

Theodore R. Schellenberg: Americanizer and Popularizer

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AS THEORETICIAN, SCHOLAR, AUTHOR of two principal textbooks, lecturer, and teacher, Theodore R. Schellenberg made enduring contributions toward development of a truly American archival profession. Following his death in January 1970, he was eulogized as a "prodigious worker, propelled by that Germanic persistence and thoroughness that leave no source uninvestigated"; an archivist of keen intellect with a "gift of lucid expression"; and as "an archival world leader" who gave "dignity to archival work" and "broke new ground" in archives administration.¹

While these tributes reflect a consensus about Schellenberg the archivist, it is more difficult to characterize him as a person. Tall and broad shouldered, physically impressive, he was a soft-spoken man who conveyed an aura of "quiet power."² Therefore, he inspired awe among his subordinates and the young archivists in his training classes, most of whom initially perceived him as a "remote authority figure."³ Proud almost to arrogance, espe-

cially with peers and superiors, Schellenberg was a man of strong convictions, even prejudices, who seemed to enjoy raising controversial issues that often sparked sharp rejoinders. He was viewed as cold, egotistical, and difficult to get along with; few of his colleagues understood him or felt that they really knew him personally.

Interesting to note, however, is the vastly different perception of him by the archivists, government officials, and students whom he met as archival envoy to other countries. In comments on his visits he is repeatedly referred to as "a relaxed, amiable, and, above all, humorous man" whose "great knowledge and cordial, likeable personality won for him the friendship of those who had an opportunity to meet him."⁴ It is unfortunate that more of his American colleagues did not get to see this side of his personality and, in the words of former Archivist James B. Rhoads, catch "a glimpse of the shy and sensitive man beneath that cool, business-like exterior."⁵

¹"In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg, 1903-1970," *American Archivist* 33 (April 1970): 190-202. "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg" consists of eulogies by seven colleagues; each eulogy has its own title. Hereafter, references to this piece will show the author, the eulogy, and the page number from which the reference comes.

²James B. Rhoads, "An Archivist of Intellect and Industry," *ibid.*, p. 194.

³*Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁴Ian Maclean, "Archival World Leader," p. 197; and Aurelio Tanodi, "Giving Dignity to Archival Work," p. 198; both in "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg."

⁵Rhoads, "An Archivist of Intellect and Industry," in *ibid.*, p. 192.

Some keys to a better understanding of his complex personality might be found in his family background and youthful experiences. Theodore R. (Ted) Schellenberg was born in Harvey County, Kansas, on 24 February 1903, son of Abraham L. and Sarah Schroeder Schellenberg, and grandson of Abraham Schellenberg, an elder of the Mennonite Brethren Church, who emigrated to America from southern Russia in 1879. The family was among the many German Mennonites who settled there in the early nineteenth century. On arriving in the United States, Elder Schellenberg and his family settled in Harvey County.

Young Abraham found the move from Russia to the prairies of the Midwest very exciting, and was soon involved in the hard work that was the lot of farm boys in pioneer days. In his biography of his father, Ted Schellenberg observes that his father's "experiences probably led him to formulate the precept, which he applied later in rearing his own children, that the first duty of a parent is to teach his child to work."⁶ Abraham had considerable intellectual curiosity, and he struggled to obtain a formal education. He read extensively in the German classics; scientific treatises by Bacon and Newton; and works of philosophy, particularly those of Immanuel Kant. Obviously, this reading developed in him a questioning attitude about the religion of his forefathers, and only gradually was he able to reconcile his doubts with his inborn faith. Although received into the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1897, his experiences led him to declare later to his own children that "he who increases knowledge increases sorrow."⁷

Abraham L. Schellenberg bought a farm, married, and began raising a family. His first-born, named, of course, Abraham, died in infancy. The next three chil-

dren were also boys: Henry George, named after the single-tax advocate; Theodore Roosevelt, "after a President who at that time gave promise of making his surname a respectable one"; and Abraham Lincoln. In the words of Ted Schellenberg: "Fortunately none of these names were officially recorded in birth registries, so his children were not forced to live with them."⁸ Doubtless, this explains why he invariably signed his name *T. R. Schellenberg*.

At the General Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church, in 1906, Abraham L. Schellenberg was unanimously elected editor of the church publications, and began the work to which he subsequently devoted most of his life. In 1913 the publishing business was moved to Hillsboro, Kansas, and in 1915 a new building was constructed to house the Mennonite Brethren Publishing House. Ted Schellenberg's characterization of the inhabitants of Hillsboro is perhaps revealing of his own personality. "Their convictions," he noted, "were so strong that, if one were not aware of their sincerity, one would consider them opinionated; and their manners were frank to the point of bluntness." Although there was little room for shades of opinion, he felt that his father "introduced the leaven of humor through his newspapers." The son asserted, however, that in one respect "Editor Schellenberg shared the penchant of his community for absolutism. This was in his search for the truth. To his way of thinking there were no half-truths, for a thing was either true or false, and if it were true it was to be told, no matter how much the truth might hurt."⁹

The World War I period was a difficult one for Editor Schellenberg and his family. From the beginning of the conflict, his newspaper, the *Vorwaerts*, like most German-language newspapers, supported

⁶T. R. Schellenberg, "Editor Abraham L. Schellenberg," reprinted from *Mennonite Life* 9 (January 1954): 5.

