

The Blessings of Providence on an Association of Archivists

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Abstract: This history of the Society of American Archivists from its founding (1935–1937) to the appointment of a paid executive director (1974) is organized into three periods: “I. Growing Up in Depression and War, 1935–1945,” in which are outlined the founding of the society and its relationships with other organizations, especially the American Historical Association; the role of the National Archives in the affairs of the society; the development of the *American Archivist*; and the impact of hard economic times and war. “II. Coming of Age, 1946–1957,” in which are discussed the society through its twenty-first year; international archival relations; the committee structure; SAA as a national voice for the profession; the tensions between state archivists and the National Archives; the establishment of Fellows; and the growing complexity, and resulting problems, of the maturing association. “III. The Professionalization of the Association, 1958–1974,” in which is reviewed the development of the society into a truly professional association designed to meet the many and conflicting demands of a varied membership. The issues examined include the threat of fragmentation and the rise of regional archival groups; the decline in interest in international archival matters; independence for the National Archives and Records Service; the Loewenheim case at the Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Library; tensions within the SAA leadership; internal operations and problems with committees; growth patterns of membership and budget within SAA; the increasing role of state archivists in the affairs of the society; attitudes of state archivists toward NARS; the rise of the institutional archivists; education and training programs; and the search for funding for the executive director position as the culmination of the work of the Committee of the 1970s to democratize SAA and make it more responsive to the needs of the membership.

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This article is an expanded version of his presidential address delivered at the 47th annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, 5 October 1983, in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The author is grateful for the cheerful and competent manner in which his colleagues on the staff at the archives at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, especially Nancy Kunde, Steve Masar, and Bernie Schermetzler, not only carried out their duties, but also aided him as he tried to serve the society.

I. Growing Up in Depression and War, 1935-1945

Three events in the mid-1930s gave birth to the archival profession in the United States: the establishment of the National Archives in 1934; the funding of surveys by the Works Progress Administration of federal, state, and local records in 1935-37; and the organization of the Society of American Archivists in 1935-37. With the National Archives finally a reality, the Public Archives Commission of the American Historical Association (AHA) came to an end. A number of archivists saw that another type of organization was needed to further the interests of the profession and to cope with both the mass of historical records located by the surveys and the flood of current records being generated by governments expanded to ease the economic crisis of the era.

The chair of the 1935 AHA conference of archivists, A.R. Newsome, secretary of the North Carolina Historical Commission, and Solon J. Buck, director of publications for the

National Archives, worked together to have the conference consider the establishment of a national professional organization for archivists. Although they originally contemplated an institute for the leading practitioners of archival administration, the founders soon realized that such a limited membership would be too narrow to meet the needs of archivists around the country. Theodore C. Blegen, superintendent of the Minnesota Historical Society, addressed the conference on the "Problems of American Archivists." After describing the period as one of fruition for the "archival movement," he called for the creation of an "Institute of American Archivists" as a clearinghouse and center for discussion of problems and experiences of archivists at the federal, state, and local levels. Blegen called for this institute to prepare scholarly and bibliographic publications; conduct experiments and investigations; provide education and training; develop the theory and practice of archival administration, especially in regard to uniform standards and rules; and foster

cooperation among archivists and repositories.¹

Following his address, which could still serve as a charter for the society, the fifty-one conferees at the AHA luncheon agreed unanimously to establish an association at the next AHA meeting. A steering committee, called the "Committee of Ten on the Organization of Archivists," was charged with drafting a constitution. Three members of that committee—Buck, Waldo G. Leland of the American Council of Learned Societies and one of the real "fathers" of the profession, and Curtis W. Garrison, archivist of Pennsylvania—served as an executive committee. During discussion on the motion to consider forming the new association, a desire for a broadly based national, and even international, group of archivists, historians, librarians, and others involved in the administration of archives became evident. In the constitution adopted in 1936, it was declared that: "The objects of The Society of American Archivists shall be to promote sound principles of archival economy and to facilitate cooperation among archivists and archival agencies."²

In the months following the 1935 meeting, the Committee of Ten planned for the 1936 meeting to be held in conjunction with the dedication of the National Archives building, originally planned for the spring. Pres. Franklin D. Roosevelt's campaign schedule forced delay after delay until the dedication scheme was abandoned in favor of meeting again during the AHA conven-

tion in Providence, R.I. Julian P. Boyd of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania addressed the group on the impact the Historical Records and Federal Records surveys had on the increasing interest in preserving historical documentation. Given this new interest, Boyd declared that the proposed association of archivists could build on the achievements of these surveys and that "probably no new profession ever found itself brought into existence under more favorable auspices."³

The 1936 meeting is known to archival historians as the organizing meeting, and not as the first annual meeting. The ninety-six men and twenty-nine women who voted to form the society in 1936 came from twenty-three states, Canada, and Cuba. The District of Columbia alone had sixty-one in attendance, all but five from the National Archives. New York was the only state represented by more than five members. Twenty of the members were employed in state archives; the remainder came from a wide variety of institutional repositories. The attendees approved the draft constitution and elected a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer to one-year terms and a five-member council to staggered terms of up to five years. The eager and overambitious members adopted a constitution that provided for twelve committees, spreading the active membership too thinly; many of these committees were all but inactive for a number of years.⁴

The question of who should be eligible for membership in the society arose at

¹Waldo Gifford Leland, "American Archival Problems," *AHA Annual Report* (1909): 342-48; *Proceedings* of SAA annual meetings, 1936 and 1937, pp. 41-46, SAA Archives, Series 200/3/1, box 2, folder 11. (Hereafter, citations to the SAA Archives will be as follows, using the above citation as an example: 200/3/1, 2/11); P.C. Brooks to G.H. Scholefield, August 1940, 200/3/1, 2/20; *Bulletins of the National Archives* 2 (November 1936).

²A.R. Newsome to S. Buck, 14 March 1936, 220/1/2, 1/4; 200/5/1, 1/17; "Report on a Luncheon Conference of Archivists," 200/5/1, 1/18; 200/3/1, 2/7.

³R.D.W. Connor to Newsome, 13 May 1936, 200/3/1, 2/7; *Washington Post*, 30 December 1936, p. 7; *Proceedings*, p. 20.

⁴200/5/1, 1/17; 200/3/1, 2/7.

the very beginning. Individual membership was restricted "to those who are or have been engaged in the custody or administration of archives or historical manuscripts or who, because of special experience or other qualifications, are recognized as competent in archival economy." After developing professionally for many years as a suborganization of the AHA whose members were more interested in accessibility and use of manuscripts and archives than in preservation, arrangement, or description, archivists had to find their own identity apart from historians. Librarians also had an interest in the archival field; and the American Library Association formed a committee on archives in 1936. SAA president Newsome expressed irritation with "library imperialism" when it appeared in 1937 that a proposed joint program sponsored by SAA and ALA would be dominated by librarians who did not understand the implications of archival administration.⁵ SAA faced a dilemma. Many of its members and much of its potential support inevitably came from historians and librarians, but the archivists feared domination by the older associations. Without the dues of historians and librarians, however, the financial health of the infant society would have been poor indeed. In an effort to insure professional purity, the council insisted on a pro forma election of every applicant for membership. There is no evidence of anyone ever having been rejected, and certainly not on the grounds of being an historian or a librarian rather than an ar-

chivist. Though its formal policy may have discouraged some would-be applicants, the society generally resisted efforts to restrict membership. Lester J. Cappon expressed the society's view when he wrote that "the broad basis of membership has been one of the strongest features of the Society in giving it flexibility to extend its influence, and nurture its growth." In an effort to extend its influence, the society also met on occasion with allied professional groups, most notably the American Association for State and Local History.⁶

While searching for its identity among the historians and librarians, the SAA also had to cope with its own peculiar institutional and geographical conformation. With more than 40 percent of those at the Providence meeting employed by the National Archives, the involvement of this agency was essential to the early success of the society; but charges of domination by the National Archives are not justified. Solon Buck devoted much time and energy to the SAA, as did other National Archives officials, such as Philip C. Brooks, the first SAA secretary. Brooks reported that the Archivist of the United States, R.D.W. Connor, was "anxious to cooperate in every way" with the society; but "he is also anxious, I feel, not to have too much of the control of the Society concentrated in The National Archives." The National Archives, for example, did not want the editor of the proposed journal to be its employee, a policy that remained in effect until the late 1940s.⁷

⁵SAA Constitution, Section 3, "Membership"; P.C. Brooks to A.F. Kuhlman, 8 April 1938, 200/3/1, 2/17; Brooks to Newsome, 24 June 1937, 200/3/1, 2/10; Brooks to H.L. White, 1 July 1939, 200/3/1, 2/14.

⁶Newsome to Brooks, 13 July 1937, 200/1/2, 1/2; *American Archivist* 5 (January 1942): 53-54; Lester J. Cappon, "The Archival Profession and the Society of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 15 (July 1952): 197.

