

Archives and the Challenges of Change

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Abstract: Changes brought about by the baby-boom between 1946 and 1964 have had, and will continue to have, impact upon archives and the archival profession. More people mean more records; more records require more decisions on retention and disposal. More people also mean more records users; more users place greater burdens on staff and make preservation of records even more difficult.

Changes in the structure of government at all levels and the attitude of the public towards government also have had, and will continue to have, impact upon archives and archivists. More and different kinds of governmental agencies create records which are frequently difficult for the archivist to obtain. Differing opinions about the public's right to know and the individual's right to privacy have created a dilemma for present-day archivists which their predecessors did not have to face.

The greatest changes, however, have come, and will continue to come, from the post-industrial, electronic information revolution. What the ultimate impact of the computer will be upon archives and archivists is unknown. What is certain, however, is that, to meet the challenge of the computer as well as those challenges resulting from other changes, archivists will have to work together to set priorities and to plan more than they ever have in the past.

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This article is an expanded version of his presidential address delivered on 19 October 1982 at the Society of American Archivists' forty-sixth annual meeting in Boston. The author is grateful to many friends and colleagues for their numerous contributions as he thought about and wrote this paper. He would like to acknowledge especially the help of Ann Morgan Campbell, Fred Coker, Maygene Daniels, Charles Dollar, Frank Evans, Larry Hackman, Gerald Ham, Ken Harris, Richard Jacobs, A. K. Johnson, Jr., Paul McCarthy, Trudy Peterson, Leonard Rapoport, John Scroggins, Helen Slotkin, Hugh Taylor, Robert Warner, Claudine Weiher, and James Harvey Young. He wants to recognize most of all the constant support of his best listener, critic, and editor, Jane Powers Weldon, who shared with him a most difficult challenge—changing jobs and moving their family during his presidential year and the preparation of this paper.

IF ANYTHING TROUBLES ARCHIVISTS, it is change. Our days are devoted to minimizing the effects of change upon the materials we care for. We work to stabilize physical environments. We seek constant temperature and humidity and purchase chemically neutral containers. We look for original order and try to restore it when it has been changed. We pay homage to permanence, to constancy, to stability, and to structure. We are a conservative lot, as we should be; but in the occupational concern with gaining stability and control, we often forget that the most constant condition in our lives is change.

In this historic Faneuil Hall, where our predecessors themselves debated changes they were experiencing and where their resolve brought new conditions to their own lives, I want to describe just a few of the fundamental changes that have taken place in our world over the last few decades, examine some of the trends we might anticipate, and try to project some of their implications for archives. I hope that this exploration into the larger context of our work will continue this week and into the months that follow.

Every generation seeks to find familiar patterns in the fabric of change and tries to come to grips with perceived tears and frays in that fabric. We are no different. One of the greatest challenges to us, I believe, is the mental one, our need to adjust our principles, practices, and language to changed circumstances,

modifying old habits of mind to fit new realities. Philosophers call this understanding; psychologists may label it rationalization. On the other hand, inability or unwillingness to accept change can lead either to withdrawal and passivity or to aggressive efforts to thwart or divert those changes we reject. These popular pulsations are the stuff of history, and archives abound with evidence of these social conflicts. We would do well to learn from the trends that are transforming our own lives.¹

The place to begin is people themselves. The most pervasive agent of change in recent American society, I believe, has been the baby-boom generation born between 1946 and 1964. One-third of our present population, more than 76 million people, came into being during these nineteen years. This demographic "pig in a python" has already had a profound impact upon American institutions and values, and it will continue to influence our social environment, as this cohort ages.

This phenomenon is examined in fascinating detail in two recent studies. Walter Nugent's *Structures of American Social History* is an ambitious reinterpretation attempting to show how population patterns influence social and economic history as well as values and beliefs.² The other is Landon Jones's *Great Expectations: America and the Baby-Boom Generation*.³ Jones attributes most of the recent troubling issues to this demographic glut: suburbia

¹A number of recent writings have attempted to analyze today's trends and to predict the direction of the near future. I am especially indebted to Alvin Toffler's three provocative works, *Future Shock* (1970), *The Eco-Spasm Report* (1975), and *The Third Wave* (1980); to Marilyn Ferguson's *The Aquarian Conspiracy: Personal and Social Transformation in the 1980s* (1980); to 1999, *The World of Tomorrow, Selections for the "Futurist": A Journal of Forecasts, Trends, and Ideas About the Future*, edited by Edward Cornish (1978); and to the report of the President's Commission, *A National Agenda for the Eighties* (1981). A very imaginative interpretation by a professional forecaster who uses content analysis of contemporary media is John Naisbitt, *Megatrends: Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives* (1982). His sources are extensive and merit examination.