⁷Ibid., pp. 6-7.

⁸Ibid., p. 8.

⁹Ibid., p. 9.

Germany; and what it published seemed to contravene the Allied propaganda about German atrocities. The American Mennonites were pacifists, however; so they faced a dilemma of conscience in directly helping the Fatherland. Schellenberg suggested that they donate money to the German Red Cross and other relief programs. By December 1914 his weekly paper had received over \$1,346 in contributions.¹⁰

In the presidential election of 1916, Schellenberg, like many of his fellow-Progressives, endorsed the GOP candidates. Before the election, however, Schellenberg changed his mind. He finally endorsed Wilson; perhaps, according to his son, on a "rather naïve assumption" that he would continue to keep America out of war. In any event, Schellenberg's outspoken opposition to American involvement in the conflict "led to his being hooted on the streets as a 'yellow-back' and 'slacker'."¹¹

The American declaration of war left most German-language newspapers in a difficult position. Although Editor Schellenberg virtually ceased to write editorials about the war, he was eventually reported to a federal investigative agency as disloyal. According to his accuser, he was "radically pro-German and always has been making light of the government. . . . Some of his utterances come very near inciting riot." After an investigation, Schellenberg was ordered to "file with the local postmaster an English, as well as a German, version of every item in his papers that pertained to public affairs." To Schellenberg this procedure "was but a minor vexation" and, notes his son, had the "salutary effect" of making his father "thoroughly bi-lingual, so that he wrote and spoke English and German with equal

fluency."¹² These wartime experiences, however, were traumatic for teen-age Theodore, and left bitter memories and psychological scars that apparently never completely healed.

In 1919, unhappy with government policies and "petty spite" within the community, Schellenberg resigned his job and moved his family to a farm in Littlefield, Texas, where they remained until 1922, when, in response to "the overwhelming preference of the church membership . . . and upon petition of the Hillsboro businessmen," he again became editor of the church publications. The next seven years were rewarding, for during this period he was a community leader and his publishing business flourished.¹³

It was during these prosperous years of the twenties that Theodore R. Schellenberg went to the University of Kansas, from which he received his A.B. degree in 1928 and his M.A. in 1930. A Phi Beta Kappa, he then did graduate work in history at the University of Pennsylvania, where he studied under distinguished scholars and further developed his keen interest in historical method. Shortly after completing work for his doctorate, in 1934, Schellenberg was fortunate to be appointed Executive Secretary of the Joint Committee on Materials for Research, of the American Council of Learned Societies and the Social Science Research Council.¹⁴ Schellenberg worked closely with Robert C. Binkley of Western Reserve University, chairman of the Joint Committee and a pioneer in the study of documentary publication devices; and with Vernon D. Tate, who in 1935 was appointed chief of the National Archives Division of Photographic Reproduction and Research. Also, Schellenberg collabo-

¹⁰Gregory J. Stucky, "Fighting Against War: The Mennonite *Vorwaerts* from 1914 to 1919," *Kansas Historical Quarterly* 38 (Summer 1972): 170–71.

¹¹T. R. Schellenberg, "Editor," p. 9.

¹²*Ibid.*, p. 10.

¹³*Ibid.*, pp. 10–11.

¹⁴Lester J. Cappon, "Prodigious Worker and Archival Envoy," p. 190, in "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg," Biographical Statement, Theodore R. Schellenberg Papers, Kansas State Historical Society (hereafter cited as Schellenberg Papers).

rated in preparation of the Joint Committee's prestigious and influential report on *Methods of Reproducing Research Materials*, published in 1935, a volume that was to have significant impact on the operations of the National Archives.¹⁵

The transition from rural Mennonite Kansas to such an assignment in New Deal Washington, D.C., must have been difficult for Schellenberg; but he apparently took it all in stride. He was active in the committee's operations and was interested in tentative plans for a national survey of state and local archives. When these plans died with the passage of the Federal Emergency Relief Act of 1934, he was one of the first to advocate a national archives survey, particularly if the Depression became more serious.¹⁶

Schellenberg was trying, of course, to find permanent professional employment, and he corresponded with Vernon Tate, Philip C. Brooks, and others, especially at the National Park Service and the National Archives.¹⁷ In 1935, after a few months as a National Park Service historian, Schellenberg received his long-awaited appointment to the staff of the National Archives. There he joined the group of young and able scholars known as Deputy Examiners, who were busily engaged in a massive survey of the records of Washington executive agencies.

He worked in this capacity for several years, although he took leave in 1936 to serve for a time as Associate National Director of the newly established Survey of Federal Archives, a project headed by Philip M. Hamer and sponsored by the National Archives. In 1938, as part of a major reorganization of the National Archives that gave the custodial divisions greater prestige and responsibility, Schel-

lenberg was designated chief of the Division of Agriculture Department Archives, his first important administrative position in the National Archives. The assignment enabled him to make an initial contribution to what was to be his life-long concern: the development, systematization, and standardization of archival principles and techniques. Schellenberg's first paper, entitled *European Archival Practices in Arranging Records* (National Archives Staff Information Circular No. 5, July 1939), "cleared the ground," in the words of Ernst Posner, "for his future constructive efforts by pointing out that European experience has only limited applicability to the processing of records in this country."¹⁸ From the beginning of his archival career, Schellenberg seemed to realize that American archivists must attempt to develop principles and techniques peculiarly applicable to modern archives, which would enable American archivists to deal with records *en masse*. He knew that the overwhelming volume of documentation generated by government agencies must be reduced to be useable. It is not surprising, therefore, that Schellenberg played a leading role in developing procedures for the effective disposition of records and that the first records disposal schedules prepared in the National Archives emanated from his division.

