor places certain restrictions, it must honor them. If papers are sealed for a number of years, they obviously can contribute nothing to historical knowledge during the period of restriction. The hope is that, with its expiration, the material will justify the efforts of the depository in collecting and maintaining it. When a donor specifies that no reproduction be made of the papers he provides, such instructions must be followed. Yet it would be well for the receiving institution to suggest to the prospective donor as diplomatically as possible that his gift could serve scholarship more effectively if the institution were free to photocopy the material for interested researchers.

Another restriction on photoduplication that is beyond protest is the one imposed by limited budgets, which imply limited staffs. Some institutions simply do not have the capital to furnish photocopying services. It must be remembered that to fill a mail request for photocopies may involve a great deal of staff time in identifying and withdrawing documents for photoduplication and refiling the material afterward. Apparently few organizations allocate much

staff time for such activity, and the result is that what is done in this area becomes overload. And some institutions insist that their staffs have more pressing and important duties than providing photocopy service. Though this argument cannot be gainsaid in its own terms, one has the uneasy feeling that it is sometimes used to camouflage a basic aversion to photoduplicating. For those institutions willing to photocopy but hamstrung by lack of funds, the facile solution would be to provide more funds. Such a solution may not be entirely utopian; with the growing interest of the Federal Government and foundations in educational and research activities, funds may well become available for this purpose.

Occasionally universities impose restrictions on reproducing newly acquired collections of manuscripts. The position of the universities is that their own faculties and graduate students should have first call on the material. If no local scholar has staked out his claim within a stated time, the photocopying restriction is usually lifted from the collection. Since most universities—both private and public—promote staff research as a matter of policy, there should be no general dissatisfaction with a university's giving first priority to the needs of its faculty and students, provided that the term of restriction is kept short—say to a year.

Some institutions are hesitant about photoduplicating parts of their collection because they contend that the researcher cannot understand the full import of isolated documents. To do effective research, they argue, the individual must be immersed in the total content of a manuscript collection. In that way he can trace leads from one document to another and often from one collection to another. Following these clues enables the researcher to get a full perspective on his subject; whereas, if he is limited to using photocopies without access to the entire collection, his research is perforce canalized and he approaches his subject wearing blinders. Without question there is some merit in this position. If an individual were doing research under optimum conditions, he would naturally desire access to the full range of information that would throw light on his subject. Sometimes, however, this "full range" is only part of a collection, one that can be easily identified by the experienced researcher, or even by the novice, with a good finding aid. Since researchers often do not command optimum conditions, it would be more useful for institutions to supply photocopies when requested than to resist because of the inadequacy of research done through this medium. The benefits of research with photocopy obviously outweigh the alternative of being unable to use the documents in

any form. Partial photoreproduction, moreover, leaves researchers at the depositories with the advantage of having the full collection at their disposal.

Some distinct advantages accrue to depositories that will reproduce an entire collection for research elsewhere. Just to preserve the contextual nature of documents from a specific collection is a most cogent reason for institutions to photocopy full series rather than random pieces upon request. Once the material is reproduced *in toto,* the originals are preserved from continued wear and tear. Furthermore, with the dispersal of photocopies, the danger of the material being destroyed through some disaster is lessened. As Thomas Jefferson put it, there should be ". . . such a multiplication of copies as shall place them beyond the reach of accident." If documents are properly arranged for photoduplication, this arrangement is permanently preserved in the copy. Furthermore, when the institution has photocopied the entire collection, no further staff time need be spent in filling requests for copies of individual documents. The requester can simply be informed that the roll of microfilm (if that be the medium) is available at the given price. If there is any dissatisfaction with having to buy an entire roll, the selling institution can defend its position easily, and the purchasing institution will be acquiring resources of value to more than one researcher.

