

## Survey

# Moving An Archives

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**Abstract:** The author conducted interviews with personnel of ten archival institutions that have been involved in recent years in large-scale removal of archival records from one facility to another, in order to find out how they proceeded and to identify the most common problems encountered in moving. Topics include pre-move planning and the issues that must be determined; the logistics of the move itself; typical problems encountered; and suggestions for improvement in operations. Examples from the experiences of major institutions provide illustrations.

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ALTHOUGH MANY ARCHIVAL INSTITUTIONS have outgrown their facilities in recent years and are sharing information about design and building plans, relatively little has been published about the actual process of moving archival records and the decisions that must be made prior to the move. The information presented here was gathered from interviews with persons at ten archives, including four on the national level, four state archives, and two private-sector institutional archives. All have been involved in moving records from one facility to another in recent years. The purpose of this research was to find out how various archives had planned and conducted their moves, what decisions they faced, what kinds of problems they encountered, and what they would do differently if they had to go through the process again.

### **Institutions Included in the Survey**

The U.S. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) recently moved 21,000 cubic feet of Reagan Administration records from the White House to a temporary holding facility in California. The records were identified, collected, and boxed, loaded onto truck pallets, loaded again onto airline pallets, all the while protected from possible security violations. While the move was an "ordinary" one encountered at the end of every administration, the U.S. National Archives is also preparing to move at least 500,000 cubic feet of its holdings in the near future to a new building in College Park, Maryland.

The National Archives of Canada moved 70,000 linear feet of records to interim storage sixty miles away from its downtown Ottawa facility in 1988 and planned to move more when renovations were finished. In 1977 the British Public Record Office moved 219,917 linear feet of records, plus large quantities of maps and oversize documents, from several locations in central London, twelve to thirty-five miles to a new building at Kew.

The Library of Congress moved its entire Manuscript, Music, Photographic, Motion Picture, and Serials and Government Publications Divisions across the street from the old building into the new Madison building between 1979 and 1984. The Manuscript Division move involved 200,000 archives boxes. There were over 1,300,000 sound recordings and 9,000 linear feet of rare manuscripts from the Music Division, 26,000 linear feet from the Motion Picture Division, and over 9,000,000 photographs, just to enumerate a portion of the total quantity moved to the new Madison building. The quantity of records moved was huge; however, an underground tunnel made moving vans unnecessary. A greater distance (approximately ten miles) was involved in moving the 5,299 map cases of the Geography and Map Division of the Library of Congress from the facility at Pickett Street, Alexandria, to the new Madison building.

The Maryland, Massachusetts, Iowa, and Louisiana state archives all have moved records into new facilities in the last several years. Maryland moved about 18,000 cubic feet from its old building in Annapolis to a new one in 1987 as well as about 45,000 feet of temporary records from warehouse storage. Maryland staff members helped with the move. Massachusetts moved to a new building at Boston's Columbia Point in 1975-76, using a professional transfer service. Iowa moved 20,000 cubic feet of records and 2,000 volumes of bound newspapers in 1988 from several old buildings into a new one in Des Moines. Louisiana moved 14,000 cubic feet of records in June 1987 and an additional 45,000 cubic feet of temporary records the following September.

The archives of the American Psychiatric Association moved about 800 cubic feet of materials across town into a new building in Washington, DC, in 1982; and the archives of the American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organiza-

tions moved about 7,000 cubic feet of records from downtown Washington into the new George Meany Center for Labor Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland, in 1987.

### Planning for a Move

Moving can be thought of in terms of two major activities: planning and execution. Everyone in this survey agreed that planning can never begin too early, and that good planning would have eliminated prob-

lems that did occur in the execution of the move. Planning a move presents an opportunity to correct past irritations, rearrange holdings, upgrade series descriptions and other finding aids, and computerize the location register. Some of the archives in this survey took the opportunity to plan changes, while others tried to make the process of moving a little bit smoother by maintaining the existing order of the records, numbering boxes serially, and duplicating the former pattern of shelving in the new facilities.