⁷Brooks to Boyd, 16 January 1937, 200/4/1, 1/1; Brooks to Newsome, 15 January 1937, 200/1/2, 1/2; Donald R. McCoy, *The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), pp. 93-97; *Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States: Second Report, 1936*, p. 33; *Third Report, 1937*, pp. 69-70; *Fourth Report, 1938*, pp. 5-6; William F. Birdsall, "The American Archivists' Search for Professional Identity, 1909-1936," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 1973; and Birdsall's oral history interview with Brooks, 24 April 1973, in the SAA Archives.

SAA President Newsome recognized that "the [National] Archives certainly will be of the greatest value to the Society, and the Society should not expect to be a burden to the Archives. There is a division line which could not be crossed with propriety and wisdom." The concentration of a large number of skilled archivists in one city able and willing to offer their services to their professional association gave the National Archives a major voice in the SAA. For a number of years, the society was affected by what Newsome once referred to as "the peculiar density of membership in Washington." Given the economic conditions of the late 1930s and the travel restrictions imposed by the federal government during World War II, it is hard to imagine how the society could have avoided being a largely East Coast organization. The National Archives has provided the society with a great number of its leaders, but it is also evident that all sections of the country and all branches of the profession have been represented among the officers and council. For example, of the first twenty-seven presidents, only nine came from the National Archives. Given the number of members from that institution and its leadership position in the profession, especially in the early years, one-third of the presidents should have come from it. The success the SAA enjoyed in this period is due to two groups: those at the National Archives and a vigorous body of state archivists who cooperated to build both a profession and a professional association.⁸

In 1937 SAA members travelled to Washington, not to dedicate the National Archives building (a ceremony that apparently never took place but which would be a fitting part of the fiftieth anniversary in 1984) but to hold the first annual meeting. Though in formal

existence for only six months, the society already had plans to publish both proceedings of the 1936 and 1937 meetings and a quarterly journal to be known as the *American Archivist*. After paying a registration fee of fifty cents and enjoying a good meal for barely twice that amount, the registrants settled back to hear Newsome deliver the first of his three successive presidential addresses.

Newsome began with an analysis of the society's horoscope. The society "was born under the influence of Capricorn, the goat, and will be ruled by Saturn. These astral influences predestine that its nature will be prudent, ambitious, persevering, melancholy, cold, dry, and perhaps archival." Acknowledging that "archivists no longer recognize astrology as an exact science" but were nevertheless interested in the future of their society, he announced his topic: "The Objectives of the Society of American Archivists." Newsome saw the first third of the twentieth century as an "era of archival pioneering in the United States" and predicted that the second third would be "a new era of remarkable archival fruition" in which the society would seek three major objectives: (1) "to become the practical, self-help agency of archivists for the solution of their complex problems" and "strive to nationalize archival information and technique"; (2) to seek "the solution of archival problems involving external relations with all archival agencies, with learned societies, and with the public"; and (3) "to encourage the development of a genuine archival profession in the United States" in which the society would "set training standards and advance archival administration through its meetings and publications." One need not examine a horoscope to know that these are still the objectives of the society after forty-six years.⁹

⁸Newsome to Brooks, 12 February 1937, 200/3/1, 2/10; Newsome to Brooks, 20 May 1939, 200/1/2, 1/16; Morris L. Radoff to Brooks, 1 September 1945, 200/9/1, 1/27.

⁹*American Historical Review* 43 (October 1937): 232, and (April 1937): 625; Newsome to Brooks, 17 May 1939, 200/1/2, 1/16; 200/9/1, 1/1; *Proceedings*, pp. 61-64.

Publishing the *American Archivist* quickly became the primary means of fulfilling these three objectives. The first issue appeared in January 1938, after a long search for an editor which delayed not only the journal but also the publication of the proceedings of the 1936 and 1937 meetings. The *American Archivist* appeared in the standard format of a history journal, reflecting the preference of editor Theodore C. Pease, professor of history at the University of Illinois. Though some members asserted that "the quarterly should be more of a trade journal than exclusively a magazine of scholarly articles," Pease devoted his editorial work largely to publishing the scholarly uses of historical manuscripts and an analysis of the European archival tradition. The first major article, for example, was devoted to a study of manuscript repair in archives in Great Britain and Europe and required most of the space in the first two issues. More space was given to the use of archival materials in the writing of history than to articles on technical aspects of archival administration, in spite of the announcement in the first issue that "The *American Archivist* will in its contents emphasize the concrete and practical over the general."¹⁰

Tensions developed between the editor and Council during the war years over both editorial policy and the inability of the editor to attend most annual meetings. In 1945 Pease resigned and was replaced by Margaret Cross Norton following her term as president. In spite of heavy duties as the archivist of Illinois, she immediately gave the journal a vigorous, practical format more in keeping with her view that the

journal "should be a trade publication." Articles on practical methodology, as well as features on the technical aspects of the craft, and photographs began to appear. The professional archivist found Norton's approach of more value than the ponderously learned style of Pease; but the society owes the first editor and his institution a great debt. Pease struggled for years to coax articles out of members not accustomed to writing papers and labored to turn talks delivered at annual meetings into pieces worthy of a scholarly journal. Likewise, the University of Illinois served the society with an annual contribution of \$500 (equal to one-fourth of the society's budget) to support editorial work, leaving the meager financial resources of the SAA responsible only for printing and mailing. Most older members of the society remember the generous contributions of the National Archives to the editorial work of the *American Archivist* for some twenty-five years; but it is important to note that in the first, crucial years the primary support came from personnel and institutions in the Midwest. It is true that many articles in the journal were written by National Archives employees, but only because Washington attracted many bright, articulate archivists interested in writing, not because the journal was a house organ of the National Archives.¹¹

The early years of the society were, of course, devoted to establishing the society and developing the journal into the respected voice of the profession; but the leadership wanted also to make significant contributions to the profession at large and not have the SAA

¹⁰Brooks to M.C. Norton, 15 January 1937, 200/1/2, 1/2; *American Archivist* 1 (January 1938): v-vi.

¹¹"Criticism of Editorial Policy, 1943-45," 200/3/1, 3/26; Norton to Cappon, 15 January 1944, 200/3/1, 3/9. Brooks to Pease, 12 January 1944; Norton to Karl L. Trever, 14 January 1944; L.J. Cappon, "Comments on Editorial Policy and Procedure," 24 February 1944; Buck to Norton, 21 March 1945; and Brooks to Cappon, 4 April 1945, all in 200/3/1, 3/26; "The Change in Editorship of *The American Archivist*," *American Archivist* 9 (July 1946): 233-35.

become just a social club. The society prepared model, uniform archival legislation to be used by the various states in drafting records laws. The secretary sent copies of these models to many public officials and noted in his 1940 report that eleven states had made use of them.¹²

At the 1938 meeting the members "unanimously voted that the president appoint a committee to recommend to the society the proper pronunciation" of archives, archivist, and archival. The committee dutifully reported back a year later with the correct pronunciations. Having spent years explaining to taxi drivers what an archivist is and attempting to cope with complaints of why the word archivist is not pronounced like archives, I wish that the special committee had not been so speedily discharged.¹³

The coming of the war forced the young society to mature rapidly. Archivists had to think about the preservation of current records for both historians and the war effort itself. Waldo Gifford Leland, in his 1940 presidential address, spoke of "The Archivist in Times of Emergency." Seeing the impact of the war on European archives, he urged American archivists to prepare for the national emergency, not only in their repositories but also by offering their assistance in the preservation of current vital government records. The Committee on the Protection of Archives Against the Hazards of War and the Committee on the Emergency Transfer and Storage of Archives were established and began cooperating with the appropriate government agencies. Few SAA members saw combat, but many played vital roles in securing and im-

proving the recordkeeping procedures of the federal government. Two committees on writing the history of the war were formed, and the membership passed a resolution at the 1944 business meeting urging support of the waste paper salvage program, provided citizens first consulted an archivist regarding "segregating valuable papers from the useless ones."¹⁴

Born in the economic hardships of the Great Depression and buffeted in its youth by war, the small (fewer than 300 members in 1945) and poor (an annual budget of around \$3,000 with a \$1,000 war bond as a reserve fund) society enjoyed a glorious moment. President Franklin D. Roosevelt liked archivists; and in 1942, amidst a war going badly, he took the time to tell the society so! At its 1941 annual meeting, the society named him its first honorary member; and SAA president R.D.W. Connor sent the membership certificate to Roosevelt on his sixtieth birthday. Roosevelt thanked Connor for the honor and expressed his "lifetime interest in the building up of archives throughout the nation— especially because of my personal interest in the naval history phase and the local Dutchess County material." Roosevelt went on to urge the society to work hard in building up public support for "the duplication of records by modern processes like the microfilm so that if in any part of the country original archives are destroyed, a record of them will exist in some other place."¹⁵

The fury of war impressed archivists, not only with the fragility of records, but also with the tenuousness of the society's relations with archivists in

¹²A.R. Newsome, "Uniform State Archival Legislation," *American Archivist* 2 (January 1939): 1-16; "The Proposed Uniform State Public Records Act," *American Archivist* 3 (April 1940): 107-115; 4 (January 1941): 53-54; 5 (July 1942): 194.

