Research Article

Drifting Disciplines, Enduring Records: Political Science and the Use of Archives

DON C. SKEMER

Abstract: Archivists' interest in expanding their academic clientele beyond historians has prompted them to consider the informational needs of researchers from other disciplines. Surveys of institutional users and citation studies of publications show that political scientists and public policy specialists have made little use of archival sources; but a careful analysis of political science literature reveals that changes in the discipline may be reversing its long-standing behaviorist antipathy for humanistic and historical inquiry. An understanding of these changes can inform effective archival outreach efforts to encourage research use of archives.

About the author: Don C. Skemer is curator of manuscripts, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections, Princeton University Libraries. He was previously head of Special Collections and Archives at the University at Albany, State University of New York, and a lecturer in its School of Information Science and Policy. He holds an M.L.S. from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in history from Brown University. *Research for this article was completed in Summer 1989 at the University at Albany through a United University Professions Study Leave. The author wishes to thank Frank B. Evans, John G. Gunnell, and William L. Joyce for reading this article in manuscript and making useful suggestions.*

Users of Archives

ONE OF THE MOST striking characteristics of the American archival profession during the 1980s was the markedly increased interest in how, why, and by whom archival materials are used. Archival writers used surveys of institutional users and citation studies of scholarly publications, both reliable tools of library and information science research, in an effort to understand the informational needs of present and future researchers. A number of published studies have demonstrated that careful monitoring of the scholarly marketplace can inform more effective administration of archives and responsive delivery of informational services. Most of these studies have focused on historians as the principal academic users of American archival repositories, leading readers to the perhaps-unintended conclusion that archivists serve only the historical discipline (this despite Elsie Freeman's assertion that "historians are neither our principal nor our most significant users).[1]

Archivists have written relatively little about academic users other than historians; the little that has been written is hardly positive in evaluating the potential interest of other academic disciplines. For example, Fredric Miller, who was assessing the archival impact of social-science research methodology as practiced by historians, observed that "social science methodology almost pridefully rejects the use of archives and manuscripts as unsystematic and unrepresentative, as well as time consuming." To counter that trend and recapture that portion of the social history market, he recommended the development of automated file-level retrieval, detailed description of quantifiable information, and outreach programs.[2]

Others have developed the theme of growth through diversification. In 1986 the Society of American Archivists Task Force on Goals and Priorities called on archivists to evaluate past and present research trends and to study changes in academic disciplines using archives in order to increase the use of archives and to make better-informed appraisal decisions. The task force urged archivists to "review methodology courses to assess current training and attitudes about the use of primary archival sources in such disciplines as history, social sciences, and public administration."[3]

In a similar vein, Lawrence Dowler has advocated better understanding of the real and potential users of archives and how they may be provided with information. He believes archivists should move away from "traditional concerns with the historically mandated conception of archives" and "to define the archival profession as something

[1]A provocative article by Clark A. Elliott ("Citation Patterns and Documentation for the History of Science: Some Methodological Considerations," *American Archivist* 44 [Spring 1981]: 131-42) explored the applicability of both techniques to the study of the documentation of modern science. Subsequent discussions and applications include Elsie T. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User Point of View," *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 111-23 (quotation at p. 116); Elsie T. Freeman, "Buying Quarter Inch Holes: Public Support through Results," *Midwestern Archivist* 10:2 (1985): 89-97; William J. Maher, "The Use of User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986): 15-26; Paul Conway, "Research in Presidential Libraries: A User Survey," *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986): 35-56; Roy C. Turnbaugh, "Archival Mission and User Studies," *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986): 27-33; Jacqueline Goggin, "The Indirect Approach: A Study of Scholarly Users of Black and Women's Organizational Records in the Library of Congress Manuscript Division," *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986): 57-67; Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives," *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 393-407.

[2]Fredric Miller, "Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History," *American Archivist* 49 (Fall 1986): 392.

[3]*Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report on the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: SAA, 1986), 8, 27.

more than custodial or ancillary to the study of history and the humanities."[4]

Political science and public policy studies offer an opportunity to analyze the potential for use of archives by academicians other than historians. For almost a half century, European and American historians have studied administrative history, and government archivists promote the informational value of their holdings for research on government and public policy. Efforts to study public policy historically with full archival documentation have existed for many years and have increased in recent decades among federal archivists and agency historians who write administrative histories as part of their jobs.[5] In this country, the documentation of the formulation and administration of public policy has long been one of the chief reasons for the creation and preservation of archives; for in appraising public records to identify those worthy of permanent preservation in an archival repository, archivists look for materials that help trace the course of policy formation in the agencies of origin.

Although archivists and historians continue to write administrative histories of federal agencies, scholarly use of archival materials for research in political science and public policy has been minimal. Convinced that federal records were an invaluable and underutilized resource for the study of the administration of public policy, the National Archives held a conference on 19-20 November 1970. "The general use of such sources," wrote archivists Frank B. Evans and Harold T. Pinkett in the introduction to the published conference papers, "has been surprisingly limited and has prompted some archivists and researchers to conclude that there exists a substantial unfamiliarity with the nature and potentialities of federal archives as sources for research in the administration of public policy."[6] One of the conference contributors, Richard G. Hewlett, a federal historian working at the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission, concluded that in reading journals in political science and public administration one finds only a "scanty underpinning of historical fact upon which many of the published articles depend and expressed the hope that if better historical, and especially archival, evidence were available to these scholars, it would be used in seeking workable solutions to contemporary problems.[7] Other archivists at the national and state levels have shared this hope.

