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***About the cover:** Photographs of the Dead Sea Scrolls generated a blitz of media publicity in 1991 when opened for unrestricted research by The Huntington Library in San Marino, California. Sara S. Hodson discusses "Freeing the Dead Sea Scrolls: A Question of Access" on page 690. Photograph courtesy of The Huntington Library, San Marino, California.*

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Forum

Questioning Stielow's Views on Education and the MARC Record

To the editor:

In writing "Access for Oral History: A National Agenda," I purposely did not take "a more complex view of access of oral history," as Fred Stielow suggests in the Forum (Fall 1992). Why belabor the complex when faced with the simple fact that for most oral historians access is an afterthought? I certainly did not mean to suggest that archivists list every interview in "an equal manner and irregardless [sic] of its value," but I did assert that any interview worth the expense of conducting and preserving is worth a simple MARC record, particularly if an institution has invested the cost of transcribing the interview. If an institution is preserving worthless interviews, then not only should they remain uncataloged but they should be deaccessioned. As I make quite clear in my article, I consider a MARC record a minimum and prefer the goal of a single catalog record per interview.

I take exception to the predominant notion that there is something "bad" about MARC as an information exchange standard. As with any standard, MARC is a compromise, especially when most of the available software is presently oriented to a library environment. But to make a standard machine-readable catalog entry, even if one does not have immediate access to any database, is to meet a present need for access as well as to set the foundation for future improvements. Stielow would have us reject tainted library methods while curators of oral history collections wait for the last word in automated access. I would rather ride in an old Chevy to get where I am going than wait for a bullet train to be built.

Through use of Hensen's *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts,* MARC provides a way to meet a number of access goals for oral history, whether the description is based on a collection, oral history project, or individual interview. The development of cataloging guidelines made possible by a recent grant from NHPRC will improve consistency in oral history cataloging and promote better access to tapes and transcripts. Based on the interest in the draft guidelines exhibited by many oral history curators, I feel that we are finally moving toward a goal that Stielow articulated back in 1986: "a working network of the sound recordings in this country and elsewhere [that] is structured from the MARC record" (*Management of Oral History Sound Archives* [New York: Greenwood Press, 1986], 73).

BRUCE H. BRUEMMER
Charles Babbage Institute
University of Minnesota

To the editor:

I wish to reply to Frederick Stielow's letter to the editor published in the Fall 1992 issue of the *American Archivist.* My article on integrating archival education with public history education programs focuses on an intermediary step in the evolution of archival education found in departments of history. I attempted to persuade the public history and archives communities that the current form and content of these graduate programs are inadequate to prepare stu-

dents for entry into the archival profession. I describe how archival education can be improved and what it would take to realize that improvement. No, I did not demand an archival education equivalent to the Master of Archival Studies degree guidelines. After all, the relationship between public history programs and archival education has been a flirtatious one. Public history programs are crawling—they must learn to walk before they can run.

As for Dr. Stielow's claim that I have called for a form of archival education reminiscent of the pre-1977 SAA Guidelines, I wish to direct his attention to a sampling of quotes from the article:

> The two-course archival sequence found in many public history education programs may be appropriate for introducing students to the archival profession and the archivist's work, but it is hardly appropriate for training professional archivists.
>
> This is a very tall order—creating more full-time faculty positions. . . . Yet, full-time archival educators are needed desperately.
>
> Problems of 'diluted instruction' and a lack of full-time, professional faculty focus . . . directly on the public history curriculum.
>
> They [public history educators] have not discussed how to integrate public history education with the stated educational needs of the allied professions, particularly the archival profession.

Do these quotes sound like I have implied "watering down archival education even below the 1977 Graduate Education Guidelines," as suggested by Stielow? I shall leave it up to my colleagues who chose to read the article to provide the answer.

TYLER O. WALTERS
Iowa State University

Responding to a Dutch Archivist's View of U.S. Archives

To the editor:

Dutch archivist Joan van Albada is perplexed by the "big tent" of American archival practice ("On the Identity of the American Archival Profession: A European Perspective" (Summer 1991). Based on his observations at several SAA annual meetings and a general familiarity with our professional literature, Mr. van Albada concludes we Americans are not true archivists, at least not as he defines the term. His bewilderment revolves around the seeming predominance of "collectors" in SAA. For van Albada, archives are received, they are never collected. An organization that spends so much time and energy discussing collecting issues cannot be an organization of archivists.

