

Clio in the Raw: Archival Materials and the Teaching of History

By HUGH A. TAYLOR

FOR A MOMENT, I would like to examine part of the general title devised for this session, "Turning Undergraduates Loose in the Archives," because I believe there is an important attitude revealed here. The phrase is, of course, lighthearted and not to be taken literally, but we are invited to visualize rapacious mortals, in the shape of the students, and poor, inanimate, defenseless pieces of paper within which is imprisoned that hapless immortal, Clio, passively awaiting academic rape or some lesser form of exploitation.

This metaphor of exploitation has long persisted among historians reared in the industrial age. How often have we heard of archives which are "mines of information" or "rich ore only waiting to be worked"? Sometimes the toils of an historian may be damned by being described also as a "mine" of this kind as he carefully hauls his information up the archives shaft and tips it down another, which leads to the pages of his unreadable book.

The inference is one of violent, aggressive energy—attack, toil, mastery, conquest, and exploitation as the riches are yielded up. It must be admitted that a great deal of historical writing is of this kind, as typographic man tears into paper with demonic energy, obsessed with words, especially those which support his thesis, wrenching phrases and whole sentences from the unresisting records of the past, often in the most insensitive way.

At first, quotations from manuscripts were used purely as elegant illustration, but Ranke and his followers developed a research methodology based on the assumption that documents not only illustrate but are the very stuff of history. "Scientific" history be-

The author, Director of the Historical Branch at the Public Archives of Canada, has been successively Provincial Archivist of Alberta and New Brunswick. Before emigrating to Canada he was City Archivist of Leeds and Liverpool, then County Archivist of Northumberland, England. He edits the *Canadian Archivist* and read this paper at the 1971 SAA annual meeting in San Francisco.

came a major industry. The factories are still producing, but often the product is as obsolete as buggy whips. Meanwhile, at the undergraduate level, the definitive history through the political narrative reigned supreme. Collections of printed documents, especially constitutional documents, were regarded as safe enough for students, but the endless glosses of their teachers often drowned out the documentary message.

In English schools, the use of printed extracts from documents was known as the "source method," and one of the first leaflets published by the Historical Association in 1906 dealt with source books. The source method derived from an American development. The 1903 report of the Committee of Seven to the American Historical Association, *The Study of History in Schools*, called sources "adjuncts to good textbook work." Source books for schools have continued to roll from the presses ever since. What were the aims of their compilers? I suggest that they were to challenge the intellect, to stimulate the imagination, to illustrate the lesson, but *not* to convert school children into historians. These aims were lofty and ambitious, but despite the availability of a wide range of source books, they were little used because the whole teaching method ran counter to them. This method was splendidly summed up by one teacher in 1910 when she complained that her 18-year-old pupils were "instructed rather than educated, drilled rather than developed, receptive not originaive, docile not independent, and possessed of a fatal likeness to one another."¹ They had become the victims of an industrialized and segmented society, consuming so-called knowledge in the form of so-called facts. The description is all too familiar. The visual sense had been largely restricted to the printed page. Source materials reached the mind as an additional load of print, confusing because it could not be learned like a textbook. Moreover, source material was seen as demanding intensive preparation on the part of the teacher and appropriate integration into the general teaching scheme.

Admittedly, the widespread availability of original records and facsimiles is a fairly recent development, but it was, perhaps, too readily assumed in the past that the original document did not have much over the carefully edited verbatim transcript. However, Marshall McLuhan has convincingly shown that the medium conveys its own powerful message over and above the content, a message

¹Quoted by G. R. Batho in "Sources," *Handbook for Teachers of History*, W. H. Burston and C. W. Green, eds., (London, Methuen, 1962), p. 95-108. Throughout this article I have drawn on the English experience with a brief look at France for approaches which might be worth exploring further on this side of the Atlantic.

which still escapes many university teachers, their students, and the school children these students teach. Let us then consider for a moment the document as a form.

