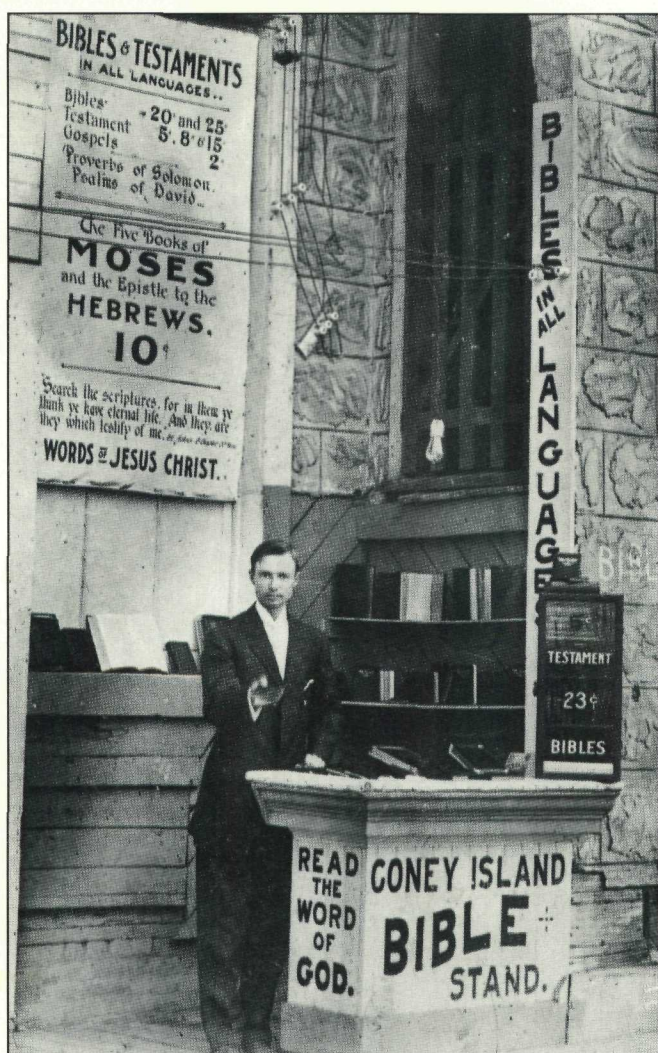


# The American Archivist

Volume 52  
Number 2  
Spring 1989



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

Karen Strauss, *Editorial Assistant*

### DEPARTMENT EDITORS

PERSPECTIVES Scott Cline, *Seattle Municipal Archives*

CASE STUDIES Susan E. Davis, *Madison, Wisconsin*

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

REVIEWS Anne R. Kenney, *Cornell 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:** Profound changes in institutional mission and behavior, and attendant changes in record keeping, are not limited to the recent past, as Peter Wosh demonstrates in his analysis of the American Bible Society and its records in the nineteenth century. In the midst of changing expectations and new marketing techniques, Harry Bacherat, a Coney Island Bible Man, continued to present an unchanging message at the popular resort, ca. 1910. (Courtesy of the American Bible Society Archives.)

---

# The American Archivist

---

Volume 52 / Number 2 / Spring 1989

---

## Presidential Address

**Searching for Common Ground / 144**  
Sue E. Holbert

---

## Research Articles

**Federal Land Records in State Repositories: The Experience in the Old Northwest / 152**  
Gregory Kinney

**Bibles, Benevolence, and Bureaucracy: The Changing Nature of Nineteenth Century Religious Records / 166**  
Peter J. Wosh

---

## Case Studies

**Will Access Restrictions Hold Up in Court? The FBI's Attempt to Use the Braden Papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin / 180**  
Harold L. Miller