### Information Sources

Information about the experience of moving the ten archives was obtained by letters, interviews, and telephone conversations. All information presented in this paper may be assumed to have been derived from the sources listed below. An earlier, more detailed version of the article, which includes copies of forms used by the various archives, is available in the National Archives Library. For more information, contact the Archives Library Information Service (ALIC), (202-501-5425).

**British Public Records Office:** letter from Michael Roper, keeper of the public records, 11 January 1989.

**National Archives and Records Administration:** interviews with Daniel Goggin, director of Archival Allocation and Records Evaluation Staff, 17 February 1989; Maida Loescher, chief of the Records Relocation Branch, 7 April 1989; and Steve Hannestad, chief of the Systems Management Division, 9 February 1989.

**National Archives of Canada:** telephone conversation with Betty Kidd, director of the Cartographic and Architectural Drawings Division, 6 April 1989; and letter from Kidd, 10 July 1989.

**Library of Congress:** interviews with John Knowlton, Manuscript Division Specialist, 17 and 26 January 1989; and Emmett Trainor, assistant chief for Collections Management, 26 January 1989.

**Maryland State Archives:** interviews with Christopher Allan, administrator, 8 February 1989; and Patricia Melville, head of State and Local Records, 8 February 1989.

**Massachusetts State Archives:** letter from Albert H. Whitaker, Jr., state archivist, 10 January 1989.

**Iowa State Archives:** telephone conversation with Gordon Hendrickson, state archivist, 5 April 1989; and letter from Hendrickson, 17 April 1989.

**Louisiana State Archives:** telephone conversation with Randall Perry, archivist, 16 March 1989; and letter from Perry, 29 March 1989.

**American Psychiatric Association Archives:** interview with Linda Henry, former archivist, 30 January 1989.

**American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations Archives:** interview with Katharine Vogel, archivist, 11 April 1989.

In response to the question, "What needs to be planned?" the Keeper of Public Records, Michael Roper, succinctly listed the major areas of concern of the British Public Record Office: the identification and measurement of the records to be moved; allocation of records locations at the new building, (heavily used records to be put near the distribution area); selection of movement routes and access points at both old and new facilities; the timetable for the move; and staffing requirements. Indeed, whether the archives in this study were large or small, many of the steps in the planning process were the same.

**The shelf survey.** One of the first tasks to be undertaken in planning the move is to determine the present locations, quantity, and physical conditions of the records. Decisions such as whether to hire a contractor or move oneself, how much time to allow for the move, and what needs to be done to the records to get ready for the move will naturally depend upon an accurate assessment of the present holdings. The information compiled in the shelf survey will also be used as a basis for other decisions—whether to rearrange the order of series in a record group, whether to break up the shelving of series internally, whether to re-box and re-label records or wrap volumes for better handling, and what kind of shelving to adopt. Most archives devised their own shelf survey form with spaces to identify the records, their physical type and condition, the quantity, missing materials or gaps, and the present condition. The U.S. National Archives is using the opportunity to record a considerable amount of information that will ultimately increase the intellectual and physical control over the holdings and benefit the reference services. The shelf-read becomes the basis of the new location register. If it is possible to enter this information into the computer, new locations can be inserted as they are assigned, and new labels can be printed out.

Most of the archives in this survey were taking advantage of computer technology to facilitate the processes of shelf reading, labeling, and updating move information.

**Allocation.** The national archives of Canada, the U.S., and Britain were all concerned with the allocation of records, since some would be moved to a new facility and some would stay at the old. Deciding what records to move involved considerations of the space at old and new facilities, the physical condition of the records, staffing requirements, and the needs of researchers. The Canadians placed heaviest emphasis on the criteria of historical and financial value, frequency of use, and type of space available, to identify records to stay in the headquarters building in Ottawa. The U.S. National Archives decided to develop the downtown building into a genealogical center, keeping records there that would facilitate genealogical research. In deciding which records to move to the new facilities, discussions centered at first on the available floor space and the total quantity of records to be moved. These discussions considered, but rejected, the alternative of keeping all military records downtown and moving the civil records to College Park (or vice versa), which would have maintained a dichotomy imposed by an earlier classification scheme.