But is it realistic to conclude that students of political science and public policy would undertake archival research if they knew that relevant information were available? Even if they would never feel the same imperative as academic historians to document their scholarly writings with citations of archival materials, are they a potential audience? A study of the discipline of political science (with passing reference to the subfield of public policy) and its changing methodologies will demonstrate that user studies are insufficient to attract

[4]Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51 (Winter/Spring 1988): 77-78.

[5]As early as 1941, for example, Karl L. Trever underscored the importance of administrative histories written by archivists but noted how little attention had been devoted by scholars to the study of the offices of national government. (Karl L. Trever, "Administrative History in Federal Archives," *American Archivist* 4 [July 1941]: 159-69.) See also Arthur Larson, "Administrative History: A Proposal for a Re-evaluation of its Contributions to the Archival Profession," *Midwestern Archivist* 7:1 (1982): 35-46.

[6]Frank B. Evans and Harold T. Pinkett, "Introduction," in *Research in the Administration of Public Policy*, National Archives Conferences, vol. 7, Papers and Proceedings of the Conference on Research in the Administration of Public Policy (Washington, D.C.: Howard University Press, 1975), xiii.

[7]Richard G. Hewlett, "Government History Writing from the Inside," in ibid., 7-11.

clients from different fields.[8] Such a study can help archivists anticipate emerging trends and provide the basis for more realistic estimates of the likelihood for use of archives only if it begins with the recognition that the fundamental issues, values, and assumptions that characterize a discipline evolve over time—and that so too do the research methods and information-seeking practices of its members.

The Evolution of Political Science

"Political science must be studied historically and history must be studied politically," said Columbia University political scientist John W. Burgess in 1897: "Separate them, and one becomes a cripple, if not a corpse, the other a will-o'-the-wisp."[9] The eminent British scholar James Bryce agreed with Burgess in his 1909 presidential address before a joint meeting of the American Political Science Association and the American Historical Association: "Political science has to be constructed out of historical facts as a building has to be reared out of the stones which have been quarried and placed on the ground." Based on first-hand experience and a critical understanding of archival and other primary sources of information, Lord Bryce argued, the careful study of political phenomena and organisms could produce a science standing "midway between history and politics, between past and present," drawing materials from the first and applying them to the other in order "to serve the practical needs of the time."[10]

The German historicism of Leopold von Ranke and the historical school of jurisprudence of Karl Friedrich Eichhorn and Friedrich Karl von Savigny exerted a heavy influence on the work of political scientists in the late nineteenth century. Critical evaluation of historical evidence gathered from books and manuscripts was still the recommended research method. Although political science, like many other academic disciplines, began to acquire independent departmental status and professional identity in the 1880-1920 period, subject matter and forms of "scientific" documentation did not change markedly; older research methods survived a growing interest in a more rigorous, scientific approach to the study of political institutions and policies.[11] Despite an increasingly independent status, political science continued to be oriented toward what might be termed statecraft. Traditional political science remained an academic discipline that studied, often historically, governmental institutions, constitutional law, political thought, and international relations.[12]

[8]This article does not deal with the genre of policy studies written by "public historians," who are really academically trained historians working as historians outside academia. Even before the public history movement was so named in the 1970s, a growing number of young historians found research opportunities and employment in the world of policy studies. For an overview of the public history field, see Peter N. Stearns and Joel A. Tarr, "Applied History: A New-Old Departure," *History Teacher* 14 (1980): 517-31; Peter N. Stearns, ed., "Policy History," in David F. Trask and Robert W. Pomeroy III, eds., *The Craft of Public History: An Annotated Select Bibliography* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983), 419-59; Edward Berkowitz, "History, Public Policy and Reality," *Journal of Social History* 18 (Fall 1984): 79-87; David B. Mock, "History in the Public Arena," and Edward Berkowitz, "History and Public Policy," in Barbara J. Howe, Emory L. Kemp, eds., *Public History: An Introduction* (Malabar, Florida: Robert E. Krieger Publishing Company, 1986), 401-25.

[9]John W. Burgess, "Political Science and History," *American Historical Review* 2 (April 1897): 408.

[10]James Bryce, "The Relations of Political Science to History and to Practice," *American Political Science Review* 3 (February 1909): 1-19.

[11]Dorothy Ross, "The Development of the Social Sciences," in Alexandra Oleson and John Voss, eds., *The Organization of Knowledge in Modern America, 1860-1920* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1979), 107-38; Dorothy Ross, "American Social Science and the Idea of Progress," in Thomas L. Haskell, ed., *The Authority of Experts: Studies in History and Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 157-75.

