

# Archivists and Research Use

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**Abstract:** The primary purpose of archives is cultural, and it is the research value of documentation that invests this essentially cultural purpose with substance and significance. As custodians of the collective memory, archivists best achieve this purpose by identifying these values in documents and by promoting their research use. This essay considers how archivists best exercise this responsibility: by doing research on the collections in their care; by drawing on scholars for assistance in reaching appraisal decisions; by preparing more analytical and evaluative finding aids; by developing better index terms for access to records; by knowing more about researchers who use their materials and by understanding better what their needs are; by understanding the risk posed by premature access to records; and by understanding how outreach assists archivists in promoting the best possible research use of their holdings.

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At a session of a Society of American Archivists annual meeting several years ago, a historian commented that finding aids prepared by archivists often reflected the "establishment" point of view about the research values inherent in collections. That is, such finding aids emphasized traditional political points of view and rarely indicated materials of interest to scholars concerned with new methodologies and revisionist approaches to research topics. Among the many archivists in the room who were eager to respond, the chairman recognized a former president of the Society, who observed that he doubted that his colleagues did any such thing. He declared further that good archivists identify and explain the research characteristics of collections and are not in the least influenced by what research methodologies or interpretive views might or might not be current at any given point in time.<sup>1</sup>

The episode, enacted in the historic grandeur of Independence Hall in Philadelphia, was both fleeting and immensely significant. As but a brief exchange at a national meeting, it merits little attention. As the explicit discussion of an issue that continually confronts archivists, however, it is worthy of our notice because, in fact, the exchange calls on us to explore several related questions: Do archivists understand sufficiently the research questions and access issues that animate researchers? Do archivists study the collections they manage to determine how they relate to research topics? Do finding aids ade-

quately enumerate the documentary characteristics of collections? Can archivists identify their research constituencies and their needs? Just what obligations are archivists under with respect to researchers in any case? These questions all have a bearing on how effectively archivists meet their purposes.

The primary purpose of archives is cultural, and it is the research value of documentation that invests this essentially cultural purpose with substance and significance. (In characterizing archival purpose as cultural, it should be emphasized that the term cultural is being used here in its broadest anthropological sense, to indicate the totality of symbols and signs—the way of life—that gives meaning and substance to human life and enables it to be transmitted to subsequent generations.)<sup>2</sup> As custodians of the collective memory dispensing pertinent information as appropriate, archivists best achieve this purpose by identifying these values in documents and by promoting their use. Whether for academic researchers, genealogists, government officials, or people interested in consulting the permanent record of the past, archivists maintain and actively shape the record of the past and attempt to provide links with the needs of their research constituencies. Archivists do not achieve their purpose in merely identifying their research constituency, such as government officials or academics, as the primary beneficiaries of the attention; rather, the cultural purpose is realized in actually serving research use and in augmenting awareness of the collective memory.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"The Revolutionary Generation: Leaders and Followers." Session at the thirty-ninth annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists, 30 September 1975, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

<sup>2</sup>John Tomsich, review of Alan Trachtenberg, "The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age" in *American Historical Review* 88 (February 1983): 193–94.

<sup>3</sup>There is a tradition among archivists to define their purpose in terms of the goals and purposes of the institutions they serve. This view, however, excessively narrows the archival function to the scope of the activity of the institution rather than to the broader applications of memory generally and in all its diversity. The most comprehensive statement of this view is found in Thorton W. Mitchell, ed., *Norton on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival & Records Management* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1975).

Archivists best promote use of their holdings by directly linking research applications of collections to the needs of users of whatever interest. To do so, however, requires that archivists become more knowledgeable about the holdings in their trust. Then archivists can reach out to researchers, both actual and prospective, to expand and enhance the uses to which documents can be applied.

