

The American Archivist

Volume 52
Number 1
Winter 1989

A Code of Ethics for Archivists

Archivists select, preserve, and make available records and papers that have lasting value to the organization or public that the archivist serves. Archivists perform their responsibilities in accordance with statutory authorization or institutional policy. They subscribe to a code of ethics based on sound archival principles and promote institutional and professional observance of these ethical and archival standards.

Archivists arrange transfers of records and acquire papers in accordance with their institutions' purposes and resources. They do not compete for acquisitions when competition would endanger the integrity or safety of records and papers; they cooperate to ensure the preservation of these materials in repositories where they will be adequately processed and effectively utilized.

Archivists negotiating with transferring officials or owners of papers seek fair decisions based on full consideration of authority to transfer, donate, or sell; financial arrangements and benefits; copyright; plans for processing; and conditions of access. Archivists discourage unreasonable restrictions on access or use, but may accept as a condition of acquisition clearly stated restrictions of limited duration and may occasionally suggest such restrictions to protect privacy. Archivists observe faithfully all agreements made at the time of transfer or acquisition.

created or are the subjects of records and papers, especially those who had no voice in the disposition of the materials. They neither reveal nor profit from information gained through work with restricted holdings.

Archivists answer courteously and with a spirit of helpfulness all reasonable inquiries about their holdings, and encourage use of them to the greatest extent compatible with institutional policies, preservation of holdings, legal considerations, individual rights, donor agreements, and judicious use of archival resources. They explain pertinent restrictions to potential users, and apply them equitably.

Archivists endeavor to inform users of parallel research by others using the same materials, and, if the individuals concerned agree, supply each name to the other party.

Archivists may use their institutions' holdings for personal research and publication if such practices are approved by their employers and are made known to others using the same holdings. Archivists may review and comment on the works of others in their fields, including works based on research in their own institutions. Archivists who collect manuscripts personally should not compete for acquisitions within their own repositories, should inform their employers of their collecting activities, and should preserve



Published Quarterly by
The Society of American Archivists

The American Archivist

David Klaassen, *Editor*

University of Minnesota

Teresa M. Brinati, *Managing Editor*

Society of American Archivists

Wendy Larson, *Copy Editor*

Karen Strauss, *Editorial Assistant*

DEPARTMENT EDITORS

PERSPECTIVES Scott Cline, *Seattle Municipal Archives*

CASE STUDIES Susan E. Davis

THE INTERNATIONAL SCENE Marjorie Barritt and Nancy Bartlett, *University of Michigan*

REVIEWS Glen A. Gildemeister, *Northern Illinois University*

EDITORIAL BOARD

Lewis J. Bellardo (1987–1991), *Georgia Historical Society*

Edmund Berkeley, Jr. (1985–1989), *University of Virginia*

John Daly (1987–1991), *Illinois State Archives*

Susan Grigg (1986–1990; CHAIR 1987–1989), *Smith College*

Howard Lowell (1988–1991), *Oklahoma Department of Libraries*

Lydia Lucas (1988–1991), *Minnesota Historical Society*

Philip P. Mason (1988–1991), *Wayne State University*

Jane Nokes (1987–1990), *Bank of Nova Scotia*

Nancy A. Sahli (1985–1989), *National Historical Publications and Records Commission*

Roy C. Turnbaugh (1988–1991), *Oregon State Archives*

The Society of American Archivists

PRESIDENT Frank B. Evans, *National Archives and Records Administration*

VICE PRESIDENT John A. Fleckner, *Smithsonian Institution*

TREASURER Linda Henry, *National Archives and Records Administration*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Donn C. Neal

COUNCIL MEMBERS

Nicholas C. Burckel (1988–1991), *Washington University Libraries*

Richard J. Cox (1986–1989), *University of Pittsburgh*

Maygene Daniels (1987–1990), *National Gallery of Art*

Linda Edgerly (1986–1989), *Consultant*

Linda M. Matthews (1988–1991), *Emory University*

Archie Motley (1987–1990), *Chicago Historical Society*

James M. O'Toole (1988–1991), *University of Massachusetts-Boston*

Mary Jo Pugh (1987–1990), *Consultant*

Joan Warnow-Blewett (1986–1989), *American Institute of Physics*

Cover note: *The development of the Archivist's Code, adopted by the SAA Council in 1980, is described by David E. Horn in his article in Perspectives. Horn implies that the suitable-for-framing version of the code, a portion of which graces the cover of this issue, has been displayed more than it has been heeded. His article, and another by Elena S. Danielson on the "Ethics of Access," address that concern.*

The American Archivist

Volume 52 / Number 1 / Winter 1989

Research Articles

On the Idea of Permanence / 10

James M. O'Toole

Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities: Opportunities and Challenges / 26