In 1945, at the end of World War II, he left the National Archives to serve for three years as Records Officer at the Office of Price Administration. His experience there undoubtedly sharpened his awareness of the problems inherent in managing and appraising the huge quantities of records being produced by the government, and increased his determination to help solve the problems. It was

¹⁵Donald R. McCoy, *The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), p. 90; Edward F. Barrese, "The Historical Records Survey: A Nation Acts to Save Its Memory" (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1980), pp. 17-23.

¹⁶Barrese, "The Historical Records Survey," p. 23.

¹⁷Tate to Schellenberg, 17 January and 8 March 1935; Brooks to Schellenberg, 7 February 1935. Professional Correspondence, Schellenberg Papers.

¹⁸Ernst Posner, "He Broke New Ground," p. 195, in "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg."

not by chance that Schellenberg's first major professional publication, after he returned to the National Archives in 1948 as Program Adviser to the Archivist, was entitled *Disposition of Federal Records: How to Develop an Effective Program for the Preservation and Disposal of Federal Records* (Washington, 1949), followed in 1956 by the widely acclaimed NA Bulletin, *The Appraisal of Modern Public Records*.¹⁹

Schellenberg returned to the National Archives during a period of change, even turmoil. In 1948, Solon J. Buck retired as Archivist of the United States and was succeeded by Wayne C. Grover; on 1 July 1949, the National Archives became part of the new General Services Administration (GSA). By January 1950, the internal structure of the National Archives was reorganized. Now called the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), it was divided into two principal units: the National Archives Division, and the Records Management Division. Schellenberg was selected to head the National Archives Division, as Director of Archival Management.²⁰ The position, however, was rather less than it seemed.

Although he had performed outstandingly in a variety of jobs, Schellenberg's return to the National Archives in 1948 was not greeted with unalloyed enthusiasm by either top management or his peers. Grover and Robert H. Bahmer, Assistant Archivist, felt that he had considerable ability and much energy, but that it was necessary to control him to "keep him on the track" they wanted the institution to follow. So instead of heading a records division, he was brought back initially as Program Adviser to the Archivist, a staff position. It was not until two

years later that he was designated Director of Archival Management, the counterpart of Herbert E. Angel as head of Records Management. Even then the title implied rightly, according to Bahmer, that the Archivist "didn't want him to have full authority over the archivists who were heads of records divisions."²¹ This was intended in part to placate several division directors who felt that they should continue to report directly to the Archivist of the United States.²²

In view of these circumstances, it is perhaps not surprising that the eleven years, 1950–61, Schellenberg spent as institutional head of the National Archives (heading the Office of the National Archives), were at once the most productive, rewarding, and frustrating years of his professional career. As Director of Archival Management he faced myriad problems, particularly with regard to space, professional standards, and staffing. He felt that his first task was to devise "administrative policies and procedures clearly and simply set forth in manual form . . . and clearly defined technical and professional procedures set forth in a series of Staff Information Circulars for the guidance and instruction of the staff." Only in this way would it be possible to achieve the division's objectives "progressively and systematically."²³ It is probable that the serious problems he faced as an administrator reinforced Schellenberg's already deep interest in improving archival methods and techniques, and in establishing standards for the performance of basic archival functions, especially in the areas of appraisal, arrangement, and description. In any event, he threw himself into the task at hand with characteristic energy, and the results were edifying.

¹⁹*The Appraisal of Modern Public Records* (Bulletin of the National Archives, No. 8, Washington, 1956), 46 pp.

²⁰Official Circular 50–33, March 31, 1950, Central Files 12.1, Record Group 64, Records of the National Archives and Records Service. Hereafter cited as RG 64.

²¹Robert H. Bahmer, Oral History Transcript, May 8, 1973, p. 6, National Archives Oral History Project, RG 64.

²²Oliver W. Holmes, Oral History Transcript, July 10, 1973, pp. 49–50, RG 64.

²³"Statement made in 1950 in defense of my plans of administering the National Archives," Staff member, National Archives, Analytical Reports. Schellenberg Papers.

