# The Pink Elephant Revisited

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ON THE AFTERNOON OF 29 DECEMBER 1961, a German-accented refugee to the United States, an able research assistant, and the state archivist of North Carolina met in the Pink Elephant Tavern in the Harrington Hotel in Washington to agree on the details necessary to administer a grant from the Council on Library Resources, Inc., to the Society of American Archivists for a survey of state archival programs. Ernst Posner, of course, was far more than a refugee; in fact, he had become a major force in the development of archival training and administration in the United States.[1] Mayfield Bray was more than a research assistant; in fact, she was a trusted associate of Ernst's and a substantial contributor to the final report which was published as *American State Archives*. I was involved not as a state archivist but rather in three other capacities: as the outgoing chairman of the Society's Committee on State Records, which had drafted the original proposal; as the compiler of the *Directory of State Archival Agencies 1959* and the *Guide to State and Provincial Archival Agencies 1961*; and as the Society's treasurer who managed the finances for the study.

For a youngster from a tenant farm who had been a practicing archivist for only five years, this was a heady experience (with no allusion to the beer), and our deliberations in the Pink Elephant not only resulted in procedures for the conduct of a project momentous to archivists and records managers generally, but also in a relationship that tremendously influenced my life and which through personal contact and correspondence ended only on 18 April 1980 with the death in Germany of Ernst Posner. (Mayfield died a number of years ago.) It was characteristic of this remarkable man that it was he, at the age of eighty-seven, who had to remind me where our friendship began: "It all started," he wrote from his sick bed, "at the Schellenberg swimming pool way back in 1957, when you took our summer institute."[2]

On an evening in May 1980, Rodney Ross of the National Archives, a friend from John Hope Franklin's "Archival Odyssey"[3] who is preparing for the fall meet-

[1] In some of my writings in the 1960s, I referred to Ernst Posner as the "dean" of American archivists. Under postmark of 28 April 1969, Posner received from the Smithsonian Institution an envelope addressed to him as "Dean of American Archivists." He promptly mailed the envelope to me with this notation written across it: "See what you've done to me!"

[2] Ernst Posner to author, 22 June 1979.

[3] See John Hope Franklin, "Archival Odyssey: Taking Students to the Sources," *American Archivist* 32 (October 1969): 375–81.

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ing of the SAA a paper on Dr. Posner's contributions, joined me in the Pink Elephant for a toast to the memories of Mayfield Bray and Ernst Posner. In their honor, I have retitled my paper "The Pink Elephant Revisited."

The first effective state archival program, in Alabama, preceded by a third of a century the establishment of the National Archives. During the intervening years, several other states, mostly in the South, followed Alabama's lead; and historians and archivists of the states, working particularly through the Public Archives Commission of the American Historical Association, provided a modest but growing body of literature supporting government's assumption of its responsibilities in relation to its documentation. By the time of the establishment of the National Archives in 1934, therefore, there existed a tiny pool of experienced archivists, from among whom Robert D. W. Connor, first secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission, was selected by President Franklin D. Roosevelt as the first Archivist of the United States. Connor drew further from that tiny pool and supplemented his staff with historians who studied principles and practices of the existing state and continental archival programs. Within two years the embryonic Society of American Archivists was formed, and a period of unprecedented archival activity began. After having endured nearly a century and a half of public records neglect at the federal level, the nation exhibited considerable pride in its new National Archives, which in turn provided resources and leadership which shamed some laggard states into archival fermentation.

The proliferation of paper work during and following World War II added a dimension to the problems relating to public records, the necessity of controlling the quantity as well as the quality of records. A number of states, following the lead of the National Archives and Records Service, established modest records management programs, sometimes as an extension of an existing archival agency, sometimes quite independent of the department concerned with older records. Several states previously without any recognizable records program took tenuous steps toward establishing one, and a few states with traditionally strong programs made additional progress.