David Bearman

Question Negotiation in the Archival Setting: The Use of Interpersonal Communication Techniques in the Reference Interview / 40

Linda J. Long

The Ethics of Access / 52

Elena S. Danielson

Perspectives

The Development of Ethics in Archival Practice / 64

David E. Horn

Archivists, You Are What People Think You Keep / 72

David B. Gracy

Case Studies

MicroMARC:amc: A Case Study in the Development of an Automated System / 80

Frederick L. Honhart

The International Scene

The Amsterdam Municipal Archives as a Source for the History of the United States of America / 88

Henri Spijkerman

Exquisite Art and Precious Archives: China's Records in Bronze / 94

Zhao Aiguo and Chang Tong

Access to Archives and Privacy: The Twenty-third International Archival Round Table Conference Proceedings / 98

Ann Clifford Newhall

From the Editor / 4

The Forum / 8

Reviews / 102

The Society of American Archivists

1988 SAA Awards / 119

Luncheon Remarks by Incoming President Frank B. Evans / 122

Executive Director's Report / 124

Treasurer's Report / 128

REVIEWS

National Historical Publications and Records Commission, *Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the United States* / 102

reviewed by Paul Conway

Stuart, *Nations Within a Nation: Historical Statistics of American Indians* / 104

reviewed by Robert A. Trennert

Sillitoe and Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* / 104

reviewed by Sharon Puglsey

Hoerder and Harzig, eds., *The Immigrant Labor Press in North America, 1840s-1970s: An Annotated Bibliography. Volume 1: Migrants from Northern Europe* / 106

reviewed by Michael Smith

Kaufman, Ifkovic, and Carvalho, eds., *A Guide to the History of Massachusetts* / 107

reviewed by Martha L. Clark

Raelin, *The Clash of Cultures: Managers and Professionals* / 108
reviewed by William Nolte

Judge and Gerrie, eds., *Small Scale Bibliographic Databases* / 110
reviewed by Karen J. Baumann

Stricklin and Sharpless, eds., *The Past Meets the Present: Essays on Oral History* / 111
reviewed by Sister Anna Mary Gibson

Rempel, *The Care of Photographs* / 112
reviewed by Kathleen Collins

The *American Archivist* is published quarterly by the Society of American Archivists, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. Postmaster: send address changes to the *American Archivist*, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. Subscriptions: \$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 Teresa M. Brinati, Managing Editor, Society of American Archivists, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. Telephone: (312) 922-0140. Advertising correspondence, membership and subscription correspondence, and orders for back issues should be sent to SAA at the address above. Requests for permission to reprint an article should be sent in writing to SAA at the above address. 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 available on 16 mm microfilm, 35 mm microfilm, and 105 mm microfiche from University Microfilms International, 300 N. Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346. When an issue is out of stock, article and issue photocopies may also be obtained from UMI. 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* is printed on an alkaline, acid-free printing paper manufactured with no groundwood pulp. As such, it substantially meets the requirements of the American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48-1984. Typesetting and printing of the *American Archivist* is done by Imperial Printing Company of St. Joseph, Michigan.

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

©The Society of American Archivists 1988. All rights reserved. ISSN 0360-9081. Second class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and additional mailing office.

From the Editor:

DAVID KLAASSEN

Archivists seldom escape the tension—one hopes that it is creative—of balancing continuity and change. Our basic purpose as a profession is to provide the means for society to create links between different times and places. In doing so we are challenged, tested, and occasionally frustrated by the constant changes undergone by institutions, organizations, and individuals—changes that are manifested in the records that they create. The shifting interests, needs, and expectations of archival users provide similar challenges, as do the evolving techniques, tools, and resources available to support our efforts.

It is fitting and inevitable that the *American Archivist* will mimic these patterns of continuity and change in the archival world, even as it seeks to reflect and analyze them. Beginning with this issue, the names appearing on the inside front cover are almost entirely new—new to the responsibilities implied there, but drawing on a wealth of archival experience and professional contacts in a variety of institutional and regional settings.

Our aim continues to be that of presenting and stimulating the best thinking on archival issues, of analyzing the contexts and relationships that shape recorded informa-

tion and its use, and of reporting various activities and developments within, or relevant to, the profession. The way we seek to achieve these ends will involve some subtle changes, most of them intended to sharpen the focus of just what it is that we are trying to communicate.

I believe that the functions of a journal such as the *American Archivist* can be divided into two broad categories. First, it provides information and adds to the existing body of knowledge about archival enterprise and related issues by presenting new reports and analyses. Second, it recognizes its place as one element in a larger information web, calling attention to and evaluating other published expressions. In a sense, it is both a collection and a finding aid.

