

themselves have never received any training or had any experience with administering archives and manuscripts.

If training is indeed desirable and necessary, I suggest we devote whatever time and talents are required to developing and advancing the body of theory and practice upon which it is based, and to making possible the internships generally regarded as essential to our profession. We may well find it desirable in the future to adopt minimum certification standards, with appropriate grandfather clauses; and to promote the adoption of training requirements and qualifications for all professional positions.

Coupled with the concept of change in the title of this session is the concept of continuity. The one necessarily implies and is relative to the other. From one perspective, the changes that have been discussed may be viewed as successive but only partial answers to continuing basic problems. In a dynamic society the prevailing view of the concept of archives, the role of the archivist, the functions and activities of archival agencies, the education and training required for the archivist, and a host of related matters will and should always be susceptible to and capable of change. The continuity in our basic problems and the changes in our attempted solutions reveal our continuing relevance to the contemporary world, while the documentary materials which are our particular province afford us, as archivists, the unique opportunity to construct bridges from the past to the future across the flux of the present. To this teacher and student of archives administration this is the continuing challenge that my generation inherited from earlier ones, and that we will in turn bequeath to the new generation.

The Third Generation: War, Choice and Chance

by ANDREA HINDING

DEFINING A GENERATION seems a task only for the very foolish or the very brave. Using a purely chronological definition is arbitrary, for it allows many individuals to fall through the cracks between generations, finding themselves included or excluded because of the accident of a few months or years. Defining a generation by stating its essential characteristics is equally hazardous, for space, condition, and perception create wide variations even in relatively homogeneous groups. But in spite of the risks, I believe one can describe a third generation of archivists, consisting of those who grew up in the 1940s and 1950s and came of age professionally in the 1960s. The third generation is the one which faced, while still in its formative years, the "ordeal of the human spirit" which was the 1960s.¹

¹ I am grateful to Lucile M. Kane, curator of the Minnesota Historical Society, for her assistance in formulating the ideas in this paper and for her characterization of the 1960s as an ordeal of the human spirit.

The third generation grew up in a rare moment in history, a period blessed by peace and relative prosperity, symbolized by the well-intentioned if sometimes clumsy fatherliness of Dwight Eisenhower. Raised as the children of middle class or professional families, we lived comfortable lives, secure in the love of our parents and the support of a stable community. We were taught—and believed in deeply—the virtues and even the inevitability of the “American way.” We were assured during our education, especially by social science, that those problems still visible could be alleviated by urban renewal, high-rise housing, closing tax loopholes, or making minor adjustments in the social environment. In the face of this socialization experience, then, it is not surprising that we developed a set of expectations of reality, not only for ourselves but for the world as well. More intensely than most generations in their formative years, and with far better reason, we expected (where others had only hoped for) life, liberty, and happiness for all.

These expectations, held perhaps as much preconsciously as consciously, were shattered abruptly by a “dirty little war” which broke out in Southeast Asia in the early 1960s and dragged on illogically and unendingly, it seemed, through the decade. Although everyone is weary now of discussing Vietnam, its importance should not be lost in today’s fatigue and boredom and the understandable wish that it had never happened. Vietnam seared the imagination of the third generation as the Depression marked another, and the memory of napalm, campus riots, and antipersonnel weapons we will carry to the grave.

If the nightmare of an undeclared jungle war fought nightly on television weren’t wrenching enough, there occurred in the 1960s the rediscovery of poverty, hunger, and blighted lives, not only in the emerging third world but at home in California, Mississippi, and New York. Scholarly studies and congressional investigations revealed that comfortable middle class lives were by no means the norm; statistics documented problems of such magnitude that tinkering with the social order seemed unlikely to solve them. With this discovery of large pockets of injustice, moreover, came a corresponding series of liberation movements by those seeming to discover for the first time their own deprivation, as Blacks, Chicanos, American Indians, gays, and women demanded redefinition of what it is to be human and sought redistribution of power and money. The war, the protests, the upheaval, the demands, the atrocity stories unfolding daily (so that one was afraid to open a newspaper or turn on the evening news) disrupted the lives of every sensitive member of society, but they affected most severely those whose sensibilities were still being formed and who were coming to the first painful and unexpected realization of the limits of the human condition. The sensibility of the third generation, reared to expect peace and order, came to be marked in large part by shocked surprise and the capacity for outrage.