By 1959, when I published for the SAA's Committee on State Records the *Directory of State Archival Agencies*, fifteen states reported spending more than $50,000 per year on archival and/or records management programs and fourteen reported devoting ten or more employees to these duties. Two years later, nineteen states reported in my *Guide to State and Provincial Archival Agencies* that they were spending more than $50,000 per year and sixteen claimed ten or more staff members devoted to work in archives and records. The front runners were North Carolina and Illinois, followed in the distance by Georgia, Virginia, and Maryland. On the other end of the scale, the *Guide* in 1961 reported essentially no archival program in the states of Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Maine, Missouri, and North Dakota; and four others—Idaho, New Hampshire, Rhode Island, and South Dakota—devoted no more than one employee to archives and records work. Other states with fewer than five employees in the work were Arizona with two; Mississippi, Nevada, Washington, and West Virginia with three; Nebraska and Montana with three and a half; and Iowa, Kentucky, and Vermont with four. One must, of course, take these figures with a grain or two of salt, because the states tended to exaggerate their claims. Thus while about 40 percent of the states claimed archives and records programs of substantial or at least modest strength (measured in 1961 dollars), another 40 percent admitted to virtual archival impotence.

In this paper, I hope to provide at least a few clues to a question that plagued me as chairman of the Committee on State Records nearly two decades ago: What accounted for the willingness of the taxpayers of two states to provide a quarter of a million dollars each (in 1961 dollars) to manage and care for their official records while the taxpayers of twenty other states, some of them no less affluent, almost completely neglected theirs?

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That question had troubled previous chairmen and members of the SAA's Committee on State Records, and during the 1950s the need for accurate data on state archival programs—or the absence thereof—became increasingly evident. Recognizing that its own mail questionnaires provided unreliable and insufficient information for evaluation of these programs, the committee drafted for the SAA Council a proposal for a grant under which an on-site study could be made in each state. In August 1960, the committee formally presented to the secretary, for Council consideration, a proposal for a grant; and on 7 October 1960 the Council approved the submission of an application to the Council on Library Resources, Inc. The CLR was reluctant to make the grant until the director of the study had been selected, so in Washington on 10 April 1961 the position was offered to Ernst Posner as a first step toward obtaining approval of the grant. President Philip M. Hamer revised the proposal and lowered the requested amount, and the grant was announced at the meeting of the Council on 5 October 1961, in Kansas City.

On 1 February 1962, Ernst Posner officially began work on the project. His schedule for the next eighteen months included a series of strenuous field trips that took him to forty-nine states and Puerto Rico. He wrote on 28 February 1963: ". . . just returned from my last extended orbit—nine States and eighteen different overnight accommodations. . . ."[4] Periodically he met with his advisory committee consisting of Morris L. Radoff, chairman, and Christopher Crittenden, David C. Duniway, Olney W. Hill, and Oliver W. Holmes; and on 28 June 1963, he mailed to each head of a state archival agency the draft of his essay on that particular state. Two months later I served with Posner and Oliver Holmes as a subcommittee on the development of standards for state archival programs.

The study was only six months underway when Posner reported to an open meeting of the Committee on State Records that he had arrived at three conclusions: "(1) that archives and records management are essentially one task and should be combined; (2) that in the undeveloped states an archival program cannot be 'sold' alone but should be offered in conjunction with a records management program; and (3) that archival personnel should be paid on a level comparable to that of university personnel and should have some job security."[5]

The resulting report was published by the University of Chicago Press in 1964 as *American State Archives*, described by Lyman H. Butterfield as an "epochal book" in which the author never raised his voice but whose "terse criticisms" lost no impact by "occasionally being understated."[6]

*American State Archives* constituted the first and only systematic review of the history or nonhistory, development or nondevelopment, and status or nonstatus of archival programs or nonprograms of the states of the Union. Within covers a reader found preliminary chapters on the backgrounds, objectives, methods, genesis, and evolution of state archival efforts, and closing chapters on findings and standards. But by far the major body of the book was devoted to an analysis of the archival situation in each of the fifty states and Puerto Rico. These analyses generally ranged from four to six pages and sought to give in capsule form the background and current status of efforts within each state. "Comments" at the end of each section gave the author's specific recommendations.