¹³*American Archivist* 2 (April 1939): 125; *American Archivist* 3 (January 1940): 56.

¹⁴W.G. Leland, "The Archivist in Times of Emergency," *American Archivist* 4 (January 1941): 1-12; 4 (July 1941): 210; 7 (January 1944): 52-54.

¹⁵SAA Honorary Membership Certificate, 7 October 1941, PPF 7972, FDR Presidential Library; *American Archivist* 6 (January 1943): 17.

other nations ravaged by battle. The SAA had always been open to foreign members, but the coming of war made it impossible for many of them to attend meetings or even pay their dues. In 1944 the dues of \$5 a year were reduced to \$1.50 for foreign members, and those unable to communicate with the society because of the war were still carried on the rolls. At the conclusion of the war, the SAA gave its support to the establishment of an International Council on Archives (ICA) as the best means of rebuilding collegiality among archivists throughout the world. Duplicate sets of the *American Archivist* were distributed to European and Asian archives destroyed by war. In spite of dislocations and inconveniences of the war, SAA never failed either to hold its regular annual meeting or to publish the *American Archivist*.¹⁶

The end of the war marked the end of the society's first decade, and Philip C. Brooks wrote a history of the period. No one more qualified for this task could have been found, for he not only kept the administrative routines going but he also led the efforts of the society to serve the whole profession. Brooks recalled being unexpectedly called on to record the minutes of the 1936 meeting and of subsequently holding the office of secretary for the next six years. After describing the birth and early years of SAA he looked to the future when the restoration of peace would mean archivists would have to redouble their efforts to restore the documentary heritage of the nation and the world.¹⁷

Few historical periods end in neat decades. It should be noted, therefore,

that on 29 December 1945, ten years and one day after the Conference of Archivists voted to consider establishing a national association of archivists, the SAA incorporated itself in the District of Columbia, declaring, as it had for a decade, that "The object of this corporation shall be to promote sound principles of archival economy and to facilitate cooperation among archivists and archival agencies."¹⁸

II. Coming of Age, 1946-1957

As the society matured, the wide diversity of interests and viewpoints of the members became evident. Secretary Cappon reported in 1950 that "State archivists have crossed swords with national; the internationalists have been criticized by some of our more domestic-minded members. Some 99.44% pure archivists have looked askance at curators of historical manuscripts in the society even though they have archives in their custody. The practical archivist has vied with the theoretical and the historical for space in our magazine." Each of the conflicts and tensions listed by Cappon shaped the society during its second decade.¹⁹

American archivists did not adopt an isolationist stance at the conclusion of World War II; instead, through their national organization, they sought to reestablish contacts with their foreign colleagues. The SAA joined the effort to create an international association of archivists to assist the archival programs of nations shattered by the fighting. Resolutions giving strong support to the establishment of ICA and an archives for the United Nations were passed at the 1948 annual business meeting. Solon

¹⁶*American Archivist* 8 (January 1945): 70; 9 (January 1946): 62; 10 (January 1947): 71-72; "Letter Sent to Archivists of Foreign Countries Concerning the Organization of an International Archival Council," *American Archivist* 10 (July 1947): 227-31.

¹⁷P.C. Brooks, "The First Decade of the Society of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 10 (April 1947): 115-28.

¹⁸Certification of Incorporation, 200/3/1, 3/1.

¹⁹*American Archivist* 14 (January 1951): 65-66.

J. Buck, second Archivist of the United States, paved the way for support for the ICA with his 1946 presidential address to the SAA. In 1949 the society agreed to contribute \$250 to ICA even though the SAA had suffered a budget deficit the previous year. Efforts to have individual members contribute an additional \$250 fell short, but at the 1950 business meeting the membership agreed to join ICA and to contribute \$50 annually in addition to the nominal dues. The outbreak of war in Korea aroused fears that archival repositories around the world would once again be destroyed. Unfortunately, concern with international archival matters among SAA members declined rapidly in the 1950s.²⁰

Committees charged with domestic affairs began to take a strong leadership role, however. The committees on state archives and state and local records continued surveying and analyzing archival legislation and completed a directory of state archivists as well as surveys of salaries, microfilm programs, and records destruction policies. The advice of the Committee on Archival Buildings and Equipment was sought by repositories completing construction and remodeling plans. The Church Records Committee prepared a bibliography of archival writings in its field. Shortly after its creation in 1949, the College and University Archives Committee became one of the most active committees, with breakfast conferences at annual meetings and diligent surveys of institutions of higher learning regarding archival programs, which resulted in a

number of new members for the society.²¹

Unfortunately, many other committees accomplished very little. A chairman of the Committee on Archival Research, charged with encouraging members to write papers for the *American Archivist*, lamented that while his committee had accomplished something, much remained to be done. He reported on the frustrations of trying to pry articles out of reluctant members, who would not write even when they had promised to do so.²²

If their work was not always all that could be desired, the committees did make a considerable contribution to the activities of the society, enabling it to fight for proper recognition of the profession and to cooperate with other associations on an equal footing. The dispute with librarians over the limits of their respective professions continued when the National Association of State Libraries asserted in a pamphlet in 1956 that "the preservation, administration, and servicing of the archives is a function of the State Library." Council passed a resolution reminding the library group that the two professions differed in the nature of materials handled and in the administration of those materials. In the resolution, SAA contended that librarians were not adequately trained for archival administration, denied "the library's exclusive right to jurisdiction in matters archival," and requested that the offending passage be removed from the pamphlet in future editions so that the archival profession and the majority of state archives not in state libraries

²⁰Solon J. Buck, "The Archivist's One World," *American Archivist* 10 (January 1947): 9-24; 10 (January 1947): 71, 76-77, 82-86; 11 (January 1948): 56-57, 64-67; 12 (January 1949): 57; 13 (January 1950): 51, 57; 13 (July 1950): 269; 14 (January 1951): 58; 15 (January 1952): 84; 15 (April 1952): 182; Brooks to L.K. Born, 17 September 1951, 200/1/3, 3/42; Brooks to Dean Acheson, 3 October 1949, 200/1/3, 3/42; 200/1/3, 3/48; 200/3/1, 1/16; 200/3/2, 2/14-16.

²¹200/3/1, 1/9-21; 200/3/2, 1/26 and 30, 2/1-3, and 4/20-5/18; *American Archivist* 12 (January 1949): 62-67; 13 (January 1950): 56, 62; 17 (January 1954): 71-72; 18 (January 1955): 46-47.

²²*American Archivist* 10 (January 1947): 87.

would not be injured. The passage of this resolution did not, of course, end misunderstandings between librarians and archivists; but it did lead to a friendly meeting between Council and a committee from the NASL to discuss areas of mutual concern. A joint ALA-SAA committee eventually developed out of such meetings.²³

Relations with another group were more cordial, perhaps because there was not the sharp professional conflict that existed with librarians.

For almost a decade after it was established in 1940, the American Association for State and Local History frequently met either concurrently with or just before or after the SAA's annual meeting. The AASLH made a very compatible companion for SAA, though some SAA members chafed at attending sessions not geared exclusively to professional archivists. A joint Committee on Historical Manuscripts, formed in 1948 to consider plans for a union list of manuscript collections, eventually led to the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections. Just as the AHA had nurtured the young SAA, so did the latter provide similar support for AASLH in its formative years.²⁴

Now able to hold its own with other national organizations, the SAA became, in its second decade, a national voice for the archival profession. Two national issues that ring a familiar, modern note first arose in the 1950s: independence for the National Archives and Records Service and expansion of the programs of the National Historical Publications Commission (NHPC). The society passed a resolution urging Dwight D. Eisenhower to maintain the nonpolitical character of the position of the Archivist of the United States when

rumors appeared that Sen. Everett Dirksen of Illinois wanted a Republican appointed to replace Wayne C. Grover. Because of the opposition of both historians and archivists, nothing came of the idea to replace Grover. In 1957 Grover introduced, and Council unanimously passed, a resolution urging support for a U.S. Congressional resolution "To encourage and foster the cooperation of private and state historical commissions with the National Historical Publications Commission." As a result, the NHPC not only supported the publication of papers of famous Americans but also encouraged the collecting and maintaining of historical manuscripts.²⁵

The SAA could make its voice heard on the national level because it had become a national organization. Though the membership still concentrated in the middle Atlantic states, the society had gained considerable strength in the entire country. It held its 1947 annual meeting west of the Mississippi for the first time, assembling in Glenwood Springs and Denver. Of the twelve annual meetings from 1946 through 1957, five were held in the East, five in the Midwest, and one each in the West and Canada. In 1950 the geographical distribution of the membership in the United States was approximately 54 percent on the East Coast, 19 percent in the South, 14 percent in the Mississippi Valley north of Oklahoma, 8 percent in the West, and 4 percent in New England. By 1954 the secretary reported that an analysis of 120 biographical data forms revealed that the percentage of the membership from the East Coast had declined by 10 percent.²⁶

Growth in absolute numbers was more important than the geographical

²³200/3/2, 4/21; *American Archivist* 19 (October 1956): 371-72; 20 (January 1957): 59.