First of all, a document is an artifact—a unique creation brought into being for a specific purpose and dependent for its effect upon the arrangement of ink on paper. Handwriting may share space with printer's type, and the shapes are often irregular. The information it contains will be limited. The reader will be challenged to complete the picture. The texture, size, and shape may have added significance. Even the smell may excite. All the senses will become involved, and we become momentarily whole men as we let the document enter into a dialogue with us at every level of our awareness. No printed text can give this total involvement, and when the document is placed with a thousand of its fellows of the same series, but all in some way different, or is examined within the context of a bound letterbook, the effect can be overwhelming. The meeting is also a personal confrontation with the original, which, for the moment, no one shares with the reader. If this awareness is heightened by content which is relevant and interesting, the relation of history to its principal source and *vice versa* can readily be perceived and, perhaps, enjoyed.

To return then to our theme, "Turning Undergraduates Loose in the Archives," it is apparent that *Clio* is not so defenseless. Fragile paper has the capacity for generating an explosive experience, so that perhaps we should rather say "letting the archives loose among the undergraduates," exposing them to all kinds of dangerous enchantment and unorthodox reactions.

That undergraduates and even school children might share the enjoyment of archives is a fairly recent concept, closely bound up with the renaissance of local studies in England. The English have a long and distinguished history of antiquarian studies, reaching back several hundred years, and it was perhaps the antiquary more than any other who kept alive the love of local documents and who understood the pleasure of handling original material long before the pundits began to write about media. Children brought up in a household respectful of history often acquired a feel and respect for it which would not have been gained in any other way. Those who, for instance, visited all the parish churches in their neighbourhood were confronted with a dazzling range of multimedia in stone, glass, wood, and parchment. Antiquaries supported local historical societies and, in recent years, pressured for the establishment of local archives. Their interest was usually local, and they kept this dimension of history alive for centuries. Their concepts were essentially mosaic

in structure, in sharp contrast to the linear writing and fixed (usually Whig) point of view of the professional historians. Meanwhile, centralist history was dissolving as the significance of local studies and local particularism made itself evident. The writings of Frederick William Maitland and Sir Frank Stenton, for instance, made us realize the infinite local variety of the Anglo-Saxon and mediaeval scene in England which had persisted for centuries and is, to some extent, still with us. The revolt of homogenized man had begun. History was no longer restricted to print, but could be revealed in stone and timber, crop marks, mounds of earth, shapes of fields, and above all, the incredibly rich treasury of documents which survived in the courts and homes of England. Our senses were being extended again, at last.

W. E. Tate makes this point very well when he compares children's so-called "research" based on the rehashing of information from a limited supply of source books, or worse still, textbooks, with the possibilities of research which lie around them every day, especially in an English village:

How different are the circumstances if the school uses its own environment—the village and the farms, the streets and the lanes, the church and the inn—as its special field of study—a ready-made and inexpensive historical laboratory on its own doorstep! and how easy it is when the teacher is really interested, for local study carried out in this way to serve three or four distinct and all educationally important purposes. Valuable as it is, the least important result of such local historical study is the factual knowledge gained. More precious is the emotional insight which the child acquires for the rest of his life. This gives him an added keenness of perception, a historic "awareness" of and an enlightened interest in his environment, a sense of local pride and a consciousness of local achievement.²

Bill Tate wrote from long personal experience, both as a village schoolmaster and as one of the leading English authorities on the Enclosure Movement in England.

The impact of local studies grew as, in county after county and in the major cities and towns, record offices were established to preserve the local records and manuscript collections of the area. Perhaps this enthusiasm had something to do with the realization that a rural environment was fast disappearing or with a resurgence of regionalism on a county basis in the face of an increasingly centralist government. In the University of Leicester, Professors Hoskins and Finberg pioneered the development of local studies within the University at an undergraduate level. In Yorkshire Maurice Beresford

² W. E. Tate, "The Use of Archives in Education," *Archives*, 1:24 (1949).

was tramping over the mounds which mark the site of deserted villages, and a totally new approach to local archaeology was being born.

