

Archival Cooperation

FRANK G. BURKE

Abstract: Although hampered by their tradition of uniqueness, archivists have managed to cooperate to a limited degree through such activities as the CONRAIL project, the Joint Committee on the Archives of Science and Technology, the National Information Systems Task Force, and others. Much more effort is needed in the areas of archival description, automation, acquisition policies, appraisal standards, and education. The author concludes with a set of priorities for future cooperation and offers suggestions for addressing them.

About the author: Frank G. Burke was educated at the University of Alaska and the University of Chicago and from the latter received the master's and doctoral degrees in modern European history. He began his professional career as Assistant Curator for Archives and Manuscripts at the University of Chicago in 1962. In 1964 he assumed the position of Head of the Preparation Section, Library of Congress Manuscript Division and in 1967 moved to the National Archives as Information Retrieval Specialist. Since that time he has successively held the positions of Assistant Archivist for Educational Programs, Assistant to the Archivist of the United States, and, since 1975, Executive Director of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. He has taught a course in manuscripts administration every year since 1975 at the University of Maryland, a similar course at Syracuse University every other summer since 1978, and courses in archival methodology in the history department's archival program at New York University in 1981, 1982, and 1983. Dr. Burke's articles on archival methodology, automation, and program developments at NARS have appeared in the major archival journals.

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TO THE CYNIC, COOPERATION MEANS getting everyone else to do what you want them to do. To the librarian, cooperation means sharing resources to avoid duplication of effort. To the archivist, cooperation means joining with others to figure out what to do next.

Archivists are raised professionally in the tradition of uniqueness. We invoke uniqueness as both rationale for action and excuse for inaction, but we have made the mistake of extending the concept of the uniqueness of our records to a uniqueness in the techniques of managing them. We look on related disciplines, such as librarianship, with xenophobic disdain, blinding ourselves to the possibilities of friendly assistance. Even worse, we often look with similar disdain on our colleagues in other archival institutions and object to the minor differences that separate us, rather than seeing possibilities in the major similarities that we share. The truth is that archivists face problems shared by many different institutions, from libraries to mail-order houses; and there is much that we could learn and use to our advantage. Such a learning role is not really cooperation, since cooperation requires a two-way sharing in which we give as well as receive.

It is my intention to concentrate on cooperation at the institutional level, archives to archives or archivist to librarian, or even individuals banded together in common cause, rather than at the organizational level of joint committees with members appointed by and representing professional groups. I view cooperation as a process of speaking familiarly with colleagues without need for translation. If we can make that work, perhaps we will catch the spirit

and enter into cooperative endeavors at a higher level as well.¹

In the past twenty years, the one area in which cooperation has been urged above all others has been in the solicitation and acquisition of collections of personal papers. "Why not divide up the world," the question goes, "so that we will not be cutting each other's throats? You collect 'A,' we'll collect 'B,' someone else will collect 'C,' and so on." Although that is an often heard suggestion, I believe that full cooperation and parcelling out of collection areas in manuscript acquisition is an unattainable goal. The personal papers that we so avidly solicit because they are "just right" for our acquisition policy also happen to be "just right" for another institution's acquisition policy because we are dealing with the written remains of complex personalities who led complex lives. The question has been asked before, and may be asked again: regardless of where they are now, what is the appropriate single resting place for the papers of, for example, Adlai Stevenson, Averill Harriman, or Bella Abzug? Each set of papers falls within the bounds of the acquisition policies of a number of institutions: the creators' alma maters, their state historical societies, the specialized repositories in their fields, and the national library, each of which claims priority consideration. Such examples only show the hopelessness of institutional deference and self-denial. Therefore, we should eliminate the personal papers of nationally prominent individuals from the list of things on which we can all cooperate.