Many factors played a part in the decision of which records to move. There was discussion of the need to avoid duplicating staff and support services at old and new facilities. If some portions of record groups were left downtown and others moved, would that entail a need for more staff familiar with the same subject matter? Would researchers have to visit both installations? Would there have to be declassification sections in both facilities? The discussions were complicated by the physical conditions of some of the records: could they physically withstand the stresses of being moved, or would they require expensive

preparation? For NARA, and for the Canadian and British national archives, there was the additional need to guard the secrecy of certain classified records. For all the archives, large or small, there was pressure to keep in proximity records that are closely related in origin, subject, and research use. Inevitably, conflicts arose among the criteria. Each institution had to weigh the values and assign priorities in keeping with its needs and goals.

A related discussion that often arose in the early stages of planning for several institutions was whether to keep the old shelf arrangement of records or to make changes. The most frequently mentioned criterion for rearranging the record series in the new facilities was to make the most heavily used records the most accessible to the research room or point of distribution. Other criteria discussed by the Library of Congress included whether or not the materials had been microfilmed (and thus the originals would not be used), keeping record series in inventory order so as to facilitate retrieval, reuniting records that had been separated, and placing groups of records likely to be used by the same researchers in proximity to each other.

The decision to change the relative placement of records may require extra time in the movement schedule. Some records may have to be deposited temporarily in a holding location before they can be placed on the shelves. The Public Record Office changed the relevant placement of some records, relying most heavily upon the frequency-of-use criterion. This produced some delays as records piled up, awaiting reshelving. In contrast, the Iowa State Archives decided to number each box or volume consecutively and reshelve them in the same order. In this case records could be moved and reshelved rapidly, but movement would need to proceed from only one point unless boxes are uniform size and the box starting a new row can be anticipated and selected.

**Labeling.** Will records have to be labeled for the move? How should they be labeled? Should the label have new location information? Almost all the archives in this survey had to institute a program to relabel some parts of the holdings. The Maryland State Archives decided to prepare new labels that not only identified the agency of origin and series, but also the new shelf location of each box or volume. Every box or volume was entered into a computer database and assigned a new location before the move began. This individual identification meant that less care and attention had to be given to keeping records in their original order during the moving process. As it worked out, Maryland did its own packing and moving and did not worry too much about keeping records in order. When it was over they were convinced that having every box or volume labeled had prevented losses and misplacement and had aided the entire moving process.

The British Public Record Office did not move any record classes that were not already adequately labeled and described at the "piece" level. They did prepare a master set of lists of all the classes to be moved. When they surveyed the shelves they measured the records in terms of the new shelf-unit length at Kew (approximately three feet). Specially constructed containers were used that would hold one Kew shelf-load of standard-sized records. Rather than identifying and labeling each item, "despatch notes" were prepared for each Kew shelf unit. The despatch notes consisted of a four-copy form, containing five items of information: the "class" code (apparently corresponding to record group number and inventory entry at NARA), the first and last "piece" numbers (corresponding to individual box numbers), present location, the new location at Kew, and the signature of the person supervising the relevant segment of the move. The four copies were used to track the shelf unit at four stages:

packing the records, despatching or transporting, arrival at Kew, and reshelving at Kew. As each portion of the operation was concluded, one copy of the despatch note was removed and signed; eventually all four slips were "married" (matched). In retrospect, it seemed to the Keeper that two slips might have been enough, one for initial packing, and one for reshelving at Kew.

In NARA's recent transfer of 21,000 cubic feet of Reagan materials to California, a computer database facilitated overall control and production of labels at various levels of aggregation. Every box received a label, showing box number and location. Crews loaded thirty boxes on a pallet and recorded the information on an inventory sheet which was immediately entered into a computer. The move supervisors tried to select boxes to form a pallet by origin and destined location. Each pallet was wrapped with shrink wrap to prevent movement of the boxes. The pallet became the next level of control, and was labelled to indicate its destination. Tractor-trailers, each carrying forty-five pallets, moved the records to the airport. At the air terminal, six pallets were combined into a freight pallet. There were three plane loads, each holding thirty-five freight pallets. The computer was used at each level to maintain inventory control and to generate labels.