²⁴200/3/1, 1/10; *American Archivist* 12 (January 1949): 55-56; 13 (January 1950): 47, 68; 15 (January 1952): 88-89; 18 (July 1955): 277.

²⁵*American Archivist* 16 (July 1953): 273-74; 20 (October 1957): 387; McCoy, *The National Archives*, pp. 270-71, 266-68.

²⁶*American Archivist* 14 (January 1951): 65; 17 (January 1954): 87-88.

distribution of the membership. As a result of several membership drives, the SAA grew from 283 individual members (as distinguished from institutional members or subscribers) in 1945 to 648 members by 1957. The society lost four members in 1947-48; and Council realized that, without additional members to share both financial responsibilities and administrative duties, the society could never reach its full potential. This growth in membership was not accomplished without a very significant shift in the criteria for joining. As early as 1946 Council considered revising the constitution to admit all those sympathetic with the objectives of the organization in addition to those actually working in the profession. SAA president Christopher Crittenden argued in 1949 that more liberal qualifications for membership should be adopted to "bring in new blood and new ideas." Denying that the professional archivist need fear being swamped by a flood of nonprofessional members, he observed: "Indeed, experience has shown that it is difficult to persuade these people to join the Society at all." Six years passed before Crittenden could announce at the 1955 annual business meeting that Council had approved an amendment to accept members on the basis of interest, not vocation, and to discontinue requiring a Council vote to approve each application. These changes were approved unanimously and without discussion by the members.²⁷

The membership did not always docilely accept the recommendations of the leadership. For the first dozen years the nominating committee's slate, consisting of a single nominee for each office, always won election without opposition. This tradition ended in 1949

when the archivist of Delaware nominated the archivist of Mississippi, William D. McCain, to run against Philip C. Brooks for president. On the first ballot both candidates received twenty-two votes. Brooks's supporters rallied and garnered two additional votes on the second ballot, while McCain again received only twenty-two. In a conciliatory move, McCain's seconder successfully moved that the election be declared unanimous.²⁸

This election struggle almost certainly resulted not from personal opposition to Brooks, but from a desire of state archivists to see the presidency continue in the hands of one of their own (the archivist of North Carolina was the incumbent) rather than return to the National Archives. Four years later Leon deValinger won a seat on Council in the society's second contested election. This 1953 election achieved a rough balance of power: National Archives personnel held the presidency, vice presidency, and one Council seat; the secretary and treasurer were from business archives; and state archivists held the remaining four Council seats. The only unrepresented segments were the relatively small and young groups of college and university and religious archivists. The latter group has consistently been underrepresented in the governance of SAA. Two other contested elections occurred during the first two decades. In both cases the nominating committee's slate prevailed over the floor nominee.²⁹

The election disputes between employees of the national and state archives revealed the deep dividing tensions between these two groups. Concentrated both professionally and geographically, SAA members from the National Ar-

²⁷*American Archivist* 13 (January 1950): 59, 65-67; 11 (January 1948): 47; 10 (January 1947): 73; 12 (October 1949): 366-68; 19 (January 1956): 80.

²⁸*American Archivist* 13 (January 1950): 52.

²⁹*American Archivist* 15 (January 1952): 84-85; 17 (January 1954): 84; 20 (April 1957): 171.

chives were often seen by some state archivists as dominating the affairs of the society while neglecting the traditional professional concerns of state archivists. Specifically, they charged the National Archives with largely ignoring the arrangement and description of manuscript collections to be used by historians in favor of the management of noncurrent records systematically generated by governmental agencies. President Brooks, anxious to bridge the gap with the state archivists, asked Margaret Norton, chairman of the 1950 Program Committee, to plan a session in which state and national archivists would present papers outlining what professional contributions and obligations each group expected of the other. Concerned about "the old accusation that the National Archives plays too dominant a role in the Society of American Archivists," Brooks hoped that such a session would lead to a system of better cooperation, through which the National Archives could provide more technical assistance to the states while state archivists could assist the National Archives in the appraisal and disposition of records of interest to both the federal and state governments. He added, "Between us, the National Archives and State archivists have the tremendously important task of determining the archival heritage of the American people, and there are many overlapping fields which we should be discussing more than we do in our SAA meetings . . ."³⁰

Norton planned the session entitled "Areas of Cooperation Between the National Archives and State Archives," reflecting her concern with the cleavage between the two groups. While editor of the *American Archivist* in the mid 1940s, she had written to SAA president Solon

Buck about the trend that "[seemed] to be aligning most state archivists and the Washington people in two more or less antagonistic factions in the Society." She wanted state archivists to give more attention to records management problems and, praising the role of the National Archives in the society, declared of the National Archives: "lest anyone think you were trying to dominate the Society . . . you lean so far backwards that I sometimes fear you will topple over."³¹

In retrospect, the society benefitted from this tension. Certainly neither group could fairly say that its interests had been subjugated. Of the dozen presidents who served from 1937 to 1957, five were state archivists and five (if Ernst Posner is included) were from the National Archives. The National Archives staff did bring in new approaches and archival principles that benefitted all archivists, and the state archivists preserved the historical heritage of their respective states with a wide variety of innovative programs. Despite the unhappiness of certain individuals, who felt that the other group dominated SAA, the society grew to maturity under the administrations of archival giants such as Newsome, Buck, Norton, and Brooks, who, through their professional association, served the entire profession. It must be admitted that the influence of state archivists was divided among a large group spread all over the nation while that of the National Archives was concentrated in one location and on a few administrators; but the National Archives did not abuse its position in the limelight. Rather, it strove to serve the profession and the society by doing work that others could not do. For example, in 1949 the editorship of the

³⁰Brooks to Norton, 9 December 1949, 200/1/3, 3/40.

³¹*American Archivist* 14 (July 1951): 223-28; Norton to Buck, 14 January 1947, and Buck to Norton, 20 February 1947, 200/3/1, 3/6.



SAA officers and Council, 1956. Standing, left to right: Father Henry Browne, secretary; Wayne Grover; Karl Trever, editor of the *American Archivist*. Seated, left to right: Ernst Posner, president; William Overman, treasurer; Alice Smith; Dolores Renze; Leon deValinger; Henry Edmunds, vice-president. Council member David Duniway was not present for the photograph.

American Archivist moved from the Illinois State Archives to the National Archives and Karl L. Trever became editor. All successive editors have been employees of NARS until the beginning of the current decade, and most of its editorial departments have been headed by other employees of that agency, not because of a desire for control by NARS, but because it has been the only agency that would, or could, devote the necessary resources to the task. Without the support of the National Archives in the form of paying the salary of the editor, the society would have had a very difficult financial burden. When the SAA published the journal in the late 1940s without the annual \$500 subsidy from the University of Illinois, it quickly ran a deficit of up to \$400 in publishing

costs. By the mid-1950s, however, the press run was over 1,100 copies, and the editor reported modest success in attracting articles.³²

Tensions over governance of the society became more than just an election issue when attention turned to revisions of the constitution. In 1946–47 a committee, consisting largely of past presidents and current officials, considered revisions to the ten-year-old document. Most of the proposed changes were minor, but one called for elimination of a phrase that assured the membership a voice in governance. The Council rejected this proposed alteration on the grounds “that this clause guarantees democratic procedure if the Society desires to overrule an action of Council.” This idea was tabled at the

³²200/7/3, 1/41; 200/7/2, 1/14; *American Archivist* 11 (January 1948): 60; 12 (January 1949): 61; 13 (April 1950): 177–80; 20 (April 1957): 173.