Not all documents fit into that broad category. We can cooperate in the ac-

¹Much ground on this subject was covered in 1976 by John Fleckner, who concentrated on state networking. His general message on cooperation remains valid today. I will try to avoid duplicating it. John A. Fleckner, "Cooperation as Strategy for Archival Institutions," *American Archivist* 39 (October 1976): 447-459.

quisitions area if we concentrate on those research materials that do have a logical place: regional collections that should not leave the region; papers of municipal leaders that should not wander from the city; county records that do not belong in the state capital or anywhere but the county; or records of local businesses, important to the economy of the community, that do not belong in an unrelated university hundreds of miles away. The nature of cooperation implies bowing to a more appropriate repository when the wrong collection comes our way as well as recognizing reasonable bounds for solicitation. Perhaps the archivist's code should include the Golden Rule.

We must also not forget the beneficiary of our collecting: the researcher. I realize that in many institutions that is a word only recently introduced into the archival vocabulary, but it is one we should recognize as important. In our collecting mania, we must be certain that we are not depriving the researcher of his just reward, the convenience of finding the materials of his research in a logical and convenient location surrounded by related ancillary material. We violate that trust at our own peril.

If the manuscript curator is to keep a weather eye out for anomalous acquisitions, so should the archivist be alert to the audience he is serving. He must cooperate with that audience in his most important function, the appraisal of records for permanent retention. We give lip service to consultation with the prospective user group when we make a determination of what to keep and what to let slip into permanent obscurity through disposal. How many institutions have given this mutually beneficial cooperation a permanent place in their appraisal procedure? We hear that it is

too much trouble, that historians want to keep everything, and that we are the professionals and will make the decisions. We also hear the voices of federal judges reprimanding us for our decisions in isolation and ordering us to go back and do it all over again. While we archivists have a tendency to want to go it alone because of our uniqueness, we see librarians at universities establishing bibliography committees, selecting evaluation assistants, and forming cadres of specialists regularly consulted for their advice and direction in the acquisition of important works. The bibliographic advisers are area or subject specialists who represent the user community. Is it that these academics, with research credits piled high, cannot understand the complexities of archival materials? Are they so insensible to the practicalities of storage and collection maintenance that they will act like children loose in a candy store and try to scoop up everything in sight? We perpetuate the archival mystique partly out of insecurity, but we are in an age where we cannot shut the door and close out those who belong in the process. The threat of judicial review should not be all that motivates us. It should also be the thought that as archivists—at least those of us who are public archivists—we are there to serve the research public, and that public should have some voice in the decision about what to retain. Let us remind ourselves of first principles, and turn back to T.R. Schellenberg, who more than twenty-five years ago urged archivists to seek help. He noted that the archivist “will be called on to evaluate records that involve a knowledge beyond his sphere. In evaluating records needed for disciplines in which he is not trained, he should, if necessary, seek the help of specialists in those disciplines.”²

²T. R. Schellenberg, “The Appraisal of Modern Public Records,” *Bulletins of the National Archives*, no. 8 (1956): 45.

Surely, however, there is one area where the archivist reigns supreme and can operate professionally in isolation as *the* expert. That is in description. We pride ourselves on knowing the documents—being intimately aware of their contents, their strengths, and their weaknesses—as well as on knowing how to bring all that knowledge to the surface for any researcher in crystal clear essays called series descriptions. Yet we write series descriptions based on functional statements rather than actual contents of records. One series in the National Archives contains 10,416 linear feet of records and is described in a paragraph just fifteen lines long. There is not one indexable term in the description. Unfortunately, this is typical, not just for the National Archives, but for archives throughout the country.

Thus, we are faced with a dilemma. Should we continue to use so-called archival descriptive techniques, which we do poorly, or should we adopt library techniques, which archivists deem to be inadequate? Recent revision of the second edition of the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* suggests that some of us who would adopt library techniques would consider a series entry equivalent to a collection entry in the *National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections* (NUCMC) and “catalog” it, removed from its hierarchical context. Perhaps, when listening to such suggestions, it would be better to crawl back into the safety and comfort of archival isolation. On the other hand, in this case it is not the library model that we should follow but rather the beat of a different drummer, the information scientist or the professional indexer who cares less about the medium than the message. While archivists are administratively concerned with physical form, informa-

tion specialists are concerned with informational content; we worry about filling up the stacks, they worry about filling up minds. Why not hire a few and let them try their hand at our finding aids and the complexities of our archival holdings, just to see what they would do? At the same time, since cooperation is a two-way street, perhaps we could convince a few more librarians that the archival hierarchical structure is a perfect device for describing some of *their* holdings. The pamphlet collection at Cornell and the theses and dissertations at Rutgers are two good examples. In short, we have something to offer too.

