

The American Archivist

Volume 53
Number 4
Fall 1990



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/Copy Editor*

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*

Terry Cook (1990–1993), *National Archives of Canada*

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

Ellen Garrison (1990–1993), *Middle Tennessee State University*

Susan Grigg (1986–93; CHAIR 1987–91), *Smith College*

Deborah Newman Ham (1989–92), *Library of Congress*

Steven Hensen (1989–92), *Duke University*

Randall Jimerson (1990–1993), *University of Connecticut*

Howard Lowell (1988–1991), *Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management*

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

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

Roxanne Nilan (1989–92), *Stanford University*

Nancy A. Sahli (1985–1992), *National Historical Publications and Records Commission*

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

The Society of American Archivists

PRESIDENT John A. Fleckner, *Smithsonian Institution*

VICE PRESIDENT Trudy H. Peterson, *National Archives and Records Administration*

TREASURER Linda Henry, *National Archives and Records Administration*

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR Donn C. Neal

COUNCIL MEMBERS

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

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

Terry Eastwood (1989–1992), *University of British Columbia*

James E. Fogerty (1989–1992), *Minnesota Historical Society*

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*

Robert Sink (1989–1992), *New York Public Library*

About the cover: The annual bibliography of writings on archives, a regular feature in the *American Archivist* for four decades but dormant in the last several years, returns in this issue with "Writings on Archives, 1988."

The American Archivist

Volume 53 / Number 4 / Fall 1990

Research articles

Managing the Records of Higher Education: The State of Records Management in American Colleges and Universities / 532

Don C. Skemer and Geoffrey P. Williams

Case Studies

Case Studies in Archives Program Development / 548

Larry J. Hackman, James M. O'Toole, Liisa Fagerlund, and John Dojka

Perspectives

Plowing the Sea: Appraising Public Records in an Historical Culture / 562

Roy Turnbaugh

International Scene

Oral Records in Senegal / 566

Saliou Mbaye

Reforms in Estonian Archives / 576

Peep Pillak

The Dutch Association of Archivists Marks Its Centennial / 582

Frank K. Buisman

Annual Bibliography

Writings on Archives, 1988 / 588

Descriptions of Archival Holdings, 1988 / 636

Journals Represented in the 1988 Bibliography / 647

Bibliography Index / 653

REVIEWS

Do *Real* Archivists Need Archives & Museum Informatics? [Review essay]
Ann Pederson / 666

Harris, *Ancient Literacy*, reviewed by James M. O'Toole / 676

Yates, *Control Through Communication* and Bruemmer and Hochheiser, *The High-Technology Company*, reviewed by Margaret Hedstrom / 677

McCarthy, ed., *Archives Assessment and Planning Workbook* and New York State Archives and Records Administration, *Strengthening New York's Historical Records Programs: A Self-Study Guide*, reviewed by Bonnie Rose Curtin / 679

McCraw, ed., *The Essential Alfred Chandler: Essays Toward a Historical Theory of Big Business*, reviewed by Cynthia G. Swank / 682

National Academy of Public Administration, *The Effects of Electronic Recordkeeping on the Historical Record of the U.S. Government*, reviewed by Sue Gavrel / 684

Champagne and Chouinard, *Le traitement d'un fonds d'archives: ses documents historiques*, reviewed by Terry Eastwood / 685

McCann, ed., *Social Responsibility in Librarianship: Essays on Equality* and Swan and Peattie, *The Freedom to Lie: A Debate About Democracy*, reviewed by David E. Horn / 686

Boccaccio, ed., "Constitutional Issues and Archives." *Archival Symposia*, vol. 1, reviewed by Robert L. Byrd / 688

Penn et al., *Records Management Handbook*, reviewed by Raimund E. Goerler / 689

Jenkins et al., ed., *The Papers of Thomas A. Edison, Volume 1: The Making of an Inventor, February 1847–June 1873*, reviewed by Lisa Browar / 690

Farrell and Desbarats, ed., *Explorations in the History of Canadian Mapping: A Collection of Essays*, reviewed by Connell B. Gallagher / 692

Schamel et al., *Guide to the Records of the United States House of Representatives at the National Archives, 1789–1989* and Coren et al., *Guide to the Records of the United States Senate at the National Archives, 1789–1989*, reviewed by James Cross / 693

Miller, ed., *A Guide to Research Collections of Former Members of the United States House of Representatives 1789–1987*, reviewed by Lynn Wolf Gentzler / 695

Wehmann, comp. and rev. by DeWhitt, *A Guide to Pre-Federal Records in the National Archives*, reviewed by Alexia Jones Helsley / 696

South, comp., *Guide to Non-Federal Archives and Manuscripts in the United States Relating to Africa, Volume 1: Alabama—New Mexico and Volume 2: New York—Wisconsin, Index*, reviewed by Herbert Finch / 697

First Historical Archives, comp., *Guide to China's First Historical Archives*, reviewed by William W. Moss / 698

Crouch et al., ed., *Christianity in China. A Scholars' Guide to Resources in the Libraries and Archives of the United States*, reviewed by Roland M. Baumann / 700

