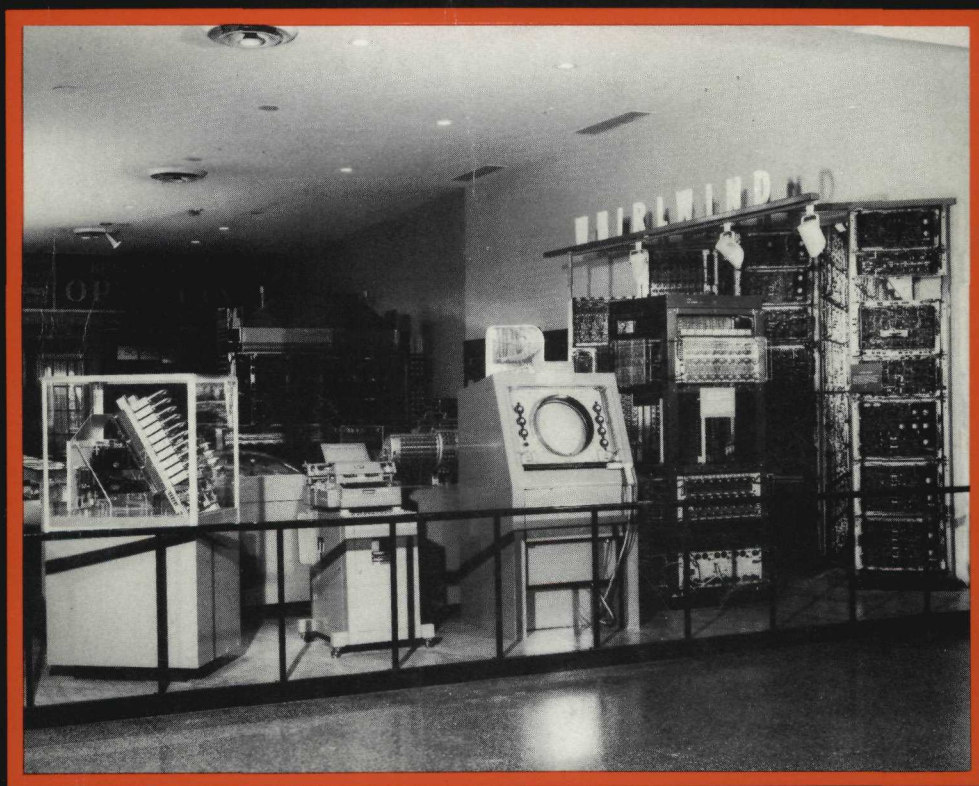


The American Archivist

Volume 47
Number 4
Fall 1984



Published Quarterly by
The Society of American Archivists

The American Archivist

Charles R. Schultz, *Editor*

Texas A&M University

Deborah Risteen, *Managing Editor*

Janet G. Sted, *Copy Editor*

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

Christopher Beam, *Shorter Features*

Ben DeWhitt, *Technical Notes*

F.L. Eaton, *News Notes*

Brenda Beasley Kepley, *Reviews*

Ronald J. Plavchan, *The International Scene*

Sara L. Stone, *Reviews*

Thomas E. Weir, Jr., *News Notes*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Francis X. Blouin, Jr., chair (1982–85), *University of Michigan*

David Levine (1984–85), *Ohio Historical Society*

Linda Matthews (1984–87), *Emory University*

Eva S. Moseley (1983–86), *Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College*

James B. Rhoads, (1981–84), *Rhoads Associates International*

Samuel A. Sizer (1983–86), *Texas State Library*

Hugh A. Taylor (1981–84), *Wolfville, Nova Scotia*

Timothy Walch (1984–87), *National Archives and Records Service*

The Society of American Archivists

PRESIDENT David B. Gracy II, *Texas State Archives*

VICE PRESIDENT Andrea Hinding, *University of Minnesota*

TREASURER Paul H. McCarthy, Jr., *University of Alaska*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Ann Morgan Campbell

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Kenneth Duckett (1983–84), *University of Oregon*

John Fleckner (1983–85), *Smithsonian Institution*

Robert S. Gordon (1980–84), *Public Archives of Canada*

Larry J. Hackman (1982–86), *New York State Archives*

Eddie Hedlin (1982–86), *National Archives and Records Service*

Linda Henry (1983–86), *National Archives and Records Service*

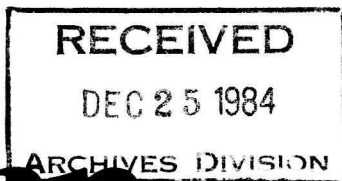
Sue E. Holbert (1981–85), *Minnesota Historical Society*

William L. Joyce (1981–85), *The New York Public Library*

Virginia C. Purdy (1980–84), *National Archives and Records Service*

On the cover: The Whirlwind computer exhibit in the National Museum of American History, Smithsonian Institution. Development of the Whirlwind began during World War II and was completed at MIT in 1953. It was part of the first generation of electronic computers. Smithsonian Institution Photo #78-3920.

