

Cooperation as a Strategy for Archival Institutions

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COOPERATION IS AN ESSENTIAL FEATURE of our highly complex and interdependent society. Archival programs and institutions, like governmental bodies, colleges and universities, professional organizations, and other major institutions, are recognizing a growing imperative to join together to pursue common goals. This paper outlines the major implications for archivists in recent cooperative developments among libraries and then examines the status of archival cooperation, particularly the growth of state depository systems and networks. It assesses the achievements and shortcomings of these state programs, and suggests the roles, critical in cooperation, of planning and of human factors. Finally, some guidelines and directions are offered, for future cooperative efforts by archivists.

Library Cooperation

"Archivists should interest themselves in library techniques," wrote T. R. Schellenberg a decade ago, because librarians "have provided an object lesson [in] how to develop a methodology. They have shown archivists the way in which to bring a profession to a high degree of proficiency."¹ Archivists, however, need not limit what they learn from librarians to techniques of classifying and cataloging physical materials. Over the past thirty years librarians have profoundly altered the shape of their professional world by elaborating on the essentially simple idea of cooperative action by institutions with similar purposes. Librarians have done this by creating a variety of formal cooperative arrangements including library systems, special service agencies sponsored by consortia and other cooperative groups, and library networks.²

A library system links libraries of the same type, usually public libraries within a limited geographic area, to permit broader services and greater efficiencies than they can achieve operating autonomously. Library system services may include ref-

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¹ T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. 5.

² I have found useful the following general works: Anthony T. Kruzas, *Encyclopedia of Information Systems and Services* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971); Michael M. Reynolds, editor, *Reader in Library Cooperation* (Washington, D.C.: Microcard Editions Books, 1972); Donald D. Hendricks, *A Report on Library Networks* (University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, Occasional Papers No. 108, 1973); *A National Program for Library and Information Services: Final Draft*, (prepared by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science, Washington, D.C., March 10, 1975); Vernon E. Palmour et al., *Resources and Bibliographic Support for a Nationwide Library Program* (Washington, D.C., Superintendent of Documents, 1974); Carlos A. Cuadra, editor, *Annual Review of Information Science and Technology* (Washington, D.C., American Society for Information Science, 1974); *Library Trends* 24 (October 1975) devotes an entire issue to library cooperation; see, especially, Joe W. Kraus, "Prologue to Library Cooperation," for a brief historical summary of the topic.

erence, interlibrary loans, technical processing, and staff training. The American Library Association's standards for public libraries, issued in 1956, strongly supported the public library system concept; and many states used funds from the federal Library Services and Construction Act (LSCA) to further this development.³

The Center for Research Libraries (CRL) and the New England Document Conservation Center are cooperative programs providing centralized special services. Ten midwestern universities incorporated CRL in 1949 with the assistance of foundation grants and a gift of land from the University of Chicago. The center expands the pool of research materials available to its members by serving as a common depository for their less frequently used holdings and by systematically purchasing highly specialized or extremely expensive materials too costly for acquisition by a single institution. A council consisting of a representative from each member institution provides general direction to the center, elects a board of directors, and levies prorated assessments on the members. CRL is the best-known agency of its type but other libraries also have built cooperative storage and joint acquisition programs.⁴

The New England Document Conservation Center is a creature of the New England Interstate Library Compact, a distinct subdivision created by legislative action of the six northeastern states. Center programs include a workshop, laboratory and consultation services, and education and training activities. A Board of Trustees, advised by a committee of center users, governs the center and appoints the director.⁵

The most dramatic and significant development in library cooperation has been the proliferation of library networks. A 1974 survey found 187 networks, at least one in every American state, and already an extensive literature reports developments in this field. While there is no single accepted definition of a library network, essential elements include formal organization, cooperation among libraries of at least two different types, regular communications channels, and cooperative action toward agreed-upon goals. This broad definition recognizes the great variety in the structures (i.e., membership, organization, governance) and purposes of existing networks.⁶

The state is, perhaps, the most common unit for library networks (though many cover smaller areas and, by 1974, there were at least twenty-three interstate networks) and state libraries or educational agencies usually have led in developing networks. While most statewide networks attempt to include all libraries, other networks are confined to libraries of a similar size, function, or source of funding. Networks rest on formal, signed agreements which establish responsibilities and provide a structure for decision making. In addition to seed money from Title III of LSCA, net-

³ G. Flint Purdy, "Interrelations Among Public, School, and Academic Libraries," in Reynolds, *Reader*, pp. 107-15; Andrew Geddes, "Managing Systems," in *ibid.*, pp. 93-102.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-11 outlines the current scope of interlibrary cooperative activity; "The Center for Research Libraries," in Reynolds, *Reader*, pp. 199-205.

⁵ "New England Document Conservation Center," (undated, 2 pp. handout); Regional Centers Study Committee, National Conservation Advisory Council, "Suggested Guidelines for the Planning and Organization of a Regional Conservation Center," (3 pp. photocopy, July 1974).