1947 business meeting. At the same meeting, the editor became a full voting member of Council even though the position remained an appointive one. This change in status reflected the appointment of a former president to the editorship and made the editor a more active participant in the affairs of the society.³³

At the 1951 annual business meeting a rather acrimonious debate developed over a petition by five members to amend the constitution. One amendment would have removed the editor from the Council, even in an ex officio and nonvoting capacity. Another would have forbidden the president and vice president to succeed themselves. Both efforts failed, though the latter proposal did clear Council. In 1957 both Council and the business meeting approved an amendment limiting the president to a single consecutive term with the added stipulation that the vice president would automatically succeed to the presidency after a one-year term. This latter provision did not win approval without a debate over parliamentary procedural matters, an entertainment for which our annual meetings have become justly renowned.³⁴

The old question of where annual meetings should be held also came under scrutiny. At the 1951 meeting, Council and the membership rejected, after some debate, a proposed amendment requiring that Council "shall consult the latest available mailing list and choose of the available meeting places that place of meeting which shall seem to them to be nearest the places of residence of the largest number of members." Undoubtedly, such a place would have been

on the East Coast near the District of Columbia. Without much doubt, this amendment in defense of eastern provincialism developed out of opposition to the location of the 1950 meeting in Madison, Wisconsin.³⁵

Morris L. Radoff, archivist of Maryland, complained to Brooks that the SAA would never reach the goal of being "useful professionally to the younger people . . . if we continue to meet in Denver, Quebec or Madison." While the educational and cultural advantages of meeting in a wide variety of locations persuaded Brooks and the rest of Council of the wisdom of the policy of meeting in cities throughout the nation, it cannot be denied that the East Coast meetings were usually much better attended than those held beyond the tidewater. Meetings in Denver, Quebec, and Madison attracted between fifty and sixty people each, while 165 attended the 1951 meeting in Annapolis. The 1953 meeting, however, proved that meetings did not have to be held on the East Coast to be well attended if the program and setting were imaginatively planned and selected. This meeting, which was centered around business archives and the opening of the archives of the Ford Motor Company, was the first ever to be devoted to a single topic. The attendance in Detroit equalled that of Annapolis.³⁶

The most significant constitutional change proposed in the 1950s involved the effort to honor outstanding members. The Professional Standards and Training Committee considered the matter for several years before reporting to Council in 1956 that "a special class of members of the Society known as Fellows of the Society of American Ar-

³³*American Archivist* 11 (January 1948): 50-51.

³⁴*American Archivist* 15 (January 1952): 82-85; 22 (January 1958): 99; 200/3/33, 4/17.

³⁵*American Archivist* 15 (January 1952): 82-85.

³⁶Radoff to Brooks, 18 October 1949, 200/1/3, 3/49; *American Archivist* 13 (January 1950): 54; 200/9/1, 1/33; *American Archivist* 16 (July 1953): 273.

chivists" should be established. Council endorsed the proposal, which provided for the election of no more than 15 percent of the members as fellows by the Professional Standards and Training Committee. The committee consisted of all the past presidents, all of whom would automatically be designated fellows to avoid any charge of favoritism. The constitutional amendment was approved fifty-six to forty at the 1957 meeting after a lively discussion. The close vote revealed the resistance of those members who feared that such a separate class of honored members would be divisive or elitist. Those supporting the idea, however, were concerned not with empty honors for those adept at playing archival politics, but with honoring those who had made significant contributions to the theory and practice of archival administration, thereby encouraging others to improve the standards of the profession. While it may be that many fellows have had more of a personal than a professional impact, the society

owes a debt to such supporters of the fellows concept as Dolores Renze, Morris Radoff, and Leon deValinger, who struggled so hard for so long to raise standards in a profession with few clear educational or career guidelines and benchmarks.³⁷

While the members focused their attention on such matters as fellows, the respective roles of state and national archives, and a variety of changes in the association and its constitution, the mundane issues of finances and budgets arose. Not unlike the situation with other teenagers, the cost of supporting the society began to climb in the second decade as SAA coped with both the inflation after the war and the rising expectations of the members regarding services and programs. Dues, which had always been \$5 a year for both individual and institutional members, increased to \$10 for institutional members in 1951, while those for foreign members, which had been reduced because of the war, were returned to the domestic rate. In 1954 dues for in-

³⁷*American Archivist* 16 (January 1953): 89; 19 (April 1956): 177; 20 (January 1957): 58-66; 20 (April 1957): 175; 20 (October 1957): 384-85; 21 (January 1958): 98-99; Radoff to Committee on Professional Standards and Training, 28 February 1956, 200/3/2, 3/30.



Six new Fellows were honored at the 1962 annual meeting of the society. Julian Boyd and William J. Van Schreeven were not present at the conference. Pictured here, from left to right, are William Alderson, Harold Pinkett, Robert Brown, and Al Leisinger.

dividual members rose to \$6 annually, and in 1956 provision was made for institutional sustaining members with dues of \$100 to \$500 a year. Increased costs made increased dues a necessity. Cash on hand as of 30 June 1951 dropped to \$160.97. For each of the three previous fiscal years, expenditures had exceeded revenues by several hundred dollars, or approximately 10 percent of the budget. These overages were caused largely by high publishing costs, but in 1952 the *American Archivist* began to run advertisements. This income helped provide the society with a small surplus. The journal represented the largest drain on the resources of SAA. Subscriptions and sales produced about 40 percent of income in 1953 and 1954, but publishing and mailing costs equalled 80 percent of the income. The annual meeting also began to produce a small income by the mid 1950s. By 1952 the society had returned to a sound financial footing, and over the next six years it accumulated a surplus of several thousand dollars on budgets ranging from \$4,257 in 1952 to \$6,088 in 1957. The cash balance in 1957 amounted to \$7,495, including a savings account of \$5,095.³⁸

This surplus allowed the accumulation of additional reserves earmarked for the most ambitious project yet: the hiring of a paid secretariat. President Ernst Posner announced a three-year program to raise \$10,000 in pledges to support the position. Unfortunately, only \$2,583 was pledged by seventy-seven members. Some sixty others indicated support of the idea but were unable to make a pledge. Only twelve members opposed the plan, but their views prevailed by

default as the society was unable to secure from foundations the critical financial support needed for the secretariat.³⁹

The dream of a paid secretariat would have to wait until the 1970s, but this twenty-first year of the society in 1957 did witness the achievement of another long-term goal. For the first time more than 1,000 members and subscribers had enrolled—648 individual members, 100 institutional members, and 347 subscribers. Secretary Renze noted in her 1957 annual report: "This 21st annual meeting in many ways reflects the coming of age of the Society—the membership, the approach to problems encountered, and the examination of trends for the future."⁴⁰

III. The Professionalization of the Association, 1958–1974

The period after the society reached the age of majority can be summarized, in a rather clumsy phrase, as the professionalization of the association. In the years from 1958 to 1974 the leadership of the society turned increasingly toward professional methods of conducting its affairs. Funds were sought, and eventually found internally, for a paid executive director. Members, no longer content just to stumble into a job, demanded the education necessary for a professional career as an archivist; and the society began to devote additional resources and personnel to professional and technical research. By the 1970s it was clear to the leadership that the society would have to be both more efficient and more responsive to the professional needs of its members in order to suc-

³⁸*American Archivist* 15 (January 1952): 82; 14 (January 1951): 48-50; 20 (April 1957): 172; 14 (January 1951): 61; 15 (January 1952): 92; 17 (January 1954): 85; 18 (January 1955): 51; 19 (January 1956): 82; 200/4/1, 1/1-20.

³⁹*American Archivist* 18 (July 1955): 278-79; 19 (October 1956): 371; 20 (January 1957): 62; 20 (October 1957): 385-87; 200/3/1, 3/39.

⁴⁰*American Archivist* 21 (January 1958): 101, 104. The number of subscribers also included exchanges with other associations but did not reduce the total of 1,095 below 1,000.

cessfully meet these challenges.

The exciting days of forming a new association were far behind when the society celebrated its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1961. Solon Buck's vision of the one world of archives dimmed in the face of an indefinite future as the SAA grappled with the questions of its contribution to the profession and its role in documenting the history and culture of the nation. Contending forces pushed from opposite directions. A much larger, younger membership, working in a bewildering variety of repositories, sought an increasingly complex level of services and threatened to form its own professional associations if such services were not provided. To have the income and personnel needed to support the organizational structure and to provide the services demanded by the various factions, it was essential to hold this amorphous body of members together. Faced with these pressures, the leadership became more introspective in the 1960s as it analyzed the society and its programs.

Officers concerned about the future of the SAA warned about the dangerous possibility of various segments of the profession forming separate associations. An early rift between archivists, concerned primarily with historical documentation and manuscript collections, and records managers, involved in the disposition of current records, contributed to the formation of the Association of Records Executives and Administrators (AREA). Efforts to hold a joint SAA-AREA meeting in 1964 broke down over registration fees, which the archivists thought were too high. While the two groups did meet in 1965, the unfortunate gap between their closely related disciplines continued to widen.

By the end of the 1960s, not only had the oral historians and librarians working with manuscripts formed their own associations, but archivists themselves had begun to consider forming their own groups based on either professional specialization or geographical proximity.⁴¹

Groups in Michigan and Ohio led a movement that in a few years saw the entire country organized into local, state, and regional associations. While some SAA leaders viewed regional associations as increasing the grass roots support for the profession and, in the long run, for SAA, others saw in them a further fragmentation of the national organization. Rapid growth of regional associations forced Council in 1972 to form a committee to meet with regional representatives. At the meeting in the spring of 1973 it soon became clear to everyone that, while the regionals jealously guarded their independence, fears of conflict between them and SAA were groundless and that, in fact, the regionals could provide educational training and professional relationships for isolated and inexperienced archivists who were unable to participate actively in SAA. The regionals were formed to provide services at the grass roots level, but many of their active members have served with distinction in SAA.⁴²

With assistance from the regionals on local affairs, the society, in theory, should have had more time to devote to international archival matters; but, given the preoccupation with the structure of SAA, international issues received little attention beyond minimal participation in ICA. SAA did host a reception for ICA's Extraordinary Congress on "Archives for Scholarship—Encouraging Greater Ease of Access" in

⁴¹200/1/9, 1/9; 200/3/4/2, 2/8 and 15; *American Archivist* 27 (July 1964): 444; 28 (July 1965): 463-65.