[12]Evron M. Kirkpatrick, "The Impact of the Be-

The subsequent development of political science, however, has been largely a chronicle of the rise of behavioralism and decline of traditional research methods. In the 1920s and 1930s Charles E. Merriam, a University of Chicago political scientist who believed that the discipline had been dominated by an institutional focus and the library/archival research methods of historians, worked zealously to advance the behavioral approach to politics. In his influential 1925 book, *New Aspects of Politics*, he advocated the application of the scientific methods of psychology and sociology to politics, thus replacing the traditional historical, legal, and descriptive approach to political institutions. Rejecting political institutions as the basic unit for research, Merriam and followers of his "Chicago school" advocated the systematic study of aggregate political behavior methods common to the social sciences. Knowing "who gets what, when, how," as Merriam's student Harold D. Lasswell defined politics in 1936, was the object of a behavioral, scientific, noninstitutional approach.[13]

By the postwar period, when behavioralism grew to all but dominate the discourse of political science, acceptable research methods came to include quantification and statistical analysis, mathematical models, observation and experimentation, surveys and interviews, and other methods common to the social sciences. Monitoring human behavior in the aggregate became more important than tracing the evolution of government and institutions. Behavioralism spread across the political science and its subfields, especially after World War II, resulting in a discipline increasingly defined by particular modes of data collection and manipulation.[14] The behavioral reorientation of political science had telling consequences for literature in the field, traceable in almost five decades of published books and articles as well as published dissertations and theses. Since the 1960s, it should be added, political science has taken an active interest in questions of public policy, to the extent that such an interdisciplinary specialization as public policy often seems a subfield of political science.[15]

In general, like other social sciences in the twentieth century, political science has shown a cyclical pattern of scientism and activism, leading practitioners to embrace particular subjects and methodologies.[16] The

havioral Approach on Traditional Political Science," in Austin Ranney, ed., *Essays on the Behavioral Study of Politics* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1962), 6-7; W. J. M. MacKenzie, "Political Science," in *Main Trends of Research in the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, New Babylon Studies in the Behavioral Sciences, no. 8 (Paris, The Hague: Mouton/ UNESCO, 1970), 169, 179.

[13]Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936).

[14]Kirkpatrick, "Impact of the Behavioral Approach," 11-29; Harold D. Lasswell, *The Future of Political Science* (New York; Atherton Press, 1963), 30-37; Heinz Eulau, "Political Science," in Berthold Hoselitz, ed., *A Reader's Guide to the Social Sciences* (New York: The Free Press, 1970), 131-35; Albert Somit and Joseph Tanenhaus, *The Development of American Political Science from Burgess to Behavioralism* (New York: Irvington Publishers, Inc., 1982), 173-94; David M. Ricci, *The Tragedy of Political Science: Politics, Scholarship, and Democracy* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1984), 60-67; David B. Truman, "A Report on Ways to Strengthen the Historical Dimension of Public Policy Research at the University at Albany through Exploitation of the Archives of Public Affairs and Policy" (Unpublished paper, 24 May 1989), 2; Theodore J. Lowi, "The Pernicious Effects of Economics on American Political Science," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (11 December 1991): B1-2; Herbert A. Simon, "A 'Diabolical Mind' Responds on Political Science," *Chronicle of Higher Education* (15 January 1992): B3.

[15]Arnold J. Heidenheimer, "Comparative Public Policy at the Crossroads," *Journal of Public Policy* 5, no. 4 (1985): 444-45.

[16]Ross, "Development of the Social Sciences," 130. "The result of these interacting processes is the imposition of a cyclical pattern upon the search for more sophisticated methods, as waves of scientism recede under the impact of political activism and the failure of scientific results to match scientistic rhetoric, and as conservative political pressures and the recognition of scientific inadequacy send social scientists again

research methodology that guides the information-seeking behavior of political scientists is not frozen in time. Even the behavioralist Heinz Eulau has allowed that in political science "new styles, topics, aims come to dominate the creative imagination of successive generations."[17]

Two political scientists have argued recently that their discipline cannot "destroy its past," as Thomas Kuhn argued in *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* about "paradigmatic shifts" in the natural sciences. Political scientists rationally revive older, apparently obsolete forms of research that can be shown to shed light on newly perceived problems and suggest solutions to others that defy resolution by more fashionable scientific methods.[18]

Political Science Methodology

That contemporary political scientists often seem oblivious to archival documentation has much to do with the discipline's often unfavorable image of archives and their unabashed methodological association with academic historians. In a recent manual of political science methods, archival records are recommended for use as nonreactive, impartial sources to supplement more common sources for empirical research such as computerized or printed statistical data. But "episodic records" such as correspondence, diaries, and organizational records are considered time-consuming to locate and use, almost to the point of limiting their research value. In the opinion of political scientists, these records tend to help explain particular events, regarded by historians as fundamentally unique, rather than more significant long-term phenomena documented with larger, more statistically valid bodies of data in "running records" (for example, congressional election returns and crime statistics). It is less expensive, in the view of most political scientists, to use "running records" collected, tabulated, and made accessible by the record-keepers themselves in printed or machine-readable forms. Contemporary textual records are considered somewhat problematic or even suspect, for they are seen as being inaccessible to scholars, more selectively preserved, and occasionally even falsified. According to the canon of political science methodology, revealing informal communications (for example, opinions given by corporate counsels or political advisors) are either not committed to writing or, if recorded, are never made public.[19] As in the literature of social science methodology, political scientists officially acknowledge the value of historical perspective and archival documentation but assign them peripheral roles. Archival research, in short, is allowed but neither recommended nor encouraged.[20]

The tepid interest in archives found in political science manuals of methodology can also be seen clearly in recent political science and public policy journal literature. Content analysis of 367 articles published in the prestigious *American Political Science Review* during the 1981-88 period shows only ten articles (2.7 percent) citing archival materials or some other form of unpublished documentary evidence. (See Table 1.) Archives and other historical records repositories were hardly used. Although one author used the Library of Congress for the papers of two U.S. Supreme Court justices, the authors of the other

into a renewed commitment to the development of an objective science."