⁶ *A National Program . . . Final Draft*, pp. 59-63; Palmour et al., *Nationwide Library Program*, esp. pp. x, 53. This paper does not consider the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) and the Medical Literature Analysis and Retrieval System (MEDLARS) or similar governmental and proprietary information systems. Primarily through the use of computers these systems provide access to large bodies of centrally stored information. They are not, however, library networks; for the role of those receiving the systems' services is that of a consumer rather than an active participant. Additional information on these systems is conveniently available in the sources listed in Fn. 2 especially, Kurzas, *Encyclopedia*, and in *The Bowker Annual of Library and Book Trade Information*, and Allen Kent and Harold Laucon, eds., *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* (New York: Marcel Dekker, Inc., 1968-).

works have raised funds from participating libraries, state library agencies, private foundations, and various federal sources.

Interinstitutional sharing of information resources is the major activity of most library networks. Unlike traditional interlibrary loan procedures, library networks provide rapid and comprehensive searches for all sorts of materials in the holdings of all member libraries. The key to network success in this area is bibliographic control and rapid communication. Twenty-three states have union catalogs and/or union lists of serials, in print, microform, card, or automated format. Three-fourths of all networks operate communications systems to speed exchange of information and location of requested materials, and although experiments in facsimile transmission disclosed "appalling costs" in this new technology, networks routinely use leased telephone lines, the TWX system, and computer networks.⁷

Among the rash of new networks on the library scene, librarians describe one as "astounding" and "portentous" in its impact; a Texan even compared its effect on librarianship with that of the space program on the sciences. The Ohio College Library Center (OCLC) in eight years has expanded far beyond the state's borders and has become a model for automated bibliographic and cataloging systems throughout the country. OCLC provides on-line access to a data base of more than two-million catalog records. As catalog cards are ordered from the system the code number of the ordering library is entered on the catalog record thus creating an enormously valuable tool for interlibrary loan purposes.⁸

To many observers the remarkable growth of state and regional networks makes the need for a national library program seem all the more pressing. The National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (NCLIS), an agency created by Congress five years ago, released its "final draft" of a "National Program for Library and Information Services" this spring. "The growth of libraries in the United States," the commission charged, "has been fragmented and uneven" and "lacking in cohesion," creating both waste and inequity. The commission urged a "new philosophy of library and information service . . . one based on a common sense of direction and purpose . . . [and] a commitment to national cooperative action." It warned that "If libraries continue to develop as they are now—unrelated to one another, a miscellany of informal cooperative arrangements, lacking common standards and compatibility, etc.—in five years time it may no longer be possible to organize them into a cohesive national system."

The proposed "National Program," in the words of NCLIS, "would weld together today's collection of disparate parts into a total system of library and information services." Based on adequate local library services, and using statewide networks as building blocks, the program calls for federal funds to standardize technical and bibliographic activities, to implement a national preservation program, to co-

⁷ Palmour et al., *Nationwide Library Program*, pp. 7, 85, 227; there is an extensive literature on the operation of specific networks, for example, in William C. Roselle and Nancy H. Marshall, "Commitment to Cooperation: COWL/WILS Service to the Academic Community," *Wisconsin Library Bulletin* (September-October 1973): 269-71.

⁸ Hendricks, *Library Networks*, pp. 18-20; Barbara Evans Markuson, *The Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority—A Plan for the Future: Summary Report of the Cooperative Bibliographic Center for Indiana Libraries (COBICIL) Feasibility Study* (Indiana State Library, Indianapolis, 1974), pp. 26-27; "Network Genes: Post-conference on Networks and Computerized Bases," *Wisconsin Library Bulletin* (January/February 1975): 29-30. Two recent articles on the Ohio College Library Center network are Art Plotnik, "OCLC for You—and Me?! A Humanized Anatomy for Beginners," *American Libraries* 7 (May 1976): 258-67; and Joe A. Hewitt, "The Impact of OCLC," *American Libraries* 7 (May 1976): 268-75.

ordinate existing federal programs, to insure compatibility among statewide networks, and, finally, to create a National Library Network.⁹

Diverse social and technological changes have produced the flourishing state of library cooperation today. One is the knowledge explosion—the enormous increase in the amount of published information and in the numbers and kinds of information consumers. The new electronic technologies and the steadily rising costs of human and physical elements in information handling are another. Librarians, too, have changed. There is among them a “new ecumenical spirit,” one writer observes, as they emerge from a long period of focusing “their intellectual energies on their specific community and institutions.” Closely related to this new spirit is a critical assumption, widely held by librarians and often stated as an unquestioned fact and a guiding ideology, that every individual has a right of equal access to all necessary information resources.¹⁰ Added to this changed professional perspective is a heavy dose of systems-thinking which provides many of the conceptual tools for planning cooperative activities. And, finally, outside funding from LSCA, the national endowments, the National Science Foundation, the Office of Education, the national agricultural and medical libraries, and the Council for Library Resources has underwritten costly experiments in cooperation. By 1972 the annual federal budget for library grant programs alone amounted to \$140 million.¹¹