Thus, in his Report on Archival Developments for Fiscal Year 1952, Schellenberg was able to cite the issuance of Staff Information Papers on *The Preparation of Records for Publication on Microfilm* and *Principles of Arrangement*, as well as completion of work on *The National Archives Handbook of Procedures*, published later in 1952. He noted, however, that much was needed to clarify basic thinking regarding two phases of National Archives work—namely, appraisal of records, and their analysis and description in finding aids “that go beyond those now being produced.”²⁴

Staffing was, however, Schellenberg's most pressing problem. Reduced position authorizations for the National Archives, in part caused by government-wide economy drives, coupled with difficulty in recruiting and retaining qualified professionals, resulted in a deteriorating situation. Many archivists found it difficult “to work together and with GSA,” while others felt there were few chances for advancement in the archival profession because records management and other new programs were being developed at the expense of the National Archives.²⁵

In an effort to deal with these problems and to upgrade the efficiency and competence of his staff, Schellenberg, with Bahmer's strong backing, decided to institute an intensive in-service training and promotion program. Training had, of course, always been an important objective of the National Archives; and, indeed, the first archival science course given in the United States was taught by Solon J. Buck at Columbia University in academic year 1938–39.²⁶ Many National Archives staff

members enrolled in archives courses offered at outside institutions. It was clear, however, by the time Schellenberg became Director of Archival Management, that more effective and intensive training was necessary. The groundwork was laid by Schellenberg and his assistant, G. Philip Bauer, in drafting standards for the classification of professional positions and preparing uniform job descriptions. The actual training program, begun in 1953, provided that all GS-5 archivist positions were merely training jobs and that the basic grade for fully qualified, professional archivists would henceforth be grade GS-7. All GS-5 archivists during their first year were to receive an in-house course of training in archival theory and practice and a series of “fairly exacting tests.” Those who passed, and performed their regular duties satisfactorily, were promoted to GS-7 at the end of the year as vacancies occurred. Those with Civil Service status who failed were reassigned to GS-5 sub-professional positions.²⁷

Schellenberg was intensely interested in every aspect of this training program, and he participated in its development by lecturing and by supervising the preparation of extensive reading materials. This experience undoubtedly heightened his already strong conviction that American archivist trainees were handicapped by the “paucity of good literature dealing with problems that arise most often in the National Archives,” and that the British and Dutch manuals were “not wholly applicable” and failed to meet our needs.²⁸ An opportunity to contribute significantly to the solution of this problem came the following year when he undertook the first of two

²⁴“Report on Archival Developments by Director of Archival Management, for Fiscal Year 1952.” Quarterly and Annual Reports, RG 64.

²⁵McCoy, *The National Archives*, pp. 259–60; Schellenberg to Grover, 5 September 1956, pp. 2–7. Staff member, National Archives. Schellenberg Papers.

²⁶Oliver W. Holmes, “Statement for Civil Service Committee of Names of National Archives Employees Who Have Accepted Pay from Outside Sources for Serving as Instructors in Archival Science,” Central Files, 77 Training-General. RG 64.

²⁷G. Philip Bauer, “Recruitment, Training and Promotion in the National Archives,” *American Archivist* 18 (October 1955): 291–306.

²⁸*Ibid.*, p. 304.

important ventures abroad as an archival envoy.

Throughout the 1940s, the National Archives was increasingly interested in the idea of international cooperation in archival affairs, but obviously little could be accomplished until the war ended. Beginning in 1946, the National Archives became involved in a variety of international projects, including the establishment of an archives for the United Nations and the founding of the International Council on Archives, which held its First International Congress of Archivists, in Paris in August 1950. Meanwhile, archivists from all over the world, attracted by the American archival education offered under Ernst Posner's supervision at American University, and the technically advanced operations of the National Archives, began to visit the agency in ever increasing numbers and to request assistance in handling archival problems.²⁹

The Australians had long been interested in developing their own archival system; in response to their request, Schellenberg was selected to visit Australia to lecture on various archival topics. Supported by a Fulbright grant, he arrived in Australia in 1954, accompanied by his wife, Alma, and spent almost half a year giving lectures and holding seminars for archivists, librarians, and other interested persons. He visited Tasmania, Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria, and New South Wales, making his services available as generously as possible to the state archival authorities and senior public officials concerned with records management.³⁰ In addition, he somehow found time to give addresses to quasi-governmental and civic groups, and even to make a short visit to New Zealand. Schellen-

berg's was a whirlwind, virtuoso performance that left him tired "physically, mentally, and every other way." He felt at ease in Australia and generally liked the people, whom he described as open-minded and "a fine lot." He also liked the countryside, the climate, and Australian beer, but confessed, in a letter to a friend, that "like Greta Garbo, I want to go home."³¹

Schellenberg's visit was widely acclaimed, but its greatest significance may be that during his stay Schellenberg decided to incorporate the substance of his notes and statements in a book on archival administration that might replace Hilary Jenkinson's *Manual of Archive Administration* as the authoritative work on the subject in the English language. His strong feelings in this regard were revealed in a letter to a friend in July 1954, in which he declared: "In my professional work I'm tired of having an old fossil cited to me as an authority in archival matters. I refer to Sir Hilary Jenkinson, former Deputy Keeper of Records at the British Public Record Office, who wrote a book that is not only unreadable but that has given the Australians a wrong start in their archival work."³² He returned to Washington in late 1954; he completed his textbook the following year, and it was published in 1956 in Australia and the United States under the title, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*.³³ Immediately acclaimed by such distinguished reviewers as Ernst Posner and Waldo G. Leland, the book was translated into Spanish, Hebrew, and German. In 1957, Schellenberg received a meritorious service award from the General Services Administration "for developing archival methods and techniques especially suited to the needs of American archivists, and embodying them in the

²⁹McCoy, *The National Archives*, pp. 171–78.

