# Shorter Features

MICHAEL J. SULLIVAN, *Editor*

The Shorter Features department serves as a forum for sharply focused archival topics which may not require a full-length article. Members of the Society and others knowledgeable in areas of archival interest are encouraged to submit papers for consideration. Shorter Features should range from 500 to 1,000 words in length and contain no annotation. Papers should be sent to: Michael J. Sullivan, Department Editor, the *American Archivist*, National Archives Building, Washington, DC 20408.

## Budgeting for Archival Processing

### W. N. DAVIS, JR.

THE PROJECTION OF STAFFING NEEDS for archival processing in a manner that budget analysts will find understandable and convincing requires close attention to the interrelations and proportions of the separate processing elements: the volume and character of the records; the processing stages; the levels of the personnel involved; and the rates of output. Each element must be presented in its relation to the integrated work flow and assessed as a significant determinant of the number and classes of employees needed to do the job.

Under a federal Public Works Employment Act grant, the California State Archives hired eight temporary Archivists I and two temporary clerk-typists in March 1977, and assigned them to archival processing on a full-time basis. This arrangement enabled the California State Archives to gather statistics on the processing function that permitted budgetary planning on a more exact scale than has been possible before. The temporary personnel concentrated their efforts on a backlog of unprocessed material. The projection of staff needs presented below, which was prepared in connection with the proposed budget for FY 1979–80, was concerned only with the number of permanent personnel needed for processing the records that were expected to be accessioned during the budget year. The budget dealt elsewhere with temporary personnel and the records backlog. The projection reflected actual output statistics for FY 1977–78.

*California State Archives Staffing Projection for Archival Processing of Records to be Accessioned in FY 1979–80*

(Abbreviations: AII: Performed by Archivist II; AI: Performed by Archivist I; C: Performed by clerical personnel.)

| Processing Stages | Estimated Workload in Cubic Feet | Cubic Feet Output Per Hour | Hours Required |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Preliminary weeding at state records centers, agency storage, and State Archives (AII) | 1400 cf. | 3.25 cf. | 431 |
| (Appraisal, selection, setting aside of records to be processed will be completed prior to preliminary weeding. Preliminary weeding will reduce the 1400 cf. to 1050 cf.) | | | |
| 2. Preparation of accession register sheets (entries include title of series, dates, volume, brief description, data on transfer and location, instructions for further processing, etc.) (AII) | 1050 | 19.5 | 54 |
| (Of the 1050 cf. entered in the Accession Register, an estimate 660 cf. will be processed by AI and C, and 390 cf. by C alone.) | | | |
| 3. Identification of records and development of notes on agency history. (AI) | 660 | 1.77 | 373 |
| 4. Arrangement. (AI) (Includes integration of out-of-place series.) | 660 | 1.14 | 579 |
| 5. Intensive weeding. (AI) (Intensive weeding will reduce the 660 cf. to 337 cf.) | 660 | .27 | 2,444 |
| 6. Preparation of agency, subject, and cross-reference catalog card entries. (AI) | 337 | 1.6 | 206 |
| 7. Preparation of descriptive inventories. (AI) | 337 | .65 | 516 |
| 8. Refoldering, relabeling. (C) (337 cf. from AI + 100 cf. of the 390 cf. sent directly to C.) | 437 | .5 | 874 |
| 9. Typing catalog cards and shelf lists (C) (337 cf. + 390 cf. sent directly to C.) | 727 | 4.1 | 176 |
| 10. Typing inventories. (C) | 337 | 8 | 42 |

Total Archivist II hours required:      485
Total Archivist I hours required:      4,118
Total clerical hours required:      1,092

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Annual net work hours per employee: | 1,800 | |
| Total Archivist II personnel required: | $\frac{485}{1,800}$ or .27 AII | |
| Total Archivist I personnel required: | $\frac{4,118}{1,800}$ or 2.28 AI | |
| Total Clerical personnel required: | $\frac{1,092}{1,800}$ or .6 C | |

This table demonstrates that an archivist I performs his or her level of processing at the rate of 1 cubic foot per 6.25 hours, or 288 cubic feet per year. The clerical rate is 1 cubic foot per 1.04 hours, or 1,730 cubic feet per year. The net 727 cubic feet of records processed into permanent storage during FY 1979–80 will require an estimated 5,695 hours of staff time, or 8 hours per cubic foot. The 8 hours break down as follows: archivist II, 2/3 hours; archivist I, 5 5/6 hours; clerical personnel, 1 1/2 hours.