Meanwhile, at high school and university, history remained a predominantly literary experience for school children and undergraduates alike. Political narrative still dominated. Successive generations feverishly memorized (and as quickly forgot) the narrative contents. I suppose my own was one of the last generations of students to pass through the universities with little awareness of the complex media of historical study. Oxford, 1946–49, was still dominated by English constitutional history, most subtly and elegantly presented with a brilliant mosaic of evidence and opinion, guaranteed to humble and delight—but there was never a glimpse of an original document.

Recently, I was delighted to stumble on a critique of the History School at Oxford by one who had read history there between the years 1961 and 1964, P. J. Lee. I was particularly struck by his remarks about the use of documents in the syllabus. When he first came to study his “special subject,” he felt that in reading selected documents from a number of printed sources he was coming close to experiencing the quest of the historian. His excitement evaporated, however, when he realized that what was required was the learning of these extracts together with glosses on them propounded by his tutor and others.

The documents, in short, were not so much evidence as information and illustration. They posed no problems essentially different from secondary sources. Evidence is to be evaluated not merely for what it purports to say but for what it may show despite its nominal message. . . . For us, the problems were given, preset. Our documents “contained” the answers . . . the documents were just another set book.³

Lee admitted that this was a valuable exercise from which a certain amount could be learned, but it is quite clear that documents are not being experienced in the sense of a personal discovery. There is too much that is given. If I may speak for an earlier generation at Oxford, in 1946, our idealism had been somewhat tempered by involvement in the war, and we did not see ourselves as apprentice historians working with our “sources.” We were not, therefore, disappointed and accepted the texts and the glosses as simply an exercise in relating the one to the other. However, our teachers, in their wisdom, often chose texts which were quite rare, and we were

³ P. J. Lee, “History at the Universities: The Consumer’s View of Oxford History,” *History*, 55:333 (1970).

thus gently directed to finely bound 17th-century editions in mediaeval libraries, like the "Duke Humphrey's," which provided an historical experience affecting all our senses. But Mr. Lee has a good point nevertheless.

By the early 1950's, the renaissance in local studies was beginning to reach the high schools and perhaps developed in them more quickly than in the universities, so that it is these changes in the high school curriculum which are putting pressure on the universities to reform their courses to some extent. The first experiments with schools were carried out by two of the record offices which had been in existence the longest, those of Lancashire in the north of England and Essex in the southeast. Lancashire pioneered the technique of traveling exhibitions of original material, accompanied by an archivist who would demonstrate and explain the items on display. In Essex, Mr. F. G. Emmison appointed a School Service Officer to the staff of the county record office and secured part of Ingerstone Hall, a 16th-century mansion, for the mounting of most ambitious displays, accompanied by exciting and stimulating catalogues and other aids. Thousands of children were brought to the Hall and were exposed to a galaxy of original material which they would not otherwise have seen in a traveling exhibition. In addition, children were encouraged to study original records in the record office, and prizes were given for essays involving original research. These projects have proved most successful.

It soon became clear that a display of archival material was not enough because, again, the exhibition placed the school children and other viewers in the position of passive consumers, even though some attempts were made to examine children on what they had seen. The handling and use of archives, on a large scale, was something else altogether, and to meet this need, kits were developed. At first, they were relatively primitive, and G. R. Batho's experiments at the Teachers' Training College in Sheffield pioneered this form. The kits he devised consisted of transcripts of original documents, mimeographed in sets and dealing usually with some local theme or subject, such as elections, turnpike roads, hospitals, or schools. The significant point is that Batho wished to educate his students in the use of archives, so that they could take this skill with them to the schools where they were ultimately to teach. At the same time, Batho worked closely with the Sheffield Record Office, and this teamwork between Institute or Department of Education and the local record office was to become a pattern for local development of archival teaching units of all kinds. One of the difficulties was that graduates of teachers' training colleges were often insufficiently

equipped historically to deal with original materials, quite apart from their difficulty in finding time to prepare schemes and projects. Batho's kits were intended at first to be purely illustrative, but the groups of documents now take the form of a number of wall pictures and maps, an historical account of the theme with a bibliography attached, and 36 copies of each document to be used in the class. These kits are aimed at secondary school children and were coordinated with work in the Sheffield museums.