It is extremely important that archivists themselves become researchers if they are to increase and improve the research use of their holdings. This does not mean that archivists should emulate historians and write monographs based on archival holdings. Rather, archivists should carefully study the documents in their collections, evaluate the context in which they were generated, and identify the purposes they were designed to meet. The information contained in documents should be analyzed, and the reliability, verifiability, and veracity of that information should be evaluated. In addition to describing the informational value of documentation, archivists should also judge any intrinsic values, such as the paper, a signature, or a graphic representation, or even the symbolic importance of the physical document. In short, the documents and their characteristics should be studied in the same way that a bibliographer studies a book as a physical artifact, not only to understand its text and meaning, but also to analyze its method of production and explain its purpose.<sup>4</sup>

Archivists might follow the recommendation of Philip C. Brooks to explore the internal and external character-

istics of documents.<sup>5</sup> In employing the procedures of external criticism, archivists might identify documents by establishing authorship or office of origin, the date, and the recipient or purpose. Indeed, until documents and the circumstances of their creation are identified, they are useless to researchers. Researchers depend on archivists for this information, and those skills must be constantly improved. In applying the techniques of internal criticism, archivists might also enhance their ability to analyze the information they have identified. By understanding documents and explaining the information contained within them, archivists provide researchers with contextual knowledge. This knowledge is scholarly in nature and goes well beyond information management into the realm of scholarship.

This broader understanding of documentary characteristics is also helpful in assisting archivists to develop a useful perspective on appraisal. Appraisal is less a set of schedules and formulaic decisions about documents than a process of review that considers documentary characteristics and the circumstances of their creation. The archivist must also explore the relation of such characteristics to other documents and the pattern of data that they collectively present, their relationship to pertinent scholarly literature, and the amount of space available to house them.

Scholars should be accorded a voice in this appraisal process. Archivists can and should, of course, accept respon-

<sup>4</sup>The best overall statement describing the work of archivists remains T.R. Schellenberg, *The Management of Archives* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1965). There is as yet no satisfactory analysis of the nature and characteristics of the concept of intrinsic value. The best descriptive analysis of bibliographic research is found in Philip Gaskell, *A New Introduction to Bibliography* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972).

<sup>5</sup>Phillip C. Brooks, *Research in Archives: The Use of Unpublished Primary Sources* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), pp. 82-92. See also Daniel J. Boorstin, *Gresham's Law: Knowledge or Information?* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1980).

sibility for the final decision in all matters pertaining to appraisal; and their chief claim to making such decisions stems from their knowledge of the documents as well as their information on the context in which documents are created. Researchers can be especially helpful in the appraisal process in determining the relationship of the documents under review to pertinent scholarly literature. The final decision, however, must be made by the archivist. Repositories should establish appraisal procedures in which the review of documentary characteristics offers an advisory panel of academic scholars an opportunity to present their views of the research value of the documents under review; their relation to other documents; whether they should be retained; and, if so, whether in their entirety and in their original format. Archivists should become sufficiently confident of their purpose and their expertise to cede to scholars a role in this evaluation process.

Scholars are trained to understand specific subjects or topics in depth, often being able to sketch a broad set of relationships from a relatively narrow scope of documentation. Such a perspective can be immensely helpful to the archivist; but the unique perspective of the archivist in being trained to deal with the universe of documentation as it applies to a number of subjects that affect a repository must take precedence. In brief, scholars are trained to pursue a subject in exhaustive detail, often seeking more documentation than is available. By contrast, the archivist manages the universe of documents generally and the purposes for which they were created. Rather than comparing such knowledge with other documents related

by subject, the archivist considers the totality of documentation, the origins of the documents, and the purposes for which they were created. This affords the archivist a broader view of documentation and reveals how patterns of evidence affect many topics rather than a few. In short, the archivist has a broader view of how appraisal decisions affect the entire scope of documentation.

The basic criteria through which archivists reach appraisal decisions are communicated to users through finding aids. Finding aids identify the originating office of bodies of records or writers of manuscripts, and utilize agency histories or biographical sketches as a means of understanding the documents. In many cases archivists maintain filing systems used by the creators of records because such systems are a means of arrangement and are also the basis of conveying understanding of the function and purpose of documents. The theoretical premise that underscores these statements is that archivists can best understand records in relation to the purposeful activity they were created to record. By placing documents of similar origin together, that is, by grouping them by provenance or function, we can reconstruct the activity of an office or program. It must also be noted that, because we live in an age of domination by institutions and bureaucracies and have done so since the latter half of the nineteenth century, these observations are generally applicable to personal papers as well.<sup>6</sup>

This theoretical tidiness does, however, present a problem. It does not work. If they are to serve any purpose at all, finding aids must outline the re-