The American Archivist



Volume 47 / Number 4 / Fall 1984

Introduction/355

An Analysis of the Work of the National Information Systems

Task Force/357

Richard H. Lytle

The Society of American Archivists Confronts the Computer/366

Thomas Elton Brown

Archival Principles and Records of the New Technology/383

Trudy Huskamp Peterson

Automation in North American College and University Archives:

A Survey/394

Leon J. Stout and Donald A. Baird

Administering Archival Automation: Development of In-House

Systems/405

William J. Maher

**The Videodisk: Technology, Applications, and Some Implications for
Archives/418**

Dominic Nghiep Cong Bui

Shorter Features/429

The Wisconsin Machine-Readable Records Project/429

Michael J. Fox

The Forum/351

Reviews/433

The International Scene/445

Technical Notes/453

News Notes/461

The Society of American Archivists/469

Recent death—

MARGARET CROSS NORTON/473

Index/ 475

REVIEWS

Weber, ed., **Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the United States/433**

reviewed by Maynard Brichford

Toward A Usable Past: Historical Records in the Empire State. A Report to the Governor and Citizens of New York by the State Historical Records Advisory Board/436

reviewed by Anne Van Camp

Hedstrom, **Archives & Manuscripts: Machine-Readable Records/437**

reviewed by Rodney Young

Kula, **The Archival Appraisal of Moving Images: A RAMP Study with Guidelines/438**

reviewed by William T. Murphy

Geller, **Care and Handling of Computer Magnetic Storage Media/439**

reviewed by Charles L. Gellert

ADPA (Automatic Data Processing in Archives), Vol. 4/440

reviewed by Richard M. Kesner

The *American Archivist* is published by the Society of American Archivists, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605, four times yearly. Postmaster: send all correspondence and 3579 forms to the address above. Subscription: \$30 a year to North American addresses, \$35 a year to other addresses; single copies \$8 to SAA members, \$9 to nonmembers.

Articles and related communications should be sent to Deborah Risteen, Managing Editor, Society of American Archivists, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. Telephone: (312) 922-1040. Advertising correspondence, membership and subscription correspondence, and orders for back issues should be sent to SAA at the address above. Claims for issues not received must be received by SAA headquarters within four months of issue publication date for domestic subscribers and within six months for international subscribers.

The *American Archivist* is indexed in *Library Literature* and is abstracted in *Historical Abstracts*; book reviews are indexed in *Book Review Index*.

The *American Archivist* and the Society of American Archivists assume no responsibility for statements made by contributors.

Typesetting for the *American Archivist* is done by Daamen, Inc., Center Rutland, Vermont, and the journal is printed by Kirby Lithographic Co., Inc., of Arlington, Virginia.

©Society of American Archivists 1984. All rights reserved. Second class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and additional mailing office.

The Forum

FROM THE EDITOR:

This issue brings to fruition several years of planning by the Automated Records and Techniques Task Force and two years of cooperation between that group and the Editor. The possibility of an issue devoted to automation was discussed at the annual meeting in Boston, and it was agreed that Fall 1984 would be an appropriate time for such an issue. The several articles included touch upon a variety of topics including history, appraisal, planning, and applications of new technologies, all of which are of importance to archivists in repositories of every type and size.

The involvement of the co-chairs of the ART Task Force, Harold Naugler and Carolyn Geda, is evident throughout this issue. They selected all the articles. Some came from a group already on hand, and others were written specifically for this issue. In addition, they solicited news notes, book reviews, technical notes, international news, and a short feature, all on automation. All information, however, was channeled through regular section editors.

In keeping with the idea of the application of new technologies, I am pleased to report that the Texas A&M University Archives has recently acquired its first IBM PC microcomputer. We plan to automate all our operations to the fullest extent that this limited amount of equip-

ment and its limited capacity will permit. In addition, I anticipate using it as much as possible in editing the *American Archivist*. Beginning immediately, I will accept manuscripts on disks that are compatible with an IBM PC and Wordstar.

CHARLES SCHULTZ

TO THE EDITOR:

Michael J. Crawford's response to Percilla Groves' letter in the Spring 1984 issue of the *American Archivist* (p. 108) explains his previous statement (in the Spring 1983 issue) that a single copy of copyrighted material made for the use of a researcher must become the property of the researcher. His interpretation of the law is based upon section 108, paragraph (d) and subparagraph (d) (1) in the Copyright Act of 1976, i.e. USC Title 17. These two passages state that the rights of reproduction and distribution apply "if —(1) the copy or phonorecord becomes the property of the user," etc.