⁴²*American Archivist* 31 (April 1968): 214; 31 (July 1968): 328; 31 (October 1968): 622; 31 (January 1968): 67; 32 (January 1969): 61-63; 36 (April 1973): 305, 313-14, 316; 200/1/10, 1/23; 200/5/1, 2/13.

Washington in 1966. The society's financial contribution to ICA remained at a minimal level even when Council passed a resolution calling on UNESCO to "improve the precarious financial position of the Council." The only real involvement with foreign archivists, beyond a few members attending meetings at their own or their institution's expense, came in the form of a \$500 contribution to the Committee to Rescue Italian Art to be used to restore archives and manuscripts destroyed by the 1966 floods in Italy.⁴³

In the 1960s relations with foreign archivists became largely a matter of teaching them, not learning from them. Council accepted grants from the Asia Foundation to provide SAA memberships for archivists in the Orient and funds to attend the society's annual meetings. One exception to this fairly dismal picture of international archivy should be noted. The word "American" in the Society of American Archivists has always included Canadian colleagues, a considerable number of whom have been members of the society. During this period, two distinguished Dominion Archivists of the Public Archives of Canada, W. Kaye Lamb and Wilfred I. Smith, were elected president of SAA. To a much lesser extent, archivists from Mexico, the Caribbean, and Latin America have also participated in the affairs of the society.⁴⁴

Unlike international matters, NARS received a great deal of attention. Fearing that the resignation letter of Wayne C. Grover, which called for an indepen-

dent NARS, might lead to a political backlash by the General Services Administration and result in the appointment of a nonprofessional as Archivist of the United States, Council passed a resolution in 1965 calling for Robert H. Bahmer's appointment as acting archivist to be made permanent. Very shortly thereafter the GSA administrator did appoint Bahmer to the position, but he did nothing to resolve the independence issues raised by Grover. The SAA did not directly confront the issue of independence until 1967, when it joined AHA and OAH in forming a Joint Committee on the Status of the National Archives. H.G. Jones conducted a study that eventually resulted in an analytical history of NARS. The controversies surrounding that study are beyond the scope of this report except to note the honored place of both Jones and the SAA in the struggle for the independence of NARS. This struggle continues at a critical point today.⁴⁵

The struggle for an independent National Archives consumed much of the energy the society devoted to national concerns; but other issues also received attention. The most positive development concerned the National Historical Publications Commission. All archivists owe a great debt to the efforts of Charles E. Lee and others which resulted in 1974 in the NHPC being reestablished as the National Historical Publications and Records Commission with additional funding to support records preservation and description projects as well as the traditional editorial projects.⁴⁶ The

⁴³*American Archivist* 30 (January 1967): 212; 29 (January 1966): 121; 29 (July 1966): 433-44; 30 (January 1967): 212; 30 (July 1967): 507; 30 (October 1967): 620; 200/3/4/2, 3/10.

⁴⁴*American Archivist* 25 (January 1962): 109-10; 26 (January 1963): 112; 29 (January 1966): 121-22, 125; 200/1/1, 1/4; 200/3/3/3, 4/16; 200/3/4/2, 1/23, 2/9, and 53; 200/4/5, 1/18-19.

⁴⁵200/1/1, 1/5; *American Archivist* 29 (April 1966): 307; McCoy, *The National Archives*, pp. 345-47; see pp. 352-363 for an analysis of Jones' study; H.G. Jones, *The Records of a Nation* (New York: Atheneum, 1969); *American Archivist* 31 (January 1968): 108; 31 (April 1968): 213; 31 (July 1968): 325-28; 32 (April 1969): 181; 200/3/5/2, 4/45-46; 200/1/6, 1/43; 200/3/5/2, 2/8; 200/1/8, 1/8-11; 200/1/7, 1/10.

⁴⁶200/1/1, 1/29; *American Archivist* 35 (October 1972): 456; 36 (January 1973): 136; 36 (July 1973): 475-76.

other major development, the famous Loewenheim case, proved to be much less positive for archivists and their society, though it has resulted in a better mutual understanding between historians and archivists.⁴⁷ James B. Rhoads, who had borne the brunt of Loewenheim's attacks, proposed in Council that SAA approach AHA and OAH about setting up a joint committee to mediate future conflicts of this type. Rhoads's proposal won acceptance and led to the eventual establishment of the Joint Committee on Historians and Archives. This committee prepared guidelines for handling disputes, whether brought to their attention by historians or archivists; but several years would have to pass before the historians recognized the equal partnership with archivists to the extent of changing the name to the Committee of Historians and Archivists.⁴⁸

Discussions of the relationship between historians and archivists had gone on since the SAA's founding; and if the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1961 passed without resolution of all areas of conflict, at least both sides could take pride in the growth of the archival association, which owed so much to the support of historians. Membership in SAA increased from 243 in 1937 to over 900 by 1961, with an additional 400 subscribers. The annual budget had, likewise, grown from just over \$2,000 to over \$12,000, with a reserve and cash balance of

\$10,000. A membership directory, prepared by Dolores C. Renze, containing historical data on the early years of the SAA, was the first society publication ever produced using machine-readable technology.⁴⁹

Renze left the office of secretary in 1963 after seven years of hard, devoted service. Thanks largely to her efforts, the SAA had orderly procedures and operations. Most importantly, its tax status had been changed to allow SAA to function as a tax exempt, nonprofit corporation structured to meet the needs of the members for educational programs. The association now functioned about as smoothly as could reasonably be expected given the vagaries and spotty work habits of volunteer, short-term, part-time elected officials and committee chairmen. Such organization, however, had been achieved at the cost of considerable personal animosity and abrasion.⁵⁰ In 1964 Renze returned to the fray as vice president and president-elect after winning the first SAA election in which the nominations committee proposed a dual slate for the vice president and the two Council seats. This more democratic procedure also reflected complicated, behind-the-scenes political infighting involving disgruntled officers and Council members; NARS officials jealously guarding their role in the society; and members, particularly some state archivists, who objected to the excessive influence, in their view, of

⁴⁷R.R. Palmer to F.G. Ham, 30 January 1970, and D.E. Miller to Ham, 27 January 1970, 200/3/5/2, 3/3; *American Archivist* 33 (January 1970): 78, 125; 33 (April 1970): 225-26; 33 (October 1970): 434; 34 (April 1971): 216-17; Herman Kahn, "The Long-Range Implication for Historians and Archivists of the Charges Against the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library," and Richard Polenber, "The Roosevelt Library Case: A Review Article," *American Archivist* 34 (July 1971): 265-75, 277-84; *Final Report of the Joint AHA-OAH Ad Hoc Committee to Investigate the Charges Against the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library and Related Matters*, 24 August 1970 (Washington: American Historical Association, 1970); 200/3/5/2, 3/1-3.

⁴⁸200/6/1/1, 2/1; *American Archivist* 34 (April 1971): 222; 34 (October 1971): 409-10; 35 (January 1972): 96-7; 35 (April 1972): 250; 35 (October 1972): 460-61; 36 (April 1973): 319-20; 36 (July 1973): 415; 36 (October 1973): 627; 37 (April 1974): 370.

⁴⁹*American Archivist* 25 (January 1962): 120-22; "Proceedings of the Society's Twenty-fifth Anniversary Luncheon," *American Archivist* 25 (April 1962): 227-40; 24 (July 1961): 365; *Society Directory: 25th Anniversary Edition*, 1961.

⁵⁰200/3/3/1, 1/1-8.