<sup>6</sup>For archival purposes the most pertinent statement of the growth of institutions is Francis X. Blouin, "A New Perspective on the Appraisal of Business Records: A Review," *American Archivist* 42 (July 1979): 312-20. See also Michael Lutzker, "Max Weber and the Analysis of Modern Bureaucratic Organization: Notes Toward a Theory of Appraisal," *American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 119-30.

search value of records. Existing inventories are helpful to scholars working on studies of political, economic, and military institutions, or on biographies of elites. Finding aids, in short, are generally useful in locating documentation pertinent to what one scholar has characterized as drum and trumpet history, that is, topics relating to political, military, and diplomatic history.

Contemporary research has, however, been captured by social history. Formal studies of institutions and elites have been largely supplanted by explorations of social structures and the activities, attitudes, and daily lives of ordinary people. The organizing principle of provenance, helpful as an arrangement technique, is less useful in conveying information relating to interdisciplinary and subject-oriented topics, such as surveys of attitude, studies of social structures and community and family networks, or investigations of ceremonies and ritual.<sup>7</sup>

To serve those whose interests lie in such research projects, it is necessary to rethink the form and content of most existing finding aids. Scope and content notes should be as analytical as they are descriptive; they should note omissions, reveal biases of records creators, and attempt to identify attitudinal data. Biographical sketches and agency histories should be more than a list of factual highlights in an individual's career or an institution's history. They should also

relate actual holdings to specific events or interests and indicate how archival holdings may or may not document various activities. Collections are rarely if ever uniformly illustrative. Archivists must emphasize evaluation and judgment in finding aids, becoming as knowledgeable about the material as any scholar; we must not retreat from forthright analysis based on our experience and judgment. Indeed, we should view finding aids as a genre of scholarly literature and undertake critical reviews of finding aids to major collections and guides to large repositories or research topics in the *American Archivist* and other scholarly journals.<sup>8</sup> Archivists need to consider finding aids as scholarly publications, reflecting the scholarly information about documentation that they have developed.

A related consideration is how archival and manuscript materials are to be presented to prospective users through inclusion in bibliographic data bases. Archivists might take heart here because there is at present much interest in developing formats in order to include archival and manuscript material in automated data bases. As computer applications become even more widespread, manipulation of information about archives in a machine-readable format is of the utmost consequence to researchers. This will be accomplished primarily by cataloging for such data bases the finding aids rather than the

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<sup>7</sup>For a recent assessment of the state of social history in the larger context of historical research, see Michael Kammen, ed., *The Past Before Us: Contemporary Historical Writing in the U.S.* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1980). A more analytical exploration of the nature of social history is found in James A. Henretta, "Social History as Lived and Written," *American Historical Review* 84 (December 1979): 1293-1322. Another useful statement that has been influential in shaping the direction of social history research is *The National Endowment for the Humanities and American Social History* (Washington, D.C.: National Foundation for the Arts and Humanities, 1979). An excellent assessment of the impact of social history on archival activity is Fredric M. Miller, "Social History and Archival Practice," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 113-24.

<sup>8</sup>For related comments on this topic, see the excellent article by Mary Jo Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and the Reference Archivist," *American Archivist* 45 (Winter 1982): 33-44.



documents themselves. By using the finding aid as the chief source of cataloging in this format, archivists will avoid a number of complications while accelerating the rate at which such documents are entered into a data base.<sup>9</sup>

Archivists should work for the speedy adoption of such formats for archival and manuscript materials. The chief purpose of such data bases is to retrieve information for research purposes and not to preserve data elements in the pristine purity of their archival definition. The SAA Committee on Archival Information Exchange should help in regulating the proliferation of data elements as use of the formats continues to grow. Now that the managers of bibliographical data bases and archivists have a means of discussing how and why archival data elements are to be used, archivists can be optimistic that these data bases will continue to be adapted to the needs of archivists and archival researchers.