[17]Eulau, "Political Science," 129.

[18]John S. Dryzek and Stephen T. Leonard, "History and Discipline in Political Science," *American Political Science Review* 82 (December 1988): 1250.

[19]Janet B. Johnson and Richard A. Joslyn, *Political Science Research Methods* (Washington: CQ Press, 1986), 191-217.

[20]See, for example, Abraham Kaplan, *The Conduct of Inquiry: Methodology for Behavioral Sciences* (San Francisco: Chandler Publishing Co., 1964), 110-11, 361, 367, 369.

Table 1

Historical Orientation and Documentary Evidence in Political Science and Public Policy Journals

	American Political Science Review				*Journal of Public Policy*				Combined			
Year	N	Historical		Documentary	N	Historical		Documentary	N	Historical		Documentary
1981	19	3	15.8%	0 0.0%	18	1	5.6%	0 0.0%	37	4	10.8%	0 0.0%
1982	41	3	7.3%	0 0.0%	17	2	11.8%	0 0.0%	58	5	8.6%	0 0.0%
1983	48	2	4.2%	0 0.0%	21	3	14.3%	0 0.0%	69	5	7.2%	0 0.0%
1984	49	4	8.2%	0 0.0%	16	1	6.3%	0 0.0%	65	5	7.7%	0 0.0%
1985	50	6	12.0%	3 6.0%	23	0	0.0%	0 0.0%	73	6	8.2%	3 4.1%
1986	53	4	7.4%	0 0.0%	16	1	6.3%	1 6.3%	69	3	4.3%	1 1.4%
1987	54	4	7.4%	5 9.3%	16	3	18.8%	0 0.0%	70	7	10.0%	5 7.1%
1988	53	2	3.8%	2 3.8%	10	1	10.0%	0 0.0%	63	3	4.8%	2 3.2%
Total	367	26	7.1%	10 2.7%	137	12	8.8%	1 0.7%	504	38	7.5%	11 2.2%

Table 1 summarizes articles published during an eight-year period in the *American Political Science Review* and the *Journal of Public Policy* that display two characteristics. Articles are considered "historical" if they are primarily time-oriented accounts of people, processes, and events (more is required than brief historical background or a statistical overview over time). "Documentary" articles require a reliance on archival and other unpublished documentary sources, rather than on data archives or printed sources.

nine articles used an array of quasi-archival documentary sources that may or may not be accessioned by an archives or historical records repository some day; included were recent federal agency records still filed in the originating offices, survey questionnaires and raw data held by data archives or private individuals, and interest-group records still held by the groups.

Even more meager results were generated for the same years by content analysis of the *Journal of Public Policy*. Of 137 articles in this period, only one (0.7 percent) used anything vaguely resembling archives or manuscripts—specifically, printed materials found in the personal papers of two public servants.[21]

Were it not for our review of political science methodology, practitioners of the discipline might have seemed better targets for archival outreach because they deal with events and processes traceable over time.[22] William L. Joyce has argued that "even if they are not formally trained in the discipline of history, social scientists, public policy makers, and others approach their topics with a retrospective or sequential understanding."[23] Some political scientists would appear to agree with Joyce, recognizing the value of a time (though not event) orientation in studies of public opinion, elections, and political institutions.[24]

But how time-oriented are students of political science and public policy? Content analysis of journal literature for the 1981-88 period shows that sequential thinking

[21]Surveys of the informational needs of social scientists (excluding historians) consistently find archives near the bottom in frequency of use, in company with such "unscientific" forms of research materials as mass media. Maurice B. Line, "The Information Uses and Needs of Social Scientists: An Overview of INFROSS," *Aslib Proceedings* 23, no. 8 (August 1971): 415-17; Richard S. Halsey and Richard D. Irving, "Assessment of Information Needs of Rockefeller College Faculty" (unpublished paper, School of Information Science and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York, 1990), table 1.

[22]For a philosophical study of the role of time in policy study, see T. Alexander Smith, *Time and Public Policy* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1988).

[23]William L. Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," *American Archivist* 47 (Spring 1984): 131.

[24]Joseph Cooper and David Brady, "Toward a Diachronic Analysis of Congress," *American Political Science Review* 75:4 (1981): 998-1006; Gabriel A. Almond, "The Return to the State," *American Political Science Review* 82 (September 1988): 853-76.