Posner's study confirmed the general accuracy of my own earlier surveys of state archival and records management programs. In terms of state appropriations for

[4] Posner to Cyrus B. King, 28 February 1963, Records of the Division of Archives and Manuscripts, North Carolina Department of Archives and History, in North Carolina State Archives, Raleigh.
[5] *American Archivist* 26 (January 1963): 109.
[6] *American Archivist* 28 (April 1965): 263–64.

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archives and records management functions, North Carolina and Illinois continued far in the lead, followed distantly by states in this order: Maryland, Delaware, California, Hawaii, South Carolina, Michigan, Colorado, and Georgia. On the other hand, the states of Alaska, Arkansas, Florida, Idaho, Maine, Missouri, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, North Dakota, South Dakota, and West Virginia were without full-time professional archival personnel. The proportional breakdown continued to indicate that ten of the states were conducting archival and/or records management programs of considerable effectiveness while more than half of all states were conducting programs or pieces of programs that at best met minimal standards. The remaining dozen failed to qualify as having a program.

Not a pretty picture. In fact, when read reflectively, *American State Archives* told an uncomplimentary story of archival lethargy or neglect in about three quarters of the states of the Union. The publication should have shocked the nation, aroused officials and historians, and influenced a burst of archival progress in the states. To be sure, the book did stir a few archivists and other state officials into genuine efforts toward improved records programs, but, in the main, *American State Archives* received commendatory reviews and then became a centerpiece on archival bookshelves. That it became a reference book rather than an action document may be explained at least partially by the way that it was conceived by the Committee on State Records and by the personal characteristics of its author.

As I have mentioned previously, the committee had for several years been gathering data on state programs by means of questionnaires, and a revealing series of publications had been issued. It was our assumption, naive in retrospect, that the publicizing of the relative status of state archival efforts would result in a sense of competition among the states and, in fact, would encourage intensified efforts on the part of the archivally retarded states. After all, no one wishes to see his or her state near the bottom rung of a national ladder. On the other hand, members of the committee knew that standards for reporting accomplishments varied from one state to another. Although this was before the advent of professional grantsmanship, there already were a few state archivists skilled at turning a sow's ear into a silk purse; consequently, responses to questionnaires tended to give an unrealistic image of the archival situation in a particular state. It was felt that an on-site inspection, coupled with an objective evaluation of pertinent data, would provide the basis for a reliable and influential published report. That report, it was believed, would furnish a guide "not only to archivists but also for government administrators."[7]

Neither the Committee on State Records nor Posner himself foresaw the difficulty of this task. In retrospect, we can observe two of the complicating factors.

One was the degree to which state archivists and officials controlled the information made available to the director of the study. With Prussian thoroughness, Posner researched available published sources; he was, however, dependent upon state officials for statistical and other unpublished data. Certainly in most states care was taken to feed him data showing archival and records programs in their best light. Furthermore, his on-site inspections were usually controlled by his hosts, both in terms of time allotted to various facets of archival activities and in terms of access to persons with useful information. It was not until I began reviewing my own files in connection with the preparation of this paper that I became aware of the degree to which I may have influenced Ernst's study of North Carolina's program. My diary, for instance, reveals that after being picked up at the airport on Monday afternoon (12 March 1962), he was whisked to my office for a "Long conference," then was taken

[7] *American Archivist* 25 (April 1962): 274.