Cooperation has not been without its problems. Enough wrecks now dot the library landscape to warn all travellers of the hazards of the cooperative course. Some of the dangers are technical: differences in hardware hinder replication of a successful project; promising technologies prove too costly or too soon outdated. More often, the causes of failure are human. The postmortem on a Colorado network reads: “Most importantly it was the lack of real commitment on the part of the participating librarians and their staffs. They were not really committed nor cooperative from the beginning.” Other cooperative efforts shrivelled or died when weaned from their initial federal funding. Even among programs which succeed, unsolved problems abound: How should costs be apportioned? How do you evaluate library service? What is the optimum size of a network? Where are librarians to learn the technical and managerial skills essential to complex forms of cooperation?¹²

This is a period of “eager expenditure of pioneering energy” and of “rapid and undisciplined proliferation,” concludes a recent survey of library and information networks.¹³ Archivists, laboring in a closely related field, often with strong institutional ties to libraries, have much to learn from this experience. The fundamental fact, of course, is that cooperation can succeed; that through cooperative means institutional barriers to achieving mutual goals can be breeched; that existing institutional structures, so much the accidents of history, need not entirely shape our professional world. A second lesson from the library experience is that cooperation

⁹ *A National Program . . . Final Draft*, pp. 2, 15, 38-40, 59-60, and 67.

¹⁰ Purdy, “Interrelations,” p. 108; and Kenneth E. Beasley, “Social and Political Factors,” in Reynolds, *Reader*, pp. 9-31.

¹¹ *A National Program . . . Final Draft*, p. 121.

¹² Hendricks, *Library Networks*, pp. 11, 4-5, 8; Beasley, “Social and Political Factors,” p. 12; Purdy, “Interrelations,” p. 115; Alphonse F. Trezza, “Fear and Funding,” *Library Journal* (December 15, 1974): 3174, concludes that “Developing an attitude of cooperation, an understanding of true unbridled and unselfish cooperation, is the major step in developing library and information services for all persons regardless of their location and their primary local library.” See also Ed Sayre, “Five Vital Considerations,” *ibid.*, p. 3178.

¹³ Ronald F. Miller and Ruth L. Tighe, “Library and Information Networks,” in Cuadra, ed., *Annual Review*, p. 204. This bibliographic essay cites 183 recent sources on information networks.

develops at its own pace, building on previous successful endeavors, on changing technologies, on changed perceptions of the way one's professional world might be ordered, and on capable leadership and skillful management. Third, we can learn something of the limits of cooperation, which is neither an end in itself nor a substitute for strong basic programs underwritten with adequate funds. Finally, library experiences provide us with a wealth of practical information, much of it in published form.

Archival Cooperation

Archivists, no less than librarians, have frequently praised the necessity and goodness of cooperation. Former Oregon State Archivist David C. Duniway put the general case in these persuasive terms: "Let us think, and plan, cooperatively. Let us each become more cognizant of the total body of records and plan our part in the task of preservation so as to insure maximum utility of our documentation and minimum duplication of our efforts." SAA President Dolores Renze listed the generous extension of "interdisciplinary and interinstitutional cooperation" among her nine standards for archivists. And debates over cooperation or competition in collecting activities are standard fare in our professional diet, although the terms of the argument are suspect. As Allan Turner of the Archives of Saskatchewan noted, in a 1970 session of the Canadian Historical Society, "all rational people agree on cooperation."¹⁴

Archivists have not only talked cooperation, on an informal and individual basis they have cooperated frequently. They have hosted visiting colleagues and fed their seemingly insatiable appetites for information surveys; they have joined professional organizations and carried out the customary professional activities. On occasion, such individual cooperation has blossomed into joint institutional efforts toward limited, short-range goals. For instance, under the sponsorship of a library consortium, archivists in five upstate New York institutions produced a joint guide to their manuscript collections. In 1969 the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and Wayne State and Cornell universities jointly purchased a prized labor collection. Without fanfare other archivists have long engaged in similar cooperative activities.

At the national level, cooperation among archivists has been the aim of at least three plans or projects. The boldest suggestion, proposed by Oliver W. Holmes in 1942, envisioned federal-state construction and maintenance of joint archives buildings. Holmes found "particularly exciting" the prospect of improving state "standards of archival work." Unfortunately, the federal records centers program, begun in the early 1950s, seems to have put this ambitious idea to rest.¹⁵

¹⁴ David C. Duniway, "Where Do Public Records Belong," *American Archivist* 31 (January 1968): 55; Dolores C. Renze, "President's Page," *American Archivist* 29 (October 1966): 528; "Conference Coverage: 'Acquisitions Policy: Competition or Cooperation?'" *The Canadian Archivist* 2, no. 1 (1970): 21-43. An SAA Committee on Cooperation, in 1939, offered "to serve as a clearing house for information on archival problems." The "Report of the Secretary," *American Archivist* 2 (January-October 1939): 55, found the committee "anxious to learn from member institutions what the needs for co-operation are and how they can be met."

¹⁵ Oliver W. Holmes, "The Problem of Federal Field Office Records," *American Archivist* 6 (April 1943): 95-96. For further discussion of this idea see also Holmes, "Areas of Cooperation Between the National Archives and State Archives," *American Archivist* 14 (July 1951): 218-21; and William D. McCain, "Some Suggestions for National Archives Cooperation with the State Archives," *ibid.*, pp. 224-27. Ernst Posner commented on the general lack of cooperative interaction between the National Archives and state archival agencies in "The National Archives and the Archival Theorist," *American Archivist* 18 (July 1955): 207-16.