Table 2

Time Continuum in Political Science and Public Policy Journal Articles, 1981-88

YEAR	N	pre-1900	1901-45	1946-60	1961-70	1971-80	1981+
1981 (*APSR*)	19	3 (15.8)	4 (21.0)	6 (31.5)	5 (26.3)	9 (47.4)	0 (0.0)
(*JPP*)	18	2 (11.1)	3 (16.7)	8 (44.4)	11 (61.1)	14 (77.8)	1 (5.6)
1982	41	3 (73.2)	5 (12.2)	10 (24.4)	14 (34.0)	16 (39.0)	3 (7.3)
	17	0 (0.0)	1 (5.9)	2 (11.8)	5 (29.4)	8 (47.1)	1 (5.9)
1983	48	2 (4.2)	6 (12.5)	8 (16.7)	10 (20.8)	22 (45.8)	2 (4.2)
	21	1 (4.8)	1 (4.8)	2 (9.5)	10 (47.6)	19 (90.5)	6 (28.6)
1984	49	5 (10.2)	5 (10.2)	12 (24.5)	17 (34.7)	21 (42.5)	5 (10.2)
	16	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (6.3)	3 (18.6)	9 (56.3)	10 (62.5)
1985	50	5 (10.0)	7 (14.0)	14 (28.0)	18 (36.0)	18 (36.0)	7 (14.0)
	23	0 (0.0)	1 (4.3)	5 (21.7)	12 (52.2)	17 (73.9)	10 (43.5)
1986	53	2 (3.8)	4 (7.5)	13 (2.5)	19 (35.8)	22 (41.5)	14 (26.4)
	16	1 (6.3)	3 (18.8)	2 (12.5)	6 (37.5)	12 (75.0)	11 (68.8)
1987	54	2 (3.7)	5 (9.3)	7 (13.0)	14 (25.9)	18 (33.3)	13 (24.1)
	16	2 (12.5)	3 (18.8)	9 (56.3)	7 (43.8)	12 (75.0)	8 (50.0)
1988	53	1 (1.9)	3 (5.6)	6 (11.3)	7 (13.2)	13 (24.5)	16 (30.2)
	10	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	0 (0.0)	1 (10.0)	5 (50.0)	5 (50.0)
SUBTOTAL	367	23 (7.6)	39 (10.6)	76 (20.7)	104 (28.3)	139 (37.9)	60 (16.3)
	137	5 (3.6)	12 (8.8)	29 (21.2)	55 (40.1)	96 (70.1)	52 (38.0)
TOTAL	504	28 (5.6)	51 (10.1)	105 (20.8)	159 (31.5)	235 (46.6)	112 (22.2)

For each year, Table 2 indicates articles first in the *American Political Science Review* and next in the *Journal of Public Policy*. The number of articles is given first, followed by percentage in parentheses. Because individual articles often make reference to more than one time period, they will add up to more than 100 percent.

may hold out less promise than archivists might hope. As seen in Table 2, a total of 504 articles in the *American Political Science Review* and *Journal of Public Policy* were analyzed for time orientation. Specialists in political science and public policy are indeed time-oriented, but their expressions of time consciousness tend to be restricted to two varieties: (1) brief statements providing historical background to recent political phenomena and policy issues; and (2) statistical overviews based on only the most superficial (usually published) evidence. Not counting articles on political theory or disciplinary methodology, about three-quarters of the articles delved to some extent into antecedents of contemporary political phenomena, if only peripherally. Clearly, they normally are interested only in the previous decade or two, rather than distant historical antecedents and processes, with public policy being even more present-minded than political science.[25] Whether giving historical background for a court decision or reciting statistics on tax policy, relatively few articles go back to the 1950s or earlier. Articles tend to go back about the same number of years, no matter when they were written; the more recent the article, the later the period of emphasis in the historical continuum.

The focus on the very recent past clearly precludes most archival documentation of

[25]Similar results are indicated for the public policy-oriented faculty of the University at Albany, State University of New York, in Halsey and Irving, "Assessment of Information Needs of Rockefeller College Faculty," 7. "On the historical-current continuum the mean for the overall population [48 of 118 social scientists surveyed] was 4.250 (on a 1 to 5 scale) indicating a strong preference for current research."

policy research because the material is not yet in a repository and is generally quite massive in volume. In recognition of this problem, archivist Richard J. Cox called for public historians to work closely with archivists "to ensure that the information necessary for public policy formulation is being well maintained."[26] Historian Samuel P. Hays has recently called for better archival documentation of the contemporary world of public affairs to support present and future historical research on public policy.[27] Discussing his own research, he noted that "the main problem was to obtain evidence about the decision-making process without getting bogged down in the mountains of documentary evidence that the process itself created." As Hays and others recognize, the massive bulk of contemporary documentation is enough to scare off even the most dedicated historians, to say nothing of political scientists and public policy specialists who do not regard this sort of documentation as a professional *sine qua non*. Scholars daunted by a glut of information on ever-smaller aspects of the recent past have turned of necessity to other forms of documentation, hardly a situation boding well for the future academic use of archives.[28]

Even when time-oriented, mainline political scientists clearly prefer broad, sweeping national or cross-national studies of process to highly focused national or regional studies of events and people. As our content analysis shows, the dozens of data archives in the United States are a far more significant resource for the study of politics than are conventional archives. Other preferred sources include government documents such as the *Congressional Record*, as well as published data, telephone interviews, secondary works, and ephemeral reports.) In the *American Political Science Review* alone, content analysis showed that 50 of 367 articles (13.6 percent) used data archives, especially election and public-opinion databases at the Roper Public Opinion Research Center (founded 1946) and the Inter-University Consortium for Political Research (1962) of the University of Michigan's Center for Political Studies.