**A Documentation Strategy Case Study: Western New York / 192**  
Richard J. Cox

---

## Perspectives

**Institutionalizing an Archives: Developing Historical Records Programs in Organizations / 202**  
Elizabeth Yakel

---

---

**The Recently Opened United Nations War Crimes Archives: A Researcher's Comment / 208**

Robert Edwin Herzstein

---

**The International Scene**

***Glasnost' in Archives? Recent Developments on the Soviet Archival Scene / 214***

Patricia Kennedy Grimsted

***Eleventh Congress of the International Council on Archives: An American Perspective / 238***

compiled by Nancy Bartlett

***Address by Monsieur François Mitterand to the Eleventh Congress on Archives / 245***

---

**Reviews**

Pederson, ed., *Keeping Archives*, / 250

reviewed by Julia Marks Young

Association of British Columbia Archivists, *A Manual for Small Archives*, / 251

reviewed by Timothy L. Ericson

National Association of Government Archives and Records

Administrators, *Preservation Needs in State Archives*, / 253

reviewed by Lisa L. Fox

Kesner, *Information Systems: A Strategic Approach to Planning and Implementation*, / 255

reviewed by Richard J. Cox

Paul, *Records Management Handbook for United States Senate Committees*, / 256

reviewed by Frank H. Mackaman

Smithsonian Institution, *From Reliable Sources: The Archives of American Art*, / 258

reviewed by Patricia L. Adams

National Archives of Canada, *Beyond the Printed Word: Newsreel and Broadcast Reporting in Canada*, / 259

reviewed by Maureen O'Brien Will

Chmielkewski, ed., *Guide to Sources on Women in the Swarthmore College Peace Collection*, / 260

reviewed by Louisa Bowen

Tepper, *American Passenger Arrival Records: A Guide to the Records of Immigrants Arriving at American Ports by Sail and Steam*, / 261

reviewed by Roger Haydon

**Boletín Bibliográfico Archivístico, / 262**

reviewed by Kathleen Roe

**Briefly Noted / 264****Selected Recent Publications / 266****Society of American Archivists****Obituaries / 268**

Paul Lewinson, Edward Campbell

**Council Minutes / 271****The Forum / 140**

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 1989. All rights reserved. ISSN 0360-9081. Second class postage paid at Chicago, Illinois, and additional mailing office.



# The Forum

## To the Editor:

William J. Maher's article in the Fall 1988 issue of the *American Archivist* provided a variety of useful perspectives on the issue of professional certification as well as several examples of rhetorical sleights of hand. I found two sleights that particularly gave pause.

Maher approvingly notes James Fallows's argument that, in Maher's words, "the professional culture's reliance on expertise and emphasis on obtaining predetermined credentials stifles creativity." Yet almost every newspaper in the country has stories about the entrepreneurial involvements of doctors and lawyers. Many business and economic historians have argued that Germany surpassed Britain in industry in part because of an education system better geared to producing professionals. I doubt even Mr. Maher would prefer being operated on by an uncredentialed doctor or represented by an uncredentialed lawyer. In short, Mr. Fallows's argument does not bear up well, at least in Mr. Maher's summary. Its use to suggest that credentialling is counterproductive may please those who share the premise but does not support the conclusion.

In addition to arguing from authorities without bothering to marshal evidence, Mr. Maher uses another age-old rhetorical trick,

the impugning of the opposition's motives. Early and late in his article he charges that archival certification is partially motivated by collective self-interest. In each case this is in effect an invitation of the reader to recoil.

Of course narrowly conceived self-interest has an unappealing history in business and politics as well as in the church and the professions. This is in part why psychologists and sociologists continue to emphasize the necessity not only of harnessing and directing, but also of educating self-interest.

Archivists should not be ashamed that they judge it in their enlightened self-interest to assert the distinctiveness of the knowledge, skills, and abilities required to do their work. Neither should they dismiss as unworthy the fear of the consequences of not credentialling practitioners in their field in a society where most skilled trades and professions are regulated through some credentialling mechanism.

That the SAA has been debating the best ways to establish such a mechanism for nearly two-thirds of its history shows that it has been very conscious of what other trade and professional groups have been doing. That, like many such groups as well, it has chosen certification as the most expedient method of credentialling does not mean that certification will serve it better than it serves others, an important point of Mr. Maher's article. On the other hand, certification may not serve the SAA any

less well either, and at the very least it affords those who choose to obtain it both a shorthand way of asserting their distinctive knowledge, skills, abilities, and experience and a job-specific credential. Those who judge such assertions and credentials ineffective or inadequate or unnecessary are going to have only about one in three prospective employers consider them potentially unqualified if they do not get certification, according to the SAA's 1986 survey. Jobs will continue to be available to them then, but now archivists who want will also be able to obtain credentials related directly to their work.

Such a choice seems sensible, even in the face of Mr. Maher's case studies.