²(Bloomington, Ind.: Indiana University Press, 1981). Nugent proposes a new periodization for North American development based on demographics. He projects a fairly bright future.

³(New York and Toronto: Coward, 1980).

and crowded schools, campus unrest and the Vietnam protests, unemployment, inflation, crime, housing shortages, divorce, the health craze, and many other phenomena. He does not suggest that the changes are *caused* by the baby boom, but rather that the boom carried and intensified these issues. Other periods, such as the 1930s, were also turbulent, but they had a smaller young generation.

Whatever the causes, archivists ultimately have to deal with the documentary consequences of social change. This generation, by sheer size and by a lifestyle that challenged the practices of its parents' generation, has left us a larger and more complex culture to record. The paperwork explosion, for instance, is as much the product of yesterday's reproductive practices as it is of today's photocopiers. As the war babies have passed through the classroom and into the labor force, they have left behind them a trail of files recording their existence and activities. Education records, military service files, employment and pension records, hospital and criminal files, like the people they represent, all have life cycles of their own. Our present problems with case files—their appraisal, selection, and use—result from this collision of people, social programs, and new documentation opportunities and techniques.

Like their records, people grow old; the surge of records will continue as the population ages. Advances in medical science, nutrition, and economic security, as well as a decline in fertility and the steady aging of the baby-boom generation, have meant that Americans individually and collectively are getting older. The nation's median age is now thirty years, up by two years in just a decade. By 2000, the median age will be thirty-six, and by the year 2010, it will be nearly thirty-nine. This aging phenomenon has important implications

for national policy, productivity, social programs, regional and occupational distribution, and, ultimately, the competition for resources, which will profoundly affect the creation, preservation, and use of records. We can anticipate, for instance, another half century of pressures for storing paper records. If these individuals continue to be geographically and occupationally mobile, then uniform retention and access standards to their records will be ever more essential.

The aging of America has not been spread evenly over regions, among races and ethnic groups, and between the sexes. These imbalances reflect historical trends and help to forecast future patterns of social change and, ultimately, documentation needs. The Northeastern population, for example, like its very infrastructures and institutions, is above the age median; the median age for Caucasians (thirty-one) is six years higher than for Blacks; women, regardless of race or origin, outnumber men, particularly in the over-sixty-five age group. In the United States in 1980, there were 6 million more females than males in a population of over 226 million people, a ratio of about 94.4 males for every 100 females. This is a relatively new phenomenon in the history of the nation. In 1910, just over two generations ago, there were 106 males for every 100 females, reflecting immigration patterns and the influx of single men seeking employment, as well as existing health practices and mortality rates. At every age older than twenty-five today, women constitute progressively larger majorities; this "differential mortality" means that the number of women over sixty-five is now growing twice as fast as that of men. By the year 2000, there will be half again more women than men over age sixty-five. One of every three baby-boom women can expect to reach eighty-five,

but fewer than one in six men will reach that age.⁴

With this aging, increasingly female, better-educated population, what will be the impact on records use, for example? Will adult continuing education place greater demands on archives for primary source materials? Will genealogy remain a popular, demanding activity? With great political power (by 2000, the median age of the older, female voting population will be forty-three), what social programs will this public seek from government? We can only speculate, but our speculation should rest upon historical experience, anticipated demographic realities, and projected lifestyles and values. We should remember, of course, that the archival work force itself will be shaped by these demographic conditions.