Mr. Crawford's response does not seem to address itself directly to the policy described by Ms. Groves. A copy sold to a researcher may indeed become the property of the researcher, as he maintains, but she is referring to a copy not sold but loaned to the researcher (even though a fee covering the cost of copying presumably has to be paid by the

researcher). Note that the language of the act, as quoted above, is conditional. It should be possible for a lawyer to draft an application for photocopying that prevents the transaction between the repository and the researcher from conveying "property" in the legal sense.

MARK N. BROWN
Brown University

TO THE EDITOR:

Certified genealogist Mary N. Speakman has chosen to use an opportunity given to her, both in person and in print, to excoriate the reference service archives provide with hardly a hint of praise for those practices she deigns to approve. I hope that she avails herself soon of a similar opportunity to testify before state legislatures and local governments insisting that her taxes be raised to pay for the improvements she so charitably demands.

There is no excuse for lack of courtesy, broken promises, undue red tape, or violations of confidentiality. But isn't it ironic that the *American Archivist* can devote a whole issue to reference and stress the need to understand the users' viewpoints and simultaneously give space to one who exhibits so little appreciation for the constraints under which most archival institutions operate?

When Speakman calls for, among other things, guides that never go out of date, standardized rules for the use of materials and photocopying procedures, research areas located away from the reference desk, access to record storage areas, and adequate parking, she demonstrates that her last argument, the need for better educated researchers, is her most telling.

STEVEN P. GIETSCHIER
*South Carolina Department
of Archives and History*

TO THE EDITOR:

I began reading Mary N. Speakman's article in the spring 1984 issue of *American Archivist* with some eagerness—I enjoy reference work and hoped to gain some helpful insight. Nevertheless, when I finished reading, I felt a strong measure of disappointment and some disgust. Not only did I fail to gain insight, I discovered in the article unjustified criticisms and remarkable ignorance regarding the archival profession.

Speakman certainly succeeds in describing some of the major problems at archival repositories in America—lack of adequate facilities, personnel shortages, insufficient finding aids, slowness to adopt modern technologies—but does this tell us anything new? I think it is wonderful that the Mormon Church's library in Salt Lake City has 500 microfilm readers, but how does that help the impoverished county archivist who is lucky to have one or two ancient models? Most of us are quite aware that resources and inclinations to adequately support archival programs are not consistent throughout this country. Most of us work hard to scrape by on whatever we can—usually on miserable salaries.

Most of Speakman's other complaints do little more than show her ignorance of archival realities. When I consider all the stolen or damaged documents and the disarray of arrangements often left behind by researchers, I can feel little sympathy with her whinings about complex entrance procedures and the distractions of having to work in the vicinity of a reference desk. Nor can I feel chastened when Speakman writes that "... depending on a runner [to pull records from off-site storage] is a totally indefensible procedure." It is entirely defensible when the alternative is not to accept valuable accessions for lack of space. Furthermore, I find hard to believe her accusation that she has rarely found materials ready for

use after prior coordination with a repository's staff. In my experience, what often occurs is that researchers fail to show or turn up a day or two late—this after the archivist has gone to considerable trouble in finding the desired items.

Perhaps the most ludicrous of Speakman's criticisms was her intimation that archivists are obligated to conceal sources from patrons if those sources have been recently used by other researchers. If a patron asks my assistance regarding a subject area in which I have just assisted another, it only makes sense to use that prior experience to guide the second patron. That is my job. Yet Speakman would have me believe that such actions reveal me as "incompetent."

In short, I found the article misinformed, unjustifiably critical, and poorly written (I do not have the time to elaborate on the amateurishness of the style). I liked the idea of an article from the user's standpoint—I only wish the result had borne out my expectations.

THOMAS D. NORRIS
*Western Historical
Manuscript Collection—
Columbia*

AUTHOR'S RESPONSE:

I am sorry my comments were offensive. I did not intend them to be.

It is true that I am not an archivist and that I may not write as well as I should to take up space in the *American Archivist*. However neither am I familiar with the mechanical operation of my typewriter, computer or automobile but I can recognize when each is not performing at its highest efficiency level.

I have worked in research facilities for thirty years. I have followed all the rules. I have not complained about the service or the equipment. I have not disrupted the archives routine with unreasonable

requests or upset the personnel with criticism. But when I am asked to speak to the question of what I have observed in some of the archives, museums and libraries in which I have worked I will speak frankly and honestly.

Many archivists are seeking better methods, better facilities and better control and wish to know what the researchers think. As a "user" I am part of the archival life cycle. This is why I was asked to participate in this forum and my presentation was structured to meet this purpose.

MARY N. SPEAKMAN

TO THE EDITOR:

We appreciated Jane Nylander's review of our *Guide to the Manuscript Collections* in the Spring '84 issue of the *American Archivist*. But PLEASE, PLEASE correct the price quoted. We are not charging \$150! The price is \$39 plus \$1.95 tax and \$1.50 for postage and handling.

CLARE M. SHERIDAN
Merrimack Valley Textile Museum