There has been much controversy over the relative merits of transcripts and of facsimile reproductions by which the student has the challenging pleasure of unraveling the writing. There is evidence that children have a great facility for this task since their minds are not so locked on the printed line as an adult's mind is. In Gloucestershire, the kits are made into bound volumes of documents, diagrams, and photographs, including an introduction to the material. The Buckinghamshire unit has been much praised for illustrating the enclosure of a village by faithfully reproducing the documents in both colour and texture at a remarkably low price. The arrival of the "Jackdaw" series was an interesting development which, however, did not solve many problems. The Jackdaws, being a commercial venture and none the worse for that, had to appeal to a wide audience which included not only students but adults enjoying their leisure. The result tended to be that the kits were made up of visually attractive documents, lacking much attention to their organic unity. There was also the problem of cost for a school investing in several sets of this relatively expensive material, and it is perhaps significant that in 1970 a guide to the use of Jackdaws was published to help solve some of the problems.⁴ This series was the first to develop kits for national themes. There may have been a tendency, however, for the items, some of which are quite large and require a great deal of space for careful examination, to be pinned on walls as illustration, perhaps not the original intention for the series.⁵

Unquestionably, the trend has been to involve school children in the records and in the use of them, and editors of more recent kits have had this very strongly in mind. That kit produced by the University of Newcastle entitled "Coals to Newcastle" has developed the Jackdaw approach and integrated the items on a much more sophisticated basis for study. The Seax series produced by Essex is even more ambitious; every year more kits appear, and their value is now seen to be considerable.

⁴ Margaret Devitt, *Learning with Jackdaws*, (London, Jonathan Cape, 1970).

⁵ J. Fines, "Archives in School," *History*, 53:348-356 (1968).

A greatly misused medium for involving students in documents is the projected transparency. The images are usually far too small for the handwriting to be clear, but given careful photography, the slide is admirable for the demonstration and explanation of form. The teacher can make points clearly, and collective concentration in a darkened room can be most effective. For a more subtle, tactile approach, documents, even quite simple ones, gain much from being filmed in colour. Slides are particularly effective in an all-round presentation involving documents, paintings, prints, handbills and artifacts, but too often in the past, good images have been at the mercy of an atrocious commentary, ill prepared or read from a script. This is disastrous. In my opinion, the only way to present slides effectively is to scrutinize them with the group, examining and explaining if necessary and pausing to let the viewers draw their own conclusions. With the slide, there is no hurry, but there is also no need to be monotonously slow. Glibness is death, but the low-key, conversational approach with plenty of variety in the pace of slide changes will usually hold the attention. If the visual image is good, it will often speak for itself.

Fifteen years ago, when I was City Archivist of Liverpool, England, I had the opportunity of making a number of slide presentations with a tape-recorded commentary.⁶ I would arrange the slides in their correct order on a table, switch on the tape recorder and then hold each one up and scrutinize it aloud, as it were. The occasional hesitations and pauses as I groped for a word or phrase came over quite naturally, and the audience shared in the effort to examine and clarify. Slide change was signalled by a tap on the table which turned out to be less distracting than the odd burps and bleeps that one often hears. A further advantage in recording the commentary is that the audience is not dominated by a teacher in a producer-consumer relationship. We all examine the slide together and share the experience.

One series consisted of 300 slides and covered the history of Liverpool in 5½ hours running time, averaging just over one minute for each slide. The presentation was divided into sections of about one hour each. I even juggled with a record player to provide background music—all very “do it yourself,” but it was my being vulnerable and exposed and not slick or carefully edited which came through. These series are still being shown to children in the Branch Libraries of Liverpool.