Florida State Archives, *The Black Experience: A Guide to Afro-American Resources in the Florida State Archives and Guide to the Records of the Florida State Archives*, reviewed by Gary R. Kremer / 701

Modoc Press, comp., *Special Collections in College and University Libraries*, reviewed by Edmund Berkeley, Jr. / 702

Briefly Noted / 705

Recent Titles / 709

Forum / 528

Postal Notice

The following statement of ownership, management, and circulation was filed in accordance with the provisions of Section 4369, Title 39, U.S. Code, on 21 November 1990, by Teresa M. Brinati, Managing Editor:

The *American Archivist* is published quarterly by the Society of American Archivists, 600 S. Federal St., Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. The managing editor is Teresa M. Brinati. The owner is the Society of American Archivists, 600 S. Federal St., Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. There are no stockholders, bondholders, mortgages, or other security holders in the organization.

The average number of copies of each issue printed during the preceding twelve months was 5,543; sales through dealers and carriers, street vendors, and counter sales were 0; mail subscriptions to members and subscribers were 4,427; total paid circulation was 4,427; free distribution was 25; total distribution was 4,452; and 1,091 copies were for office use, leftover, or spoiled after printing. For the most recent issue (Summer 1990), total number of copies printed was 5,323; sales through dealers and carriers were 0; mail subscriptions to members and subscribers were 4,573; total paid circulation was 4,573; free distribution was 25; total distribution was 4,598 and 725 copies were for office use, leftover, or spoiled after printing.

Forum

To the editor:

Along with many less-welcomed pieces of mail over the Christmas holidays, I received the two latest issues of the *American Archivist* (Vol. 52, no. 4 and Vol. 53, no. 1). Perhaps I am woefully out of touch, but these two special editions took me entirely by surprise. From Lawrence Dowler's "Introduction," through the "Report of the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description," the Working Group's "Recommendations," and all of the individual "Background Papers," this is a compilation of major importance and interest. Coming as it does at a time when other SAA working groups are considering a redefinition of the profession's information technology-related education programs, these publications provide clarity, substance and direction on an issue of fundamental importance.

With support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, an outstanding team of our colleagues have grappled over the last three years (and for some, much longer!) with the subject of descriptive standards. Thanks to the *American Archivist*, their accomplishments have now come to light. But, one may ask, "Why should this undertaking merit such an investment of effort, time, and financial resources?" After all, archivists have always argued that their holdings are unique, defying standardized description. Shouldn't archivists devote the limited resources of their institutions to the collection and preservation of original documents rather than the standardization of descriptive tools?

In response, the Working Group on Standards for Archival Description has provided a convincing case, justifying a profession-wide effort to improve the "intellectual control" over archival collections. Failure to do so obviates the most vital of archival concerns, namely providing the customer (constituent) with timely and economical access to relevant information. By hammering this point home and by then calling for a greater commitment of resources to ensure its realization, the Standards Working Group has made a significant contribution to our thinking and strategic direction as an information services profession.

Second, in their analysis of descriptive requirements, they have identified and defined the key levels and components of archival description. Indeed, they have laid bare the criteria with which both we and our constituents (customers) may judge the adequacy of the intellectual controls placed on collections. Their three-dimensional model provides a comprehensive set of guidelines as well as a performance metric for those engaged in the actual formulation of descriptive processes and tools. The virtue of their approach is in its practical, non-technical nature and its flexibility. It requires neither the employment of computer-based technologies nor an artificially limited series of descriptive categories.

Instead, it provides a common foundation for the development of better controls and enhanced information exchange. This latter end will be achieved through stimulating a more comprehensive and accurate

approach to description (again through reference to the Working Group's three-dimensional model) but without rigidity. These developments will, in turn, help the cause of the archives. Within the parent institution, descriptive standards will facilitate access, encourage use, and presumably garner greater recognition of, and hence support for, the archival enterprise. Similarly, mechanisms for intellectual control, once standardized, may be shared more readily, creating greater awareness and promoting interorganizational use. Clearly, printed and media-based information products have benefitted from common descriptive standards. Though important differences remain, it nevertheless stands to reason that archival access must follow a similar path of evolution if archives are to comprise a relevant/accessible information resource.

If the reasonableness of the Working Group's recommendations do not in and of themselves move our profession forward, surely external developments will eventually force change upon us. Here I would note two converging trends. First of all, globalization has taken hold. Now more than ever, organizations are establishing a formal global presence or are building strategic alliances with sister institutions around the world. As part of the information services network of the global organization, the archives must also transform itself to perform responsibly. Over time these cooperative ventures will engender a global communications and information-sharing infrastructure that can only exist through a broad agreement on data-exchange standards.

In turn the movement towards globalization is driving developments in information technology (I/T), affording numerous alternatives for how we might create, store, collect, control, communicate, and exchange data. To reduce the complexity and the overall cost of this emerging I/T environment, standards hold the key. As the Working Group points out, the future of

our profession will be greatly influenced by those currently laboring on the many national and international standards boards concerned with these communication/cooperation issues. As the Working Group suggests, we had better start paying attention and, whenever possible, join in the discussions. It is in our best interest but it is also our professional responsibility to do so.