Assuming that receipt of records is related to our notion of transfer, most American archivists would see some distinction between collecting records and accepting transfers of records. Collecting involves field work, collection planning, donor relations, etc., and is generally undertaken by special collections libraries or state and local historical agencies. Transfer of records takes place under a corporate rubric; inactive records are transferred from office of origin to an organization's archives according to a schedule.

American archivists would generally agree that of these two activities the latter is probably more "archival." But it has never been something we lose sleep over. When we accession and arrange a "collection" of records we follow the basic rules that apply to the arrangement of institutional archives, i.e., respect des fonds and maintenance of original order. If we uphold archival principles in other than corporate settings, does it follow that we do not belong within the world community of archivists?

My own case provides a good example of van Albada's problem with American

practice. By his definition I am not an archivist. My staff and I manage the archival record of the major entities of American public broadcasting, but we do so in a university library setting. We work with individuals from organizations such as National Public Radio, the Corporation for Public Broadcasting and Public Broadcasting. Service to identify and select archival materials from their inactive record. My staff processes these transfers and makes them available for research.

In one sense we are collectors: We contact organizations and individuals related to public broadcasting in search of materials to add to our collections. In another sense, we are receivers: Records personnel from organizations with whom we have established deposit agreements contact us when a transfer is pending and we make arrangements to receive it. Does it matter then that the physical transfer is interinstitutional rather than intrainstitutional? A change of location measured in miles rather than floors in a building should be immaterial so long as context and original order are preserved and legal requirements are followed.

Van Albada's warning on loss of context is well taken. American archivists have not discussed context theoretically to any meaningful degree. This is because archival context is an elusive idea. Context refers to the relation of one document to others within a file, to relationships within series, within an entire body of records and within and among institutions. Are all contexts necessarily sacrosanct? Perhaps Mr. van Albada would expand on his sense of context and how it operates in European archival practice.

That American archival practice differs in certain respects from European—and Canadian, Australian, and British for that matter—is at the heart of van Albada's argument. That it differs should not surprise him. Differing historical *contexts* produce differing practices in any field of endeavor. What surprises me is how van Albada equates European—actually Dutch—archival practice with correct and universal archival practice. One need not visit archives around the world to realize this equation is false. Common sense tells us that.

Against van Albada's nominalism I would offer good old American pragmatism as an explanation of why we differ in what we understand and undertake as archival practice. Pragmatism deals, among other things, with outcomes. Our goal is to preserve the record of the past the best we can. If a body of records is about to be destroyed by a (nongovernment) creating agency, we seek the best reasonable outcome: a good home for those records, generally in a library or historical society. Granted, the creating organization *should* have an archives as an official corporate function, but this is not often the case. Cultural organizations step into the breach and do what is possible given the circumstances. (Government agencies are another matter. Records disposition in government agencies is governed by law and that law is generally if unevenly followed.)

Van Albada's faulting SAA its ability to include librarians, manuscript curators, "or worse" among its members is perhaps more telling of European archival organizations than American. The current leadership generation of U.S. archivists fought a long battle to open the national organization to a membership truly representative of the wide variety of American keepers of the historical record. For some background on this course of events, van Albada should read Wayne C. Grover's address when he assumed the presidency of SAA in 1954. For purposes of this argument I will quote one passage that refers exactly and eloquently to van Albada's concerns. "This Society has been remarkably adept at accommodating itself to the great variety of vocational interests and points of view represented in it. Archivists, manuscript curators, practicing historians, librarians, and now records management specialists, corporation secretaries, records administrators, commercial management engineers—all seem to sit together

in reasonable harmony" (Wayne C. Grover, "Archives: Society and Profession," *American Archivist* 18 [January 1955]: 5–6. I am grateful to Greg Bradsher for alerting me to this article).

Archivists who feel that a more specialized organization is in their best interests have formed such groups. I am thinking here of the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), the National Association of Government Archivists and Records Administrators (NAGARA), or the Association of Moving Image Archivists (AMIA), many of whose adherents are also SAA members in good standing.

I hope van Albada continues to attend SAA meetings and observe them as a concerned and open-minded foreign colleague. But better than attending meetings, he should visit a range of American archival repositories and historical records facilities to actually see if the true path of world archivy is being subverted here in the United States. He is certainly welcome to visit my shop anytime. I think he will find we are archivists.