For members of a university community—even penniless graduate students—free or inexpensive computer time and institutional access to such data archives have facilitated low-cost behavioral research and thereby discouraged original research based on the quantification of unpublished sources in archives, libraries, and other historical records repositories. Quantitative data on voting, opinion research, and government spending are available for little cost, as opposed to the expensive and onerous task of identifying, collecting, and organizing data from archival holdings or even bureaucratic files, either active or inactive. Data archives may also be combined to produce

[26]Richard J. Cox, "Archivists and Public Historians in the United States," *The Public Historian* 8 (Summer 1986): 29-45.

[27]Samuel P. Hayes, "Manuscripts for Recent History: A Proposal for a New Approach," *Journal of American History* 77 (June 1990): 208-16.

[28]O. Lawrence Burnette, Jr., *Beneath the Footnote: A Guide to the Use and Preservation of American Historical Sources* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1969), 310-11; Richard A. Baker, ed., *Proceedings of the Conference on the Research Use and Disposition of Senators' Papers, Sept. 14-15, 1978* (Washington: GPO, 1978), 172; Patricia Aronsson, "Appraisal of Twentieth-Century Congressional Collections," in *Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance*, ed. Nancy E. Peace (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1984), 82. In a 1977 panel discussion about Executive Office records, former White House official Stephen Hess said to Andrew J. Goodpaster, "It's probably too much to expect public officials to save papers solely because they might be historically useful to someone at some time, because at least given a change in how political scientists at least look at their discipline, including great computer runs on every piece of paper that comes out through the Executive Office, this would mean saving every paper." (Anna Kasten Nelson, ed., *The Records of Federal Officials: A Selection of Materials from the National Study Commission on Records and Documents of Federal Officials* [New York: Garland Publishing, 1978], 42.)

sophisticated longitudinal and cross-national studies. The existence of data archives also discourage political scientists from undertaking traditional, institutionally oriented case studies, committee studies, or research on interest groups, which requires more considerable research time and travel expenses often unsubsidized by one's university.[29]

There are other explanations. The fundamental unpopularity of case-study methodology in political science and elsewhere in the world of social science research is one of the principal reasons, often unstated, that political scientists disdain archives and ignore evidence relevant to their areas of inquiry. Our content analysis of recent journal literature shows that political scientists and public policy specialists focus far more on process than on events that could be analyzed in case studies; in the 1981-88 period, a mere 4.7 percent of articles in the *American Political Science Review* and 4.4 percent of those in the *Journal of Public Policy* dealt with specific events.

Why are such case studies of particular events avoided? Relevant methodological literature recognizes that archival records offer both evaluative and quantitative evidence but argues that the historically oriented case studies that will result from this type of research will have a narrowly "monographic" subject focus, episodic and restricted in scope, static and misleading, which more often than not cannot be generalized to broad theoretical propositions.[30] "No serious scholar wants to be known as the producer of 'just another case study,' " said one political scientist. "The label is highly appropriate for purely descriptive case studies, and the effects laudatory. Unfortunately, the same label drives people away from doing theoretically interesting case studies."[31] While short case studies on the recent history of American government and public policy have been used pedagogically for decades, the historically oriented and archivally researched variety, most political scientists and public policy specialists fear, will inevitably result in massive, overly detailed publications providing little if any basis for scientific generalization.[32] And whether for publication in professional journals or not, there is a professional difference of opinion as to whether such case studies of public policy could be of benefit to government itself, as archivists and historians believe.[33]

[29]Jerome M. Clubb, "Sources for Political Inquiry: II. Quantitative Data" in Fred I. Greenstein and Nelson W. Polsby, eds., *Strategies of Inquiry*, Handbook of Political Science Series, vol. 7 (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1975), 43-77; R. Douglas Arnold, "Overtilled and Undertilled Fields in American Politics," *Political Science Quarterly* 97 (Spring 1982): 101. On the exponential growth of data sets and resulting access problems, see *Managing a New Library Resource: Results of the RLG Machine-Readable Data File Project in Six Member Libraries* (Mountain View, CA.: Research Libraries Group, 1989).

[30]Robert K. Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Applied Social Research Methods Series, vol. 5 (Beverly Hills, CA.: Sage Publications, 1984), 19-23, 78-82; G. David Garson, *Handbook of Political Science Methods* (Boston: Holbrook Press, 1971), 70; Harry Eckstein, "Case Study and Theory in Political Science," in Greenstein and Polsby, eds., *Strategies of Inquiry*, vol. 7.

[31]Arnold, "Overtilled and Undertilled Fields in American Politics," 101.