⁶ H. A. Taylor, “Local History: An Experiment with Slides and Tapes,” *Archives*, 5:142-144 (1962).

In France, the experience of those involved in archives and education has been, in some ways, similar to that in England despite a very different archival tradition. In 1950, the *Service Éducatif aux Archives Nationales* was initiated, and the following year, the *Départements* were invited to join in the scheme. Five did so in 1954, 15 by 1955–56, and 45 by 1969. Some archivists remained out of this scheme, not so much because they opposed it, but because of their distance from centres of population, lack of time, and other difficulties. The principal users of the scheme today are normal schools and secondary schools. Professors of the normal schools serve as part-time officers who contact their fellow teachers and then, in collaboration with the archivist, have reproductions made and archives selected for whatever kind of demonstration is required. The records are either displayed or used in the archives or taken to the schools, an alternative regarded as less satisfactory because only less valuable material can be released and because copies must be substituted for the more valuable items. Stress is laid on the necessity of having a suitable room for exhibitions and demonstrations. Not a large lecture hall but rather a small room, capable of accommodating about 20 students, affords them a much more real experience.

The choice of documents is largely controlled by the curriculum on the one hand and by the resources of local archives on the other. Repositories are encouraged to build up a bank of documents which have been displayed, to help in providing a custom-built exhibition from material previously read. A checklist of exhibition material is also recommended.

Student exposure to documents is either by *exposition* or *manipulation*, and commentaries for exhibitions are prepared by the *professeur chargé du Service éducatif* who, after a general statement, expounds upon the individual documents in turn. The other alternative is for students to be in groups of two or three and handed some documents to study with the aid of the teacher; each group then tells the others what it has learned from the documents studied. Many students find it stimulating to see the originals of documents which they have studied in school from copies. One or two other interesting points are made; namely, that the schoolteacher should accompany the students to the archives and that the students themselves should be allowed to relax while there and not feel that they are within the more restrictive school environment. Teachers express some reserve at working with the officer in charge of the education service, since this sometimes seems an interruption which

threatens the comfortable routine of regular teaching. The proof of the effectiveness of the service is the teacher's return with a new class at a later date.⁷

The *Service Éducatif* also publishes kits, but I have not seen any more recent than those which I purchased in 1959 and which are rather conservative in approach.

To return to the English scene, in May 1969, there appeared the first issue of *Teaching History*, published by the Historical Association. It gives a great deal of space to experiments concerned with the use of documents and is a valuable source for trends and opinions based on the experience of teachers in the field. Perhaps it would be worthwhile, therefore, to review some of these trends to get an idea of the state of the art at present, because there is still, and I suppose always will be, considerable difference of opinion on this matter of documents in teaching. At one end of the scale, there are those like Professor G. R. Elton, who has serious doubts about the teaching of history at all to school children. He argues that history is about men and not about abstractions and that a measure of maturity is necessary to understand the forces which control and drive people, or influence their decisions. He argues that there is a danger of over-simplification by the bright intellect, untarnished by experience, and also of confusing an absence of understanding with clarity of vision. Whatever the need of young students may be, the real thing, academic history, is wrong for them. On the other hand, Elton's experience has largely been with English undergraduates who have reached a high level of specialization, and this experience causes him to reason as follows:

The study of history consists of debates—between the historian and his evidence, between different students of history, between the historian and his own society—and if the teaching of history is to be successful, it, too, must rest on debate.⁸

This is precisely the kind of situation which the use of documents should stimulate. I think that Professor Elton may underestimate the ability of children to understand and to accept disparate information received as a mosaic through a series of documents which is so much in line with the present mode of handling information. At the school level, the problem has been defined as the need "to create an awareness of history which will help in the process of self-

⁷ Association des archivistes français, *Manuel d'archivistique; théorie et pratique des archives publiques en France* (Paris, Imprimerie nationale, 1970), p. 672-694.