³⁰H. L. White to G. G. Rossiter, 18 November 1954, p. 2. Professional Correspondence, Schellenberg Papers.

³¹T. R. Schellenberg to Albert C. Schwarting, 7 July 1954. Personal Letters File, Schellenberg Papers.

³²Ibid.

³³T. R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Melbourne: F. W. Cheshire, 1956; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

first comprehensive textbook thus far written in the United States."³⁴

Shortly after his return from Australia, Schellenberg again became heavily involved in development of the archival instruction program that he had initiated in 1953. He planned for GS-7's an advanced, two-semester course which was labeled as an American University course and could be taken for academic credit by students enrolled at the university. Given during regular working hours, it paralleled the evening course taught by Ernst Posner. Schellenberg also organized a series, begun in September 1955, of seminar conferences for senior archivists. Beginning in 1957, he served for several years as director of the Summer Institute in the Administration and Preservation of Archives, sponsored jointly by the National Archives, the Library of Congress, the Maryland Hall of Records, and the American University. Finally, in the late 1950s his training efforts were extended to professional-level employees working in the records centers. Although Herbert Angel and his deputy, Everett Alldredge, had attempted for several years to provide in-service records management training to these employees, Angel and Alldredge believed that some training in archival administration was also desirable. Thus, in 1958 and 1959 Schellenberg visited the centers and nearby institutions all over the United States, giving intensive three-day courses in various aspects of archives administration. Although intended primarily for records center personnel, the course was opened to non-federal archivists, librarians, historians, and manuscript curators,

who attended in large numbers. The tour was another resounding success for the National Archives theoretician-in-charge.³⁵

The Latin-American countries had always been of special interest to American archivists, and it was in Latin America that Schellenberg's most intensive work as an archival envoy focused. In 1960 he accepted an invitation from the Archivist of Brazil to visit that country, study the archival situation, and recommend improvements. However, his visit grew into a three-month tour, as part of the International Educational Exchange Program of the Department of State. During this period, too, Schellenberg chaired the *ad hoc* committee that planned an Inter-American Archival Seminar which, in turn, led to the formation of an Inter-American Technical Council on Archives. Organized and directed by Schellenberg, it represented the culmination of his efforts to modernize Latin-American archives and to increase the professionalism of their staffs.³⁶

Schellenberg's many writing and teaching activities, particularly those abroad, further enhanced his growing reputation as a world archival leader, and his achievements undoubtedly added to the national and international prestige of NARS. It must be said, however, that they also contributed heavily to the ever increasing frustrations he experienced as the institutional head of the National Archives and to a rapidly developing estrangement between him and his superiors, the Archivist of the United States and his deputy.

Personality conflicts, of course, contributed. Bahmer and Grover felt that Schel-

³⁴Wayne C. Grover to Chairman, Incentive Awards Committee, 14 May 1957. Day File, Grover Papers. RG 200, National Archives.

³⁵For detailed information re Schellenberg's archival training program, see: Bauer, "Recruitment, Training and Promotion," p. 304; McCoy, *The National Archives*, p. 286; Grover to Regional Directors, 25 April 1958, Day File, Grover Papers, RG 200; Records Management Office, Numbered Memoranda, NR 58-42, 25 April 1958, RG 64; and Schellenberg to Grover, "Archival Instruction at Federal Records Centers," 22 May 1959, Schellenberg Papers.

³⁶For information re Schellenberg's Latin-American activities, see: *American Archivist* 23 (October 1960): 465; Planning and Control Case No. 060-131, 062-131, RG 64; George S. Ulibarri, "The Inter-American Technical Council on Archives," *American Archivist* 27 (January 1964): 73-80; McCoy, *The National Archives*, pp. 183-84.

lenberg was unhappy for reasons they were never able to fathom, and that he was a “prima donna who tended to sulk if he didn’t get his way.”³⁷ Schellenberg, on the other hand, believed that his many contributions to NARS were unappreciated and had not been properly recognized by top management. In early January 1956 he demanded that his title be changed from Director of Archival Management to Director of the National Archives, citing the former title as “meaningless” and a source of frequent embarrassment while he was a Fulbright lecturer abroad.³⁸ When Grover adamantly opposed the change, Schellenberg was described as “wrathful.”³⁹ He achieved his goal, however, in November 1956 when, as part of an internal reorganization, he became Assistant Archivist for the National Archives.⁴⁰

The basic cause of the growing animosity between the men stemmed from strong differences of opinion about the operation of the National Archives. Grover believed that Schellenberg gave too much attention to his teaching and writing activities and that he should become personally more involved in the administration of the National Archives. Schellenberg complained that Grover did not keep him informed of major policies or problems, that Grover encouraged senior staff members to come directly to him with their problems, and that he had not delegated to Schellenberg “any real authority for the administration of the institution.”⁴¹ Furthermore, he believed that the Records Management Division was receiving preferential treatment, particularly in financial allocations, and that the programs of that division and the National Archives Divi-

sion were being judged by double standards. In his diary Schellenberg defended his actions, stating that he had given so much attention to writing and teaching primarily because Grover insisted upon running the National Archives himself. In any case, he concluded: “I do not believe it would be possible for me to satisfy Grover in my administration of the National Archives, nor in my public relations activities, nor even in the production of professional literature.”⁴²