The mere fact of inclusion in the bibliographic data bases, however, does not guarantee ready access by anyone. Indeed, because archival and manuscript material is by nature unique, the reference function of such a data base is realized only when access is augmented by use of index terms. While these terms may be derived from finding aids, archivists need to become more knowledgeable about providing additional access points to research holdings.<sup>10</sup>

In contrast to printed materials, there is no distinction in archival materials between the topic of a given document and its purpose; the distinction is, therefore, neither made by the researcher nor reflected in the bibliographical record. As unconsciously created documentation, archival and manuscript material have as their subject both the activities that created them and the purposes of that activity. As David Bearman put it: "The distinction between persons [or organizations] creating the described materials reported on by the materials, and otherwise represented in the described materials, is alien to archival practice and would involve unacceptable levels of redundancy."<sup>11</sup> Therefore, subject phrases are less useful than index terms; and finding aids better yield index terms than subject entries or added entries.

Despite their long-time utilization of standardized thesauri of subject headings and extensive experience in applying such headings to cataloging practice, librarians have not done much better in providing added-entry access. Indeed, the author of a recent report suggests that library users were successful in finding pertinent subject terms for their searches in only 50 percent of the cases. Add to this the fact that there are on average less than two subject entries per cataloged record, and we begin to grasp just how ineffective added-entry access can be for users of printed materials.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup>See Steven L. Hensen "[Revised Draft of Chapter Four, Anglo-American Cataloging Rules, 2nd edition (AACR-2)]" (Washington, D.C.; typescript draft, 1982); David Bearman, "A Proposed MARC Format for Archives and Manuscript Materials" (Washington, D.C.; typescript draft, 1982); RLG Task Force on Special Formats, "Functional Requirements for Manuscripts and Archives" (New Haven, Conn.; typescript draft, 1982).

<sup>10</sup>See Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience," *passim*.

<sup>11</sup>"MARBI," *LC Information Bulletin* (13 August 1982): 242; David Bearman, "Comparison of a Proposed MARC Format for Archives and Manuscript Materials and the Data Elements Defined for Manuscripts in the *MARC Formats for Bibliographic Data*." (Unpublished report, revised 9 April 1982 [p. 34]).

<sup>12</sup>Carol A. Mandel and Judith Herschman, "Subject Access in the Online Catalog: A Report Prepared for the Council on Library Resources" (Washington, D.C.: CLR Bibliographic Service Development Program, 1981), pp. 6-9.

In important ways, the situation is even more bleak for those seeking access to archival materials through index terms. The reasons for this include: (1) Archival finding aids systems are, in Richard Lytle's phrase, creator oriented because of their general reliance on provenance for intellectual understanding as well as an arrangement technique; (2) There has been scant progress made in developing thesauri of index terms for application to archival materials; and (3) While research topics are increasingly dependent upon subject analysis of collections, such topics are frequently interdisciplinary or emphasize attitudinal data that is hard to capture in search phrases.<sup>13</sup>

Archivists do have at least one advantage over librarians: finding aids are an infinitely richer source of index terms than the relatively spare cataloging records produced for most books. As archivists expand their ability to identify the many possible index terms, they must also identify delimiters of time and place so that entries in data bases can be searched more effectively. There must also be more interest among archivists in authority files for personal and corporate names as well as thesauri for subject phrases. The development of these authorities is essential if archivists are to sustain progress in improving access to archival and manuscript holdings through searches of data bases.

The development of analytically precise finding aids enriched by multiple access points increases the usefulness of the information that archivists can glean from their holdings. The corollary to this, of course, is to link the enumeration of the intellectual characteristics of archives with the needs of the users of

documents. More simply, improved systems of intellectual control of archives will promote reader access.<sup>14</sup>

Archivists might also promote reader access by knowing more about who their researchers are and understanding better just what their needs are. Indeed, archivists often identify academics and genealogists as their primary constituents and then go on to list very general categories such as miscellaneous or other. As a means of combatting this ineffective categorization of users, there should be an effort to discover the intentions of prospective users and to identify more precisely the nature of their institutional affiliations.

Once a researcher's topic is understood and his disciplinary training and current affiliation has been determined, archivists might begin to analyze his needs. Very often this is done through an effective initial interview. A series of questions asking what the ideal typical source for a given topic might be, what information it would contain, and what about it would make it ideal, are promising avenues of achieving understanding of a researcher's needs. In the same way, analysis of readers' disciplinary background and current affiliation often provides clues regarding readers' needs that can then be incorporated into finding aids and access points as a means of communicating more effectively with other researchers.