⁸ G. R. Elton, *The Practice of History* (London, Fontana Books, 1969), p. 181.

realization and actualization.”⁹ This definition is charged with a number of psychological implications, but it is a fair statement of the need to appreciate history without having to write it. It is also an answer to Professor Elton, since children do not need to become historians to derive a good deal from historical documents and historical writing generally, which may well aid their personal development. There is a desperate need to break down the dichotomy between junior school—with its thirst for knowledge and enjoyment of stories, events, and personalities, its involvement in modelmaking and picturemaking and above all in its corporate work—and the senior school—where so much history takes the form of lectures, textbook reading, note-taking, one-word answer tests, and essay writing, and where the whole memorization ability is distorted out of all reason. Many teachers believe that the point of departure is the family circle. The children question their relatives about their past lives, place these experiences in the context of the changes which have occurred in their own locality, and so come to realize that these are forms of historical evidence which are complementary to the documentary form. Street names, place names, all help to develop an environmental approach to history.¹⁰

The documentary approach has also been used to bring relevance to the study of history in the schools, since it has within it much that is adaptable to other disciplines and sources of evidence. This argument says, in effect, that the subject of history is valid but that the old method of teaching it was wrong. Although it recognizes the danger of the new mode becoming the “gaudy wrappings of the 1970’s with which the teacher tries to disguise the bitter pill of history,”¹¹ the argument may be taken too far when it asserts that “the chief justification for use of archives in school . . . is that only by their use can we introduce pupils to the original documents which form the working material of the professional historian and the real life blood of history Only through this method is it possible for the child to experience what history really is and to feel that he is a true historian.”¹² This argument seems to be pushing the use of documents a little too hard, since it is Elton’s possibly valid complaint that children are in no position to play at being historians. However, the following is an excellent point:

⁹ M. L. Andrews, “History for Life,” *Teaching History*, 1:210 (1970).

¹⁰ Andrews, “History for Life,” p. 210–212.

¹¹ G. Jones and D. Watson, “Archives in History Teaching: Some Problems,” *Teaching History*, 1:188 (1970).

¹² Jones and Watson, “Archives in History Teaching,” p. 188.

If the archive method becomes common in schools, it may well oblige universities and colleges to revise their history courses because they will have students who are versed in the use of archives and in the methodology of history.

Already, those leaving school have in their final examinations an option of taking a personal topic upon which they may research and prepare a thesis, with plans and diagrams in support. In addition, a Leicester school is experimenting with the use of documents as a basis for examination, and at the university level, York is experimenting with a first-year course in original document work. The York course attempts to raise at once the level of awareness and, in Professor Williams's words, "seeks to get through the book to the sources."¹³

Much discussion has turned on the extent to which exposure to documents should be structured. Clearly, for a 30-pupil class, some guidance will be necessary. The argument against imitating the historian entirely is that he, in fact, spends a great deal of time searching for his references. However, the danger lies mainly in structuring a series of documents to reach only one conclusion, the one which the teacher or compiler feels is the most convenient. There is now a strong trend for the duplication of whole bundles and series of records from which can be drawn all kinds of conclusions so that the exercise of examining these records, bringing to bear qualities of judgment and analysis, and drawing together the information into a coherent statement is of the greatest value. A teacher in Berkshire writes:

The beginning of all historical work is the arousal of interest in something specific. Grand themes are abjured and at no stage have I attempted to select documents because they might illustrate work that has already been done in school. One friendly critic of the scheme has suggested that I have treated the archives office as if it were the editor's room of a popular newspaper. This I take as a high compliment from one who has understood (though not approved of) the idea that underlies the scheme.¹⁴

Here, very aptly described, is the mosaic approach which is receiving considerable attention these days.

The fact that documents can now be copied easily and accurately has resulted in the use of copies in schools and, to some extent, the neglect of the possibility of using originals which, by their very nature, have a special compulsion that does not exist in the copy for reasons discussed above. Children and undergraduates are becom-

¹³ B. Harrison, "History at the Universities, 1968: A Commentary," *History*, 53:362 (1968).