There is little official documentation of the deteriorating relations between Schellenberg and Grover, but the diary entries show that the warfare became increasingly bitter. This is described in considerable detail in Donald R. McCoy’s book, *The National Archives: America’s Ministry of Documents, 1934–1968*,⁴³ and it is unnecessary and perhaps inappropriate to do more here than indicate the dimensions of the battle. The sharpest conflicts were waged, between 1958 and 1960, over the Grover and Bahmer proposal that the National Archives be reorganized on a functional basis, and, in August 1961, when the Archivist established an Accessioning Policies Review Board to “review past accessioning policies and actions” and to formulate “more detailed policies and standards governing records accepted for deposit in the National Archives.”⁴⁴

Schellenberg held that “archivists should be subject-matter specialists capable of performing all archival functions on a given body of records.” He viewed the proposed reorganization of the National Archives as “a big step backward” that “would create temporary anarchy, and would render the institution sterile from a scholarly point of view.”⁴⁵ Apparently

³⁷Robert H. Bahmer, Oral History Transcript, 8 May 1973, p. 6. RG 64.

³⁸Schellenberg diary, 5 January 1956, p. 1. Schellenberg Papers. Hereafter cited as Schellenberg diary.

³⁹Ibid., pp. 2–3; Bahmer, oral history transcript, 8 May 1973, p. 7.

⁴⁰McCoy, *The National Archives*, p. 280; *American Archivist* 20 (April 1957): 179.

⁴¹Schellenberg diary, 28 February 1957.

⁴²Ibid. See also the diary entries for 5 and 6 January 1956.

⁴³McCoy, *The National Archives*, pp. 319–24.

⁴⁴Planning and Control Case 062–102, RG 64; GSA Order NAR 5420.2, 28 August 1961.

⁴⁵Schellenberg diary, 10 March 1958 and 19 January 1962.

however, it was Schellenberg's bitter complaint about the establishment of the Accessioning Policies Review Board that provided the proverbial last straw. He denounced the new board as "unnecessary and highly inappropriate." Further, he was angered by the appointment of Herman Kahn, whom he associated with presidential libraries, as head of the board. He regarded Kahn's assignment as "a derogation of my authority, as well as a personal affront, as I believe it was intended to be."⁴⁶

It was perhaps Schellenberg's tendency almost invariably to personalize the conflict, that sealed his fate. Both Grover and Bahmer were essentially fair-minded people, but they became convinced that Schellenberg was too controversial and too divisive to continue functioning effectively as Assistant Archivist for the National Archives. Therefore, they carefully worked out for NARS a reorganization plan that would result in Schellenberg's reassignment and enable them to attain their joint goals of functionalism and increased attention to appraisal, which Grover had long considered "by all odds our most difficult problem."⁴⁷

In mid-December, Grover and Bahmer informed Schellenberg of their intention to reorganize NARS along functional lines effective 1 January 1962. He was told that his position had been abolished and that the Office of the National Archives was to be divided into an Office of Military Archives, an Office of Civil Archives, and a new Office of Records Appraisal, each headed by an Assistant Archivist who would rank with the head of the Office of Records Management. G. Philip Bauer, Schellenberg's long-time assistant, and Herman Kahn were to head up Military and Civil Archives, respectively. Schellenberg was offered the Office of Records Appraisal post.⁴⁸

Schellenberg was understandably stunned by the news, since he had not been drawn into any of the discussions about the reorganization. He observed to Grover that it involved quite a comedown for him, and inquired about the possibility of retiring. He was assured, however, that they did not wish his retirement and that his proposed new job was an important and difficult one. Schellenberg's diary shows that his "immediate reactions to the organizational changes were those of utter consternation and despair." He was particularly hurt by the implication that his intensive efforts "in developing instructional and professional literature" were of "no consequence," and by Grover's orders that his teaching activities were to be terminated summarily. Although he viewed the reorganization plan as basically a compound of personal vindictiveness and favoritism with political overtones, he admitted that it included some valid administrative elements and that something must be done to improve records schedules, which he regarded as "practically worthless" in identifying records of research value. He therefore informed Grover that he would accept the job and do the best he could with it.⁴⁹

Having made this decision, Schellenberg characteristically sublimated his personal bitterness to the demands of the job, and, in the two years that elapsed before his retirement, threw all his energy into studying disposal procedures and analyzing methods that might improve disposal and accessioning by the National Archives.⁵⁰ The result was successful implementation of a new and positive approach to records appraisal, based on identification of the permanently valuable agency documentation that should be retained, rather than on the conventional negative approach of focusing attention on agency lists and schedules of records

⁴⁶Ibid., 14 August 1961.

⁴⁷Grover to Deputy Archivist, Office of the National Archives, and Office of Records Management, 10 November 1958. Day File, Grover Papers. RG 200.

⁴⁸Schellenberg diary, 15 and 20 December 1961; *American Archivist* 25 (April 1962): 277-78.

⁴⁹Schellenberg diary, 15 and 19 December 1961.