Washington in the affairs of SAA. In 1966 society politics again led to a contested election in which the nominating committee's sole nominee for vice president lost to a nominee from the floor. Fortunately, the bitterness of such campaigns has been replaced by the memory of the dedicated service of officials such as secretaries Philip P. Mason, F. Gerald Ham, and Robert M. Warner, who, as successors to Renze, carried forward the work of professionalizing the association.⁵¹

Ham, archivist of Wisconsin, playing the role of an archival Janus, used his 1970 secretary's report to look back at the accomplishments of the decade and to consider the future needs of both the society and the profession. Membership and subscriptions had increased by almost 1,000, and the annual budget had risen to over \$50,000. Whereas the 1961 meeting only had 160 registrants, 511 attended the 1970 meeting; and the number of sessions on the annual program had increased from five to twenty. Educational offerings, limited to three summer institutes at the beginning of the decade, could now be found at twelve institutions, including three at the graduate level. Ham urged his audience to use this new strength to solve some of the long-neglected problems facing archivists, particularly in the areas of archival theory and advocacy.⁵²

The contributions of state archivists such as Mary Givens Bryan, deValinger, Ham, Jones, Lee, and Renze proved vital in this period. If the National Archives constituted the preeminent institutional component of the society in its early years, state archivists occupied

that position in this third period. Six of the sixteen presidents from 1958 to 1974 were state archivists, as were three of the four secretaries, two of the three treasurers, and a large number of Council members. The Committee on State and Local Records, which had published detailed studies of state archival programs in the 1950s, continued to be one of the most productive committees. In 1958 it played a leading role in having Council form a Committee on Federal-State Relationships to deal with tensions between the two groups as well as to facilitate cooperation and the sharing of information on archival programs.⁵³

In 1963 the State and Local Records committee established the Distinguished Service Award (DSA). Three distinguished state archivists and fellows of the Society—Dolores Renze, Mary Givens Bryan, and Leon deValinger—provided the trophy to be awarded “for significant and aggressive leadership in archival documentation or administrative improvement and development.” The society established other awards such as the Gondos Memorial Award, the Waldo Gifford Leland Prize, and the Philip M. Hamer Award to honor its outstanding members and to win public recognition for the society and the profession.⁵⁴

The DSA was conceived in part as an effort to improve state archival programs then undergoing examination in a study conducted by the society under a grant from the Council on Library Resources. Ernst Posner, America's foremost archival educator and theoretician, demonstrated the critical contribution of state archival programs to the na-

⁵¹200/2/1, 1/42; 200/3/3/1, 1/8; 200/3/4/2, 1/26-27 and 2/1, 15-16 and 57-58; *American Archivist* 28 (January 1965): 136-37; 30 (January 1967): 210.

⁵²*American Archivist* 34 (January 1971): 92-100.

⁵³*American Archivist* 22 (April 1959): 253; 22 (July 1959): 353; 200/3/3/2, 3/22-4/8.

⁵⁴*American Archivist* 26 (October 1963): 534-35; 37 (July 1974): 513; 200/1/5, 2/68. Although he was never an archivist it is impossible to overstate Leland's contributions to the profession, which extended beyond his death with generous bequests to fund an award for publications.



Phillip Brooks, right, presents the Waldo Gifford Leland Prize to Phillip Hamer for *A Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States*. The presentation took place at the 1962 SAA annual meeting in Rochester, New York.

tion's historical recordkeeping activities in his *American State Archives* (1964). Cooperation of state archivists in this study took courage as the weaknesses of many state archives were exposed along with the strengths of sound programs. The chapter on "Standards for State Archival Programs," however, provided guidelines that led to several improved programs. An update of Posner's study is now being considered, and it is essential that the society cooperate as fully with this update as it did in the original survey. It is essential that the SAA and state archivists work in closest harmony.⁵⁵

The dominant leadership role of state archivists began to dwindle in the 1970s, not because of a decline in talent or abilities within the group, but rather because they fell victim to demographics. The salad days of colleges and universities in the 1960s and early 1970s provided both money to support and graduates to staff archival programs in institutions of higher learning. Perhaps two-thirds of the more than 900 college and university archives listed in the 1980 *Directory of College and University Archives in the United States & Canada* had been created in the two preceding decades, and many of the archivists em-

⁵⁵200/11/3, Box 7 especially.

ployed by them became members of SAA. The number of archival repositories in religious and business organizations also grew rapidly. In the survey of "American Archivists and Their Society," conducted by Frank B. Evans and Robert M. Warner in 1970, it was reported that of the 423 respondents, exactly one-third worked for colleges and universities while only 13.5 percent came from state government. There were almost as many college and university archivists as federal and state government archivists combined and almost as many from the business and religious fields combined as from state archives.⁵⁶

The old cliché about real estate being a good buy because God is not making any more of it applied to state archivists. The fifty states did not increase their numbers, nor did the staff of the state archives grow enough to compete successfully with the institutional archivists for society leadership positions. The answer to Ernst Posner's question in the title of his 1956 presidential address: "What, Then, Is the American Archivist, This New Man?"⁵⁷ had become by 1970: "Crevecoeur, he or she is an institutional archivist."

The growth in the membership in this period challenged the leaders' traditional methods of operating the volunteer-staffed association. Twenty-one years had been required to reach the first thousand members and subscribers, but it required only a decade to reach the second thousand. Four years later, in 1971, the society had one thousand in-

dividual members. In 1974 the new executive director reported 1,308 individual members and a total membership of 2,710, in spite of a dues increase and the deletion of many former members for nonpayment of dues. Just keeping track of this large membership required many hours of the secretary's time, leaving little time for program development.⁵⁸

Many of the new members enrolled in the membership drives of the 1960s and 1970s were interested in archival work as a permanent career, not just as a job. This trend increased as the number of teaching positions in history declined. They turned to the society for placement services as well as for the specialized professional training provided by college programs. SAA president Everett O. Alldredge proposed in 1963, and Council accepted his offer, to join NARS in sponsoring a series of symposia on archival administration. These one-day training sessions, conducted largely by NARS regional offices, provided low cost educational opportunities for new archivists and their more experienced colleagues to discuss problems, hear papers, and participate in panel discussions at both the beginning and advanced levels.⁵⁹

Not all the educational needs of the profession could be provided through such symposia, and the Education and Training Committee in 1965 arranged for a two-week archival training course at Columbia University. As other institutes were offered, Council took up

⁵⁶Nicholas C. Burckel and J. Frank Cook, "A Profile of College and University Archives in the United States," *American Archivist* 45 (Fall 1982): 410-12; 34 (April 1971): 162.

⁵⁷*American Archivist* 20 (January 1957): 3.

⁵⁸*American Archivist* 23 (January 1960): 95; 31 (January 1968): 113-14; 34 (January 1971): 99; 38 (January 1975): 119. This rise in membership also meant a broader geographical distribution. By 1966 the 840 U.S. members represented every state. The SAA had become a truly national association enriched even further by 66 (7 percent of the total) individual members from other nations. *American Archivist* 30 (January 1967): 216-17.

⁵⁹*American Archivist* 27 (April 1964): 339-40; 27 (July 1964): 442; 29 (January 1966): 113, 125-26; 30 (January 1967): 213-25; 30 (April 1967): 349-50; 31 (January 1968): 111-12; the *American Archivist* of April 1968 was devoted almost entirely to this topic.

the issues of society sponsorship and certification of courses. The profession considered the various facets of the training of archivists: formal academic courses, institutes, library school training, and archival apprenticeships. The lack of standards made it very difficult, then as well as now, to develop a sound, comprehensive program of archival education and training.⁶⁰

Development of archival education and training programs depended, as did almost every society activity, on the efforts of committee members scattered over the country, unable to meet except at annual meetings, forced to conduct business by mail and telephone, and with no staff support except within their own institutions. Results were often less than satisfactory. Members appointed to committees heard nothing from their chairmen, and many energetic members soon learned that little was expected of them except advice on a session topic for the next annual meeting. By the end of the 1960s, the committee system had reached the point that F. Gerald Ham, as secretary, prepared a report on the strengths and weaknesses of the system. He found that some committees, especially those on institutional archives, had been very busy. The business archives and college and university archives committees had prepared directories, the church archives committee had completed "A Preliminary Guide to Religious Archives" and had begun work on a manual, and the Committee on Archival Buildings and Equipment was ready to bring out its reader on archives and records center buildings. Other committees with specific charges achieved results. The Committee on

Paper Research actively sought and received a large amount of outside funding for research by the National Bureau of Standards on the permanence of archival paper and related materials.⁶¹ Ham found that many other committees had only vague areas of responsibility or charges that no longer fully met the needs of the membership. In 1969 Council reorganized the committee structure, eliminating and consolidating several functions, and established new committees on machine-readable records, oral history, and collecting personal papers and manuscripts. This reorganization did not solve the problem of how to get committees to work, but it did make the structure more responsive to the new interests of the members. In his 1970 report, Ham pronounced the new committee organization an improvement, particularly for giving "more representation to some underrepresented segments of our profession" and dealing "more effectively with the problems of archives-manuscript administration that had not been within the purview of any of the existing committees."⁶²

Problems continued to plague the committees, however. President Charles Lee, faced with Ham's 1970-71 report that "few [committees] had anything to show in the way of real accomplishment," assigned each Council member as liaison with several committees in an effort to increase efficiency and give better administrative control. Council soon abandoned this effort, and the members continued to complain, not only about how little the committees did, but also about how hard it was to be assigned to a committee in the first place. In an effort to ease these problems Council in-

⁶⁰*American Archivist* 28 (July 1965): 468-69; 30 (April 1967): 383; 31 (April 1968): 135-37.