As a means of further understanding the needs of researchers, archivists should turn their attention to these sorely neglected topics: How do users of archival materials acquire the information that they regard as important to their research? What criteria do they use to decide whether to make a research visit

<sup>13</sup>Richard H. Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives: I. Provenance and Content Indexing Methods of Subject Retrieval," *American Archivist* 43 (Winter 1980): 64-75, especially pp. 70-73.

<sup>14</sup>Lytle, "Intellectual Access to Archives: II. Report of an Experiment Comparing Provenance to Content Indexing Methods of Subject Retrieval," *American Archivist* 43 (Spring 1980): 191-207.

to see a collection? Once at a repository, how do they decide what specific documents are pertinent and available? Remarkably little is known about how such data is acquired and evaluated by researchers. Archivists need to undertake more research to discover how users acquire information about documents and how they make decisions regarding the usefulness of archival resources.<sup>15</sup>

An impediment to archival understanding of the needs of researchers is the unfortunate adversary relationship that has developed between archivists and some researchers, especially historians. While the differentiation of function between archivists and historians was bound to produce a measure of tension, the situation appears more complex than is explained by the evolution of differing priorities and procedures. In reviewing the psychological roots of this situation, one encounters many archivists who have been trained as historians but now find themselves tilling in a vineyard once looked down upon by historians. Indeed, many archivists have themselves taught history at one time and are now ambivalent about the nature of their professional identity. Archives was a field traditionally regarded by historians as a preserve for those thought to be merely incapable of teaching, rather than as a career for those considered to be especially suited for archival work. Moreover, as Herman Kahn noted in the wake of the Roosevelt Library case, archivists have been treated less like colleagues of historians than as servile handmaidens.<sup>16</sup> Having long coped with such attitudes, archivists now find themselves importuned by their academic colleagues about jobs

for their graduate students. Moreover, historians have entered with enthusiasm into the teaching of archivists, claiming with plausibility that historical preparation is essential for archivists. Archivists have exacerbated their frustration in this area, however, by their own inability to develop a consensus about how best to train prospective colleagues. The appearance of archival education programs initiated by departments of history and featuring courses taught by historians untrained and inexperienced in archival work scarcely improved the situation. The overall course of relations between historians and archivists was bound to breed mutual cynicism and distrust. There must now be a concerted effort to enhance the sense of complementary purpose and collegiality in research that can and should exist between archivists and academics, especially historians.

Some archivists have recently asserted a related, if disingenuous, view, arguing that, while their readers are academics, they are not historians. While this may be true in the narrow sense of disciplinary affiliation, it overlooks an important fact: whatever the disciplinary affiliation of the academic user of archives, most come to the archives using an historical way of thinking. Even if they are not formally trained in the discipline of history, social scientists, public policy makers, and others approach their topics with a retrospective or sequential understanding. Scholarship in the social sciences and humanities is essentially an exercise in problem solving, and such projects are often an exercise in analytically evaluating a pattern of decisions regarding a problem histor-

<sup>15</sup>Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience," p. 40; Michael E. Stevens, "The Historian and Archival Finding Aids," *Georgia Archive* 5 (Winter 1977): 64-74, quoted in Pugh; Miller, "Social History and Archival Practice," 122-124.

<sup>16</sup>Herman Kahn, "Long-Range Implications for Historians and Archivists of the Charges Against the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library," *American Archivist* 34 (July 1971): 267-68.



ically defined. As repositories of non-current records, archives are inevitably (one is tempted to say relentlessly) historical. While some archivists may want to absolve themselves of dealing with historians, they cannot avoid dealing with the historical method and its implications for archival repositories and archival researchers.

Another related consideration is the growing distinction between academic and applied research. Academic research is theoretical in nature and proceeds in the manner of an open-ended inquiry, in which the investigator, not unlike the scientist, forms research strategies designed to test hypotheses. Because the inquiry is open-ended, however, and the research is shaped by a tentative hypothesis, researchers are frequently less than precise about what it is they are seeking. This often accounts for the "fishing expedition" quality of research to which all archivists are exposed and of which most disapprove. Such expeditions tend to be episodic and, worse, entail use of a large amount of material in a relatively short period of time.