THOMAS CONNORS
National Public Broadcasting Archives
University of Maryland at College Park

Editor's note: *Joan van Albada declined the opportunity to respond.*

An Assertion About "The Certification Boondoggle"

To the editor:

The process of certification, as conducted by the Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) under the auspices of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), is espoused as an essential dogma for the archival profession as it progresses into the twenty-first century. As with any doctrine, there is a cavalcade of high priests and priestesses propounding its virtues in the scholarly journals, on the councils and task forces of SAA and the National Archives, and in the once-hallowed halls of academe. These advocates attempt to inculcate starry-eyed graduate students and neophyte archivists with the ostensibly wondrous merits and endless bounties of certification.

The certification examination of one hundred questions is a doubtful and highly subjective manner to evaluate the disparate elements essential for a qualified archivist. Certification does not create common sense, which should be the primary prerequisite for any position. This ability is not easily acquired, and those lacking it should seek another profession, perhaps politics or journalism. Certification does not impart the hands-on experience in appraisal, accessioning, preservation, and processing necessary to engender skill and judgment. Certification does little to teach automation techniques, expand historical knowledge, or shape managerial development and long-term planning.

The recent article by Alan Gabehart ("Qualifications Desired by Employers for Entry-Level Archivists," *American Archivist* 55 [Summer 1992]: 420–39) confirms what many suspect but the certification gurus do not admit: The vast majority of archival employment opportunities require experience and education, not certification. What then, is the reason for what one archivist refers to as "the certification boondoggle"? The answer is quite simple: money. With a fee of $275, renewable at ever-decreasing intervals, it is one of the few current money-making ventures to fill SAA's depleted coffers. It also serves to give a false sense of pride and accomplishment as an archivist to those entering the job market or seeking to climb the employment ladder. Most importantly, in conjunction with the myth of pure archival theory, it gives the archival "talking heads" something to continually write about to justify their existence and bore readers into fits of catalepsy.

Surely a better way to foster and measure archival competence and development is through a broad program of higher education, practical workshops, and on-the-job

training. Although providing some technical utility, library science education is intellectually inadequate and structurally misdirected for the needs of budding archivists. The recent proposal published in *Archival Outlook* regarding a masters degree in archival science appears to be a move in the right direction, provided it is not merely a sham to lure students and funding to financially troubled institutions.

Archivists are not produced from an assembly line nor printed out from a computer. They are nurtured like trees, spreading their roots deep with an eclectic knowledge of history and social sciences, archival principles such as provenance and original order, and specific familiarity with the context of the records under their care. They operate in an environment of diminishing resources, erratic leadership, and technological revolution. Far too many of the brainstorms that increasingly assail the profession are distractions at best. Therefore, we must be certain to apply a grain of salt to whatever gimmick is currently in fashion and remember that archivists are stewards of the past serving the needs of the present for the benefit of the future.

WILLIAM JOHN SHEPHERD
Catholic University of America

The President of the Academy of Certified Archivists Responds

I agree almost entirely with the last paragraph of Mr. Shepherd's interesting letter. Regrettably, I cannot agree with much of what goes before.

The Academy of Certified Archivists (ACA) was established with the support, financial and otherwise, of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), but since its formal establishment in 1989 it has operated entirely independently of the SAA and has repaid the SAA for all costs involved in its development. The SAA, it is true, performs certain clerical and secretarial services for the Academy, but these are fully reimbursed. In short, the Academy does not operate under the "auspices" of the SAA, and certification fees are retained by the ACA. The assertion that certification "is one of the few current money-making ventures to fill SAA's depleted coffers" is simply and entirely incorrect.

Mr. Shepherd also apparently misconstrues some of the purposes of certification. If there are archivists who view certification as an "essential dogma" or a "doctrine," I am not among their number. Certification is not designed to "create common sense" or to "impart . . . hands-on experience" in essential archival functions. Nor is it intended to "teach automation techniques, expand historical knowledge, or shape managerial development and long-term planning." Rather, the certification examination seeks to measure an archivist's existing professional skills and knowledge.

Finally, it must be noted that prospective employers of archivists are remiss if certification is the only criterion used for selection. Experience and education should always be important yardsticks of professional competence. Certification simply provides employers with an additional method of evaluating prospective staff. Indeed, one cannot be certified without documenting significant education *and* professional experience.

Archivists can and do disagree on the appropriateness and value of certification. But discussion of the issues involved will be more productive if it is founded on fact and if innuendo is soft-pedaled.