The discovery of injustice and misery, shattering in itself, presented members of the third generation with crisis in another form—the

phenomenon of choice. Many of us hadn't begun serious careers and were still unencumbered by mortgages, by growing children to be educated, and by institutional responsibilities. We had the option, denied to directors of large libraries or archival agencies, of going to Alabama with the civil rights movement or to New Mexico with Eugene McCarthy. Given our sense of social crisis, many of us nevertheless chose what is the good life in academe or in an archives; though the choice was human and understandable, it marked many of us with a form of survivor guilt. Though we knew that helping to preserve society's collective memory was an essential task, we knew equally well, as the young black poet, Gregory Young, said, that others were out dying in the streets—and at times in the 1960s it was dying which seemed “for real.”

Not surprisingly, the abuse of logic, the police dogs and hoses, and the villages being destroyed in order that they might be saved, led many in the third generation to question the parents, teachers, and leaders who had proclaimed and defended the “American way” and whose lives and expertise had somehow seemed to promise happy endings. It is not accident, one suspects, that the period from which we're just emerging has been singularly hard on its leaders: one president assassinated and two driven from office, one presidential candidate murdered and another crippled. Less violent but often equally effective attacks on leadership resulted in besieged administrators dropping out in large numbers and increased difficulties in replacing college presidents and deans. The questioning of authority undeniably had its healthy effects—Vietnam and racism, for example, required one to ask why or to say, bluntly, no. But to the extent that the concept of authority itself came to be questioned, as it did, the trend was dangerous, for without authority there could not be structure, responsibility, or, finally, accountability.

The challenge to authority had related and mixed legacies, among them a new equalitarianism, a mania for participation, and the practice of “telling it like it is.” Equalitarianism meant in some instances that institutions and organizations responded to new and valid points of view, regardless of the qualifications of the proponents, though it sometimes resulted in leveling of operations toward the lowest common denominator. Participation was beneficial because it made individuals feel they had some control over “their destiny,” but it often threatened to become an end in itself rather than a means to conduct business more effectively. Directness had the virtue of cutting through old forms or of avoiding hypocrisy—or what was perceived as hypocrisy—but it also diminished the negotiating room so necessary in human affairs. Deprived of graceful ways out of situations in which conflict was inherent, conferences or meetings frequently became adversary proceedings and resolution was made virtually impossible.

The other major consequence of the social and political upheaval of the 1960s was that the old myth of a monolithic culture, with its single definition of what it is to be fully human, broke down. The discovery

of diversity had an immediate professional impact, making archivists of all generations aware of the need to document lives and cultures previously neglected by society. But the discovery of diversity affected us personally as well, requiring us to come to terms with black neighbors, with gay colleagues, and with long-haired men and women in bizarre costume. In no area did the monolith come apart more painfully or with greater consequence—statistical, symbolic, or psychic—than it did with the insistence of the new feminists that women be defined as fully human. For the feminists weren't seeking only equal pay for equal work; they were stepping out of many of the roles which society had prescribed for women for centuries and insisting on the validity of a "feminine" approach to reality. Because as creatures of our culture we had internalized the definitions of male and female given us, this change was yet another profound shock added to the others being endured. Contemporary feminism required that each of us consider what it meant to be a man or woman as well as struggle with mundane but surprisingly troublesome questions of who would open doors, who would make coffee, and who would take minutes.

But what, as one critic has asked me, has all this to do with the national historic records survey or the quality of finding aids? What has Vietnam or feminism to do with the deplorable state of local records or progress for the archival profession? If the third generation is still mired in its anger and protest, the questions implied, will it ever be able to face serious institutional problems?

In response, as I said to my critic, how well the third generation faces "serious institutional problems" depends, of course, as it always has, on money, political ability, and general circumstance. It depends too on how intelligently archivists of all generations cope with the complex research and documentation questions we face together. But progress also depends on how well we learned the lessons of the 1960s—not the lessons of the domino theory or voter registration, but the lessons of the complex human needs, personal and professional, which pull and tug on each of us. What our ordeal should have taught us, above all else, is that human beings have ethical and emotional needs which are as much a part of their institutional lives as intellectual and professional needs. This mixture of needs, sometimes legitimate and sometimes not—but usually suppressed in the old stoic order—is ignored or denied only at great cost to institutions and the individuals in them.