The Library of Congress NUCMC and the NARS SPINDEX projects, while producing tangible results, also underscore the limitations of voluntary cooperation. NUCMC is a valuable and heavily used tool, but estimates of the proportion of manuscripts not reported in its volumes range as high as 50 percent. SPINDEX, a NARS project carried out in collaboration with eight other institutions and aided by a \$40,000 grant, is now a workable set of computer programs to prepare indexes and other finding aids. It is not, however, a step toward a national archival data bank, and a 1973 conference of SPINDEX users rejected the call of Charles E. Lee to create a formal consortium to work toward this goal. The conference resolved, instead, simply to form a "‘committee of correspondence’ to coordinate and exchange information."¹⁶

In sum, most cooperation among archivists and among archival institutions remains functionally simple and aimed at immediate goals. In a few states, however, pioneering archivists have built archival systems or networks based on inter-institutional cooperation of a very different sort. Formal agreements, legal in appearance and signed by representatives of the participating institutions, are the foundations of these state programs. They spell out the purpose of the cooperative relationship (uniformly this is to improve access to information) and the obligations of the cooperating parties. Although the agreements contain withdrawal provisions, they are negotiated with the expectation of long-term cooperation.

Today's archival networks fall into two categories: statewide systems for the deposit of local government public records and statewide networks of regional archival centers holding private and public records and carrying on a variety of archival functions.¹⁷

The regional depository concept, proposed to American archivists before World War I and bolstered by European successes with similar schemes, remained untested until the 1950s and 1960s.¹⁸ The higher education revolution of those decades strongly shaped the programs which then appeared. In the colleges and universities, it seemed, were large new buildings for archival storage, young faculties and students hungry for original research materials, and librarians and historians eager to come to the aid of the archivist. Together the state archives and the state colleges and universities would preserve and make accessible, at locations reasonably close to their origin, vast quantities of historically valuable records endangered by the poor administrative practices of local governments.

¹⁶ "Summary of the Meeting," SPINDEX Users Conference, June 11-12, 1973, Washington, D.C. (photocopy, 9 pp.). The NHP[R]C (Hamer's) *Guide* is an invaluable bibliographic tool based on the cooperative efforts of many institutions. It is not an operating network or information system.

¹⁷ In addition to sources cited below, my information about and understanding of archival networks and depository systems has been greatly augmented by a Seminar on Regional Archival Networks sponsored by the Midwest Archives Conference in July 1974, attended by representatives from Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Nevada, Ohio, Texas, and Wisconsin. A tape recording of the seminar proceedings is preserved at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, and information on the Illinois, Michigan, Nevada, and Texas programs presented at the seminar is summarized, and updated, in James E. Fogerty, "Four New Regional Networks: A Progress Report," *The Midwestern Archivist* 1, no. 1 (1976): 43-52. I also conducted telephone interviews in September 1975 with the following state network or depository system coordinators: Stanley Tylman (Illinois), Martin McLaughlin (Michigan), James Fogerty (Minnesota), John Townley (Nevada), and Marilyn Von Kohl (Texas).

¹⁸ On the origins of the idea see: Solon J. Buck, "Local Archives; Should They Be Centralized at the State Capitol?" *Annual Report of the American Historical Association* (Washington, D.C., 1913): 268-71; Theodore C. Pease, "The Problem of Archive Centralization with Reference to Local Conditions in a Middle Western State," *ibid.*, 1916, pp. 151-54; Ernst Posner, "European Experiences in Protecting and Preserving Local Records," in Ken Munden, ed., *Archives and the Public Interest: Selected Essays by Ernst Posner* (Washington, D.C.: Public Affairs Press, 1967). Posner originally presented this essay in 1940.

By 1965 at least seven state archives adopted this strategy for coping with the awesome problems of county and local government records. Building operational systems, however, proved far more difficult than expected: proposed systems in Washington, Ohio, Kentucky, and New York never materialized although a few institutions served informally as depositories; the Michigan and Illinois programs failed to prosper despite the adoption of several written agreements; and a lack of both researchers and of local cooperation forced Wisconsin to reorganize its system in the early sixties. Subsequent efforts to create depository systems in California and Oregon met similar frustrations.¹⁹

Despite these early setbacks, the depository idea has enjoyed something of a revival in the past five years. A new Texas system and reworked Illinois and Michigan programs, benefiting from disappointing past experiences, now recognize the depository as but one element in a viable local records program which includes adequate state legislation and funding, field assistance to local governments, and means for gaining physical and intellectual control over acquired records. None of these come cheaply. Recognizing this, Michigan has obtained a \$60,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities for a local records survey, and Illinois has applied for a grant to hire interns at each of its proposed centers. Because money alone cannot assure cooperation, a member of the state archives staff in each system now is responsible for planning, communication, problem solving, and the many similar functions necessary to mobilize people for cooperative action.²⁰

Funding and management aside, troubling questions remain about the regional depository approach. Is it adequate to handle the enormous bulk of local government records? Can it alone provide sufficient information resources to justify the expenses of the cooperating campuses? There is some recognition of these problems. After its federal grant expires, the Illinois State Archives proposes to shift the staff at its depositories to its regular budget, and Texas has sought to increase the funding for its local records program, now at about \$90,000. Michigan's most successful depository, at Western Michigan University, administers the university's related information resource jointly with the public records depository to provide researchers there a wide range of materials.