⁶¹*American Archivist* 31 (July 1968): 324-25; 32 (January 1969): 45, 60; 33 (October 1970): 436-37; 34 (April 1971): 219-20; 34 (October 1971): 407-08; 200/3/5/1, 2/14 and 3/1-3; 200/8/1, 7/13-19.

⁶²*American Archivist* 33 (April 1970): 229; 34 (January 1971): 106.

creased the funding available to support committee activities in 1971–72 and also expanded the number of members assigned to committees.⁶³ All these reforms did nothing, of course, to cope with the fundamental problem of inactive committees.

As the 1960s drew to a close, however, the ferment for change in the social structure, which had swept the nation for most of the decade, reached SAA as both leaders and the general membership sought ways to democratize the society and make it more responsive to the needs of its members. A group of professionally active and socially concerned archivists at the 1971 annual meeting formed ACT, an informal organization of activist archivists, to work for changes and reforms within the society as well as to encourage it to take a position on political and social issues. A strong desire for better communication between Council and the membership came out of the 1971 membership survey. Members wanted a newsletter and wanted the *American Archivist* to be more timely and more useful to both practitioners and scholars.⁶⁴

President Philip P. Mason, who had long been concerned with such problems during his terms as secretary, appointed an ad hoc Committee for the 1970s to “study the organizational and program needs of the Society for the coming decade.” The committee, with some of the best minds in the society as members, investigated eight areas: organizational structure and operations; relations with other professional groups and organizations; the committee system; research and publications; membership relations and development; education and training; annual

meetings, conferences, and symposia; and finances. A blitz of questionnaires in which members were queried about every facet of their professional lives led Ham to proclaim 1970 as “the year of the questionnaire in the Society’s annals.” Of all the many contributions of Mason and Ham to the society, few have been as fundamentally important as this committee. Failures of earlier long-range planning committees to produce a comprehensive plan were redeemed by this committee’s report, which permanently altered the society and its operations.⁶⁵

The Committee for the 1970s issued its final report in the spring of 1972. Among its major recommendations were: to hire an executive director and raise the dues and fees to pay for the post; to present a dual slate of nominees for elective office; to establish a close working relationship with the regional archival groups; to open up committee membership; to expand the publications program; to encourage the preparation of guidelines and standards for education and training; and to urge that the annual meeting programs include sessions for all levels of archivists and that provisions be made for younger, newer members to participate in program sessions. Finally, “social relevance” received attention when the committee suggested that “SAA should be actively committed to the social goals of racial justice, equal employment, and reasonable access to research materials. . . . To this end, the SAA has a moral obligation to take official positions on those contemporary public issues, however controversial, which affect the archival profession.”⁶⁶

Council made only minor modifica-

⁶³*American Archivist* 35 (January 1972): 97–98, 107–08, 115; 36 (April 1973): 318–19.

⁶⁴200/3/6/1, 1/6–8; 200/8/1, 1/1–8.

⁶⁵*American Archivist* 35 (January 1972): 106; 34 (January 1971): 89.

⁶⁶Philip P. Mason, “The Society of American Archivists in the Seventies: Report of the Committee for the 1970s,” *American Archivist* 35 (April 1972): 193–217; 200/8/1, 1/2.

tions to the committee recommendations; and though their response was more moderate, perhaps reflecting their fiduciary responsibilities, the leadership was committed to the new order brought about by these reforms. President Wilfred I. Smith established a Committee on the Status of Women and urged the recruitment of minorities into both the profession and the society. The membership responded in 1973 with a hearty endorsement of a comprehensive resolution to eliminate discrimination within the society on the basis of "race, color, religion, national origin, sex, marital status, age, life style, or political affiliation." Also at that 1973 business meeting, the membership quickly and easily adjusted to the new democratic procedures in spite of the previous year's experience with runoff elections and interminable counting of ballots. Council responded favorably to a petition from seventeen members that those attending the business meeting, rather than Council itself, conduct the election for two vacant Council seats. One of those elected in that last election not conducted by mail, Ann Morgan Campbell, served just one year on Council before accepting another prominent position in the society.⁶⁷

Of most importance to the future development of the society, the members in 1973 committed themselves to a dues structure that would finance the executive directorship. From the mid-1960s Council returned again and again to the question of whether or not funding could be found to support such a position. Foundations would not support an ongoing administrative expense, and requests for voluntary contributions

from SAA members raised only a few thousand dollars. Though clerical assistance was eventually hired, a paid professional position continued to elude the society. The crushing nature of the secretary's job is demonstrated by the increasingly shorter terms served by Renze's successors. "The difficulty clearly and simply is one of resources. We are no longer small enough to operate the Society by volunteer help; we are not large enough to finance a paid staff from membership dues," warned Secretary Mason in 1968 and again as chair of the Committee for the 1970s. He placed prime importance on solving this financial problem. The society's income had increased tenfold from 1957 to 1973, but even a budget of \$79,000 produced a surplus of only \$3,000. Reserves had likewise increased to over \$100,000, but restrictions on the use of the principal of these funds made a paid secretariat a hopeless dream until the members agreed to tax themselves heavily enough to fund the position.⁶⁸

After a year as secretary, Robert M. Warner agreed in 1972 to serve an additional year as the appointed (but unpaid) executive director, replacing the elected secretary under a new constitutional amendment. Council had not endorsed this amendment, proposed by the Committee for the 1970s, not because it did not desperately want such a position, but only because the resources to support it were not in sight. The membership gave its approval, however, by the required two-thirds vote in 1972 and voted the necessary dues a year later. Thus the way was finally clear to hire a professional executive director. Finances remained unstable. Judy Koucky was

⁶⁷*American Archivist* 36 (April 1973): 315-16, 321; 36 (October 1973): 627; 35 (July 1972): 359-66; 36 (January 1973): 133-35; 36 (April 1973): 305-06, 310-12.

⁶⁸*American Archivist* 28 (July 1965): 467; 30 (October 1967): 598; 30 (January 1967): 217-18; 31 (January 1968): 114-16; 33 (January 1970): 123; 29 (July 1966): 448; Mason quotation from *American Archivist* 32 (January 1969): 63; 21 (January 1958): 105-06; 38 (January 1974): 121-23.

hired as acting secretary for a few months, and Council encountered difficulties in finding a suitable director. Finally, Ann Morgan Campbell was hired in July 1974 and an office was established on the Chicago Circle campus of the University of Illinois.⁶⁹

That is another story for another time. This story ends in 1974 with the Society of American Archivists poised on the threshold of becoming a truly professional association. Problems such as inadequate archival education and training, few professional standards or guidelines, a less than comprehensive publications program, and tensions between the various segments of the profession did not disappear with the hiring of an executive director; but those active in the society in the early 1970s knew fundamental changes were being made. In the 1950s the Council of Learned Societies rejected our application for membership on the grounds that we were a custodial, rather than a learned, profession. That rejection hurt our pride; yet, if not a learned society in the view of some, we knew by 1974 that we had the capacity to be far more than mere custodians of dusty records. Our

role in preserving, protecting, and providing access to all forms of information is vital to all professions, all peoples. We knew by the 1970s that we had to build the kind of professional association that would be equal to this task.⁷⁰

SAA presidents addressed the challenge of the professionalization of the association in this period. Mason saw SAA "at the crossroads" in 1970, Smith pointed out the "broad horizons" and the "opportunities for archivists" in 1973; and Ham in 1974 saw us on "the archival edge" of a bright future if we would face this challenge. We have met this challenge, not perfectly and in many ways not adequately; but our profession has an association in which we can take much pride, not only in its past accomplishments, but also in the sure and certain hope of future contributions.⁷¹

I am compelled here to recall the words of A.R. Newsome, our first president, in his 1937 address. Thinking back to the organizational meeting in Providence, he concluded with the observation and prayer: "A hospitable Providence was the place of the Society's birth. May a kindly Providence bless and immortalize its career."⁷²

⁶⁹*American Archivist* 36 (April 1973): 236; 36 (January 1973): 138-39; 37 (January 1974): 165-69.

⁷⁰Herman Kahn, "Some Comments on the Archival Vocation," *American Archivist* 34 (January 1971): 3-12.

⁷¹Philip P. Mason, "The Society of American Archivists at the Crossroads," *American Archivist* 35 (January 1972): 5-11; Wilfred I. Smith, "Broad Horizons: Opportunities for Archivists," *American Archivist* 37 (January 1974): 3-14; F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 5-13.

⁷²A.R. Newsome, "Objectives of the Society of American Archivists," *American Archivist* 26 (January 1963): 299-304; *Proceedings*, p. 64.

Archivists: Remember the SAA Archives

SAA archivist J. Frank Cook urges SAA members to examine their own files and those of their repositories for records that should be transferred to the SAA Archives. Archivists also are encouraged to make use of this rich collection for their own studies of the Society and the profession. For more information, contact J. Frank Cook, University Archives, B134 Memorial Library, University of Wisconsin-Madison, Madison, WI 53706, (608) 262-8899.