Both NARA and the National Archives of Canada are considering the idea of bar coding as a means of keeping track of records, both during and after the move. This approach can store and easily manipulate a large amount of information. On the other hand, bar codes cannot be read without specialized equipment and they certainly cannot be used to replace the usual textual labels. It may not be possible with portable bar code scanners to tap directly into the large database without returning from the stack area to a computer terminal wired into the main computer. Bar code labels also present a disturbing opportunity for van-

dalism—they could easily be removed or defaced.

**Shelving.** The decision to change the arrangement of the records or to maintain their present order may depend upon which of two types of shelving has been selected: stationary, or moveable (compact) shelving. If an archives decides to duplicate the old system of shelving, either by reusing the old shelving or by purchasing new standard shelving, the process of determining new locations is relatively simple. Records can be moved to the new location and placed on the shelves in their previous order. This apparently was the situation at a number of the archives in the survey. Reusing existing shelving creates the problem, however, of placing the records in a temporary location while the shelves are disassembled and reassembled at the new location.

With space at a premium in archives buildings, some planners are turning to the use of moveable shelving. Entire rows of shelving units are mounted on tracks, permitting as many as twenty shelving units to rest against one another; rows are moved apart to create an aisle when access is necessary to retrieve particular records. The movement mechanism may be either mechanical (manual wheels or cranks) or electrical. The advantages in terms of the space saved and the additional shelving per square foot of floor space are obvious. These savings are offset by the possibility of needing access to more than one row of shelving at the same time. Special arrangements must be planned to accommodate the needs of reference archivists as they consult the records because no carts, boxes, or loose papers can ever be left in the aisle space. Reference archivists may have to move out of the way while records are being retrieved from another row for a researcher. If the quantity of records is small and the number of staff pulling records is limited, there may not be much conflict in gaining access to the shelves. However, with a large archives or heavy records use, problems will

arise. An archives contemplating the use of moveable shelves should arrange to visit a facility already using them, to see how they actually work in practice.

The Maryland State Archives adopted compact shelving, operated mechanically. To minimize retrieval problems, they tried to plan the placement of the records series so that one heavily used series would not block access to another. This difficult task of planning had to be done by one person who was very familiar with the entire holdings. The total space requirements for an agency's records had to be calculated by figuring how many boxes, volumes, or records cartons would fit onto a shelf, identifying a shelving area (keeping in mind the degree of usage), and then assigning each container a shelf space. Even though the Maryland Archives tried to keep heavily used records accessible, they did not go so far as to break up series. Large series were shelved continuously, wrapping around to the next row as they would have been on stationary shelving.

It is possible that the use of compact shelving, along with the extensive use of computers, will transform concepts and practices in the arrangement of records on the shelves. The placement of series in order of demand or frequency of use would appear to be more beneficial than an order derived from an intellectual scheme. Intellectual control may be maintained by a computer, while actual locations of boxes are determined by other factors, as is the case now in many records centers. It might become more practical to continue a large series across the main aisle, for example, rather than wrapping it around to the other side of the row, which requires moving the shelf unit to continue retrieval.

**Unanticipated problems.** One of the questions asked respondents was, "What were the complications or pitfalls that were not anticipated?" All of the archives told of some problems that might have been avoided with better planning. Everyone had

problems related in some way to shelving. The problems occurred at all stages of the process, from the bidding for the shelving contracts, to the installation of the shelves, and the placement of the records on the shelves. For example, the Iowa State Archives experienced delays in the delivery and placement of the shelving because it had to reopen the entire bidding process. The contract was awarded to the low bidder but was contested by another party. It was necessary to go through the bidding process three times. The AFL-CIO Archives did not have sufficient input at the design stage of the new building, which contained shelves that were seventeen feet high. The archivist had to persuade the builders to put in an unplanned floor at mid-height, giving access to the upper reaches of the shelving. The installation of the shelving was delayed, and added braces prevented access to certain spaces.

The archives of the American Psychiatric Association contracted with a mover to take down its old shelving and reassemble it at the new location. The movers had difficulty reassembling the shelves, which delayed the process of moving and reshelving.