The concept of a network of cooperating archival centers, like the regional depository idea, has been widely discussed. In the late 1930s Oliver W. Holmes offered

¹⁹ Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964): 33-34, 312-13, 336-37, 363-64 discusses several strategies for coping with local government records and offers an insightful critique of the depository systems then planned or in existence. Hermann F. Robinton of the New York State Education Department revealed at a 1944 SAA meeting his state's plan "to set up regional archival depositories" in eight locations "selected as the result of a survey of economic trends and needs," in *American Archivist* 7 (January-October 1944): 25-26. For details of the struggles to build state systems see the reports of the state archival agencies, e.g., California Heritage Preservation Commission, *The Preservation, Organization, and Display of California's Historic Documents: Report to the California State Legislature* (Sacramento, 1973), p. 13: "Librarians at some colleges have been reluctant to make space available fearing that state funding would not be forthcoming for needed expansion. A few have trained archivists on the staff, but others prefer to use available staff positions for alternative functions. Although the archival function is now authorized by the trustees of the state universities and colleges, it has not been generally accepted. It is our reluctant conclusion that this [regional archives] program has not achieved its objectives and that additional means should be sought for preserving those manuscripts of local government which document the rich heritage of the State." David C. Duniway, in his last report as State Archivist, cogently presented the rationale for a regional depository system: *Oregon State Library: Biennial Report for the Period July, 1970 to June, 1972* (Salem, 1972).

²⁰ Stanley Tylman, "Local Records," *For The Record . . . Newsletter of the Illinois State Archives* 1 (September 1975): 4-5. I am indebted to Tylman for a draft copy of *Guidelines: Regional Depository System, Illinois State Archives* (August 1975), 28 pages. Marilyn Von Kohl, "New Program Focuses Attention on Local Records," *Texas Libraries* 34 (Summer 1972): 90-93; also telephone interviews with Von Kohl, Tylman, and McLaughlin.

it as a solution to the vexing problem of business archives. Several years later, library consultant A. F. Kuhlman suggested a cooperation program to administer archives and manuscripts in the North Texas area to avoid damaging competition and to complement his recommended cooperative library program. Canadian archivists have proposed networks to link the provincial archives with the universities; and the establishment of a university campus branch operation by the Archives of Saskatchewan is, perhaps, a move in this direction. And in 1969 historian Alfred B. Rollins, Jr., urged archivists to see networks as a means to "develop better systems for coordinating and managing our total archival resources." Rollins proposed "a network of regional historical facilities like the one at Cornell University."²¹

The state networks of regional archival centers now operating in Minnesota, Ohio, and Wisconsin differ markedly from the local government records depository systems. In the latter, the individual depository is an important but limited segment of the state archives' larger local government records program. It has little input into state public records policy, for its role is primarily custodial. The networks, on the other hand, strive to build regional centers with comprehensive holdings of archival and related research resources and a variety of self-generating history-related programs. Thus the regional depositories are akin to branch office operations of a single, large agency, while the regional centers in an archival network, at their best, are independent members of a federated association.

The three state archival networks now in existence are strikingly similar in origin and purpose despite important differences in their actual operations. In each instance the state historical society conceived and created the program, secured initial legislation and funding, negotiated the network agreements, and continues to coordinate network activities. Through the archival network the state society pursues its goal of collecting and preserving original documentation for the state as a whole as well as for the localities and regions within the state. The network also extends the services and resources of the state society beyond the bounds of the capital city. Because the state society functions as the state archives in all three states, the regional centers also serve as depositories for local government records.²²

The cooperating units of the state networks, with the exceptions of Ohio's West-

²¹ Holmes, "The Evaluation and Preservation of Business Archives," *American Archivist* 1 (October 1938): 181. Robert Polk Thompson, "The Business Records Survey in Wisconsin," *American Archivist* 14 (July 1951): 255, pictured the state's newly opened regional depositories as "the answer to the problem of caring for local and business records in bulk." A. F. Kuhlman, *The North Texas Regional Libraries, An Inquiry into the Feasibility and Desirability of Developing Them as a Cooperative Enterprise* (Nashville, 1943), reviewed by R. B. Downs, *American Archivist* 7 (April, 1944): 135-37; "Conference Coverage . . ." *The Canadian Archivist* 2 no. 1 (1970): 21-43; Rollins, "The Historian and the Archivist," *American Archivist* 32 (October 1969): 373.

²² On the Ohio network: "New Manuscript Libraries Urged," *Echoes: A Publication of the Ohio Historical Society* 6 (June 1967); David R. Larson, "Ohio Network of American History Research Centers," *Ohio History* 79 (Winter 1970): 62-67; *The Ohio Archivist*, newsletter of the Society of Ohio Archivists, frequently reports on network developments; the attractive printed brochures prepared by most Ohio network centers document their interests and activities.