A reason that some institutions advance for their reluctance to photocopy manuscripts is that, once copies are made, the institution loses control of the documents. They evidently fear that researchers will reach irresponsible conclusions unless the documents are studied within the owning institution and, by implication, with staff supervision. This position is highly suggestive of controlled research. Is it the function of a depository to determine or influence a researcher's investigations? The historian must answer with an emphatic "No." Nor is there any reason to think that a researcher working with reproductions would be any less conscientious than when using originals. And the actual documents could not instill a sense of responsibility in a researcher otherwise predisposed. This desire to maintain control of manuscripts—to ascertain that a researcher interpret documents as the institution wishes them interpreted—strikes me as dangerous. The depository cannot dictate and should not try to influence what use historians make of documents. Obviously, the Massachusetts Historical Society, the National Archives, and the Library of Congress, in making some of their choicest material available on film, have not been afflicted with

fear of losing control of their collections. And it might be pointed out that microfilm from these and other public-spirited institutions has found its way into communities throughout the United States and into some foreign countries. Historical scholarship in a democratic society demands easy access to the records of the past and unfettered research.

A related but legitimate problem concerns the proper citation of photocopied material. Many institutions complain that historians do not give them credit for holding the originals of the photoduplicates used in research. Such oversights reflect ignorance, ingratitude, or poor research techniques—none justifiable. One way to help remedy this ailment would be for each roll of microfilm to include targets with clear explanations and examples of proper citation—desiderata often neglected in the casual and piecemeal photoduplication that too long has been practiced.

A few institutions that maintain lists of research projects based on their resources fear that if they photocopied their material they would be unable to prevent duplication of research. This clearinghouse service is commendable, for it can prevent a great deal of wasted effort. Yet the fact that a depository wants to know what research involves its holdings should not constitute a deterrent to research and therefore should not be used as an excuse for not photocopying. On the doctoral dissertation level, the American Historical Association maintains a file of topics in progress and publishes a *List* of these topics triennially. Consequently this is one level of research for which depositories need to assume no clearinghouse responsibility. And even on this level the profession seems to be less fearful of duplicated research than formerly. The assumption is that, while it is desirable to avoid outright duplication, there are many ways to approach any given topic and that parallel investigations may be fruitful. Some professors directing dissertations will state flatly that they are unconcerned about duplicated research, implying that their graduate students will outshine the competition. But this bravado is not yet typical of our conservative profession.

Having examined a number of leading arguments for restrictions on photocopying, let us consider briefly the alternatives that would be imposed by absolute restrictions. In many cases the scholar would be limited to the sources near at hand, and this in turn could result in fragmented research. In other instances it would be completely impossible to undertake research on many topics in certain locations. Where graduate research in history is concerned, some

commentators say this is as it should be. They think that too many institutions have inaugurated Ph. D. programs with insufficient resources, and this may be true. But it is unlikely that the tide will be turned back, and I think more good will be done by strengthening these programs than by complaining of their inadequacy. The easiest way for inadequate research facilities to be strengthened is through the acquisition of great quantities of photoduplicated original sources.

Whatever the magnitude of any one university's primary sources, the doctoral candidate who does not travel in connection with research for his dissertation in American history is in the distinct minority. According to the findings of the Survey on the Use of Original Sources in Graduate History Training, all universities granting the Ph. D. in United States history require most of their candidates to travel for research. The extent of travel that historians must undertake nowadays, however, is greatly modified by the willingness of most depositories to let researchers photocopy documents. If such photocopying were impossible, the cost of travel in time and money would significantly curtail historical research. Consequently, restrictive policies on photocopying discourage rather than promote this scholarly activity.

The fact that departments of history throughout the country expect their graduate students to travel for research indicates that no university feels self-sufficient in original sources. Universities depend upon one another and upon non-degree-granting research institutions—to varying extents, to be sure—but still they are interdependent. If this be the case, a policy of cooperation in photocopying is much more justifiable than one of restriction. A richly endowed institution will not diminish its prestige through generosity, but rather it will make the research community indebted to it for sharing its resources.

