The Archives of the History of American Psychology

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THE ARCHIVES of the History of American Psychology[1] is in its fifth year of existence. In the early years it profited from sophisticated advice generously given by the personnel of various established organizations. Recently, representatives of disciplines closely allied to psychology have solicited assistance from the Archives as they initiated specialized collections. This shift in role, from novitiate and learner to presbyter and mentor, suggested enough success to prompt a review of how the operation was established, the techniques by which it was promoted among both donors and scholars, and the manner in which the procedures were consolidated.

The account of the founding of the Archives must start on a note of obscurity because the details of its conceptualization are obscure even to the authors, its founders. One general factor that did contribute is the general interest of both participants in the history of their discipline. One (JAP) had an atypical background for a psychologist in as much as his undergraduate work involved a major in English and minors in history and fine arts, a program that underscores the past. Discussions about the dearth of materials available for teaching a course in the history of psychology were permeated by mutual complaints about the scarcity of secondary sources and the inaccessibility, or possibly even nonexistence, of primary sources. The conclusion that the documentary evidence of psychology needed to be collected and preserved was sufficiently blatant to lead to action.

At the University of Akron in 1965 a historian was the dean of the college, and he concurred in the idea of establishing a repository. Consultations were held with Garnett McCoy of the Archives of

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1 Materials relating to the activities of the Archives of the History of American Psychology—in addition to the content of this paper—consist of the four annual reports issued to date, the current brochure designed to be of aid both to donors and scholars, and a manual for those involved in oral histories. Copies of all of these are available upon request.

American Art as well as with Philip Mason and Stanley Solvick of the Labor Archives at Wayne State University. They endorsed the idea and initiated the education of two psychologists into the mysteries of the archival world.

The next step involved soliciting the opinions of psychologists, the group from whom most of the depositors and many of the investigators would come. A sample of 21 psychologists who were known to be interested in the history of the discipline were asked whether they knew of any conflict with an existing or proposed archives, and if not, whether they believed such a facility would have merit. All 13 replies supported the idea—a result that was anticipated in the light of the criterion that dictated the respondents' inclusion in the survey. Some reported that materials of a very small number of psychologists were retained in institutions in which they had worked or in the Library of Congress. No one knew of a specialized collection.

Following the compilation of this vote of confidence a visit was made to Robert I. Watson, the editor of the *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* and chairman of a former ad hoc committee of the American Psychological Association that was charged with determining the fate of the official records of the organization. Dr. Watson reported that the committee had made arrangements for the records of the American Psychological Association to be deposited with the Library of Congress but the officers of the American Psychological Association at that time had neither completed the agreement nor made deposits.[2] These stipulations did not make any provision for the materials belonging to the majority of the more than 27,000 members of APA, for numerous regional, State, municipal, and interest groups, or for journals not published by the APA. The individual members, the organizations of less than national scope, and independent publication outlets encompassed a large reservoir of historic documents that needed preservation. They became the target of the Archives of the History of American Psychology. "American" was included in the title not on the basis of a nationalistic bias but out of respect for the need to impose practical limitations. It is interpreted to mean any psychologist who has functioned or does function in the United States, either personally or by virtue of his extensive influence in this country.

Dr. Watson and Dr. Mason visited Akron to brief local personnel on the problems and advantages that support of an archives would

2 The agreement was signed Nov. 22, 1966, but transmission to the Library of Congress was deferred until 1968. At that time approximately 50,000 items (60 linear feet) were deposited. "The next deposition will probably not occur until 1972 or 1973." Jane Hildreth in *American Psychologist*, 24:968 (1969).

bring. The administration approved their recommendation that a repository for archival and manuscript collections be founded. In October 1965 John A. Popplestone was named director and a budget provided.

In order to obtain broad representation within the profession and to procure assistance in the formulation of policy, the members of a History Psychology Group in the APA were invited to make nominations for a Board of Advisors. From the candidates who were suggested a board of 21 distinguished psychologists was assembled with Robert Watson as chairman. Their names on the letterhead served to indicate the *bona fides* of the Archives of the History of American Psychology. With these endorsements the era of promotion was inaugurated.

