Archivists and Librarians: Time for a New Look

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I DO feel that this is a family gathering, and I am going to talk to you today as if I were a member of the family, who would like to see more family feeling displayed by archivists and librarians. For we have a common ancestor from whom we derive kinship—that old *clericus*, who quite literally kept the books. His descendents continued to do so for centuries, filling both our roles in society, until Gutenberg and his successors changed the situation. There was a distinction after the printing press between books and manuscripts, although it was not a marked one until many books became available, and from the date of the founding of the earliest Oxford libraries until quite recently in this country, librarians maintained custody of both kinds of material.

When American archivists finally emerged in the 1930's as members of a separate profession, you were probably right to insist upon the distinction between your work and ours. The first group of newly created archivists, transformed from historians or librarians to arrange records in the National Archives building in 1935, was conscious of the difference between the group's responsibilities in preserving the unique records of government agencies and those of librarians in taking care of printed books. The history of the Society of American Archivists reveals the further development of this consciousness, as a body of archival theory was created, archival practices were developed, and the fledgling archivists themselves were educated. The insistence of the Society on the differentness of its professional responsibilities has enabled it to focus public attention upon the importance of preserving records and to gain support for its activities from the scholarly world and government.

But in insisting upon your differentness as archivists, you have wanted very little to do with librarians. The time has come to change this attitude. With your profession firmly established, you can afford to recognize that there are some likenesses between the two occupations, and that we have some problems in common. Now, 30 years after you, as a professional society, called attention to the difference of the materials of which we each had custody, are they really so different? With the exception of the manuscript collections that many libraries have always administered along with their book collections, what about motion pictures, sound recordings, near-print publications, and, that specter that haunts us all, magnetic tape? These new kinds of material present

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problems for you as well as for us, problems that we can solve more readily together than independently.

The Library of Congress, for instance, at the end of June 1969, had in its collections 3,277,000 maps and views; 3,070,000 photographic negatives, prints, and slides; more than 266,000 phonographic discs, tapes, and wires containing all kinds of music as well as speeches and poetry; 176,000 prints and drawings; 93,000 motion picture reels, in addition to paper prints of the earliest motion pictures; 526,000 rolls and strips of microfilm; and broadsides, posters, photostats, and various microforms. The National Archives, just a few blocks away on Pennsylvania Avenue, has an equally impressive volume of like material. In some degree so do the Presidential Libraries that the National Archives administers. And so similar is the treatment accorded pictorial materials in our institutions that the National Archives has asked us to instruct some of the Presidential Library trainees in the handling of prints, photographs, slides, and posters. If this kind of cooperation is considered valuable here in Washington, would it not be equally valuable elsewhere? And while the Society is thinking about the education of archivists, it might be a good idea to reflect on how much of the same kind of training is needed by both archivists and librarians.

Both archivists and librarians are threatened by the growing size and the increasing deterioration of their holdings. How large can we become and still retain control of our collections? How can we arrest the deterioration of paper and film? Both of us need to explore at the same time miniaturization, preservation, and some kind of automated control of our materials. These explorations should be cooperative ventures; it is philosophically and economically unsound that they be otherwise.

Although the experience of the Library of Congress with automatic data processing may not be applicable to all archival institutions, the scope of its automation activities may be of interest. The basic program underlying many of its activities began in 1963, when after a 2-year study of the automation of the Library of Congress, a team of experts published its conclusions in an 88-page report. Entitled *Automation and the Library of Congress*, this report has been our general planning guide and serves as the basis for the Library's program for automation of its Central Bibliographic System. The first phases, analysis of information previously gathered by the Library staff and a survey of the existing manual system, a statement of systems requirements projected into the 1970–80 period, and a functional description of a recommended system, have been completed. We are now at work on the determination of systems specifications.

Meanwhile we have tested and put into operation the MARC Distribution Service, the transmission of machine-readable cataloging data for all English-language monographs cataloged by the Library of Congress to, at

present, 75 subscribers. Although the MARC data base, still in its infancy, is small, the Library has already begun to retrieve information from it to answer reference needs. Originally defined for monographs, MARC has now been extended to special types of materials, such as single-sheet maps and serials. Audiovisual materials will soon follow. The Legislative Reference Service, the department of the Library devoted exclusively to serving Congress, uses 20 on-line terminals to prepare the *Digest of Public General Bills* and the *Legislative Status Report,* to revise and update lists, to process bibliographic entries, to control new materials received by the service, to update reports of continuing interest to Congress, and to implement SDI, the Selective Dissemination of Information to the subject specialists in the Legislative Reference Service itself.

Of special interest to you may be the application of automated data processing to the Manuscript Division. Since 1964, item indexes to the Presidential papers have been prepared electronically. The number of items per index ranges from as little as 1,000 to as large as 500,000. Fields per entry include writer-recipient, date, series, number of pages, additional information, and card count. Index entries are key punched in the Presidential Papers Section and sent to the Library's Data Processing Office in lots of 80,000 cards for transfer to magnetic tape, the index for each collection taking from one to seven reels of tape. Entries are sorted alphabetically by the computer, and the index is printed out in upper case. Now in press is the first index to be printed via Linotron, which should promote faster delivery time, lower cost per page, and the elimination of extensive mounting work in the section.

The Master Record of Manuscript Collections is a magnetic-tape record of descriptive and statistical information on the 3,000 collections in the custody of the Manuscript Division. The record contains 98 data fields, 75 of them retrievable. There are 6 basic computer programs and 37 subprograms. The record contains reference information, accession records, processing information, statistics on use, and a central charge file. It consolidates data from five different manual fields, and has allowed a more accurate count of the number of pieces in the collection and has facilitated the preparation of statistical reports. Individual printouts are provided to the manuscript historians as reference tools covering their particular areas of specialization; to the reader service staff for ready-reference guides and collection locators; to division officers for administrative purposes; to the Exchange and Gift Division to coordinate records of active solicitations; and to the Science and Technology Division to inform that staff about the existence of manuscript collections relating to science and technology.