On the Minnesota network: James E. Fogerty, "Minnesota Regional Research Centers," *Minnesota History* (Spring 1974): 32; Fogerty, ed., *Preliminary Guide to the Holdings of the Minnesota Regional Research Centers* (St. Paul, 1975); information on the network and on activities at each center is found in Lucile M. Kane, *Archives and Manuscripts Division Annual Report for 1974-75 and previous years*.

On the Wisconsin program: Richard A. Erney, "Wisconsin's Area Research Centers," *American Archivist* 29 (January 1966): 11-22; Richard A. Erney and F. Gerald Ham, "Wisconsin's Area Research Centers," *American Libraries* (February 1972): 135-40; mimeographed checklists of holdings prepared for many of the centers; and F. Gerald Ham, *Wisconsin's Area Research Center Network: Biennial Report, 1973-1975* (Madison, 1975): 8 pp. mimeo, provides statistical data on holding and use as well as a narrative report.

Nevada's unique "History Share Program" is an interlibrary loan network linking the Historical Society at Reno and eleven county libraries. Since its creation two years ago it has handled some fifty

ern Reserve Historical Society and Wisconsin's private Northland College, are archives programs sponsored by public colleges and universities. In all but a few cases the agreement to become a network member marked the beginning of archival activity on the campus. For the colleges and universities the regional archival center afforded an opportunity to acquire original materials for faculty research and for curriculum enrichment while providing an important, and visible, service to the local community.

The three state networks, although relatively young (only Wisconsin's dates before 1970), have become integral parts of the archival programs of the state historical societies and of most of the participating campuses. Many of the available indicators suggest that the networks have made substantial progress. For instance, Wisconsin's centers hold more than 1,000 collections of manuscripts (ca. 1,700 linear feet) and over 2,000 series of local government records (ca. 6,000 linear feet); they recorded some 3,600 daily patron registrations in 1974-75. This year the fledgling Minnesota network published a *Preliminary Guide* to the holdings of its centers, and another larger edition is expected. In addition to strong archival programs, the Ohio network boasts an impressive record of administrative achievement including the adoption of a formal charter, written agreements on four areas of program administration, and a detailed manual on network operations.

The state networks, however, are not without their difficulties. Individual centers vary greatly in the degree to which they have become thriving, comprehensive archives programs. This variation reflects the basically voluntary provisions of the agreements under which the networks operate. Beyond the minimum requirement of secure facilities and access to holdings upon demand, commitments in terms of quality and quantity of staff and funding are left to the determination of the participating institution.²³ Some regional centers, established in days of more generous budgets and burgeoning enrollments, have suffered financial restrictions and staff reductions or transfers prompted by fiscal rather than professional considerations. Elsewhere the lure of original source materials to students and faculty has proven less strong than hopeful archivists had expected. As a result of these and other factors, several Wisconsin centers, and no doubt some elsewhere, operate more nearly as depositories than as full archival programs. The state societies too have faced financial stringencies. Wisconsin's coordinator devotes only part of his time to network activities and Minnesota now operates without its initial support from grants by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

If interinstitutional cooperation among libraries is in a hectic "pioneering" stage, such efforts among archivists are surely in their nascency. This relative paucity of experience in cooperative activities renders especially important two aspects of cooperation frequently considered in the library literature: planning and human relations.

Planning is critical to effective cooperation. Formal planning studies, often federally mandated and funded, have preceded most recently created networks; archivists should insist on similar studies. Good planning begins with a clear assessment of the real and perceived needs of all parties to a potential agreement and the identi-

requests per year for use of society manuscripts at various locations around the state, especially in Las Vegas. Possible directions for network growth include interstate transfer possibilities and assistance to local libraries in building local history collections—MAC Seminar and telephone interview with John Townley.

²³ While Ohio's written agreements do not specify levels of support for center operations, David R. Larson's 1970 article recommended an operating budget of \$25,000 to \$50,000 and the network has attempted to monitor the levels of support provided each center.

fication of mutually acceptable goals which can justify the cooperative venture. Planning should also define specific short and medium-range objectives and provide a clear understanding of the financial implications of cooperation.²⁴ Existing archival networks and depository systems are long on statements of purpose but require only a minimal commitment by cooperating centers. If, as often is the case, other contributions are essential to program success (for example, vigorous collecting efforts, publicity for center holdings and programs, and center integration with the college curriculum), these ought to be specified in the initial agreements.

Organizational structure is another important planning element. All networks and depository systems have grappled with the problem of identifying appropriate regions and suitable institutions.²⁵ They also have had difficulties in designing decision-making mechanisms. Except in Ohio, decisions are reached unilaterally by the coordinating society or state archives or in bilateral agreements. These simple mechanisms are not adequate as the network matures and its programs become more complex. Wisconsin and Michigan are considering creation of network advisory committees. Library models of network governance may be applicable here.