JAMES B. RHOADS
President, Academy of Certified Archivists

With the exception of editing for conformity of capitalization, punctuation, and citation style, letters to the Forum are published verbatim.

From the Editor

The Archives: A Quiet Place, Beset by Controversy

ABOUT A DECADE AGO I read a newspaper article describing a then-recent revision of the life insurance actuarial tables. The writer of the article described how some professions were calmer, and, therefore, their practitioners had longer life expectancies and were better insurance risks. Archivists and librarians were identified as members of these calmer disciplines. To be sure, it is a public image we have long possessed. I occasionally interview prospective students who are attracted to our field because they think it will be a peaceful respite from the world.

But our archival repositories and our profession are hardly the sanctuaries many people seem to think they are. In the past year, in research I completed for an essay on the image of archivists in one of the national newspapers, archives and archivists were mentioned in stories about the declassification of public records, controversies about the opening of personal papers for research use, political struggles, complex international affairs, the president's destruction of certain files and his ownership and control of his papers, and, yes, the management of our own National Archives.[1] Just a reading of the Society of American Archivists newsletter in recent times will uncover resolutions about access to the Thurgood Marshall Papers at the Library of Congress, federal funding cuts for the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and the declassification of federal records and the records of other nations.[2] The articles in this current issue of the *American Archivist* reveal what all archivists know about their vocation—it can be stressful, controversial, and fraught with all sorts of personal, professional, and legal problems.

A consideration of just one issue, ethics and professional practice, suggest the degree of problems we face and the necessity of more research and writing about the complexities generated in such an aspect of professional practice. While we possess a number of relevant codes of professional conduct, it seems that these are challenged on many fronts. The American Association for State and Local History ethics code in-

[1]See, for example, "The Thurgood Marshall Collection: Press Stories Stir Furor over LC's Opening of Papers," *LC Information Bulletin,* 14 June 1993, pp. 231, 252–55. My own research is described in "International Perspectives on the Image of Archivists and Archives: Coverage by *The New York Times,* 1992–1993," *International Information and Library Review* 25 (1993): 1–36.

[2]As an example, see *Archival Outlook,* July 1993, pp. 3–5.

cludes a statement that "institutions shall maintain and abide by comprehensive collections policies officially adopted by their governing authorities."[3] All evidence suggests that few of the historical and cultural institutions in which archivists and manuscript curators work have any such statement that could be considered "comprehensive" or, for that matter, "officially adopted by their governing authorities." So, what are we to do? The Rare Books and Manuscripts Section Ethics Code contains a strong statement about the security of special collections—"the materials guarded against theft, defacement, alteration, and physical damage"—and yet there is no equally strong statement suggesting that special collections refrain from wheeling and dealing in the marketplace to acquire their materials (except not to "knowingly acquire materials which have been stolen or imported in contravention of applicable law").[4] It is quite possible that such activity contributes to driving up the price of rare books and manuscripts and supports the potential threats to the security of such documentary holdings. At the least, we know that the desire and quest exhibited in acquisitiveness can cause otherwise well-run professional institutions and competent professionals to seem to fly apart at the seams.[5]

There is still the matter of what the basis of the archival ethic is. The effort of a decade ago to define the archivist stated, in a rather straightforward manner, that "as member of a profession, archivists share a set of values" and "some of these derive from ethical standards widely shared in our culture and common to other organized professions."[6] Have we really articulated this "set" of values? The current Society of American Archivists (SAA) ethics code suggests that we have not, as it seems inconsistent at points, the most important problem being a lack of any mechanism to use it in any meaningful way.[7] There are related information professions that seem to have coalesced about some ethical issue; librarians, for example, have certainly developed as their basic issue the matter of equality of access.[8] Yet, despite these continual challenges to the ethics of our professional practice, the degree of research and writing on such matters is very limited in

[3] *AASLH Statement of Professional Ethics* (Nashville, Tenn.: American Association for State and Local History, [1992]), [p. 1].

[4] "Standards for Ethical Conduct for Rare Book, Manuscript, and Special Collections Librarians, with Guidelines for Institutional Practice in Support of the Standards, 2d edition, 1992," *College & Research Libraries News* 54 (April 1993): 207–15 (quotes pp. 210 and 211).

[5] See the recent report detailing competition between the Library of Congress and the Smithsonian for the same collections of jazz manuscripts and recordings and architectural drawings. The competition raised the price paid for the materials; United States General Accounting Office, *Artifacts Acquisition: Smithsonian Institution and Library of Congress Should Not Compete* (Washington, D.C.: General Accounting Office, July 1992).