The Louisiana State Archives was forced to temporarily store archival records in location order in an unfurnished third-floor stack area until shelving was installed in the destined second-floor stack. Temporary records from the records center were not moved until the installation of a combination of new and refurbished shelving was completed.

The Maryland State Archives mistakenly allocated records to shelves that did not exist, because it was so difficult to visualize from the plans the way the shelving would look. They did not realize that a portion of the compact shelving was stationary, and that some shelf space was actually taken up by columns. They also discovered that the shelves had been constructed one-half-inch shorter than specified in the plans.

The initial supply of shelving for the new

British Public Record Office facility at Kew was inadequate. Shelving heights were adjusted as they received the assigned documents, and it was necessary to strip the shelving from other areas to make good the deficiencies. There were also other problems; occasionally they mistakenly allocated two containers to the same location, and they were unable to use some top shelves where these were obstructed by lights or ducts. The records had to be placed in the "disaster" area (see "special problems" below) or held back at the despatching area until the problems could be worked out.

The Library of Congress had planned to complete its move within eighteen months. In fact, they did use only eighteen months of moving time, but the process was dragged out for four years because of unanticipated problems in installing shelving and furniture.

**Containers.** The Library of Congress conducted its move using large canvas carts similar to those used by the post office. It ordered the carts from a commercial firm, reinforcing them with more durable castors. The records were loaded into the carts, which were then pushed onto elevators or vans (in the case of moves that involved a greater distance than across the street.) A twenty-four-foot van could carry twenty-two of these carts at one time. They had about fifty carts and twenty-five book trucks. The AFL-CIO Archives rented rather than purchased forty similar mail carts that held twenty-four cubic feet apiece. The Maryland Archives constructed its own carts of one-inch plywood, with four shelves twelve inches apart. Each shelf was sufficiently large to hold four record center cartons. The carts were equipped with heavy-duty castors (like the LC). Fourteen of these carts could be carried by the eighteen-foot van that they used for the move. They had enough carts to keep three sets circulating during the move: one being packed, one in transit, and one being unloaded.

The British Public Records Office used

specially constructed "coffin-like" containers made of fiber board on a wire frame. They had hinged lids that were fastened down when the containers were filled. When empty, tapered sides allowed the containers to be stacked. The containers were designed to accommodate one Kew shelf load of records. In retrospect, they found the number of containers to have been insufficient to meet peak demands, and many had to be scrapped because of damage to the corners.

**Bound volumes.** The Iowa State Archives used Kraft paper to wrap bound volumes for the move. The work was done by the staff as part of the labeling and other preparation for the move. Unfortunately, due to very limited staff and dramatic increases in reference demands since the move, they have not had time to go back and remove all the wrappings. The Louisiana State Archives also decided to wrap the bound volumes, but acid-free paper was used. It will not be necessary to remove the wrappings.

Both Maryland and the AFL-CIO Archives wrapped bound volumes in fiber-reinforced plastic called Scrimweave, which is said to inhibit ultraviolet light. They cut a rectangle of the plastic large enough to overhang the ends of the volume several inches, and long enough to wrap it around the outside of the volume leaving several inches excess to overlap and secure the sheet. Pieces of Velcro fastener were glued onto the plastic to secure it in place. The plastic held disintegrating volumes together during the move and provided a place to attach labels. It has been kept on the volumes, which are stored flat on the shelves so that the ends are open for air circulation. The Velcro fasteners allow the plastic to be kept in place even when the volume is brought out to researchers. The plastic has not been tested to determine its long-term effects on leather and paper.

The U.S. National Archives is considering the idea of shrink-wrapping volumes

to facilitate moving. Tests are being conducted to determine the long-term effects. It is hoped that the wrap could be left in place until the volumes are used, then replaced as necessary. The advantage of the plastic wrap is the ease and speed with which it can be applied.