Planning for cooperation, both by archivists and librarians, has been notably weak in creating means to evaluate cooperative efforts. Yet outside pressures on archival programs, and tight higher education budgets especially, make progress here essential. Statistical reports of patron use and of additions to network holdings are obvious measures. More valuable, but almost never available, are detailed analyses of the types of uses and users and the patterns of acquisitions. Unfortunately, many important accomplishments cannot be quantified: the rescue of valuable materials from destruction; increased sensitivity to archival considerations; and focus or encouragement to related activities such as oral history collecting, popular historical exhibits, local historical society activities, improved school curricula, and the like. Determining the extent to which archival networks and systems approach their laudable goals is a difficult task with implications for the entire profession.

Finally, planning for cooperation must recognize that cooperative activity creates a new entity which, in various ways, changes the original cooperators.²⁶ For example, most agreements provide that all collections revert to the state archives or historical society if a center closes. But what becomes of the commitment to a donor, often crucial in obtaining a collection, that the papers will be available locally? And, if the holdings of a defunct depository are of any size, what will the archives or historical society do with a body of records it never intended to store in its central location?

Close attention to the human element in cooperative programs is also vital. A recent survey of successful interlibrary cooperation concluded that the "most important [factor] is the attitude of the people involved."²⁷ The basic task of the network or system coordinator is to create conditions which maximize the ability and

²⁴ Planning and evaluation are widely discussed in the library literature cited above. Some of the more useful discussions include: Miller and Tighe, "Library and Information Networks," pp. 177-82; Markuson, *The Indiana Cooperative Library Services Authority*; and Hendricks, *Library Networks*, pp. 2-5.

²⁵ Patrick B. Nolan's paper before a session on archival networks at the SAA's 1975 annual meeting dealt with this question at some length.

²⁶ Beasley, "Social and Political Factors," p. 12.

²⁷ Purdy, "Interrelations," p. 114. For similar statements see William S. Budington, "Interrelations Among Special Libraries," in Reynolds, *Reader* pp. 145-54 and quotation by Alphonse F. Trezza, Fn. 12, above.

willingness of all participants to contribute to the cooperative effort. Magnifying the importance of this task are the peculiar nature of archival materials and the minimal requirements of network agreements. Coercive measures cannot elicit thoroughness in collecting efforts, care in arrangement and description of unique materials, thoughtful assistance to potential researchers, and close physical security over irreplaceable materials.

A central feature of all efforts at good human relations is communications. Most archival networks and systems depend extensively on low-cost state government telephone lines (one coordinator, for instance, maintains at least weekly telephone contact); supplementing this are frequent personal visits (another coordinator devotes nearly half his time to center visits). Other means of communication include periodic meetings of network staff (annually in Wisconsin, twice each year in Minnesota), advisory committees, formal reports, newsletters, and participation in regional professional organizations. Finally, many incentives to cooperation are intangible: mutual respect, confidence, care, good will, and strength. By and large these develop of their own accord, though lack of planning and communication can surely stifle their growth.

The Future of Archival Cooperation

Cooperative arrangements at present engage but a small portion of the energies of American archivists. Yet the problems archivists face and the forces shaping their responses suggest that this situation will change. The problems are familiar: lack of storage space for ever larger collections, badly deteriorating holdings, constantly changing technologies, escalating user demands, inadequate budgets, and, above all, the responsibility not merely to accession the accidental accretions of time but thoughtfully to select from the universe of original documentation materials for permanent preservation. Already, respected voices in our profession argue that changes in the very structure of the archival world are required. F. Gerald Ham sharply criticized our lack of vision in gathering the holdings of our archives. Charles E. Lee, in terms similar to the statement of the National Commission on Libraries and Information Sciences, charged that current archival efforts are "piecemeal, uncoordinated, and therefore unsatisfactory. The situation with regard to the records of the nation's past," he added, "comes close to being a national disaster." Like critics in the library world, Ham and Lee identified cooperation, backed by federal money and leadership, as basic to any future remedy.²⁸

That things are bad is no assurance that people will act to better them. But there are hopeful indications. There is a growing sense of professionalism among archivists and, as with librarians, a stronger commitment to the broader goals of the profession. The burgeoning regional organizations reflect this change and foster the communication and good will essential to cooperation.²⁹ The apparent success of existing archival depository systems and networks stands as an incentive to others to explore this approach. Finally, as in the library world, there is increased financial

²⁸ Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 5-13; Lee, "President's Page: The Proposed National Historic Records Program," *American Archivist* 35 (July/October 1972): 372.

²⁹ The Midwest Archives Conference provided the first opportunity for archivists in Chicago and in Minneapolis-St. Paul to meet fellow professionals within the same city on a face-to-face basis. In an April 10, 1975, presentation to a conference of Wisconsin's area research center directors, David Larson credited the Society of Ohio Archivists with creating a sense of community invaluable to building the state archival network.

assistance for cooperation. Federal funds launched the ambitious Houston Metropolitan Archives and Research Center and the Minnesota Regional Centers programs, and it is evident that private and public grant-giving agencies view favorably such cooperative efforts.