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to the Confederate House "for fine dinner and talk until 9:30." On Tuesday he visited the Archives Section; then had a two-hour lunch at the home of one of the assistant state archivists, and in the evening attended a cocktail party at the home of another assistant state archivist; and finally was a guest of the staff at a formal dinner at Plantation Inn. On Wednesday morning he was driven to a courthouse in an adjoining county for a discussion with local officials, spent the afternoon at the State Records Center, and visited my home and went out to dinner in the evening. On Thursday, Posner spoke at a full staff meeting, held final conferences, lunched with Chris Crittenden, and in the afternoon departed.[8] My point is that we gave Ernst Posner little time in which really to assess our program, little freedom to poke around, and little opportunity to talk with people who might have viewed the program differently. This experience, Ernst told me, was repeated in many states. In short, hospitality often interfered with his attempt to conduct a critical study of state programs.

A second complicating factor was Posner's approach to the study. A man with firm opinions but gentle ways, Ernst Posner seemed to feel that he was a guest in America. He consciously tried to avoid the stereotype of the ruthless Prussian, he argued less frequently than he reasoned, and his conclusions were expressed less as dictum than as subtle suggestions. Despite his treatment by both the Nazis and one American senator, he was prone to accept in good faith what was told to him, and his own expressions were mild and usually complimentary. He, like the Committee on State Records, too trustingly accepted state archivists' evaluations of their own programs; and he, like the committee, assumed—wrongly, as it turned out—that a gentle nudge, couched in diplomatic terms, would be sufficient to move archivally underdeveloped states to action. Ernst Posner, in other words, was simply too nice a person to wield a sledgehammer.

While *American State Archives* fell short of the shock treatment necessary to jar most states into feverish efforts to remedy generations of archival neglect, it did provide documentation potentially useful in the strengthening of every state's records program; and some states, archivally strong or weak, profitably used this information. But there was no burst of enthusiasm. At the meeting of the SAA in Santa Fe in 1967, a session was titled "Posner Revisited: Recent Advances in State Archival Programs." Paul McCarthy described a false start in Alaska, Frederick Gale reported that in Nevada the State Archives had "started making order out of chaos," and Robert M. Connor of Missouri and Samuel Silsby of Maine described the nation's two newest state archival programs. Silsby, however, contended that the Maine program was an indigenous movement little influenced by the Posner study.[9]

*American State Archives* remained largely a reference tool rather than an action document. It lit only a few archival fires in the 1960s when the report was fresh, and it only seldom was used as kindling in the 1970s when a new generation began replacing men and women whose careers overlapped Posner's splendid years. No one was more disappointed than I over the failure of state archivists to seize upon the opportunity *ASA* provided, and those who at Madison in 1969 heard my substitute for an SAA presidential address (which I deliberately did not write out for publication) may recall my exasperation with the much-talk, little-action characteristic of so many of my colleagues. That exasperation, coupled with wounds inflicted by the General Services Administration's nationwide rumor grapevine and telephone hookup in regard to the Joint Committee on the Status of the National Archives, accounted for my withdrawal from active participation in archival organizations. But, as a Life Mem-

[8] Diary of author, 12–15 March 1962.
[9] *American Archivist* 31 (January 1968): 103–4.

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ber and Fellow of the SAA, I have continued to review the literature; and my travels and research in connection with the book *Local Government Records*[10] led to a renewal of contacts in many states. From what I have read and what I have heard from archivists around the country, my impression is that (with some notable exceptions) the much-talk, little-action characteristic still plagues the state archival scene, and that the number of states with comprehensive archival programs remains painfully small. This is my impression despite a claim in a recent *AHA Newsletter* that in 1979 "all states had active archives and archivists for their public records";[11] for, though most states may have a paper organization, a considerable number of them provide little in the way of services. Certainly of the eight states whose programs I have visited in the past two years, not a single one provides more than a modest level of archival supervision, services, and facilities for both state *and* local governments.

Thus I am back to the question that perplexed me nearly twenty years ago: Why is it that a handful of states are willing to support comprehensive archival and records management programs while many others, some with greater wealth, remain archivally retarded?