When we turn to the problems of preservation, we encounter a field strewn with acidic landmines; and so we form a coalition linking librarians, archivists, museum curators, art curators, and even book manufacturers, tentatively inching our way through terra incognita in search of a pH-neutral oasis. Here, out of sheer frustration and in the face of extraordinary complexity, the archivist has joined in cooperative efforts to find viable solutions. Our problem is not limited to difficulties with paper, which we share with the librarian; but our stacks also contain vellum, leather, gold tassels and skippets, grosgrain ribbon, silver clasps, lapis lazuli illuminations, wood, silk, linen, film, glass, and magnetic tape. The National Archives is joining the Library of Congress in mass deacidification experiments. A book longevity committee composed of librarians, a conservation specialist, a paper manufacturer, a commercial publisher, a university press director, and an archivist has been attempting to educate publishers and printers on the importance of quality long-lasting materials for the publication of impor-

tant books.³ Archivists have wisely joined in the national efforts of the National Institute for Conservation of Cultural Property (NICCP; still known to most of us as the National Conservation Advisory Council or NCAC) looking for mutual solutions to national as well as international conservation problems. Although archival concerns are but a small part of the NICCP agenda, solutions in any area will benefit us; and we, too, can contribute some specialized knowledge to the commonweal. A recently completed grant project to the Western Council of State Libraries surveyed the needs and probed possible solutions to preservation problems of libraries and archives in eighteen western states.⁴ Through cooperative efforts, a plan of action was drafted, which archivists should urge upon their colleagues. As with many such plans, the main ingredients for success are the availability of new money and the open acceptance of cooperation. Unfortunately, archivists themselves have failed to set their own priorities for conservation and are letting others write the agenda.

The difficulty with raising general enthusiasm for cooperation in acquisitions, appraisal, description, and conservation is that society gains little by such activities outside of the very narrow field of documents. The impact on the general public of victories in these areas would be slight. It is important, therefore, to move ahead in areas where there is a broad interest. One of these areas is photocopying. Archivists are not the only profession faced with choices in the

copying field. There are new technological breakthroughs that can benefit us, and we have something to offer from the processes and procedures that we have developed. The major commercial houses—MCA, Kraus-Thompson, Scholarly Resources—have no reason to improve the quality of their processes except to meet the competition of the market place. We archivists are in a position to insist on a higher quality and, when state or federal funds are involved, to use high-quality standards, such as those of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, as a requirement for film and fiche. This is not always an adversary relationship, and archivists and commercial film houses can, and do, cooperate to seek a better product.

One photocopying area where there has been some significant cooperation, and where we hope it will continue, is in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (LDS) filming projects in this country. The church has specific filming goals, a limited budget, and production schedules to maintain; but we have found that, when the LDS project approaches material in a state in which there is also strong local archival interest, a better product results if there is cooperation between the church and state in selection and coverage. In contrast, one instance in which archivists were often deeply and rightly concerned about the rationale and quality of the work was in the microfilming program of the Law Enforcement Assistance Agency (LEAA). Grants were made for filming records that seemed in some

³The Committee on Production Guidelines for Book Longevity was formed by the Council on Library Resources with help from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. The members were: Herbert Bailey, Princeton University Press, Chairman; Frank G. Burke, NHPRC; Warren J. Haas, Council on Library Resources; Peter Mollman, Random House, Inc.; Leonard B. Schlosser, Lindenmeyr Paper Co.; David Stam, New York Public Library; and Gay Walker, Preservation Department, Yale University. The committee issued a number of reports, both interim and final, on paper and binding qualities desirable for books of permanent value.

⁴Funding was for the Western States Materials Conservation Project directed by Howard P. Lowell. The project concluded with a *Final Report: Western States Materials Conservation Project*. Denver: Western Council of State Libraries, Inc., 1980 (report submitted to ERIC).

vague way to relate to law enforcement. Too often, decisions to film were made on flimsy evidence of necessity. It appeared that the decision stemmed essentially from the availability of funds and had little to do with archival considerations. The LEAA is dead; but should a similar program arise in the future, archivists should actively work to obtain a voice in the process so that they can lend their professional knowledge to a potentially important program.