The Library of Congress, the National Agricultural Library, and the National Library of Medicine have created a United States National Libraries Task Force on Automation and Other Cooperative Services to

identify problems and to recommend cooperative programs. This task force has concentrated its attention on standard bibliographic codes, automated controls over serial publications, and cooperative acquisitions. The directors of the three libraries have recently adopted a standard calendar date code, a standardized character set for roman alphabets and romanized nonroman alphabets, and a standard language code. Use of these codes will aid rapid transmission and use of machine-readable bibliographic data. Acquisitions policies of the three libraries are also under study to avoid unnecessary duplication; and a national pilot project to develop a union list of the currently published scientific and technical serials in the three libraries is planned.

There are comparable innovations being studied in the archival world. One question that must be most pressing, with all of us creating magnetic-tape records at an ever accelerating pace, is how to store and service ADP records. Our experience indicates that librarians and archivists both will need exposure to this new technology during their training periods. Neither profession plans to replace archivists and librarians with machines. Using machines to do repetitive tasks, however—and some of our mental tasks are repetitive—will enable us to release men and women for creative work that will be of far greater benefit to the Nation and to society. Does it not seem that archivists and librarians need much of the same kind of training for work in the kinds of institutions that are developing? Whether or not you decide to offer it in the same schools, the curricula will certainly be similar and parallel.

If our materials and problems are growing more alike each day and if our training needs display more similarities than differences, what about our users? Here too we share. What scholar uses only books or only archives or manuscripts? As he does his research in libraries and archives, he is seeking information, not specific types of materials. He can expedite his search if he knows what special arrangements are imposed by the nature of the material, but most of our clientele depends upon us for guidance in this area. The historian is more likely than other scholars to know his way around in archives, but you should be welcoming more practitioners from other disciplines to your institutions—economists, sociologists, anthropologists, urban planners, political scientists—and for these the distinctions between the kinds of material we offer are often blurred. The more we insist upon these distinctions or the special difficulties in working with our collections, the more we put off the people we are trying to interest.

In the matter of public relations, some of us behave as if we had a rendezvous with oblivion. News of acquisitions, finding aids, reports, and documentary publications are sent out into the world to make their own way, with little help, if any at all, from the issuing parent. Librarians, however, at least those librarians who are interested in this subject, have had for 30 years a Library Public Relations Council, which has a

continuing commitment to investigate, discuss, and promote every phase of library public relations. The Council presents awards at the annual convention of the American Library Association in a variety of categories, which change from year to year so that a variety of libraries can compete. The award categories for 1963–69 are for the best printed guide for the use of a library and its facilities, the best item publicizing a new service or program initiated by a library or library system, and the best annual report. While the Society is not large enough to sponsor a separate body concerned solely with public relations, it might give more attention to this field of activity.

As long ago as 1949, Charles Braibant complained of the conditions that led to the stagnation of historical research in France and the steady shrinking of the French archives budget, as against the total Government budget, from 1865 to 1947. In order to combat what he called the *despotisme de l'inattention*, he planned a campaign of expositions, press conferences, and radio talks. These were not his only moves in what he saw as a continuing struggle. In 1947, when 4 of 11 positions in the departmental archives were abolished (*archivistes-adjoints des départmentes*), he tried to get them reestablished in the usual way without success. Then he asked for them again, saying he would put them in those departments most frequented by tourists, organizing tours and conferences on monuments, history, and great men of the province. The idea appealed to the Commissioner General of Tourism, and Braibant got his positions. "A city won!" was the way he saw his victory.

The times and places are different, and we don't have to convince a commissioner of tourism of our importance, but we all do have to seek support in the universities, in the community, or in various levels of government. We have to act not only as custodians but also as missionaries. How much more effective we can be if we join forces! Someone once pointed out that if one collects 1,000 ignited sticks into a heap, one has a bonfire that can be seen in three counties.

We ought to be taking the long view, too, seeking to interest the young people who will be our support in years to come. The "two cultures" we used to worry about have almost disappeared; scientists and humanists are communicating better than ever before and both support the libraries and archives that nourish their work. The characteristic split of the present time is the generation gap, which poses almost more of a problem for us than its predecessor—more of a problem because we share the disquietude of the young people and are inclined to be pessimistic as we contemplate contemporary society. The young do not share our pessimism, however; some of them have a passionate belief in reform, and with this belief they have a commitment to learning, education, and research—not, it is true, for the sake of learning alone, but for what it can do to improve society. Typical was the situation at the University of

South Carolina, reported just before Christmas, in which white students, black students, and a good percentage of the faculty joined in protesting the trustees' ordering of priorities that put the expansion of the athletic stadium ahead of a new law school, nursing education, and other educational needs.

These young people are a new constituency. To reach them, the commemoration of the bicentennial of American independence presents a great opportunity. How "relevant," to use one of their favorite words, is the experience of this little colony, headed by "committed" leaders. The divided loyalties, the problems of a dissenting minority, the heavy price in life and treasure, the agreement of a number of factions to noble ends—all these have special meaning for today's young people, and we have a special obligation to make them aware of the record of this incredible experience. Archivists and librarians are both represented on the national commission charged with planning the national commemoration; you should see that archivists and librarians are both active in State and local committees, that they cooperate in revealing that the records of the past have some answers to the moral dilemmas of today. Let us cooperate in this as in other endeavours; I know that I will welcome—and I believe other librarians will also welcome—our coming together.