From my perspective, there is yet another major message to be drawn from the presentation of the Working Group's report. To achieve satisfactory results in archival description, we must review, indeed, re-engineer our operations and processes. In all of my work as an I/T consultant, the greatest and most common failings that I find with automated applications have nothing to do with technology. They have to do with the unwillingness of users to rethink their processes in light of new tools or automated capabilities. What I find so exciting in the Working Group's recommendations is their call (both explicitly and implicitly) to rework the archival descriptive process and all that falls from it (i.e., access control, user services, and inter-institutional cooperation). This is a most difficult undertaking and yet one that is essential to the success of the entire enterprise. Here again the Working Group has provided both an approach and a justification for action but the profession as a whole must rise to the challenge.

Finally, I would like to observe that the strategic use of the working group model as employed in the case of archival description has great utility elsewhere. By bringing some of the best minds in the field together and freeing them for brief periods of time from day-to-day responsibilities, the sponsoring agency created the opportunity for focused, innovative achievements. The Society of American Archivists now has a similar arrangement in place—albeit on a lesser scale—to explore the profession's approach to the teaching of automated rec-

ords and techniques. We need to encourage this effective use of resources as we go forward. We also need to commit ourselves as a profession to the goals and objectives set forth in the Standards Working Group's "Final Report." Last but not least, we need to extend our deepest appreciation to the NHPRC and the team who have provided us with such a fine map for the immediate future.

Richard M. Kesner
Babson College

To the editor:

I am appalled that Linda J. Long spends eleven pages discussing question negotiation and interpersonal communication techniques (vol. 52, Winter 1989) but completely ignores the perspective that I lay out in "The Myth of the Reference Interview" (*Reference Librarian* 16 [Winter 1987]: 47-52), viz., that question negotiation is greatly overrated. It is often unnecessary, superfluous, a cover for ill-informed staff, or an ego-enhancing activity for librarians. This minority opinion is buttressed by the following empirical evidence: I spent many hours observing working librarians at eight academic institutions in Texas, Oklahoma, Kansas, Iowa, and Minnesota. Not a single true reference interview occurred in all of the 229 witnessed interchanges.

Robert Hauptman
St. Cloud State University

Author's response:

I'm sorry you feel that way. All the examples in my article were genuine, taken from my own experience as an archivist or the experiences of my colleagues while interacting with patrons. This experience and, I believe, the experiences of most archivists, tells me that patrons need and appreciate archivists' efforts to serve them the best way possible. It seems a shame to see the issue in terms of "an ego-enhancing activity for librarians." Shouldn't the real

issue for all of us be serving our patrons effectively?

Linda J. Long
Stanford University

To the editor:

Far too frequently archivists simply pay lip service to the notion of collegial cooperation but do nothing in practice to further such cooperation. Archival cooperation in the abstract is a commonly accepted, often-lauded good, but all too rarely do we see concrete instances of it actually occurring. Recently, however, I had the very good fortune to be involved in a concrete instance of collegial cooperation, an instance that I wish to bring to the attention of my colleagues as an exemplar.

Early in 1990 I received a letter from Mark H. Jones, State Archivist of Connecticut, informing me that the staff of the Connecticut State Archives was in the process of reevaluating segments of the archives's holdings that appeared to be out of its mission scope. Among the holdings that were clearly out of scope were the papers of Henry Wade Rogers, president of Northwestern University from 1890 to 1900. Jones indicated that his records did not include any information on how the Connecticut State Archives had acquired the Rogers papers, but that he was amenable to having them deaccessioned and returned to Northwestern University if we were interested.

Henry Wade Rogers had been one of the three most important presidents in the 140-year history of Northwestern University. He had been largely responsible for transforming Northwestern from a loose federation of affiliated professional schools and an undergraduate college of regional importance into a centralized modern university with a national presence. I had been acutely aware that the Northwestern University Archives held virtually no records documenting Rogers's presidency. Hence Mark Jones's letter came as a very welcome surprise. After

Rogers left Northwestern he became a renowned federal judge. I surmised that since he had lived in New Haven while on the bench, his heirs or executors had passed his papers, including the records of his Northwestern presidency, on to the Connecticut State Archives.

I immediately informed Jones that we would indeed be interested in having the Rogers papers, and he set the deaccessing machinery in motion. The process took several months, during which the Northwestern University Archives had to satisfy the understandably rigorous requirements of the Connecticut State Archives for any of its holdings that are deaccessioned and transferred to the custody of another repo-

sitory. On 23 October 1990 I was elated to receive a container with the Rogers papers enclosed. The records of one of the most distinguished and significant leaders of the university had been returned to their proper home and a gap in the documentary record of the institution had been filled.

I wish to express my appreciation to Mark Jones for his exemplary expression of archival cooperation and I wish to commend to my colleagues in the archival profession the process described above as a model case of transferring out-of-scope holdings of one repository to another, which would benefit greatly from such a transfer.

Patrick M. Quinn
Northwestern University Archives