¹⁴ Quoted by J. Fines, "Archives in School," *History*, 53:352 (1968).

ing increasingly responsible when material is placed before them, and it may be possible to set aside whole series for this kind of use when original documents have been microfilmed and are going to deteriorate in any case. Such an arrangement may be necessary if the need for facsimiles gives way to the study of archive groups in the original. The method may well come in time, for after all, kits, for all their appearance, are essentially selections much as the old volumes of printed documents were, and this fact should not be disguised. I realize that here we are looking some distance into the future when the whole approach to the teaching of history will be transformed, but we might do well to keep this concept at the back of our minds.

And so the debate goes on. We will continue to argue to what extent students' work with archives is to be an exercise or an experience, or whether these two can be combined. There is every indication that work with original documents will increase and that this will take place lower in the educational scale as the years go by. We may see the decline of the textbook as an essential teaching tool, simply because the one single point of view will be seen as inadequate and insufficiently open-ended.

As archivists, we should give a great deal more thought to the implications of manuscripts as communication, as evidence of human transaction as it once was. We should try to devise ways of conveying the intense pleasure which can be experienced when handling manuscript and record groups, pleasure which has something to do with personal discovery. We, and not the historians, are often the ones who understand most about documents as we ponder over their order and content, trying to remain sensitive to as many implications as we can. We are the ones who are concerned with information from a wide spectrum of media and who must then relate our knowledge to the needs of the researcher. We work not with stark categories (save in physical arrangement) but with an awareness of content which is deep and often imponderable. It is this awareness of documents and the nature of their relationship to both past and present which has grown from our constant exposure to records prior to and after their structuring in our archives. Historians and teachers have always used records as a means to an end. Perhaps we rather than they are the ones who can introduce the student to a genuine experience by simply placing an unsorted group of papers or series with unspecified contents in front of him and saying, in effect, "enter into a dialogue with these records, this tiny fragment of thousands of tons that have been written, and ask your own questions and draw your own conclusions; expose your personality

to them and see what happens; there is no right or wrong answer." I believe the result would be a genuine historical experience because it is quite unstructured and far removed from textbooks and source books which have their place in another context. Perhaps then the student might accept the printed substitute and identify it as a substitute. This is a far cry from playing at historian, because the theme is not pre-selected, but it has everything to do with sensitizing the individual to the incomplete uncertainty of all knowledge and the terrible arrogance that seeks to cram anything so delicate and subtle as history into the pages of a textbook, and then demands that it be learned. If this looks instead like students playing at being archivists, the experience can still be a valid one, and anyone who has employed students, especially history students, in archives knows how quickly their enthusiasm mounts and how their strong sense of commitment develops and is maintained. It is this kind of learning experience to which Alvin Toffler is referring when he quotes psychologist Herbert Gerjuoy as saying: "The new education must teach the individual how to classify and reclassify information, how to evaluate its veracity, how to change categories when necessary, how to move from the concrete to the abstract and back, how to look at problems from a new direction—to teach himself. Tomorrow's illiterate will not be the man who can't read; he will be the man who has not learned how to learn."¹⁵

Our standards and institutions are dissolving around us; we have to learn about the death of permanence and about transience and how to live with both. For many, history is last week or a year ago; so be it. Change, not time, is the measure of the past, and a project on the city as it was a year ago may provide a vivid experience of the rate of change. The city 50 years ago may simply not appear as the same city, but rather as a community from pre-history. We are all badly hung up on linear time, and this has played havoc with our historical experience.

Let us then have more dialogue with teachers and their students about how best they can be let loose among the archives, whether with single documents or volumes or series or "distinct, confused heaps," as one 17th-century English archivist described them. Let us avoid over-structuring these sessions or necessarily fitting them into a curriculum or anything else. Perhaps in this way, we shall all "learn how to learn."

¹⁵ *Future Shock* (New York, Bantam, 1971), p. 414.