It would not be appropriate to talk about cooperation without mentioning one area that has been almost totally foreign to archivists but where there is a greater and greater need for attention. This is the concept of planning for the future, devising strategies if you will, for tackling forthcoming problems, for defusing those many little time-bombs that are ticking away around us every day. Planning can take place at many levels, from the institutional to the national; and cooperative planning is merely a recognition that the tides of change are often generated on foreign shores. Does the institutional archives know what the same institution's library or administrative offices are doing with regard to computer hardware, laboratory facilities, space, environmental controls, and staffing patterns? If not, the archives will one day find that its own internalized plans for the future are unrealizable because the community of which it is a part has committed its resources to moving in another direction.

At the state level, cooperative planning is necessary if there is to be a future sharing of resources. Are three institutions independently installing conservation and preservation facilities while none is considering upgrading microfilm capability that could be shared? Is everyone in the state attacking the question of photographic preservation while no one seems to care about local rec-

ords? Are there extensive surveys of business records while church records, which are of high social value, are ignored? Recently, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission awarded State Assessment and Reporting grants of approximately \$25,000 each to twenty-seven states to assist them in identifying archival needs in the state and the constituencies that should be concerned about such needs. Public meetings were held to receive feedback from interested parties as well as to educate the public about the problem and to draw up a plan for the state with a program to attack the problem and provide the resources to improve conditions. This planning effort at the state level involves archivists, historians, records managers, county and municipal clerks, genealogists, and business and church representatives. It is too early to tell what the results of the twenty-seven individual efforts will be, but those that succeed in rousing the community conscience to an awareness of the problems may well become models for other states to follow. It is the commission's contention that cooperative planning must precede all other substantive action in attacking archival problems.

Not all archival issues can be resolved within a state, however; and the expansion of the state planning concept to a region involving a number of states may well be the next step in the process that the NHPRC has launched. One can envision the individual plans for four or five midwestern states being compared and hammered into a regional plan that could have more ambitious goals. A look at the Northeast Document Conservation Center (formerly New England Document Conservation Center) shows the value of regional cooperation and planning for a variety of activities and professions including librarians, archivists, and others. The work of the Western Council of State Libraries men-

tioned above was a case of regional planning among diverse disciplines. The Midwest State Archives Guide Project, in which Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Illinois are experimenting with producing a common guide to the state archives by computer, is a fine example of regional cooperation.⁵

One thing that we should not forget, but we seldom remember, is the necessity for cooperative planning with prospective funding agencies. We would not think of institutional planning without involving someone responsible for budgets and finance, but we often plan for foundation support for projects without involving the foundation we intend to approach. There is nothing that a grants officer recoils from more than an unanticipated yet fully developed application about which there has been no prior communication or indication that the application would be submitted. Some foundations, such as the MacArthur Foundation in Chicago, will not accept unsolicited applications. They, and others, want to know what our ideas are, what we are about, how this specific project fits into our overall program, what is going to happen after the grant period ends, who will be the beneficiaries, and so on. All of that implies a plan that is not a closely guarded secret, but one that can be shared and commented upon. Foundations like to think that they have had a hand in designing those programs that are successful. They do not like to play the role of bank teller, simply doling out the funds with no responsibility for how they are used.

Until now, I have concentrated upon cooperation as an interdisciplinary activity, whereby we share problems and processes with librarians, records managers, museum curators, county clerks, photographic specialists, and a vast array of other professionals. I

would like to turn to that other kind of cooperation, so basic to our daily activity and yet apparently so difficult to attain: cooperation with our fellow professionals, other archivists.

I began by stating that the process of dividing up acquisitions was an impossible task and therefore not worth discussing. My concern was with personal papers produced by multidimensional personalities. When an institution is attempting to acquire a collection to fit its acquisition policy, there is no power in the world that can stop other institutions from approaching the same donor. A recent case in which a judge awarded the Igor Stravinsky papers to an institution over the objections of the family, who wanted them to go elsewhere, muddies the waters to some extent. This, however, is the rare exception to the archival rule of competition.