The central social institution is the family, which is changing dramatically. The American divorce rate, for example, has doubled since 1970, involving about 10 percent of all people between the ages of twenty-four and fifty-four. For baby-boom couples under thirty, however, the divorce rate has increased 300 percent. The Census Bureau reports that 20 percent of the children in the United States now live with only one parent, an increase over the decade of 54 percent. This trend is even greater when one realizes that the total number of children under eighteen in the United States declined in the last decade by nearly 10 percent. In 1980, the rate of divorced people per 1,000 married people had jumped from 47 to 109 in a decade.⁵

There are numerous archival implications in such basic family shifts. For in-

stance, divorce and possible subsequent adoption produce records in court. Genealogy in the future will be even more complicated, since divorce procedures can result in a revised birth certificate to replace the original one, obliterating a natural father's surname. As individuals become more remote from one or more of their biological parents, their need to know their own genetic and personal health histories will be harder to satisfy. Alex Haley's odyssey will have many tragic modern parallels unless we establish and administer responsible policies for documenting individual lives in the midst of divorce and mobility. At the same time, the rights to privacy of the parties will have to be safeguarded. The effort to satisfy such conflicting needs will challenge archivists in the future. It should certainly concern us now.

Records, and ultimately that portion of them of lasting value, are like government: of, by, and for the people. As we observe and are part of the pulsations of a dynamic people, we are challenged to understand their nature and needs. As people are born, grow, become educated, go to work, form and dissolve families and other associations, age, and ultimately die, they produce and use records. As these circumstances change, it remains our professional obligation to understand the transitions and the ways they shape the ultimate historical record.

Our political and constitutional structures also have been undergoing profound change, and they will continue to do so in response to population pressures, regional mobility, and economic stress. The New Federalism is

⁴See the remarks of the Director of the U.S. Bureau of the Census, Vincent P. Barabba, "Demographic Change and the Public Work Force," prepared for the 2nd Public Management Research Conference on the Changing Character of the Public Work Force, Washington, D.C., 18 November 1980. During 1981 and 1982 the Census Bureau published a number of interpretative reports on the 1980 census. These were summarized in the media, and I have relied on them to a great extent in trying to anticipate the impact on records and recordkeeping. See, for example, John Herbers, "Sharp Rise of Elderly Population in 70's Portends Future Increases," *New York Times*, 24 May 1981, pp. 1, 44.

⁵"U.S. Reports 20% of Children Reside With Only One Parent," *New York Times*, 8 August 1982.

only one manifestation of a new mood of dissatisfaction with traditional governments. The last decade alone saw a proliferation of new quasi-governmental, multi-jurisdictional arrangements designed to accommodate regional needs. The growth of special districts and authorities reflects the inadequacy of many municipal governments prohibited from deficit financing and faced with taxing and spending limits. This proliferation of independent, special-purpose governments has been called by one political scientist "the new dark continent of American politics." Recent figures indicate that the number of special districts and authorities has increased 11 percent in the last five years, numbering now nearly 29,000. With income mostly from special taxes and user fees, the special districts, in 1977, spent \$9 billion. Three years later, that figure nearly tripled to almost \$25 billion, or about 10 percent of the total spent by all local government.⁶

Some districts, like the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, are a step toward consolidation of services for several jurisdictions within a metropolitan area. Most of the others, however, have grown up in suburban settings where people have resisted large, general-purpose governments but nevertheless need basic services, such as water and sewage disposal, fire protection, health care, and parks and recreational facilities. These units are seldom run by elected officials or put in the public spotlight as are the more traditional governments, and in the shadow, their records, too, are often hidden from view. Archivists with responsibilities for state and local government records can testify to the difficulties in gaining con-

trol over the documents of these new creatures. They offer a challenge to our traditional notions of public accountability and public records authority.

Another creative device being used by many municipalities experiencing severe budget pressures and needing to cut costs or raise cash is the sale of tax write-offs to private investors.⁷ These so-called "safe harbor" tax leasing schemes are being widely used to raise money for capital improvements such as buildings, which may then be leased back for city-run activities and which provide tax depreciation for private investors. The 1981 tax law, with its greatly accelerated depreciation write-offs, appeals to investors and municipalities alike. Such sale-lease deals could arouse concern among citizens about private ownership of public facilities, especially where borrowing is done without voter consent. The possibility of cozy arrangements makes critical public access to such records. Conventional archival experience has assumed public ownership of capital facilities. Appraising and scheduling the records of such agile funding schemes require imagination and certainly adequate authority.