The first function—that of adding to the archival information base—is shaped by our circumstances. A profession as thinly spread as ours must go out of its way to share the insights garnered in our workaday experiences. Many of us are not surrounded by a critical mass of nearby professionals to provide any semblance of a think-tank atmosphere, or even to offer the opportunity to compare notes regularly with someone grappling with a similar problem. That

condition probably accounts for the camaraderie and the impressive turnout at national and regional conferences. Rarely do many of us find ourselves in the midst of more than a handful of our “own kind.”

Research articles, based on original investigation or on systematic review of literature, remain an essential element in the collective effort to advance the profession’s ability to understand the issues it faces; but the formal research article is not always the appropriate means through which to communicate what is intimately related to the author’s everyday work experience. Reports on situations encountered and approaches developed, or reflections on issues from particular points of view are, or should be, a vital part of our experience-sharing, and they do not always translate well as research articles.

To that end, the journal’s departmental format has been modified slightly, aiming to encourage and give legitimacy to more varied forms of expression. The journal has long offered alternative venues to “real” articles but has generally consigned them to a back-of-the-bus status. What was most recently “Commentaries and Case Studies” (itself a distinct advance, in substance as well as in name, over “Short Features”) is now two departments: “Case Studies,” edited by Susan E. Davis, and “Perspectives,” edited by Scott Cline. The point of the reorganization is to emphasize the distinctiveness of each type of article and, in so doing, to allow each the opportunity to develop. Analytical reports of projects or activities in specific settings (case studies) are as different from commentaries or reflective opinion pieces (perspectives) as either type is from original investigation-based research articles, and each stands to benefit from the effort to define it for what it is. In any number of cases in our short tenure, the new editors have initially puzzled to determine the appropriate department for a particular manuscript submission, because the boundaries are far from abso-

lute; but ultimately, in our estimation, the various articles have been sharpened by the insistence on determining whether the emphasis was on reporting, researching, or advocating. We hope you will agree that all three are valuable and that each is improved by a consciousness and intentionality of purpose.

The journal’s second general function—that of fitting into a larger web of archival information sources—should recognize the extent and diversity of our field and emphasize the benefits of interaction. The “Reviews” department is the most obvious acknowledgement of one journal’s role in relation to the totality of relevant literature. Reviews editor Glen A. Gildemeister, who will be succeeded by Anne R. Kenney beginning with the next issue, serves as a broker in a process that calls attention to, and engages in critical dialogue with, other forms of archival expression. Look for the pages of the Reviews department to give increased evidence of the dialogue, as well as the summary-of-contents, aspect of reviewing.

A new feature, entitled “Surveys,” is projected for future issues. It will share the critical-dialogue aspirations of the Reviews department, but its focus will be on recent developments in various areas of archival endeavor, rather than on resulting publications. The invited essays (volunteers who would like to contribute are, of course, welcome to identify themselves) will present the forest as well as the trees, reporting on specific developments while analyzing them in the context of broader trends. Articles have done this from time to time in the past, but we want to strengthen the format by encouraging more explicit and systematic application.

The “International Scene” department serves both functions. Its articles may take the form of research, case studies, or perspectives in presenting archival practices and conditions in other parts of the world, or they may review foreign journals and other

publications. To my mind, the department's great value lies in reminding us that we are part of a much larger community. There was a time when familiarity with European theory and practice was assumed to be a necessity for an educated American archivist, if only because of the paucity of American literature. Now, critical mass is no longer the issue, but awareness of diversity (and commonality) is more important than ever. The International Scene department cannot aspire to provide anything approaching comprehensive coverage, but it can open windows and call attention to developments. As long as Nancy Bartlett and Margie Barritt continue as department editors, readers can expect to enjoy coverage of innovative developments as well as selected routine-but-unfamiliar-to-us archival practices and circumstances in many different settings.

So that is what we will try to do. Much of the above you will recognize as the urge to define categories, an impulse that is probably the inevitable result of arranging too many manuscript collections that made "original order" sound like a contradiction in terms. Editing is a stimulating business (I can say that even in the midst of proof-reading galleys), precisely because it affords the opportunity to engage with authors in the process of exploring and expressing ideas. It is that sort of engagement in which I hope the readers can become involved as well. Oh, I nearly forgot to pledge an unrelenting effort to keep the "s" in "archives" (and thereby to restrict its use as a verb) and to try to get issues out on schedule. One must be faithful in things great and small. Let me know what we should continue and where we need to change.