[6] The full statement is in "Archivist: A Definition," *SAA Newsletter,* January 1984, pp. 4–5.

[7] *Code of Ethics for Archivists* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992). The code notes that "legitimate complaints about an institution or an archivist may be made through proper channels," but what are these channels? At another point, it is stated that "Archivists avoid irresponsible criticism or other archivists or institutions and address complaints about professional or ethical conduct to the individual or institution concerned, or to a professional archival organization." It appears that the professional archival organization would be the last resort, but there is no such organization with a mechanism for effectively dealing with such complaints.

[8] For example, this statement: "the evolution from paper library to automated library to electronic library is simply a continuum of better mechanisms to respond to end-user needs. What drives librarians to maintain professional domination over information provision to users, however, is not merely the master of technology or the facilitation of collaborative partnerships but the librarians' vision of equal access for all." Kathleen de la Pena McCook, "Project Century 21: A Background Report Responding to ALA 1991–92 Council Document #14," in *Project Century 21: A Research and Action Program for Meeting the Information Needs of Society; Background Papers* (Chicago: American Library Association, President's Committee on Project Century 21, 1993), p. 7.

scope.[9] Trends in Canada and Australia suggest, however, that as a profession archivists are developing a new and more appropriate framework for such matters.[10]

The essays in this issue of the *American Archivist* run the gamut from legal and political issues generating problems for archivists, to problems posed by professional jealousies and debates of the users of archival resources, to continuing debates about the relationship of archivists to their professional colleagues. There is even consideration of problems caused by archivists themselves. As a group, these essays certainly prompt us not to see ourselves through rose-tinted glasses, and they raise many interesting problems for us to tackle in our future activities. Furthermore, they show, by considering matters in different kinds of institutional settings and national environments, that there are common problems facing archivists everywhere, no matter where they work. There seems to be no place to hide in the stacks and vaults of our archival repositories, for the controversies and challenges swirling about us require our attention and affect us in every possible manner.

The control of government records is the topic of three essays in this issue. Bruce Montgomery's description of the controversy over the Nixon presidential records is built on his assertion that "In a republic whose highest official is a public servant, perhaps no archival or historical question is more critical than who controls the records of the Oval Office after a president leaves office." Montgomery's essay is full of points that lead one to ask where the professional archival community was during many of the events he describes and whether the profession has ever had sufficient organization or clout to make any substantial changes in the public policy arena. While, on the one hand, Montgomery describes the many complex legal and political issues that have mired the Nixon records in controversy for twenty years, one must also consider why archivists have failed to be more effective in breaking down the obstacles to the public's control of public records.[11]

Patricia Kennedy Grimsted's lengthy description of the opening of the Russian archives is not only another installation of her series in this journal on the archives of this world power but is a document itself providing insight in the notable recent events of the end of the Cold War. One important point she makes is the extent to which international events have outpaced the capacity of archivists to develop appropriate

[9]Karen Benedict, "Archival Ethics," in *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions,* edited by James Gregory Bradsher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 174–84; Elena S. Danielson, "The Ethics of Access," *American Archivist* 52 (1989): 52–62; David Horn, "The Development of Ethics in Archival Practice," *American Archivist* 52 (1989): 64–71; Herman Kahn, "The Long Range Implications for Historians and Archivists of the Charges Against the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library," *American Archivist* 34 (1971): 265–75; Philip Mason, "Ethics of Collecting," *Georgia Archive* 5 (1977): 36–50; Heather MacNeil, *Without Consent: The Ethics of Disclosing Personal Information in Public Archives* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992); Harold L. Miller, "Will Access Restrictions Hold Up in Court? The FBI's Attempt to Use the Braden Papers at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin," *American Archivist* 52 (1989): 180–90; Diane S. Nixon, "Providing Access to Controversial Public Records: The Case of the Robert F. Kennedy Assassination Investigation Files," *Public Historian* 11 (1989): 29–44; and Richard Polenberg, "The Roosevelt Library Case: A Review Article," *American Archivist* 34 (1971): 277–84 are typical of the writings that have been published in the professional literature. The other essays that could be cited are not significantly greater in number or reveal a range of sufficiently broad research approaches or coverage of the potential topics.

[10]Such as the notion of "accountability," as written about in Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward, eds., *Archival Documents: Providing Accountability Through Recordkeeping* (Melbourne, Australia: Ancora Press, 1993).