This does not mean that there cannot be cooperation in placing categories of material in appropriate repositories when they are archival orphans, so to speak. A case in point is the experience of the CONRAIL project undertaken in 1977-78 by a committee of archivists from a variety of institutions who surveyed the extant records of the seven railroads that made up the newly established CONRAIL system. The committee found that, for the most part, the retired records of these companies were being neglected; and in the shuffle of reorganization and amalgamation of the companies, there was the threat that the records would be disposed of as so much liability.

The role of the archival committee was to survey the records of the railroad companies, which meant traveling from warehouse to warehouse to look at quantity, content, and condition. With some idea of the extent of the problem, the group then approached CONRAIL

⁵The project is centered at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin and will soon issue its final report.

for an opinion on the future of the records. Since CONRAIL was not interested in the retired files of its predecessor companies, the group contacted the legal estates of the companies to determine what disposition was to be made of the records. Where it was found that the records were to be disposed of wholesale, the group contacted repositories whose acquisition policies indicated an interest in transportation or railroad materials and began the necessary negotiations to have at least some of the archives moved to safe and permanent quarters. That was a good approach to the problem. Even if all of the desired solutions were not found, at least some good was done; and many records were saved.

Another active cooperative effort that will probably continue for years is the Joint Committee on the Archives of Science and Technology (JCAST), which contains historians but is predominantly composed of archivists. JCAST is cooperatively addressing the problem of the location and disposition of, and access to, records of science and technology. The Joint Committee's first task is to clarify the status of scientific records produced by government, industry, academia, and the non-profit sector. Laboratories throughout the country contain significant documentation relating to developments in twentieth-century science. Many of the records appear to have fallen between stools with no one claiming responsibility for their maintenance. Access is almost totally restricted because of the uncertainty of literary proprietorship. In the interest of historical research and archival responsibility, the cooperative work of JCAST is looking for a solution. The team approach may be the only way to attack problems as massive as those associated with scientific documentation that has gone unattended for half a century during which there was accelerated develop-

ment. It seems reasonable to conclude that archival cooperation is the answer.

"Team approach" is a good term on which to dwell. The scientific community has long depended on teams to solve major problems; and, indeed, most scientific discovery today is the result of team effort. Problems are just too vast for solution by a solitary scholar. We can even see team projects in some of the humanities, specifically in the preparation of documentary editions in the past fifty years. As many as eight or ten people may be working on a single project at one time under the direction of a general editor. Archivists would do well to use a team approach in their archival activities. With some team effort, perhaps carried out as an SAA task force or an interorganizational joint committee, we can attack problems that are too big for any one archivist or institution. The JCAST model might well be emulated when searching for solutions to the problems of appraisal; the evaluation of labor union case files, hospital patient records, and court records at various levels; or how to deal with Congressional papers with their plethora of constituent files.

As opposed to the team approach in which a number of people from diverse institutions cooperate on an equal basis to attack a problem, there is the reverse situation in which one institution is established as a center to assist others. This centralization of resources for the common good is a form of cooperation that libraries have used in the Center for Research Libraries, the OCLC and other network systems, and in certain functions of the Research Library Group. Archivists are just beginning to recognize, and take advantage of, the centralized co-op; but there is great potential for such efforts if they are carried out properly.

The United Negro College Fund, for instance, has plans to assist many of its

smaller member colleges in dealing with their archival problems by establishing a centralized processing and training center at Atlanta University. Member colleges may send their unorganized archival collections to Atlanta for arrangement, description, and boxing; and they may even send with the records a staff member who would have responsibility for the material when it is returned to the home institution. The people who accompany the records may actually do the processing under the tutelage of the professional archival staff at Atlanta and carry back to their institutions the skills and procedures learned. In a similar experiment, the Eleutherian Mills Historical Library in Delaware studied the feasibility of establishing a centralized processing center for records of institutions in the Delaware Valley. The model was the Contemporary Scientific Archives Centre administered by Margaret Gowing in Oxford, England; however, it processes only scientific records.