Similar contractual relationships are being employed by governments to obtain services as well as goods. There has been a strong trend toward contracting with independent vendors for a variety of public services and thus replacing permanent employees. It is a technique being used by all levels of governments wanting to cut the size of their payrolls and reduce the burdens of large post-employment pension payments. Widespread contracting for work means the need for new standards in the creation, maintenance, and retention of organiza-

⁶"Tax and Spending Curbs Spur Growth of Independent Agencies," *New York Times*, 6 August 1982, p. 8; "After 34 Years, Jobs Declining in Government," *New York Times*, 27 December 1981, pp. 1, 44.

⁷"Cities Seek Aid of Private Concerns to Cope With Budget Cuts," *New York Times*, 1 April 1982, p. 25; "How Cities Are Selling Tax Write-Offs," *Business Week* (April 5, 1982): 95.

tional files which will reflect the new relationships.

The Defense Department has long been a major procurer of services from private contractors, while civilian agencies like the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, the Atomic Energy Commission, the Environmental Protection Agency, and other scientific agencies are not far behind in contracting for applied research, the development of programs, and even the actual operation of facilities and projects. All federal agencies are being directed now to contract out more activities and to replace employed staff and services with hired ones when the comparative costs are favorable. Under the mandate of OMB Circular A-76: *Policies for Acquiring Commercial or Industrial Products and Services Needed by the Government*, agency officials are taught the techniques of analyzing every aspect of a particular function, determining the costs of those functions, and then preparing and evaluating bids from commercial vendors hoping to perform them.⁸ The National Archives and Records Service, for example, soon will be cost analyzing its microfilm laboratory, library, and records center operations.

Contracting services and functions provides archival managers an opportunity to reduce overhead and to obtain more specialized skills than might normally be acquired. The Northeast Document Conservation Center, for instance, offers to many archives a selection of services to fit a range of needs and available resources. The trend toward contracting will continue, and it will present archivists with not only the

challenge of faithfully documenting the new processes and products of government, but also the challenge of acquiring themselves those basic administrative skills necessary to understand and break down our functions into accurate cost components. In preparing and reviewing grant proposals, for example, we have had to learn to project anticipated costs of projects. The competition for resources will stay great, and we will scramble for funds and seek fiscal flexibility through grants, inter-agency or inter-governmental agreements, or contracted services. In this setting, archivists will have to develop and use management skills that most lack, skills certainly never received in a liberal-arts education. One of the greatest challenges archivists face could well be the psychic one of finding job satisfaction in solving the new archival management problems rather than in dealing first-hand with researchers or historical materials.

If we want to comprehend where we are and to foresee where we are going in archives, we must look at work in America.⁹ Records are the byproducts of people's labor, the evidence of human and mechanical activity directed to the creation and distribution of goods and services. The nature of work, the way it is organized, and the composition of the work force all shape the eventual historical record. To select and preserve that tiny portion of the record that will accurately convey to succeeding generations this complex, pluralistic, changing world is an obligation and indeed a challenge to us.

A number of features have marked the direction of change and suggest

⁸The debate over the appropriateness of governmental functions being performed by businesses has been extensive. Especially thoughtful is Earle C. Williams, "A Political Issue: Government Competing With the Private Sector," *Government Executive* (May 1982), p. 36-40.

⁹See, for example, the four-part series in the *Washington Post* on "The Future of Work," 25-28 July 1982, and the September 1982 issue of the *Scientific American* devoted entirely to "The Mechanization of Work." An excellent bibliography is appended to the latter.

trends for the future. The first has been the steady shift away from the soil to services. In 1820 more than 70 percent of the labor force worked on farms; in 1900 fewer than 40 percent worked in agriculture; and in 1980 that figure was just 3 percent. Today, only a third of the labor force is engaged in the production of goods, mostly in manufacturing. The other two-thirds of the people work to provide services. Of all the new jobs added to the economy between 1969 and 1976, 90 percent were in services. Much of this growth has occurred in health, education, and related programs, as well as in basic public-sector services such as police protection, fire protection, and sanitation. As a result, public archives and records have been heavily affected by new programs and records problems: short-sighted new managers uninformed about records requirements; burgeoning casefiles from a burgeoning population; and conflicts between legitimate needs to know and appropriate restrictions on access, resulting from both freedom of information and privacy legislation in many states as well as at the federal level.