By contrast, someone engaged in applied research is normally working for someone else and has a very specific need and a deadline. Whether it be, for example, research undertaken in an Indian land claim case or for a historical impact statement for a public improvement, the applied researcher's needs are unambiguous; frequently modest; and usually, though not always, quickly concluded. Archivists appear to prefer the concrete needs of the applied researcher to the abstract formulations and occasional fishing trip of the academic. Genealogists constitute a category of user, closely akin to the applied researcher, who often does not achieve

favor. In many important respects, genealogists are the ultimate applied researchers. Their need for historical information is very specific, and they are frequently indifferent to an understanding of the context that is so important to identifying records.

Yet, archivists too often generalize about genealogists in assuming their narrowness of interest and lack of understanding of the characteristics of documents. Archivists should take care to assist genealogists in the same way that they assist other applied researchers; and they should be grateful that, in a time of competition for scarce resources, there is still interest among at least a portion of the general public in historical records. Genealogical organizations are large, adequately financed, and politically knowledgeable. Archivists at the National Archives can testify to the importance of friends. With their political leverage and concomitant interest in documentation, genealogists warrant improved service. Archivists would do well to be less concerned with the status of their users and their place in the hierarchy of researchers than with providing improved access for everyone interested in using archival holdings.<sup>17</sup>

While archivists can all assent to the idea of enhanced access, they are aware that its realization is far more complex than the assertion. The conviction that access means the earliest possible opening of documents for research use is tempered by the realization that the scholarly need to know must be balanced by protection from premature disclosure. Statutory requirement and donor-imposed restrictions require scrupulous observance of such limitations in every case. In expressing a concern for an adequacy of documentation, however, ar-

<sup>17</sup>For a useful statement reminding archivists of their obligations to genealogists, see Phoebe R. Jacobsen, "The World Turned Upside Down": Reference Priorities and the State Archives," *American Archivist* 44 (Fall 1981): 341-45.

chivists must also remain mindful of Herman Kahn's warning about the chilling effect premature access can have on records creation. Researchers will never gain access to documents that are destroyed by their creators or that perhaps are never created in the first place because of fear of premature disclosure for whatever reason. This could scarcely constitute sufficient documentation for anyone. This difficult topic should be investigated further to identify reliably what constitutes premature disclosure as well as what procedures might be established to enable archivists to manage the fullest possible record of documentation consonant with timely access to those records. Indeed, pressure for untimely access to information could create an attitude of distrust toward documentation that will discourage creation, or, at the least, hasten destruction, of records. That would constitute a perversion of archival purpose.

There is, finally, the problem of misunderstanding what outreach is and is not and how it assists archivists in meeting the purposes of their repositories. In its most basic aspect, outreach is the effort to enable a repository to become a more significant cultural institution, not by changing its purposes as some archivists perceive outreach activity, but by enabling the repository to meet more effectively its existing goals and objectives. Certainly this entails reporting to users about holdings, what they are, and how they might be used. It also entails the effort to explain archival mission to the broadest segment of the public and to broaden the base of re-

searchers. This is undertaken in two ways: by a renewed effort to enhance intellectual control over holdings and to expand the reporting of that control to prospective researchers, and by assuming a more direct role in interpreting and sponsoring use of records. In the second way archivists can emphasize whatever part of their holdings they think is appropriate. Through presenting lectures, exhibitions, debates, and even interpretive performances for the general public, as well as seminars, conferences, and fellowships for specialists, a repository can enter what F. Gerald Ham has described as the post-custodial era. Effective outreach requires relinquishing the traditional passivity that has for too long characterized archives and beginning actively to shape the type of future research use and understanding of documents appropriate to the archives' cultural mission.<sup>18</sup>

As cultural institutions, archival repositories enhance the collective memory by bringing together varieties of documentation that focus on activities and programs of individuals and institutions as well as geographical or subject areas. Insofar as the documentation constitutes an important aspect of the collective memory, archivists must recognize research use—the cultivation and maintenance of the collective memory—as their ultimate purpose. If this is forgotten, our repositories are in peril; if it is emphasized, archivists can confront their problems and renew their commitment to their profession and revitalize their mission as keepers of the materials that shape our cultural heritage.

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<sup>18</sup>F. Gerald Ham, "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era," *American Archivist* 44 (Summer 1981): 207-16.