Perhaps the greatest potential for changing the structure of the archival world lies in the recently authorized records program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). Under this program state historical records advisory boards will submit project proposals to the NHPRC. Here is an opportunity to transcend many institutional limitations to the mission of documenting cultures. State plans should include not only projects within the scope of individual institutions but programs that foster cooperation among institutions. The NHPRC, for example, might assist the Minnesota Association of Collecting Agencies, created in May 1975 and chaired by the coordinator of the Minnesota regional network, to plan and implement a statewide strategy for identifying and acquiring historically valuable materials.³⁰ Existing statewide networks and systems could provide the structure for cooperative interinstitutional projects in areas of preservation, bibliographic access and reference services, training, and technical assistance.

As archivists in the future turn more frequently to cooperation, they will channel their efforts in at least four directions, none of them mutually exclusive.

First, much remains to be done through familiar forms of cooperation: comprehensive guides and directories, additional internships and temporary staff exchanges, expanded national and regional professional activities, and a more extensive professional literature.

Second, the statewide network approach will be duplicated and expanded. One direction for expansion will be the use of networks to provide greater services to a wider clientele. For example, Ohio offers a state conservation laboratory and a data archives; other networks provide consultant services and technical assistance. Already, in each regional network, some centers have developed cooperative relationships with museums, libraries, local historical societies, and other institutions performing archival functions for their localities. The systematic extension of such ties may eventually create hierarchical networks, similar to those among libraries, providing comprehensive reference services and a wide range of technical assistance. Since most state archival networks now maintain central bibliographic control over materials within their systems, they are a logical vehicle for efforts to gain bibliographic access to other archival materials within a state. Finally, state networks offer a structure for dramatically increasing access to archival materials through temporary transfers of original records among network members. Already Nevada and Wisconsin permit virtually free flow of holdings and Texas allows limited transfers. To realize this enormous potential in the network concept will require archivists to reexamine their commitment to full access to information resources in their custody.

Third, library consortia and similar cooperative arrangements offer models for cooperation among archival institutions. The Houston Metropolitan Archives and Research Center began as a conscious prototype of a comprehensive urban archives under multi-institutional sponsorship, and, although the project has met many frustrations, its former director and staff continue to believe that the approach is

³⁰ Minnesota Association of Collecting Agencies, "Report of the Steering Committee to the Organizing Committee," (6 pp., photocopy, May 1, 1975). Recently published guidelines and procedures for the NHPRC's Records Program do make special provision for cooperative projects by institutions within a state and by institutions in a region.

applicable elsewhere. At a session on urban archives at the 1975 SAA annual meeting, Patrick Quinn, Northwestern University archivist, made a strong plea for cooperative efforts in the Chicago area. Among his recommendations were reappraisal of Robert Brubaker's 1966 proposal for a citywide records survey, frank discussion of collecting efforts, and consideration of mutual technical assistance. For urban areas with established archival institutions a cooperative arrangement similar to the Center for Research Libraries might also prove appealing. Common storage of little-used collections in low-cost facilities could effect operating economies and encourage shared access. Perhaps Oliver W. Holmes's proposal ought to be revived and federal records centers involved in such a scheme. To deal with preservation problems, archival institutions could establish regional cooperative conservation centers either serving individual institutions or dealing directly with state networks. Archivists will be forced to pool resources with libraries and data archives in the esoteric and expensive area of electronic data collection if they are not to be excluded from this field altogether. Finally, cooperation among institutions with specialized subject collections, including oral history programs, would include development of comprehensive collecting strategies, coordination of field-work efforts, sharing information on collecting progress, and development and sharing of compatible finding aids.

Fourth, at a national and international level, archivists can begin to formulate an archives program similar to that developed by librarians. Essential to this will be a national data base of information about all archival depositories to which detailed information on their holdings will gradually be added. The enormous strides in cooperation and technology which OCLC represents makes this sort of an archival program appear to be within the range of reasonable expectation. A comprehensive national program can be achieved only with federal funding and leadership over a long period of time. In the meanwhile the NHPRC, concerned with archival matters in all fifty states, should recognize that a national cooperative program for archives, like a national library program, can stand only on the foundations of strong individual institutions and on effective cooperative arrangements at the sub-national level.

Summary and Conclusions

It is tempting to conclude a paper on cooperation with a stirring exhortation to lay aside trifling differences and petty jealousies and join hands in a noble crusade.³¹ The thrust of this paper, however, is quite different. It suggests that cooperation is a strategy used widely by librarians, and by some archivists, to achieve certain goals they wish to pursue, often those blocked by existing institutional structures and economic realities. Cooperation comes in various sizes and shapes, ranging from informal assistance to formally structured networks and consortia. Willingness to cooperate is, in part, a function of existing social conditions, although conscious action can nurture its growth. Cooperation is no panacea, it is often expensive, it requires planning and management, it sometimes fails. Nonetheless, it is likely and essential that future archivists will devote far more information and far greater resources to devising cooperative solutions to their mutual problems.

³¹ For an analysis of cooperation in social-science terms see the editor's introduction to Reynolds, *Reader*. Reynolds notes, however, that "there is not yet a theory of library cooperation sufficiently inclusive, developed, and accepted by a large enough segment of the library profession to serve as the basis for analyzing this phenomenon [of cooperation]." (p. 1)