In addition, a post-industrial service sector has shifted the work force from blue- to white-collar employment, eroded union strength, contributed to industrial unemployment, and created a cadre of professional, scientific, and technical workers, as well as a new and growing managerial and administrative class. Information is their life blood, and most of the records issues we face today arise from this fundamental shift from an industrial economy to a service one.

Another consequence of this trend has been an apparent decline in productivity

as more working people produce fewer goods. It is hard to identify and measure clearly the product of labor in services. This is especially true in archives, where we find ourselves frequently on the defensive to justify needed resources and even our very existence. Archivists must become much more adept at conveying in specific, measurable terms the costs and the benefits of archival decisions, activities, and services. What is the cost to society, for example, if a certain group of sensitive records, say police case files, is kept for 50 or 100 years? But what would be the measurable social costs of *not* maintaining those files? Both are great, but not easily quantifiable. We must learn to analyze alternatives, estimate both real and potential costs as well as savings, and convey to higher authorities their options and the implications of their decisions. The old productivity arguments simply are not adequate in such situations, and we must fashion more imaginative, convincing justifications for our work.

Of course, the most profound influence on work, and in turn on record-keeping, has been the post-industrial, electronic information revolution. "From the beginning of time through 1980, there were approximately one million computer systems," said the president of Commodore International Ltd., announcing that in 1982 alone Commodore itself would produce that many computers. A Silicon Valley market research firm reports that last year about a half-million computers costing less than \$5,000 were sold worldwide. The firm projects that the total will grow at least 40 percent annually to more than 3 million units in 1985.¹⁰

¹⁰See "Next, A Computer on Every Desk," *New York Times*, 23 August 1981, section 3, pp. 1, 15; and the special issue of *Science*, "Computers and Electronics" (12 February 1982). The Fourth General Assembly of the World Future Society devoted its meeting (18-22 July 1982) in Washington, D.C., to "Communications and the Future." See also "Public Sector/Private Sector Interaction in Providing Information Services," published by the National Commission on Libraries and Information Science (1 February 1982).

I would not dare to speculate on the archival impact of this revolution on recordkeeping in the home, school, office, and laboratory. The computer profoundly shapes how we learn, reason, value, and generally perceive our world. It will become the pervasive symbol for our age, much as the mechanical orreries represented the balanced, clocklike universe of the eighteenth century, or as the rugged natural environment in the nineteenth century symbolized the values and vision of an expanding, extractive, industrializing, and competitive society. As innovations in computer hardware give us smaller, faster, and cheaper units, and as abundant new software, like the sirens' song, seduces us with ever more user-friendly programs, the electronic era, with all its own reshaping force, embraces us.

Every age interprets its past, and to some extent its future, in terms of how it sees the present, and archival theories and principles, like historical interpretations, are products of their times. The industrial order depicted an organic, hierarchic, corporate, contained, controlled, structured world. Archival ancestors saw related families, talked of records as secretions, valued policy records at the top of an organization over those incidental accumulations containing mere information, and described the arrangement of information as taking place at five levels: repository, group, series, folder, and item.

In the electronic universe, which necessarily retains much of the older hierarchy, authorities, and structures, we are witnessing information also flowing up, down, and across systems: data sharing through networks, remote access opportunities, extensive manipulation, multiple formatting, and much greater freedom. The old ways handled material products; the new utilize electronic impulses and fluid processes.

The nature of this new order makes it imperative that an archival perspective be introduced early into record and information making. Program managers and systems designers must be reminded of long-term needs. Also, information and records systems having continuing values must be constructed and operated so that the conflicting requirements of security and access are met and so that appropriate formats and safeguards exist for eventual care and use. Archivists have the experience to bring historical perspective to this design. I am hopeful that professions that have drifted somewhat apart—archivists, records managers, and library and information specialists—will recognize common needs and draw together in this task.