The team approach and, indeed, cooperation of any kind, implies the acceptance of standards in archival activities. It is the lack of standards that has been the stumbling block to the advancement of much archival cooperation, especially in description. There are two ways to approach the standards problem in description: one permits the individual institution to continue its traditional descriptive processes, while the other requires all cooperating institutions to apply universal rules in their internal operations. An example of the first approach is the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, which receives descriptions of manuscript collections from a wide variety of institutions applying numerous descriptive techniques; but NUCMC restructures the information to fit *its* standards. The repository need not be affected, since it can continue to describe its collections as it

wishes and ignore the NUCMC rules.

The second approach is one followed by all of those institutions who use the NHPRC standard database format and the SPINDEX III processing program to produce guides that are compatible with each other and with the NHPRC *Directory*. In this case each institution agreed to accept the standards for description imposed by the system and to apply them to their records. This approach has a more profound impact on the cooperating institutions than does the private standardization of centralized or nationalized cataloging. It appears, however, that the NHPRC process to standardize description will not proceed very far because of the threatened loss of NHPRC funding and the consequent prospect that the NHPRC could withdraw as a factor in archival progress.

The SAA's very active National Information Systems Task Force is another example of the second approach. The task force has assumed the job of beginning the process of setting standards for the description of records through the establishment of standard data elements. In the early 1970s the SAA Committee on Automation faced the prospect of suggesting an automated approach to archives and manuscripts but finally gave up, disbanded, and reestablished itself as the Committee on the Control and Description of Archives and Manuscripts. The committee realized that it was impossible to computerize a nonsystem. The NISTF, originally established to recommend a universal software system for archives and manuscripts, has reached the same conclusion and has retreated to the point where it is now attempting to recommend standards for description.

All talk of cooperation in the setting of standards, however, will be fruitless if archivists refuse to confront a basic issue. Minimum curriculum standards for the education of archivists will have

to be established before the archival profession can truly be regarded as a profession. For such a process to be put into place, there will have to be an extraordinary cooperative effort among archivists, historians, librarians, and educators because we archivists do not control our own educational system. Today, anyone can teach an archives course, in any department, at any level; and the courses vary from one or two-week institutes to full-fledged curricula with practicums and advanced seminars. The SAA Education Committee has been struggling with the problem. A few years ago it recommended standard basic curricula and a process for accreditation, but the committee just recently reversed itself. The Council of the SAA has accepted the committee's recommendation that no more action be taken. The usual difficulties have arisen, and the solution has been encumbered with a bit of the old archival mystique (no one can teach archives but an archivist); professional rivalries; turf-protection; lack of consultation with, or inclusion of, key educators from key departments; and the entire array of impediments facing any attempt to impose order and uniformity where there were formerly small independent satrapies or fiefdoms.

Indicative of the lethargy with which archival education is being treated is the fact that at the forty-sixth annual meeting of the society in 1982, where there were an astounding eighty-four sessions and workshops, with as many as twelve offered concurrently, there was only one session relating to the education of archivists. Since the beginning of publication of the *American Archivist* in 1938, only twenty-two articles on archival education have appeared, in contrast with fifty-five articles on arrangement and description. It would seem that the leaders of the society are not

concerned about the future of the profession and that they are not interested in having the society lead the movement for regularization. It is certain, therefore, that change will have to come through voluntary cooperation and not from the imposition of standards, at least in the foreseeable future. Besides the apparent disinterest of the society, I base this prediction on the fact that archival education, as indicated earlier, is not in the hands of archivists. Therefore, establishment of standards by the society could be meaningless to those who do not subscribe to the society's rules. Rather, there will be an evolution of standards brought about by a process that has already begun, the mutual exchange of syllabi, reading lists, and other course materials among those who teach archival courses, be they librarians, historians, archivists, or others.