⁵⁰Meyer H. Fishbein, interview, 5 August 1980.

proposed for destruction. This change in emphasis was an imaginative and significant development in the appraisal of modern public records, and a fitting capstone to Schellenberg's distinguished career as an archival theoretician.

Schellenberg continued to believe, however, that his reassignment was a "punitive measure" designed to destroy him professionally by removing him from the mainstream of "professional archival activities and contacts."⁵¹ Consequently, his retirement in December 1963 was tinged with deep bitterness toward the staff of the National Archives, especially top management, and the conviction that his many contributions to NARS had not been appreciated—a feeling that the passage of time did not assuage.

The six years that elapsed between his retirement and his death in January 1970 were, however, busy and productive, and, on the whole, seemed to bring Schellenberg a considerable measure of professional and personal satisfaction. In great demand as a teacher and lecturer, his advice was constantly sought by archivists, manuscript curators, historians, and others at home and abroad. In a mere six-year period he taught courses in archives administration at a number of universities; published seven professional papers; gave two important papers at the First Caribbean Archives Conference, and completed work on his second full-scale textbook, the controversial *The Management of Archives*, published by Columbia University Press in 1965.⁵²

This book was really the outgrowth of his philosophical conviction that the "principles and techniques now applied to pub-

lic records may be applied also, with some modification, to private records, especially to private manuscript material of recent origin, much of which has the organic character of archival material."⁵³ Although not everyone agreed with this assumption, it was really Schellenberg's observations about archival training that sparked heated controversy. His thesis, developed at some length in *The Management of Archives*, is that "Library schools are the proper places in which to provide archival training, for they reach the most important class of record custodians, i.e., the librarians themselves."⁵⁴ Furthermore, he contended, such courses "can be given more systematically" in library schools, "which are concerned with methodological training."⁵⁵

During the 1966 annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, at Atlanta, this subject was further explored at a session on "Different Approaches to Archival Training." In excellent papers presented by H. G. Jones, State Archivist of North Carolina, and Schellenberg, the issues involved in archival training were thoroughly reviewed and debated, followed by a lengthy discussion that "was halted only when it became necessary to vacate the room."⁵⁶ The discussion, it might be added, continues still.

In addition to these professional activities, Schellenberg somehow found time to carry on extensive correspondence on a variety of subjects, ranging from step-by-step instructions to a lay archivist on how to arrange a small collection of manuscript materials, to an exchange of letters with Julian P. Boyd and H. G. Jones regarding the independence issue, to the bitter debate in 1968 over the *Report* of the joint

⁵¹Schellenberg diary, 4 January 1963.

⁵²George S. Ulibarri, "Bibliography of Selected Writings of Theodore R. Schellenberg," p. 201, and Clinton V. Black, "The Complete Archivist," pp. 199–200; both in "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg." Professional Correspondence, 1963–68, Schellenberg Papers.

⁵³T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965), p. ix.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 70.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. ix.

⁵⁶"News Notes: Society of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 30 (January 1967): 205–6; H. G. Jones, "Archival Training in American Universities, 1938–68," *American Archivist* 31 (April 1968): 135–54; T. R. Schellenberg, "Archival Training in Library Schools," *ibid.*: 155–65.

committee appointed by the AHA, the OAH, and the SAA to investigate the status of the National Archives in the federal government.⁵⁷ Schellenberg strongly supported most of the basic findings of the *Report* and in March 1968, at the suggestion of H. G. Jones, he prepared a candid, 13-page "Analysis of Developments Within the National Archives and Records Service," incorporating his views on the subject and his comments on the rebuttal report prepared by NARS.⁵⁸ His correspondence further reveals, not surprisingly, that Schellenberg, with his challenging intellect and passion for work, was planning several additional professional undertakings, including a possible collaboration with Everett Alldredge on a book on records management.⁵⁹

It is not difficult to assess the professional impact of Ted Schellenberg's career and achievements, for most reasonably objective observers will agree with Ernst Posner that "he broke new ground" in many areas of archival administration—as a theorist, writer, teacher, and archival envoy.⁶⁰

In the early years of the National Archives the principles and techniques of the archival profession were not well defined, and little guidance was available to the staff on doing its work. Gradually, however, the National Archives methodology evolved. Schellenberg felt that the greatest progress in the development of methodology was made in the 1940s "when the scheduling procedure, the finding aid program, and criteria for the appraisal of records were developed," and the record group and inventory concepts were introduced as operating devices to

ensure adequate initial control of National Archives holdings and to facilitate records description. Of course, the National Archives did not invent finding aids or even the record group concept, which was based on the French idea of *fonds*. The staff did build on European experience that was relevant, but it went on to develop new archival standards and a more truly American archival profession. Thus, as Schellenberg noted: "It is difficult to attribute to any one archivist major accomplishments in the development of archival principles and techniques, for one archivist built on the contributions of his predecessors."⁶¹ Members of the Finding Mediums Committee, including Solon J. Buck, Oliver Holmes, and others, made major contributions to the development of the finding aids program, as did Schellenberg. Progress in developing the microfilm publication program, and several other aspects of archival operations, may also be attributed in part to the collective thinking of the senior staff members; but it was Schellenberg who had the unusual ability to analyze complex archival problems, to develop and systematize archival doctrine, and to express it clearly and logically.