The fundamental explanation, of course, lies in the states, some of which have traditionally neglected their records, others of which have from time to time taken tentative steps toward the development of archival programs, or pieces of programs. Those with no history of archival interest or action defy explanation, and I shall not waste time trying to concoct one. However, in those states in which archival responsibility has been placed in the hands of an archivist, librarian, or historian, the blame for failure to develop an adequate program must be borne in large measure by that official. Whoever accepts appointment as the state's chief archival officer assumes the responsibility for convincing the remainder of the citizens, and particularly other officials, that an effective archival program is essential in a modern society. Salesmanship, in the sense of "selling" an archival program, is a first duty of a state archivist. The sad truth is that some promising state programs have stagnated or atrophied because the archivists remained in archival convents rather than putting on the mantles of missionaries. State records programs are successful when the position of state archivist becomes accepted by administrators, legislators, and the public as a normal function of the state, and when the incumbent is recognized as an executive-level officer. This acceptance, this recognition, will not be won at meetings of professional organizations outside the borders of the state; it must be won from the citizens within the state. Little is accomplished when an archivist boasts at national meetings about a program that is unknown to his or her state and local officials and fellow citizens. One test of archival effectiveness is to ask a county or town official about his or her own state archives; another test is to ask a taxi driver, without giving an address, to take you to the state archives. Or, better still, check on the governor's most recent visit to the archives.

There are, nevertheless, some contributing factors in state archival backwardness; and, based upon associational literature, official reports, and comments from state archives personnel around the country, I venture forth with a brief description of three of them. You will think of others.[12]

1. *The diminished supportive role of the National Archives and Records Service*. From the Connor days, the National Archives conceived itself not merely as the monitor of

[10] H. G. Jones, *Local Government Records: An Introduction to Their Management, Preservation, and Use* (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1980).

[11] DeLloyd J. Guth, "History as Epistemology," *AHA Newsletter* 18 (April 1980): 6.

[12] If space permitted, I would discuss at least two additional factors that have in some states adversely affected archival progress. One is the incorporation of state archival and/or records management programs into larger departments headed by political appointees less interested in substantive, profes-

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federal records but also as the leading national resource in terms of archival expertise which it readily shared with the states. It was looked upon as a fountainhead of archival experimentation and information, seldom too busy to share its technical and practical knowledge with state archival staffs. In my day, it was almost axiomatic that a new high-level archivist would go off to the four-week institute taught by Ernst Posner or Ted Schellenberg; it was also axiomatic that a state archivist would have at telephone's reach the division heads and the regional director of the National Archives and Records Service. A. K. Johnson, for instance, was a regular visitor to my department, sometimes simply to talk, sometimes to spend several days working with my staff in developing records management workshops which we then conducted for hundreds of state officials. Some of my experiences in this connection, and the experiences of other state archivists, are recorded in transcriptions of Phil Brooks's oral interviews conducted in the early 1970s.

I hear from state archivists that, with the passing of persons such as Everett O. Alldredge and Theodore R. Schellenberg, the retirement of persons like Herbert E. Angel and A. K. Johnson, and the continued bureaucratization of NARS by GSA, close liaison between state agencies and NARS is not now so evident. If so, that is a pity; for the shared wisdom did not flow entirely one way in the earlier relationships. There was a spirit of mutuality in which each of us learned from the other. Not all archival wisdom had been centralized in Washington.

I suggest that one of the tasks of the new Archivist of the United States will be to restrengthen a spirit of cooperativeness between NARS and the state archival agencies. Certainly there is no need for a centralized archival administration in the United States, and I would oppose any attempt to establish one, but I do recognize the need for the sharing of expertise and information which can benefit both NARS and the state archives.