In the first 2 years storage space was shared with the University Archives, and clerical space was divided between the Archives and the Department of Psychology. The staff was restricted to student labor, and all labored mightily at the task of informing as many psychologists as possible of the existence of the Archives and soliciting their assistance. In order to accomplish this, formal notices were published in various journals, and extensive mailings were undertaken to both individual and organizational officers. The latter have usually included whatever brochures were current as well as a letter. About 4,200 such communications have gone out to Fellows of APA, editors of 57 journals, and officers of 26 divisions of APA. Each spring psychologists who attain the age of 65 receive an invitation to become donors. Currently there is an active correspondence with more than 1,000 individuals. Approximately one-fourth of these direct solicitations have already yielded either a deposit or a promise of one. The latent number is unknown.

Public relations are promoted at the annual APA conventions. At each of these a report of the year's activity is included in a symposium entitled "Current Events in the History of Psychology." Also an annual open house is held. These usually last 2 hours and a number of people who will not bother to write *will come in* to visit. Conversations at these gatherings cover a diversity of topics, and conspicuous among them are reports of the location of materials. In fact, the majority of information concerning uncared-for documents comes from this source.

In 1967 the APA celebrated its 75th anniversary, and the Archives was responsible for a large exhibit of historic apparatus in honor of this anniversary celebration. Several thousand people saw this display, took away the catalog, and realized the Archives' role in this production.

Numerous trips have been taken to meet prospective donors.

There is a large map of the United States in the Archives, and potentially fruitful locations are marked with flags. When a cluster forms around one spot, the director travels. On occasions immediate contact seems important and in those cases in which the distance, and thus the cost, is great a member of the board who lives near the target area is asked to make the visit.

Those in the field of psychology have responded to these appeals with an astonishing amount of support. Most of it has helped to clarify procedures and functions. A bit of it has injected minor, but manageable, problems. The latter arise from the values that psychologists as a group ascribe to history. These exceed their sophistication about history. A course entitled History and Systems of Psychology is a standard departmental offering across the country but frequently demands merely memorizing the sequence of antecedent events as depicted in one or two popular texts. Because psychologists are accustomed to creating, by means of experimentation, the data they need in order to answer specific questions, they have difficulty in grasping the historian's dependence upon fate and chance. The former's ingrained habits of tailoring what they are investigating are offended by unsystematic sampling. In addition the code of publishing all results makes them either obtuse or reluctant to acknowledge that unpublished material may be as valuable as the ledger.

As a result one of the continuing tasks has been to educate the psychological world about the needs of history. In response to these efforts some psychologists have hastened to protect historians from what they deem intractable problems of methodology but in so doing have compounded the situation. For example, it was discovered early that the word "papers" connotes something quite different to pyschologists than it does to historians and archivists. Numerous psychologists responded to the request to deposit papers by forwarding a package of neatly assembled reprints—all their published "papers."

Such barriers to communication are compensated for by a motivation to cooperate. This has been augmented not only by personality traits but by the fact that psychologists have always been self-conscious about the status of their discipline as a laboratory science. The founders tended to substantiate the propriety of the field by announcing the establishment of laboratories and by detailing the equipment. Journals devoted to the publication of research appeared shortly after the foundation of laboratories. As a result, the printed record of psychology is probably more complete than it is for many other areas of scientific activity. This largess has prompted a continuing campaign on the part of the Archives to indoctrinate

psychologists against editing and prejudging value or relevance. The plea to keep a collection intact continues to amaze donors. Some react to the self-description as the "attic of psychology" with approbation, others with bewilderment, and others with criticism. The director is censured because he "thinks it's a sin to split a collection" and adulated because he is "making an unexcelled contribution to scholarship."

Philip Mason had warned that the major problem would be rapid growth, and the veracity of this forecast was readily apparent. The shared space in the library was outgrown within 2 years, and in the fall of 1967, the university constructed a special concrete vault and supplied office space. These quarters provide ample clerical space but because the increments in accessions have been geometric rather than algebraic, practically all of the vault is filled. At the present time there is less than 50 feet of shelf space available. Plans for expanding the vault have been approved, and the actual construction is about to begin.

The growth of the collection has also meant that the amount of intramural work has increased. In the early phases of the expansion the director had assumed an additional assignment as head of the Department of Psychology and so pleaded for more staff in the Archives. The administration replied by naming his wife, Marion White McPherson, as associate director and releasing her from half of her teaching load. So an informal relationship became formalized. There was no need to train a new staff member, for she had been in on every step of the work from the beginning.