The Forum

To the Editor:

Having received in rapid succession four numbers of the *American Archivist* (in three volumes) and the printed program for the SAA 1988 annual meeting, I am struck by the frequent use of the term “documentation strategy” and discussion of some of the ideas related to the development and application of documentation strategies. For the most part, I find this encouraging. Some of the discussion, however, especially comments by Frank Boles (Winter 1988, pp. 43–46), indicates a misunderstanding of key points. To avoid confusion, or to avoid having documentation strategy become an overgeneralized buzz word, it may be useful to clarify or reemphasize several matters.

First, as indicated in the definition of documentation strategies in the *American Archivist* articles by Samuels (“Who Controls the Past?” Spring 1986, pp. 109–24) and Hackman and Warnow-Blewitt (“The Documentation Strategy Process,” Winter 1987, pp. 12–47), a documentation strategy process is focused on an “ONGOING issue, activity, function or subject” (emphasis mine). This distinguishes it from a collecting project or other effort to document a unique or transitory phenomenon. It would be unfortunate if documentation strategy becomes a catch-all term for almost any planned or proactive effort relating to the selection of archival records.

Second, as also indicated in the defini-

tion of documentation strategy which Samuels and I first offered in a 1984 SAA session and which has remained essentially intact since, the development of a documentation strategy is a process “involving archival documentation creators, records administrators, archivists, users, other experts, and beneficiaries and other interested parties” and is “carried out through the mutual efforts of many institutions and individuals influencing the creation and management of records and the retention and archival accessioning of some of them.” By definition then, a documentation strategy cannot be formulated by archivists within a single institution, or carried out by a single repository, or even developed or executed only by archivists. It is definitely not a subset of a repository’s collecting policy. It also goes well beyond several repositories cooperating in the development of their acquisition policies.

Third—and this is ultimately much more important than these definitional issues—while the documentation strategy process seeks better analysis based on appropriate data and knowledgeable participants, better analysis is not its sole—and perhaps not even its primary—purpose. The model also seeks to maximize the use of influence. In that sense it is political as much as analytical. A major reason for involving parties other than archivists is not only because of the additional knowledge and perspectives that they may bring to analysis, but also because their awareness, support, leader-

ship and resources are needed to help promote implementation of the recommendations from the strategy process.

Fourth, while the model does not “presume archival prosperity,” as Frank Boles believes it does, neither does it assume that resources of existing programs are static or decreasing. It does assume that some new repositories are likely to be needed which, by carrying out their own missions, will contribute to improved archival documentation overall.

While I greatly admire Frank Boles’ efforts to help us better understand the way archivists presently make appraisal decisions, understanding the way we make these decisions now does not necessarily inform either the way we need to make them or how we can better obtain the support needed to carry them out more effectively—through both existing archives and others to be created in the future. Effective documentation decisions cannot be carried out merely by archivists deciding alone or by archivists talking to archivists, no matter how clear they are on the factors they are considering in their appraisal recommendations.

A fifth point is basic if the documentation strategy process is to acquire any acceptance in the archival community. A documentation strategy is meant to inform and recommend; it cannot dictate or direct. It is obvious, at least to me, that archival selection decisions must be made within individual repositories and that the primary factors underlying these decisions will always be the corporate mission, constituency, and capacities of the repository. The products of an informed documentation strategy process are tools to be drawn upon to enrich the basis upon which these decisions are made by repositories, whether the repository is part of the records creator or is a collector of records from other creators. Analysis carried out by a documentation group, and the information and reports it shares with creators, custodians, archivists and others, can help reduce duplica-

tion of effort, reduce resources needed by some repositories, encourage new programs, and pinpoint other actions to improve documentation. This can help repositories carry out their individual missions and, together, improve documentation overall. There is ordinarily no underlying contradiction between serving the repository’s mission and at the same time contributing to better documentation overall. However, where such is the case, it is unduly cynical to assume that repositories are unsusceptible, at least at the margin, to informed encouragement from respected external sources to act on behalf of broader community interests. The documentation strategy process can provide leverage toward that end. Informed persuasion by credible parties is a vital part of an effective documentation strategy process. A rigid, prescriptive, directive, top-down documentation plan is not.

Finally, developing strong archival programs adequate to the needs of the present and future requires that we take some risks. We *can* afford to try new approaches while seeking to better understand and evaluate present ones. We *can* foster the development of new programs, realizing that there is “substantial resistance” to their development. Facing “fiscal realities” and understanding that “resource allocators have not viewed archival programs as a high priority” is no reason to accept the status quo—or worse. The documentation strategy process is intended to help us make better and more easily the decisions we archivists are already making; but it can also provide levers for change. The lone appraiser is unlikely to make the best selection decisions; acting alone, s/he is even less likely to ensure that the designated records are retained and appropriately administered.

LARRY J. HACKMAN
New York State Archives