2. *The relative inattention to state and local government records by professional organizations in recent years*. While the American Records Management Association and Association of Records Executives and Administrators (now merged as the Association of Records Managers and Administrators) were always attuned more to business and federal government records problems than to those of state and local governments, the Society of American Archivists during its first three decades was in the forefront of promotion of state programs. Its Committee on State Records (renamed in 1961 as the Committee on State and Local Records) was prestigious and active, especially in the 1950s and 1960s, and both the annual programs and the *American Archivist* regularly featured state and local records subjects. Because of the leadership of representatives of state archives, the relatively small number of manuscript curators and university archivists in the society tended to ally themselves with state agency personnel to form the "state people" who counterbalanced the "federals," i.e., representatives from the Washington establishments. A "fairness doctrine"—an unwritten understanding that the leadership of the society would alternate between the "federals" and the "state people"—was seldom breached.

Matters relating to the development and problems of state and local programs appear to me to have received less attention in the *American Archivist* and in program

sional accomplishments than in activities leading to streams of press releases, media productions, ribbon cuttings, and cocktail parties. Another is the trend toward "popularizing" history both in the public schools and historical agencies, and the substitution of faddish and arty subjects, including mythology and folklore, that require little or no reference to source materials and scholarship. A friend once explained that "The difference between you historians and us folklorists is that we don't have to worry about the facts." As that explanation implies, history does require more than fun and games. So does education.

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topics in the 1970s. I sense a feeling of alienation from the Society on the part of a disappointing number of "state people" who report an increasing dose of pressure-group advocacy and less attention to fundamental causes of and remedies for public neglect of official records. In the states I hear allegations that the Society has been "taken over" by groups less interested in archival principles and practices than in the promotion of social and political action. If this charge is true, perhaps the SAA is following the example of the American Historical Association, whose recent annual meetings seem to be modeled after the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968.

It may be that the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators now provides for public archivists the opportunities once supplied by the SAA; but if it publishes a journal I do not know about it, and I am unfamiliar with its leadership, energy, and influence. I do, however, commend NASARA for its splendid document, "Principles for State Archives and Records Management Agencies," published in the January 1979 issue of the *American Archivist* (pp. 106–8), to which I would recommend one additional principle: the extension of state authority over county and municipal records in states whose statutes do not already provide it.

I suspect that the diminishing influence of state archivists in the profession is partially accountable for the apparent deterioration of the archival vocabulary and a relaxation of archival principles relating to public records. A measure of maturity in any profession is the clarity of its specialized vocabulary. As one trained in the Jenkinsonian tradition, I rankle when I hear or read cheap, imprecise words, such as "papers," referring to public records (this may be another corruption spread by the long-held Washington myth of personal ownership of records of the presidency); "archive" (without the "s") when referring to an accumulation of anything that seeks academic respectability (only last month I heard a head of an archival agency say that his staff had been busy "archiving records"); and "processing" when referring to such professional tasks as accessioning, arrangement, and description (I saw the word used three times in one eleven-line paragraph in the latest issue of *Prologue*[13]). I also find heresy in the contention that an archivist may create records to promote his or her social or political views that otherwise may not be represented adequately in the official records. I am troubled too by the frequency with which public records, especially county and municipal records, are alienated from official custody by being handed, without adequate legal and physical safeguards, to nongovernmental organizations. And I see grave implications arising from the glut in the graduate history market—a consequence of the historical profession's overspecialization and shortsightedness. I am glad that more and more young historians are available for training in archives and records work, but I am deeply concerned over the proliferation of history department and library school courses—taught by persons with virtually no training or experience in the subject—that purport to train archivists. I wholeheartedly support substantive courses that broaden the perspectives of embryonic historians and librarians in relation to the backgrounds, principles, and practices of archival activity; but the training of archivists is the responsibility of experienced archivists. Incidentally, members of the archival profession, so long looked upon condescendingly by many academic historians, may find amusement and vindication in the latest reinvention of the wheel: "public history."

3. *The increasing temptation to slip through a revolving door on someone else's push—or more particularly, the use of someone else's tax money to accomplish what the beneficiaries refuse to provide for themselves.* Nearly every federal grant program originates with the avowed

[13] "Accessions and Openings," *Prologue* 12 (Spring 1980): 60.