Standards for hiring archivists will develop, not from the imposition of the society's will on institutions that hire archivists, thereby forcing them to seek qualified professionals, but conversely, because the directors or teachers of academic archival courses will actively seek to place their students in key professional positions. The society, by "making available" to its members a listing of open positions, assumes only a passive role in placing competent individuals in important jobs. In that sense, professionalization can come about only through individual efforts in the area of placement. What will then follow will be a process that is already beginning to take place. Archival institutions administered by well-trained and experienced archivists will insist that new employees also be well trained and educated. These will be self-imposed—not externally imposed—professional standards. We have already seen a phenomenal growth of professionaliza-

tion at the top levels of the archival world: in New York, Georgia, Alabama, Alaska, Texas, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, and Kentucky; at the New York Public Library; and at many other institutions. It is unlikely that any of these professionals will be content with less than professional staff. That demand will, in turn, improve the credibility of archival academic courses; and in a natural development over the next two decades, there will be a concomitant improvement in the stature of archivists as professionals. In effect, the change will come about regardless of the society's actions; and perhaps we should therefore heed the advice of the SAA Education Committee and the Report of the Committee for the Seventies, which suggests that the society not endorse advanced degrees for archivists.⁶ The society's endorsement, in fact, is irrelevant to the question. What is relevant is action by the society to help provide those tools which the administrators want and the teachers need; but those wants and needs are defined by administrators and teachers, not by the society, except as administrators and teachers act in their capacity as SAA committee members.

Perhaps the greatest present threat to the establishment of archival educational and hiring criteria is the move by the federal office of Personnel Management to downgrade both the librarian and archivist position classifications to almost clerical status where there would be no specific educational requirement for either profession. The movement should be going in the other direction. Whereas now it is necessary to have only eighteen hours of college credit in history, political science, or a related field to be classified as a federal archivist, it should increasingly be re-

quired that applicants for federal positions have specific archival training in a formal course with an accredited curriculum.

Without such a requirement, all of the pronouncements of the SAA committees and all of the protestations by archivists throughout the country about the OPM action will mean nothing. Where is the session expressing outrage at the OPM recommendation? Where is the rallying cry to muster the archival forces of the country to protest this threat to the profession as a whole? The profession has been too lax too long in not protecting its own territory and fighting for its principles. We should be out on the ramparts struggling for recognition of our important role in society; and, at the same time, we should be insisting that the skills we need are appropriately learned in a solid academic setting where professionalism can be developed. Instead, we have abjectly conceded that perhaps we are not as important as historians, librarians, computer specialists, and even business administration majors; and we have limped along on two-week institutes, summer practicums, three-day workshops, and an occasional elective tacked on to a library school curriculum. It is little wonder that the Office of Personnel Management looks on the archival field as something less than professional and contends that a group that accepts anyone who can correctly spell Schellenberg's name is hardly to be treated in the same class as lawyers, engineers, and public accountants. In sum, I believe that we are asking the wrong questions when we discuss the future path of archival development because we are not giving top priority to the condition of archival education. It is not impossible to have coopera-

⁶Philip P. Mason, "The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies. Report of the Committee for the Seventies," *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 208.

tion before the education and creditation question is settled, but any cooperative efforts in other areas will be temporary and ad hoc. I will therefore conclude by presenting what I believe are the priorities for future cooperation in the archival world and offering some suggestions for addressing them.

The first requirement is for archivists to define areas of cooperation that demand attention. Need there be cooperation in the design and construction of archival buildings? In implementation of local security measures? In the design of forms and file structures? In outreach programs? I think not. Guidelines may be required in these areas, but cooperation is not necessary. On the other hand, in the areas of archival description, automation, acquisition policies, appraisal standards, and education, we are confronting interinstitutional affairs, often requiring cooperation with librarians, historians, government officials, and educators. Others could be added to the list. Council should address the question of directly defining national concerns or establish a committee or task force to do so.

Once there has been a definition of the areas in which cooperative efforts are required, the profession, through committees and task forces, should turn to the problem of establishing priorities. The first priority for archivists is to cooperate in deciding what an archivist is and how to become one. Such a definition can recognize subordinate fields of archival specialization, such as map archivist, photo archivist, genealogical archivist; but these specializations should overlay the basic definition and contain the basic educational requirements. This question should be addressed initially by a national conference of teachers of archival courses, no matter what their professional affiliation.