If we are to achieve a spirit of willing cooperation in photocopying among research institutions, it would be helpful to establish equitable arrangements. Since some institutions are more likely to be providers than receivers of photocopy, their interests need protection. When these providing institutions purchase a collection of manuscripts they should not be expected to reproduce the entire collection immediately for the mere cost of filming. If they wanted to be so generous, no one should complain; but it would seem fair if the providing depository asked prospective institutional buyers to contribute something toward the cost of the collection. A logical variation of the foregoing arrangement would be cooperative pur-

chasing of original sources, either manuscripts or photocopies, by institutions within a region. If a providing institution wished to amortize the very substantial cost of preparing papers for photoduplication, it might invite subscriptions to its film publications. The Massachusetts Historical Society used this device in its microfilm edition of the Adams papers and met with considerable success in the long run. Some institutions, not wishing to vitiate the value of their unique material, are willing to reproduce an entire collection only if they can exchange it for something of equal importance. Although this is cooperation narrowly construed, the attitude does acknowledge the mutual dependence of the research community. The very logic of events indicates that sooner or later depositories with holdings of national significance will practice this golden rule of photocopying. If they are to acquire photoduplications from other institutions to complement their own resources, they must be willing to reciprocate. When the interlibrary loan system began it met with resistance from many quarters. But it flourishes today. The same comity should prevail with photoduplication.

The enthusiastic response of many institutions to the microfilm publication program of the National Historical Publications Commission has been most encouraging. Many universities, historical societies, and other institutions have received NHPC grants for preparing and filming collections of national importance, and the *Catalog of Microfilm Publications,* issued in July 1966, announced the first fruits of this cooperative program.

Within the last few years two publications have made significant changes in the research patterns of historians. These are Philip M. Hamer's *A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States* and the Library of Congress' *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.* The very nature of these volumes reinforces the notion of the corporateness and interdependence of the research community in the United States. By identifying the location of various collections, these books have enabled researchers to plan their travel systematically and to make mail inquiries concerning specific items. The latter practice has led to some abuse, correctly and disparagingly labeled "mail-order research." Rather than requesting precise information, the individual will write to ask a depository to send him reproductions of everything it has on a certain subject. Compliance with such a request would entail doing the writer's research for him. The willingness of an institution to photocopy materials for researchers should not be subjected to this type of abuse.

As mentioned earlier, one way to minimize such impositions is for depositories to photoduplicate entire collections of high research potential and to provide proper indexes or finding aids with the collections, on the pattern of the current NHPC-sponsored microfilm publications. It would also be helpful if professors directing graduate research would teach their students the amenities of research, whether at their own universities, at other institutions, or by mail. Another urgent need is for closer communication and cooperation among historians, librarians, and archivists. It does historians no credit if they are unaware of original sources in their research and teaching fields at their universities or in their communities, of their library's policy on photocopying, or of their library's reporting (or not reporting) its manuscript holdings to the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections.*

Historical research, because of the nature of the sources, must be a cooperative venture. Historians rely upon the depositories, and no depository claims to be self-sufficient. Within this framework of interdependence, and to promote optimum service to scholarship, all institutions should seek to be as helpful as possible. Roadblocks to research should be removed, not perpetuated. The most significant advance that archivists, librarians, and historians could make together would be to liberalize access to manuscript collections through photoduplication.

The prospects for such liberalization are highly encouraging. In a paper presented in May 1966 at the Extraordinary Congress of the International Council on Archives, Albert H. Leisinger, Jr., reported that, of 96 American institutions responding on whether they would photocopy entire series of their records for use by others, 79 said they would. "Particularly significant was the fact that a number of institutions that have had strong proprietary feelings toward their records in the past and had refused to film large blocks of records *in extenso* were now willing to do this."[2] The findings of the Survey on the Use of Original Sources in Graduate History Training are likewise encouraging. Of 114 depositories queried on their willingness to photocopy entire series, only 24 replied that they had restrictive policies. Clearly the preponderant weight of the historical and archival professions now supports liberal and generous policies for photocopying archives.

[2] "Microreproduction of Archives for Reference and Publication Purposes: Selected Aspects of Microreproduction in the United States," p. 7 (Processed).