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purpose of assisting the truly needy and meritorious, but each tends for its own perpetuation and growth to become a crutch for the lethargic and crafty. For instance, for years I have been reading grant applications for the National Endowment for the Humanities, and I have been puzzled by the success of applications for make-work projects on faddish subjects and the difficulty of obtaining grants for substantive programs that could, with the incentive of matching funds, soon become fully funded by their sponsoring agencies or organizations. Without for a moment implying that no good has come to archival programs through CETA, the National Endowments for the Arts and Humanities, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and other federal programs, I am suspicious that they have weakened the major influences that will eventually result in strong archival programs: leadership, incentive, and pride in self-reliance.

Prior to the availability of federal grants, state and local programs could be judged in proportion to the success of archivists in enlisting public support. Every state archivist knew, or should have known, that to be successful he or she had to wear, in addition to an archivist's garb, the cloak of a diplomat, a politician, and, most of all, a missionary; for only through building personal and official relationships with members of the executive and legislative branches could he or she win the respect and the funds necessary for the development of an adequate program. The great unevenness of state programs can generally be explained in proportion to the diligence, competence, and effectiveness of state archivists past and present. As a member of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, I want to guard against the commission's becoming a crutch for archivists and other officials who may be more adept at filling out grant applications for someone else's tax money than in proselytizing for archival support among their own constituencies.

Every state has the responsibility, the obligation, to provide an archival and records management program for its own records and to assist local governments, which are creatures of the state, in caring for theirs. Some states long ago accepted that responsibility and incorporated archival and records management activities into the normal functions of government, some have taken modest steps in that direction, others have virtually neglected the responsibility. A study of state archival programs in the United States reveals little relationship between the absence of a strong state archival program and the ability of the citizens to pay for one. Thus, when we speak of the archival "needs" of particular states, we refer not so much to money as to will.

Any federal program designed to assist in correcting archival underdevelopment in the states should begin with an understanding that (a) state and local history, traditions, laws, and politics vary from state to state; (b) states with strong programs have developed them through their own initiative and with their own resources and should not be discriminated against because of their success; and (c) states that have neglected their public records have done so by choice, not for lack of money, with the understanding that inability to pay is not the cause of archival backwardness, we must confront the real culprit: absence or failure of will.

The task of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, then, is one of building incentive. And, if I am correct in asserting that it is the obligation of every state to care for its own records and to assist its local governments to care for theirs, the commission's efforts must be directed toward state governments. It is on this point that I find myself uncomfortable with the present philosophy of the commission which appears to view money as the problem. In my opinion, federal money threatens to exacerbate rather than solve the problem. Federal funds tend to be sought for second, third, or even lower priority purposes, i.e., programs that the recipients do not consider important enough to be fought hard for in their own budgetary process. Interesting results might emerge from a commission rule that re-

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quires an applying agency or institution to submit documentary evidence of the priority given the proposal in its original budget request.

Thus, in present NHPRC policies I see too much emphasis on spreading money around and too little emphasis on providing motivation for the strengthening of state archival programs that can then carry out their responsibilities to state agencies and local governments. I understand, of course, the ways of Washington in seeking to pyramid applications for grants as a means of demonstrating the demand for federal funds; for I served as the first chairman of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers' Policy Group which played that game. But the Policy Group also recognized the necessity of a fair apportionment formula that provided incentive for lagging states while not penalizing energetic states. By developing a grant program administered by each state historic preservation officer,[14] the grant provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 have furnished an effective incentive leading to an active program in each state. The success of that program has been due less to the amount of money available than to the way the funds were used to stimulate the assumption of responsibility by each state.

The NHPRC can, if it chooses, provide a similar incentive for the strengthening of archival programs in the states. To do so, it must adopt a two-pronged approach in its records program, one prong directed toward encouraging state governments to assume their archival responsibilities, the other (and smaller) directed toward assisting projects involving nongovernmental records of truly national significance. Of the present $2 million annual appropriation, I would devote approximately $500,000 to projects involving private papers that clearly transcend local and state interest and, in fact, possess undeniable importance for the nation.