#### **Hiring a contractor or moving oneself.**

The decision to hire a moving contractor or do the moving oneself is, of course, related to the costs, the funds available, the quantity and condition of the records, and the number of staff available to participate in the move. The staffs of all the archives in this survey participated in the moving process to some extent, but most chose to contract with an outside party to perform the actual move. Locating movers familiar with the characteristics of archival records is not easy; Iowa, for example, found it necessary to conduct a one-day session to train the hired movers in handling the records.

The Public Record Office used its own staff as movement officers (one per building to oversee the entire operation) and movement supervisors, who supervised the moving contractor's employees. They had weekly meetings with the contractors during the process of the move. The movers (contracted by their Property Services Agency) were required to supply all containers, ramps, dollies, forklifts, conveyors, and whatever else was necessary to carry out the move. On the average, they moved 1,500 linear feet per day over an average distance of about twelve miles.

The Library of Congress was unsatisfied with the results of an earlier move done by a contractor. Books were removed from shelves without regard to their order, and the bottoms of metal cases were smashed by the use of dollies that were too small. It took six months to straighten things out after the move. Following that experience, the Library of Congress began to train and use its own moving crew of twenty-four

permanent staff from its Collections Maintenance Branch. For the move to the Madison building it also hired thirty temporary employees. The men worked in relays. One stood at the shelves and loaded the boxes into the canvas tub, in reverse order. The tub was passed to another person at intervals of about fifty feet. Color coding aided in delivery to the proper storage area in the new building, where the contents of the tub were unloaded and reshelved in correct sequence. A staff member with a shelf list helped check off the boxes as they were reshelved in the new location. The person who supervised the movers calculated that thirty men could move 364 linear feet per hour. This involved dusting the books or boxes when they were removed from the shelves, packing the book truck or cart, pushing it to the elevators, through the tunnel, up the elevators and to the storage shelves in the new building, unloading them, and reshelving the books or boxes in order. To determine how long it would take to move, and to prepare a move plan for each branch, the planner made trial runs. The move plans were based on a six-and-a-half-hour working day, and an overall time frame of eighteen months.

The Maryland State Archives also conducted its own move. The administrator rented a truck that accommodated fourteen carts, each loaded with twenty-four cubic feet of records. During the move the staff also used portable roller conveyors, the dumbwaiter in the old building, a fork lift, and ramps. Like the Library of Congress, they stationed people in relay fashion. About six people worked at the starting point. One person removed records from the shelves; another loaded the dumbwaiter; another unloaded at the other end of the dumbwaiter; two loaded records onto the truck; another operated the fork lift, and so on. About four people worked on the receiving end, unloading and reshelving the records. In addition to their regular staff of thirty-two,

they also hired several temporary employees, including some prisoners. They were able to move two-and-one-half to three truck loads, or about 600 cubic feet of records per day. Some of the staff were involved in monitoring the phones or keeping up reference activities, and a few took leaves the month of the move. There were no accidents other than a pinched finger. The experience was successful, and the Maryland Archives recommends using archives staff members to move the records—they are the ones who care.

**Reference Services.** In planning for reference services during the move, it is necessary to consider the length of time that the records will not be accessible. If records must be held in a temporary holding facility, they will be inaccessible longer than if they are moved and immediately reshelfed in the new location. Most of the archives in this survey did not actually have to close down to the public for long periods of time. The Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress did not close for the move. They informed researchers on the eve of the move to appear the next morning at the new building. Records that were requested but had not yet been moved were retrieved from the old building. (Prior to the opening of the new building, records that had already been moved were retrieved on request.) Other Library of Congress divisions did close for varying lengths of time.

The Public Record Office moved records from several buildings to the location at Kew over a period of seven months. Records requested at Chancery Lane that had already been moved to Kew were brought back from Kew for readers' use. Only during the final five weeks of the move was the PRO closed to the public. The major problem in reference services was that there was a higher demand for the records that had already been moved to Kew than had been expected, placing a heavy burden on the staff to recall records.

### The Execution of the Move: Special Problems

The various archives adopted a number of unique solutions to particular problems.