Archivists are beginning to deal with dimensions of change, analyzing the context in which records are created, questioning some of the traditional verities of our craft, or looking at the information process itself rather than only at the recorded products of organized activity. Recent writings reflect this freshness: Rich Berner's historical analysis of archival theory and practice and suggestions for priority discussions; the debate on archival theory between Frank Burke and Lester Cappon, as well as Harold Pinkett's essay; Dick Lytle's and David Bearman's critiques of the record group concept; Frank Boles's disrespecting original order; Leonard Rapport's questioning of appraisal policies and practices that grandfather into archives records that time and circumstances show to have less than permanent value; George Mazuzan's essay on nuclear power records; Trudy Peterson's imaginative analysis of changes in counting techniques and the evolution of record formats and practices; Michael Lutzker's study of the sociology of modern bureaucratic organizations and its influence on the way in which work is

structured and records are valued; and, of course, Jerry Ham's thought-provoking essay on archival strategies for the post-custodial era.¹¹

The proliferation of committees and task forces in the Society of American Archivists also reflects a concerned and collegial effort to come to grips with the effects of change and to meet new needs of our profession. The Joint Committee on the Archives of Science and Technology (JCAST) has brought together scientists, administrators, historians, and archivists and has pointed out the many difficulties in documenting mid-twentieth-century scientific activity. The questions raised about the nature, ownership, and responsibility for maintaining and using scientific records are critical and lie at the heart of similar activities that cross traditional jurisdictional lines and involve both public- and private-sector behavior. JCAST is a model of participatory inquiry, and we expect to learn much from the final report.

The same has been true of the National Information Systems Task Force (NISTF), another successful effort to involve many interests and to accommodate the varieties of archival description that characterize our pluralistic structures. Both of these groups, JCAST

and NISTF, as well as other attempts to help archivists understand and cope with the circumstances we face, have been furthered by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. They provided funds for the 1977 Chicago Priorities Conference, which tried to rank archival functions; the 1980 Madison, Wisconsin, conference on archival networks; needs assessment grants to 26 State Historical Records Advisory Boards; and numerous institutional self-studies and evaluation efforts, including SAA's own task force.¹² The Mellon Foundation's support for research fellowships and seminars at the Bentley Historical Library of the University of Michigan is an exciting and promising new initiative to address the issues of modern documentation. These activities will help archivists to understand better the changing environment we work in and to order that work more effectively. The core sessions at this annual meeting have been arranged by your program committee to serve this end.

We hope also that a result of this meeting will be a mandate for continued, cooperative inquiry, priority setting, and planning. A decade ago the committee on the 1970s analyzed the

¹¹Richard C. Berner, "Toward National Archival Priorities: A Suggested Basis for Discussion," *American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 164-74; Frank G. Burke, "The Future Course of Archival Theory in the United States," *American Archivist* 44 (Winter 1981): 40-46; Lester J. Cappon, "What, Then, Is There to Theorize About?" *American Archivist* 45 (Winter 1982): 19-25; Harold T. Pinkett, "American Archival Theory: The State of the Art," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 217-22; David Bearman and Richard Lytle, "Hierarchy in Archival Theory and Practice: A Critique and Proposal," unpublished paper presented to the National Archives and Records Service Assembly's Description Committee (March 4, 1982); Frank Boles, "Disrespecting Original Order," *American Archivist* 45 (Winter 1982): 26-32; Leonard Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 143-50; George T. Mazuzan, "The Challenge of Nuclear Power Development Records," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 229-35; Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "Counting and Accounting: A Speculation on Change in Recordkeeping Practices," *American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 131-34; Michael A. Lutzker, "Max Weber and the Analysis of Modern Bureaucratic Organizations: Notes Toward a Theory of Appraisal," *American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 119-30; and F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 207-16.

¹²Mary Lynn McCree and Timothy Walch, eds., "Setting Priorities for Historical Records: A Conference Report," *American Archivist* 40 (July 1977); *Midwestern Archivist* 6, no. 2 (1982).

issues then important to archivists: they related to structure and governance of the organization and to professional opportunities for members.¹³ Today, the issues are broader: they concern mission, goals and priorities, and resources. A profession strengthened by these earlier efforts, however, can begin to deal with these current needs.

We archivists have to be historians in our own time. We should hold our principles and practices up to the light of those forces at work in our larger society. I have touched on only a few transforming our world: population trends, the way in which people and

governments are organized and work, how information is gathered and used. We are always reminding researchers that the past is prologue and that if they do not consult archives, their view of the past will be blurred. It would be ironic indeed if archivists did not heed our own cliché and try to discover the larger context in which records today are being created and in which our principles and practices are shaped. In this historic hall and in this great historic city, we should not forget that as archives can help to shape history, history also shapes archives.

¹³"The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970's," *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 193-217.