To replace the present scattergun approach of making grants directly to local agencies, I would devote about $1.5 million of the current appropriation to competitive grants to a limited number of states, perhaps from five to ten each year, which submit proposals with great potential for the development or improvement of comprehensive archival programs. Certainly states that assume their obligations to assist local governments in their records problems would receive more favorable consideration than those that do not, since my proposal would prevent the bypassing of state archival agencies and thus eliminate direct grants from Washington to local governments.

I further propose that grants to state archival agencies be made on a direct cost-sharing basis, though I would not insist upon a standard 50 percent ratio. By permitting a sliding scale of from 25 percent upward in direct cost-sharing, the commission could consider special circumstances that might justify greater liberality in some cases. Furthermore, the commission ought to retain the authority to make an occasional grant without even a 25 percent direct cost-sharing requirement, though any such decision should be clearly extraordinary and should be approved unanimously by commission members present and voting.

The crazy quilt of local records attention or inattention will persist so long as the NHPRC and other federal agencies bypass and thus undermine existing state mechanisms or fail to encourage the development of such mechanisms in the archivally retarded states. If local governments can

[14] The designation "state historic preservation officer" was adopted on my motion on 2 February 1973 to replace the former title of "state liaison officer for historic preservation." Facetiously, I said I would rather be a SHPO than a SLOHP. Actually, there was a more compelling reason for the change: all other federal grant programs in each state were under the jurisdiction of a single "state liaison officer" who, it was suspected, might become jealous of another officer with a somewhat similar title. A title change appeared to be little enough price to pay for continued control over the program by the state's chief historical administrator.

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turn to Washington for funds to meet needs the states should be filling, they will have little reason to demand that the states assume their responsibilities. On the other hand, by declining to make grants directly to local governments, the NHPRC can help build powerful pressures that can force the state governments to provide services that both state and local government agencies have a right to expect. After all, legislators are elected locally.

In summary, I believe that the records program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission can become an instrument for strengthening state and local archival programs, but I believe that its present policies are obstructive to that end. Its first need is a change of policy, not more money. On the other hand, if the program is redirected toward the strengthening of state archival programs, it will generate confidence and support even from those who now view it as rewarding failure and discriminating against diligence and success.[15]

In the final analysis, nothing that is done in Washington will, alone, improve the patchwork map of archival programs across the land. The change will be accomplished by state and local officials who are converted by the missionaries of the archival profession and their allies. If I could impress but one message upon every reader, it would be this: *Your greatest contribution as an archivist may not be the quantity and quality of the work that you accomplish in the archives; rather, it may be the degree to which you are successful in persuading the public—and particularly public officials—of the essentiality of your work in a civilized society.*

[15] I suggest also that the membership of NHPRC be divided into two panels for the consideration of grant applications; one for publications, the other for records. I have relatively little interest in the publications program, but a great deal of interest in and knowledge of archival needs. On the other hand, some of my colleagues appear to have superior competence and special interest in documentary publications, but less interest in and understanding of archival problems. A smaller records panel, composed of members with expertise in the subject, could more closely examine grant proposals for records programs and, I believe, make more judicious recommendations in the future. Similarly, a publications panel of eight or nine members could more competently evaluate publications proposals. Of course, to conform to the statutes, the full commission would approve all panel recommendations or, at its discretion, alter them.

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CORRECTION: In the last issue, Summer 1980, in the article by Alan K. Lathrop, "The Provenance and Preservation of Architectural Records," footnote 11 was omitted. On page 327, between footnotes 10 and 12, should have appeared:

[11] "The Management of an Architect's Office," *The American Architect and Building News* 33 (15 August 1891): 98.

Our apologies to the author and to all those who sought the reference in vain. The Editors

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