**The anomalies sheet.** The Public Record Office set up a system for handling "queries and anomalies" during the move. Any time something unusual happened, such as the discovery of an uninventoried document, an overloaded moving container resulting in too many documents for the shelf, damages to a container, leaving a container overnight, or two containers allocated to the same shelf, the movement supervisor noted the fact on the anomalies sheet and turned it in to the movement officer at the end of each day. The records were held in a special area designated the "disaster" area, until the problem could be solved.

**Fumigating in transit.** The Massachusetts State Archives took the opportunity to fumigate records in transit. They used aerosol bombs placed in the van before sealing. The fumigants were of a type (pyrethrum) that would not be harmful to the workers and were used under the supervision of certified pest control agents.

**Removing obstacles in the movement route.** The building vacated by the Maryland State Archives belonged to the state and was to be renovated for a new use. With permission, the Maryland Archives had a large hole opened in an interior wall that greatly facilitated the removal of records.

**Keeping informed.** The Library of Congress used the "Scorpio News" menu on its computer to great advantage during the move. Users could consult the menu on any of the computers in the offices and search rooms and be supplied with the latest move information on any particular unit: when it would move, information on disruptions in service, telephone numbers, and other pertinent information. The computer update supplemented numerous

temporary signs in the buildings and reading rooms, posters and announcements mailed to the LC information bulletin subscription list, and a move “hotline” telephone number that patrons could call without charge and leave their name and number to be called in return. The British Public Record Office reported that so many changes occurred to the planned schedule during the process of moving that it would have been better to have had some sort of updating method.

**Other Problems.** In addition to the problems already mentioned connected with shelving, there were a variety of other common experiences, such as difficulties with elevators. The Public Record Office said the lifts in the old buildings worked better than the ones in Kew. Most of the time one was out of operation, and it was rare to have two working at the same time. Other archives reported problems with elevators not being ready on time, being used for the delivery of furniture, or not being located in the most useful place. Several suggested having elevator repair people on hand for the move.

There were a variety of minor problems. Flat boxes (“pizza boxes”) used for prints were crushed and did not survive the AFL-CIO move intact. An LC van drove off with the back door still open, but fortunately nothing dropped out. The LC Manuscript Division was plunged into temporary chaos when the workers started removing boxes from the shelves in three different places. No one had realized that they would be working from more than one starting point.

Problems also occurred in timing. The Public Record Office found that the adjustment of shelving, slow elevators, and greater efficiency at the packing and despatching end of the operation caused the records to pile up at the new building. Consequently, the containers used for moving were occupied. Everything had to slow down or stop, until records could be shelved and moving containers emptied.

## Conclusion

Despite the problems encountered, most of the archives in the survey reported that the process they employed was basically successful and that they would repeat it if another move were necessary. Everyone experienced delays and could have used more time, but there were no major disasters. Having sufficient input at the design stage of the new facility was extremely important to the efficiency of the move. Some of the worst problems in shelving and elevator arrangements could have been avoided if the building planners had consulted the users from the start. All survey respondents said that planning is everything and that it is impossible to start planning too soon. They agreed that more time must be spent preparing than actually moving.

Constructing the timetable for the actual move requires planners to think in terms of the entire cycle, from the removal of records from the shelves to their replacement in order on the new shelves. The planned schedule should anticipate the problems that survey respondents experienced with shelving by allowing time to accommodate delays at specific points—bidding (including the possible need to re-bid), installation, and reshelving. Double the time required to actually install, adjust, and load the shelves should be built in to the schedule.

The plan must take into account the number of people, carts, trucks, elevators, and loading areas available and identify the movement route, access points on each end, and possible bottlenecks. The elevators in both the old and new locations should be inspected and timed; an elevator mechanic should be available during the move. The ability of access routes to accommodate the weight and size of the chosen form of transport should be tested by doing trial runs with actual boxes and carts. This will also demonstrate how many people, records, and carts can fit into an area at one time. The

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importance of dry runs cannot be overemphasized. The repeated advice of those who have been through a move was to try things beforehand in as realistic a simulation as possible.

The experience of the archives presented in this survey suggests that it simply is not

possible to anticipate all the bottlenecks and possible sources of confusion until the process is tried out in practice. Given careful planning, however, the problems and frustrations of moving to a different archival facility can be held to a minimum.