[32]See Edwin A. Bock and Alan K. Campbell, eds., *Case Studies in American Government* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1962), v-x. While these case studies are hardly examples of original research based directly on archival and other documentary sources, they hold out hope of possible archival use in political and policy research. Beginning in 1948, for example, many universities have participated in the development of the Inter-University Case Program. The most important recent example of historically oriented case studies to train people for careers in public life is Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986).

[33]There is a school of thought that formal social science research of any kind is far less important than informal sources of information, that the nature of sources and data pale before the assumptions used in interpreting them. Internal policy research may be conducted at times but plays a minimal role in ad-

During the last decade, a small but growing number of academicians in political science and public policy has come to appreciate the value of historical perspective or even has come forward to decry the declining influence of history.[34] In an extreme example of this point of view, political scientist David M. Ricci argues that

> Mainstream practitioners sometimes forget that modern political analysis is really a latter-day version of writing history per se, and they therefore tend to suggest, explicitly or implicitly, that we can attain a much more precise grasp of things than any historian would expect to achieve. In this sense, to read history and to become aware of its ambiguities, is to be reminded constantly of the dangers of learning about politics from books and articles that overemphasize the worth of figures and models.[35]

More important, since the late 1970s there has been renewed scholarly interest in American political institutions, once the mainstay of generations of historically oriented political scientists. Political scientists have engaged in a disciplinary discourse on what has come to be called "the new institutionalism," maintaining that in recent decades behavioralist scholars and their graduate students have ignored the disciplinary history of political science, rejecting administrative and institutional history in favor of "vague conceptualization." Appreciating the complex interdependence of politics and society, supporters of the institutionalist perspective value the significance of political events and long-term trends as mirrors of social change rather than passing "epiphenomena" and the state and its institutions as independent factors that both influence, and are influenced by, individual or group behavior.[36]

Specifically, institutionalists have suggested research agendas for political science that, if implemented, cannot but have

ministrative decision-making. (Charles Lindblom, "The Science of Muddling Through," *Public Administration Review* 19: 77-88; Herbert Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, 2d ed. [New York: Free Press, 1965]; Carol H. Weiss, "Ideology, Interests, and Information: The Basis of Policy Positions," in Daniel Callahan and Bruce Jennings, *Ethics, the Social Sciences, and Policy Analysis* [New York: Plenum Press, 1983], 218, 219, 227, 253.) The limited use of records in research to guide decision-makers has been noticed by at least one of the public administrators who created them. In a recent article, the distinguished federal administrator and scholar Rufus E. Miles, Jr., described three cases in which archival, oral, and other recording of public policy formulation and implementation would have resulted in more efficient and effective administration of new social programs at the federal level. (Rufus E. Miles, Jr., "A Costly Deficiency in Public Policy Formulation," in Theodore W. Taylor, ed., *Federal Public Policy* [Mt. Airy, Md.: Lomond Publications, 1984], 92-93.) Miles noted, "With the rate of turnover of policy-making officials and even career officials that has prevailed in recent years, the necessity for a careful system of recording experience in a form useful to future officials is especially acute. Formerly, there used to be a considerable amount of 'institutional memory' in the heads of those who were kept on from one administration to the next, but the trend has been steadily toward clean sweeps of top officials whenever there is a change of administration (and sometimes in the middle of them) so that fewer and fewer old hands are available to report to the new officialdom about the good and bad experiences of former administrations. Thus, the development of formal, written, and readily retrievable institutional memories is imperative."

[34]For example, Dean L. Yarwood and Thomas B. Alexander, "History and Policy Studies," *Policy Studies Journal* 7 (Summer 1979): 803-11. "The authors discuss a number of ways in which history is relevant to policy studies—among them, the conception of history as a policy laboratory, as a source for perspective about the development of current policies, as a source of theoretically interesting rare or unique occurrences, and as a repository of values to which appeals can be made to justify current and proposed policies."

[35]Ricci, *Tragedy of Political Science*, 311-12; see also Daniel R. Sabia, Jr., "Political Education and the History of Political Thought," *American Political Science Review* 78 (1984): 985-99.

[36]James G. March and Johan P. Olsen, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life," *American Political Science Review* 78 (September 1984): 734-49; Rogers M. Smith, "Political Jurisprudence, the 'New Institutionalism,' and the Future of Public Law," *American Political Science Review* 82 (March 1988): 89-108; Gabriel A. Almond, "The Return to the State," *American Political Science Review* 82 (September 1988): 853-76.

direct consequences for what will be researched and how it will be documented. Nelson W. Polsby, for example, noted eight trends in American politics since the 1960s, that merit scholarly attention: the growth of the public sector, the welfare shift in federal appropriations, the rise of symbolic interest groups at the expense of political parties, the growth of state government, the political role of the mass media, the professionalization of policy-making elites, the expanded role of courts, and changes in the conduct of the presidency.[37] Citing excessive scholarly attention to presidential and congressional elections, R. Douglas Arnold called on fellow political scientists to undertake in-depth studies of congressional committees and analytical case studies of legislative history, forms of research that were popular in the 1940s and 1950s, in order to understand the growing role of federal government in American society.[38] Research attention in these areas might present archivists in charge of institutional records and political papers with a welcome opportunity to expand research use.