The California State Archives' proposed total budget for FY 1979–80 contained comparable statistics on workload, hours, and personnel for the other divisions (Administration, Appraisal and Accession, Document Restoration, Reference Service, Exhibits). Total projected staffing needs, apportioned as to employee classes, amounted to 14.2 permanent employees and .8 temporary help.

Each processing project is of course unique, and the character and volume of the work load vary inevitably from year to year. Nevertheless, reasonably exact operational statistics, which are far more persuasive than non-analytical general pleas, are definitely available to the archivist.

W. N. DAVIS, JR., is Chief of Archives of the California State Archives, Sacramento.

# Indexing Student Newspapers

EDWARD C. OETTING

As a VEHICLE for buffoonery, boosterism, radicalism, and conservatism, a college or university's student newspaper has few peers. It is usually an excellent barometer of the views and moods of the student body it serves and the campus it reports. A key primary source for the history of an academic institution, the student newspaper is one of the more heavily used and versatile collections at college and university archives. However, it is often given minimal professional attention, and has not been developed to its full potential as a resource.

Indexing provides for archivists a relatively simple way to promote and facilitate the use of student newspapers. I have found both at the University of North Dakota and at the State University of New York at Albany, where such projects are underway, that given some basic instructions college work-study students can index quickly and accurately.

Archivists devising an indexing training system should first consider the scope of the index. In my experience, it is not necessary to record every name, activity, or incident that occurred on campus. For most archives, indexing will be a long-term project, and avoiding inclusion of too much trivia and detail is essential for maintaining a steady progress. Selective indexing insures that after about a year the archives will have a manageable body of indexed

newspapers, and also helps to keep those working on the project from getting bored or bogged down.

On what, therefore, should an indexer concentrate? If a student newspaper accurately reflects campus life, then an index to that newspaper should contain the activities, individuals, events, and opinions that shape that life. Some important activities and events to index include athletics, student government, building programs, university politics, and social gatherings.

Although student newspapers constitute an important primary resource, it is necessary not to overestimate their historical value. Some information is not important even to the most pedantic scholar or "old grad." Therefore, when indexing the names of individuals, "the big man" theory of history is a good rule of thumb. It is advisable to index only important individuals such as student leaders, faculty, or administrators, and those only when they play a key role in a substantive story. The mere mention of an important individual does not warrant inclusion in the index.

Student opinion is often mercurial and ambiguous; therefore, it is important to index all its manifestations. Opinions are voiced in the editorial section, in regular columns, and in the letters-to-the-editor section which can be a gold mine of student opinion. A complete listing of these three sources should be kept.

Having amassed a large collection of newspaper index cards, how might one best utilize them? As a component and tool in a program to encourage wider and nontraditional uses of archival material, a good student-newspaper index is extremely valuable. At the University of North Dakota, we encouraged the use of the *Dakota Student* index by freshman English composition classes interested in using primary source material. For many of the students, this was a first exposure to archives and primary sources.

Also, an index can be very helpful to a university's public relations or alumni office. Its use facilitates the popular "what was happening in 19___" type of article. To alumni, such an article visibly demonstrates archival accomplishment and can aid the archival acquisitions program. More than an excellent research tool, a student-newspaper index can help illustrate and promote the services offered by college and university archives.

Lastly, such an index is a useful internal tool, particularly as an aid to ready reference and processing. In the ready reference area, it can often serve as the quickest means for answering a question, particularly when the dates and details are somewhat hazy. Essentially, an index to the student newspaper serves as an effective subject index to the history of the college or university. During the processing of archival collections, a good index can easily clear up questions of date, time, place, and importance. It is also an excellent source for obituaries and biographical material on prominent faculty and alumni.

Given the benefits that can accrue through the implementation of a student-newspaper indexing project, let's bring those newspapers out of the closet of benign neglect. It is incumbent upon college and university archivists to utilize the indexes to promote researcher awareness and use of our archives.

EDWARD C. OETTING is the university archivist of the State University of New York at Albany.