This appointment served to accelerate the task of consolidation, and in this part of the venture the accessions have been complemented by various other activities. A modest oral history program has been undertaken. Financing for more extensive work has been sought actively but because the campaign has been unsuccessful, progress in this operation is in low gear. The staff does as much as possible on a limited budget. A "Manual for Oral Histories" has been written in order to systematize procedures, and one or two interviews are taped and transcribed each year. The Archives has accumulated a dozen interviews.

Another task has been the creation of a locator file, a card index that shows the existence of psychological documents in any repository other than the Archives of the History of American Psychology. This centralized listing has been consulted by numerous investigators.

A third project is the apparatus collection. The Archives had been urged from the beginning to accession material other than documents because laboratory manuals, films, testing equipment, and

laboratory apparatus are important components of the history of psychology. These three-dimensional objects posed such problems of storage and care that their acquisition was initially resisted. The anniversary exhibit, however, consisting of more than 75 pieces of laboratory equipment, initiated the deposit of manufacts, and currently 600 pieces are held. The budget does not allow restoration, but these relics of the past are being protected. There has been opportunity to explore the origin and functions of a few of the items. An organized search for residuals that may be in older laboratories is currently being carried out, and when neglected materials are found, the Archives endeavors to accession them.

The expanded collection has made mandatory refinement in the techniques of controlling the holdings. Beginning in 1967 the entire correspondence file was reordered, and the equipment as well as the documents were classified in a manner that is expected to increase efficiency in retrieval. The system is essentially one in which names are indexed so that a historian has access to an inventory of each collection and to a listing from all deposits of materials relevant to psychologists of interest to him. He is informed, before the actual papers are searched, whether an individual whom he is endeavoring to study is represented by materials that he originated, by items that he received, or by references made to him.

This system was developed around the nature of the holdings and from experiences in dealing with requests for resource materials. One conclusion that has emerged from the internal organization is that cooperation among archivists, historians, and psychologists is essential. The skills of the first two disciplines are requisite for the structure of procedures and those of the third for the management of content. Interdisciplinary advice became available in 1969 when a few psychologists on the Board of Advisors asked to be relieved of their duties. Replacements included two historians, two archivists, and, because of the nature of the holdings, a psychologist who is also a manufacturer of apparatus. Personnel without a knowledge of both contemporary and historical psychology would find it impossible to manage the details of the deposits. In fact, familiarity with psychology serves merely to expedite recognition and classification and falls short of providing a guarantee. Old membership lists and catalogs are repeatedly consulted. Sometimes the combination of early records and personal acquaintance does not combat the perplexity induced, for example, by an instrument carefully labeled "spring driven introspector" or an isolated reference to "Jack's Committee." Learning that it met after "Joe's dinner" does not provide too much enlightenment.

Enumeration of the holdings of the Archives is impractical. The

recent founding means that most of the holdings are the gifts of men still living and therefore incomplete. The collections that are comprehensive by virtue of the death of their creator include those of David Boder (8 feet), Henry Goddard (8¼ feet), Leta Hollingworth (4½ feet), Harry Hollingworth (4 feet), G. S. Hall (3 feet), Walter Shipley (1¾ feet), Martin Sheerer (11½ feet), and E. C. Tolman (2 feet). The papers of Ward C. Halstead, uninventoried, had a shipping weight of 150 pounds.

The editorial files of several journals have been deposited, and arrangements have been made for continuing transfers. Most of these series reflect only recent shipments, and therefore their utility is still limited. An exception is the records of the *Journal of the Experimental Analysis of Behavior,* a recently established periodical and one for which all of the documents have been acquired.

Predictions about the usefulness of the collections are presumptuous and even dangerous. Each year assistance is given to scholars, and their number increases. The major strength of the Archives is in the intellectual history of American psychology, but the holdings also reflect institutional policies and events, political and social action, and many other kinds of activities that psychologists have been involved in along with their disciplinary work. The science of psychology has had an effect on life in the United States, and the psychology which Americans have created has a unique national character. The holdings of the Archives of the History of American Psychology now reflect this and will continue to do so with increased fidelity as the facility matures.