The Potential for Increased Use of Archives

Although political science will never again be confined to intensive text-based research in libraries and archives, as it was in the days of Burgess and Bryce, the discipline has shown signs since the 1970s of a post-behavioral interest in American institutions and history and indications of a possible return to its humanistic origins. According to a 1985 American Political Science Association report, the discipline and its subfields are increasingly being influenced by humanistic methods of historical explanation and documentation. The resurgence of archival research and textual analysis in nearly all the subfields of political science, including public policy, may indicate "a stage where there will be a reversal in the bifurcation of the humanities and social sciences."[39] A 1989 report of the Research Libraries Group on the informational needs of the social sciences has supported this view, saying that "political science shows renewed interest in longitudinal or 'historical' work, and the use of archives."[40] Few archivally documented articles have appeared in the mainline political science and public policy journals, but there are unmistakable signs of change.[41] Although behavioralism will remain strong in the near future, there is reason to believe that archival research by political scientists will increase, chiefly in the areas of American political institutions, group politics, international relations, comparative public policy, political theory, and history of the disciplines.

Although political science and public policy will never replace history in terms of the intensive academic use of archives, it would appear worthwhile to search for ways to encourage research. Ignorance of the existence of relevant archival documentation remains a problem.[42] The use of ar-

[37]Nelson W. Polsby, "Contemporary Transformations of American Politics: Thoughts on the Research Agendas of Political Science," *Political Science Quarterly* 96 (Winter 1981/82): 551-70.

[38]Arnold, "Overtilled and Undertilled Fields in American Politics."

[39]American Council of Learned Societies, *A Report to the Congress of the United States on the State of the Humanities and the Reauthorization of the National Endowment for the Humanities* (New York: American Council of Learned Societies, 1985), 89-106.

[40]Stephen E. Wiberley, Jr., and William G. Jones, "Patterns of Information Seeking in the Humanities," *College and Research Libraries* 50 (November 1989): 639; Constance C. Gould and Mark Handler, *Information Needs in the Social Sciences: An Assessment* (Mountain View, CA.: Research Libraries Group, 1989), 15.

[41]For example, almost half the editorial board of the new interdisciplinary *Journal of Policy History* (The Pennsylvania University Press, 1989-00) are from academic departments of political science and public policy.

[42]James A. Black and Dean J. Champion, *Methods*

chives by political scientists will probably extend to more than contemporary archives and will require aggressive archival outreach efforts involving print communications, bibliographic instruction, scholars-in-residence, and other standard techniques.[43]

In calling for a renewal of the once-close relations between the disciplines of political science and history, political scientist Clement E. Vose upheld the value of archival research and recommended the inclusion of courses on library and archival research techniques.[44] Assuming that most archival research would be by graduate students and junior faculty who are somewhat daunted by an unfamiliar methodology and the volume of materials, archivists will have to develop specialized finding aids (perhaps in consultation with senior faculty directing research) that permit this new audience to move quickly through manuscript and record groups to discover data on selected themes.[45] Not every institution will be able to make the extraordinary efforts needed to provide archival materials to these new audiences. The resulting use may not mimic traditional historical research, but will comprise what Frank B. Evans calls "retrospective documentary research." For those archivists eager to build new academic audiences, these efforts should be profitable.

Finally, a word of caution to archivists: archival alliances with particular academic disciplines and resulting patterns of use clearly change over time. Fifty years ago the thought of developing holdings of the social history records in favor among American historians since the 1960s might have seemed pure folly to archivists monitoring current use and citation. Although archival use in the distant future can be no more obvious to us now than today's use would have been to earlier generations of archivists, studying trends in the methodology of particular academic disciplines can help spot future trends not obvious from user and citation studies and thereby identify new audiences for archives. While user surveys and citation analysis can provide valuable indicators about current research patterns in archives and historical records repositories, their results must be approached with care, for they are present-oriented and do not necessarily identify future pattern of research use. Studying the history of disciplines may be a corrective for archival myopia, reminding us that as disciplines drift over time, new subjects are researched and forgotten while others are revived, using methods and forms of documentation both old and new. Just as the discipline of history itself was once not oriented toward archival research, current preferences in the social sciences for certain types of documentation may change in the future.

and Issues in Social Research (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1976), 406. According to the authors, archival and other documentary materials in government agencies, businesses, and voluntary organizations are usually not used by researchers because of "the lack of knowledge of their existence."

[43]For a summary statement of outreach and public programs, see William L. Joyce, "Understanding SAA's Principles of Institutional Evaluation," *SAA Newsletter* (September 1990): 14-15.

[44]Clement E. Vose, "Sources for Political Inquiry: I. Library Reference Materials and Manuscripts as Data for Political Science," in Greenstein and Polsby, eds., *Strategies of Inquiry*, 1-2, 27-28, 38. "Today vast offices of files from government agencies, voluntary associations, and individuals are culled, processed, and preserved by professional archivists in hundreds of repositories across the country. These manuscripts are sources of data concerning political behavior, professional careers, human relationships, social movements, organized strategies, and tactics in seeking or stopping new public policies."

[45]This emulates Fredric Miller's recommendations for accommodating the research methods of social-science historians. See his "Use, Appraisal, and Research: A Case Study of Social History," 371-92.