The second priority should be strengthening of the Council's commit-

tee on planning. There is little to be gained from every Professional Affinity Group (PAG) going its own way to do what it thinks best in its own areas without reference to what the rest of the profession is doing. Placing limitations on the actions of PAGs and only selectively funding certain task forces may seem dictatorial, but a little authority can go a long way toward bringing order out of chaos. The SAA might easily be tempted to support the studies in certain fields just because a grant to do so comes its way. The society should make certain that it responds to national needs and not just to expediency. The Council should establish priorities on a three- to five-year plan and hold tightly to them in an effort to make progress against major problems.

With a clear picture in mind of what must be done, what the priorities are, and who will participate in the accomplishment of the goals, the next thing to turn to is how to fund the activities. We can no longer depend on Washington to fund every experiment, every scheme, every untested idea that we claim will advance the art and science of archival administration. The roughly four million dollars that has been allotted annually for archival projects from the NEH and the NHPRC over the past seven years is severely reduced. Museum services and library services grants are no longer being pumped into the profession like North Slope oil. The well is going dry; and it is going to take a lot more drilling, often in dry holes, to find the resources that are needed for the tasks ahead. The funds are there if we are persistent and intelligent; but we must realize that we cannot sustain progress by taking handouts for narrow, specific purposes. Financial planning begins at home. How much is needed, and for how long? How much of that need can be sustained by one's own institution or professional organization? What is the

size of the gap? How can the gap be filled temporarily until there can be firm institutional support for the whole project on a long-term basis? The NHPRC's State Assessment and Reporting grants, now being administered in twenty-seven states, will tell us all a lot about needs and priorities. The society should monitor the results closely, and the 1983 program committee should give prominent space to discussion of them and how they establish the basis for a national consensus. I suggest that they become the foundation for archival initiatives over the next decade, at least at the state and local level.

Next I would adopt the current slogan of the Bell Telephone Company, which suggests that we "reach out and touch someone." Trying to solve all archival problems within an organization that contains mainly archivists is a narrow and impractical approach. We must include in our discussions and in the decision-making process itself those colleagues who do not pay dues to the SAA or claim to be archivists. They are part of the solution as well as being part of the problem. In January 1977 the society held a conference in Chicago called "Priorities for Historical Records." It was a good conference. I attended and listened carefully, since the NHPRC might have been asked to support some of the proposals issuing from the conference. Very little happened. When one looks back it becomes apparent why. Of the thirty-three distinguished panelists, twenty-nine (by my definition) were archivists. Except for a précis of the conference published in the society's journal,⁷ little more was heard. No priorities were established or announced, no strategies were devised, no comprehensive plan was adopted, and no outsiders were admitted to the process. If we are

to survive as a profession, we cannot continue to function as a closed, self-perpetuating oligarchy. We must communicate and be prepared for give-and-take cooperation. We should determine whether the members of the PAGs or task forces represent the only ones involved in the questions that are being discussed. If the society could gather all of the people who will really be involved in finding solutions, would that group include academic department chairmen, records managers, a dean or two, a budget officer, librarians, a systems analyst, and maybe a few chemists? If not, I fear the echo of Lincoln at Gettysburg, when he said that "The world will take little note of what we do here."

In sum, we need to plan, to budget, to allocate, and to innovate according to a master scheme; and, when that process involves the wooing of a legislature at either the municipal, county, state, or federal level, it implies cooperation. Call it lobbying if you will, but it is really education.

We have seen such cooperation in the effective work of the Coalition to Preserve our Documentary Heritage, although the traditional amount of reluctance has surfaced because not everyone could run the show. True cooperation means that it is not important who runs the show, but that the job gets done. Let us, therefore, rise above petty jealousies and strive for that broader accomplishment, the improvement of research resources, at the federal, state, county, and municipal level; in the universities and research institutions; and in the libraries, historical societies, and church archives. Our cooperation should not be for narrow and partisan purposes but for the greatest good for the greatest number. We are the keepers of the flame. Let us take that responsibility seriously.

⁷Mary Lynn McCree and Timothy Walch, "Setting Priorities for Historical Records: A Conference Report." *American Archivist* 40 (July 1977): 291-347.