DAVID MOLTKE-HANSEN

*University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill*

### Author's Response

I welcome the public and private comments I have received on my article discussing approaches to understanding the nature of professional certification. While the article has appeared later in the certification process than I would have liked, I hope it can still form an important basis for archivists' future understanding of certification as a phase in our professional development.

Mr. Moltke-Hansen's letter raises several interesting points. A full answer to each would require more space than is available, but I will comment on his most salient points.

First, the importance of the James Fallows commentary to my overall article has been greatly exaggerated, and Moltke-Hansen has ignored the context within which I cited Fallows. The article (page 411) quite clearly stated that Fallows was being cited as an example of one side of the often heated argument conducted by public commentators on credentialism. I never intended to place Fallows on the same level as the far more subtle and scholarly work of historians and sociologists described elsewhere in

the article. Thus, it would be unfortunate to regard my assessment of certification as the mere adoption or amplification of Fallows' views.

While Fallows might be seen as a polemical rather than a balanced analyst of the role of occupational credentials, he is not an irresponsible writer, and his approach is far more reasoned than some of the more severe public commentators on credentials, such as Milton Friedman. In fact, a review of the full text of Fallows's article reveals several important points that Moltke-Hansen has ignored. For example, Fallows emphasized that the skills on which credentials are granted are often quite different from the kinds of job performance essential to the success of professionals; and he approvingly described how a careful program for continuous examinations of airline pilots promoted both proficiency and openness.

Moltke-Hansen inquired of my willingness to use an uncredentialed lawyer or undergo surgery by an uncredentialed doctor. I find this line of argumentation quite discouraging because I had hoped that my article would move archivists to look at their profession in contexts well beyond these restrictive and irrelevant comparisons. While often cited in discussions of professionalism, law and medicine are so fundamentally different from archives, and they incorporate such substantially different educational, credentialing, and regulatory processes, that they can provide little basis for creating a viable program for archival credentials. Until a direct analogy between archival decisions and the life-and-death issues faced in the medical profession can be demonstrated, I believe that we should studiously avoid all such examples and reject them as red herrings.

I regret that my references to self-interest have also been misunderstood. My purpose in raising the question of self-interest was to illustrate that economic and social factors are important motivations to the de-

velopment of certification programs, even though these elements are not often explicitly considered as occupational groups move toward certification. This is not, however, to impugn the case for archival certification or to suggest that it is little more than veiled self-interest.

In fact, if there was anything hidden in my discussion of the role of self-interest, it was my hesitation to raise the issue at all. I was reluctant to discuss self-interest because I feared that its role could easily be exaggerated. In addition, I have been troubled by the lack of self-honesty in those who are unwilling to admit that it is a factor and who recoil from the suggestion that self-interest and turf might be important goals of certification. In the end, I raised the issue because I believe that we would be far better off if we openly articulated archivists' self-interest and then used it as a basic organizing and justifying element of the certification program, rather than relying predominantly on the rhetoric of altruistic public service. Thus, I applaud Moltke-Hansen's forthright articulation of the role of certification in archivists' self-interest.

Still, I must protest Moltke-Hansen's suggestion that I am impugning the motives of those who have advanced certification. Rather, my focus was on the potential discrepancy between the arguments used to promote certification and the full range of elements that commonly contribute to this process. I agree that archivists' self-interest should be harnessed and directed, but this cannot be done without first acknowledging the presence of self-interest and giving it a respectable place in the planning process for certification. Certainly we should not be ashamed of our self-interest, but neither should we buy into a credentialing program merely because many other trades and professions are so regulated.

I appreciate the suggestion that certification may be a sensible choice for those seeking a shorthand way of asserting their distinctive qualifications. However, a key

purpose of the article was to demonstrate that we should embark on such a program only if we are willing to do better than other occupations. Through the contexts and analyses that I was able to describe only briefly in my article, I hope that I have demonstrated that archivists should not overestimate what certification can do for them and how effective a measure of competence it can be.

In the process, I hope that the readers will see that while certification might be a simple and expedient response to the long-term issue of credentials for archivists, it may not be an effective solution to the problem. I still hope that archivists can do better than the society they document, and that they will build a credentialing program on the understanding that professionalism is considerably more elusive than a certification process, no matter how carefully it is developed.

WILLIAM J. MAHER  
*University of Illinois  
at Urbana-Champaign*