In the difficult area of records appraisal, moreover, Schellenberg made significant and unique contributions as an archival theoretician. That he fully understood the situation faced by the American archivist-records manager trying to cope with the mass production of modern records, is clearly evidenced in his widely acclaimed bulletin on *The Appraisal of Modern Records*, published in 1956. This detailed exposition of the principles of appraisal, together

⁵⁷T. R. Schellenberg to James J. Kiepper, 27 July 1967; Schellenberg to Julian P. Boyd, 16 February 1968; Boyd to Schellenberg, 21 February 1968; H. G. Jones to Schellenberg, 20 February 1968; Schellenberg to Jones, 27 March 1968. Professional Correspondence, Schellenberg Papers.

⁵⁸T. R. Schellenberg, "Analysis of Developments Within the National Archives and Records Service." Professional Correspondence, Schellenberg Papers, 27 March 1968.

⁵⁹T. R. Schellenberg to Everett O. Alldredge, 8 February 1968; Alldredge to Schellenberg, 15 February 1968.

⁶⁰Ernst Posner, "He Broke New Ground," pp. 195–96, in "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg."

⁶¹Schellenberg, "Analysis of Developments," p. 9.

with the statement on "Appraisal Standards," so admirably defined in *Modern Archives*,⁶² comprise an invaluable legacy to archival theory and to the practicing archivist. Nor should one forget his work in helping to develop the procedures followed in the U.S. government in scheduling records for disposition, particularly in developing and implementing the new identification of permanently valuable documentation.

As contributor to archival literature and as a teacher, Schellenberg's main objective was to systematize and standardize archival principles and techniques. In the words of Ernst Posner, *Modern Archives* "brought the objectives and techniques of the management of current records within the purview of the archivist, in contrast to the previous attitude that their genesis and management in the agencies were not his concern."⁶³ In advocating extension to private records of the principles and techniques now applied to public records, Schellenberg also broke new ground in *The Management of Archives*. Both works were designed to serve as academic textbooks, for he felt strongly that archival methodology must be "clearly and fully defined" before "it can be taught effectively in training courses."⁶⁴ Imbued with these convictions, Schellenberg taught with great authority and had a low tolerance level for students who failed to meet his rigorous standards of professionalism.

When, in his later years, he advocated archival training in library schools because, unlike university history departments, they are "concerned with methodological training," he contended that this would "not subordinate the archival profession to the library profession." "If properly taught," he wrote a former colleague, "such courses will clearly differentiate between the tech-

niques of the archivist and the librarian, and will actually result in the development of a professional knowledge of techniques—which is now lacking among most manuscript curators and archivists." He never changed his life-long conviction that the well-trained archivist should be well grounded in history, and for most positions should have an advanced degree in the social sciences.⁶⁵

The impact of Schellenberg's activities as an archival envoy, and his influence in the countries he visited as a scholar and teacher, were tremendous and have proved to be enduring. The interest generated in Australia by Schellenberg's seminars and lectures not only led to the establishment of new archival positions and to the general adoption of American rationale and techniques, but gave impetus to the movement for archival reform.

Schellenberg's archival activities in Latin America were no less rewarding, culminating in the 1961 meeting of the First Inter-American Archival Seminar and in the subsequent creation of the Inter-American Technical Council on Archives, to continue the work begun in the seminar "and to seek ways and means of implementing the program agreed upon for the improvement of the archival profession in the Americas."⁶⁶ Schellenberg was chosen Chairman of the Council and served in that capacity until he was forced by ill health to resign, in 1962.

Certainly it may be said that he was a brilliantly successful archival envoy and that his contributions to the profession were understood and appreciated abroad—perhaps more than at home. How else can it be explained that, despite his renown, he never received the honor and privilege of being elected to serve as

⁶²Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, pp. 133–60.

⁶³Ernst Posner, "He Broke New Ground," p. 195, in "In Memoriam: Theodore R. Schellenberg."

⁶⁴T. R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives*, p. ix.

⁶⁵T. R. Schellenberg to H. Baumhofer, 2 November 1964. Professional Correspondence. Schellenberg Papers.

⁶⁶George S. Ulibarri, "The Inter-American Technical Council on Archives," *American Archivist* 27 (January 1964): 73.

President of the Society of American Archivists?

At the 1958 annual meeting of the SAA, in Salt Lake City, Ted Schellenberg gave a perceptive address on "The Future of the Archival Profession," and concluded with these often quoted words: "In the course of time archivists will create their own profession. It will be a profession with techniques and principles as well defined as those of the library profession, but quite distinct from them. And these techniques and principles will be embodied in literature that will constitute the basis for a separate discipline—for sepa-

rate training courses taught in library schools and universities."⁶⁷

Much remains to be accomplished before this objective will be fully attained; but as an archival theorist, writer, and lecturer, Schellenberg certainly played a major role in pointing the profession in that direction. Indeed, as Americanizer and publicizer, he probably made more significant and enduring contributions to the development and maturation of the archival profession than any American archivist, with the sole exception of Ernst Posner. And, like Posner, Ted Schellenberg made an indelible imprint on those who were fortunate enough to know him.

⁶⁷T. R. Schellenberg, "The Future of the Archival Profession," *American Archivist* 22 (January 1959): 58.

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