[11]In the past I have tried to present the problem of archivists and national information policy in chapter fourteen of my *American Archival Analysis: The Recent Development of the Archival Profession in the United States* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1990).

practices or to adopt and adapt archival standards in a very different political environment. Still, one might wish to compare the United States's own troubled times in dealing with the Nixon papers and the PROFS electronic files with the archival problems facing the Russians and ask just how much better we actually are doing in providing access to government records. It is easy to feel smug that we are in far better shape in North America, but Grimsted's article indicates that many of the pressures on Russia come from the West and relate not just to the desire for more open access and availability but to efforts to make quick profits and to capitalize on Russia's weakened condition to get access to racy, intriguing, and historically significant documents.

David Bearman's analysis of the *Armstrong* v. *the Executive Office of the President* lawsuit makes several very important points. First, he succinctly describes the building professional consensus about the basic professional work of the archivist, notably the definition of the record. Second, Bearman describes how the National Archives has tried to manage electronic records in the federal government, arguing that this institution's approach has been further and further removed from current professional ideas and practices. Finally, he wonders where the Society of American Archivists has been in this lawsuit and in other related controversies concerning the National Archives, similar to the kinds of questions Montgomery poses about an earlier set of issues regarding the Nixon presidential records.

From government records and their myriad of problems, we move to other complex issues regarding scholars' access to records, security, and new laws regulating physical access to archives. These essays suggest that our actuarial tables may have seen some dramatic shifts in recent years. Sara Hodson's essay provides an introduction to an event many archivists have been anticipating for years—the opening of the famous Dead Sea Scrolls. Her essay reminds us not only of the Library of Congress and its more recent squabbles about the opening of the Thurgood Marshall papers, but of the fact that our decisions can often expose our places of quiet repose to news crews, angry scholars, and the curious. Hodson's account reveals the difficulties faced by a research library in making a decision to open access to a set of prized manuscripts caught up in fuzzy ownership matters, international tensions, scholarly ambitions, and religious fervor. Hodson characterizes the Huntington's activities as "unique" for a research library of its ilk, but I suspect her open recounting of the story is what is more unique. Is it not possible that archivists and manuscript curators have faced many other similar types of controversies that simply remain untold?

Vincent Totka's essay on security is an exploration of a topic archivists seem to have lost interest in examining, at least as reflected in their literature. Fifteen years ago the SAA made security a major focus of its professional activities, publishing a manual on the topic, running a service to identify purloined manuscripts, and providing other assistance. With some exceptions, efforts to examine either case studies in theft or our own attitudes about security have been rare. Totka's essay reveals why we need more such self-examination, and it reveals attitudes and practices that may only provide inviting targets to thieves or overzealous collectors. Some may question Totka's assertion that the profession's interest in service is a significant factor working against adequate security. But he presents an important case study in support of this statement, and I certainly think there are other areas to explore. For example, does the practice of many research libraries and historical societies of purchasing manuscript collections only encourage problems in security by buttressing a private collector's arena that should have been ended

or more closely regulated a half-century ago? Where are archivists acquiring adequate introductions to the kinds of legal issues described by Totka, and is such education and training a significant factor in our poor understanding and preparation to deal with such matters?

Ron Gilardi's article is a reminder to the archival community that there is a definite legal context for their institutions and activities, although archivists have not addressed such concerns very often. As Gilardi has noted, these are not optional interests or concerns, but the enactment of federal laws is setting new demands for our institutions and individual employees. As this author suggests, archivists may have to reexamine every aspect of their employment and public service practices in light of the Americans with Disabilities Act.

The publication of two reports in this issue on the importance of history in archival education and the substance of what historians should be taught about archival science relates to a professional debate that has gone on unabated in this country for this entire century. Both reports cite many of the earlier reports, essays, and studies that have been published and distributed through these years, and there is no reason for me—in this introduction—to rehash any of this. Whatever one's personal views may be, I believe these studies will prove to be the most comprehensive and useful on this issue. What makes the reports valuable is their underlying premise that there is a fundamental body of archival knowledge. The authors of these reports contend that many aspects of this knowledge have a "clear historical dimension," a conclusion with which few would argue. My own reading of it only confirms my strong sense that the profession needs to embrace and support the master's of archival studies (MAS) degree, a degree that strives to provide a comprehensive graduate education that is interdisciplinary in nature—including history as a core component. While the profession seems resigned to continual carping about the validity of such a degree—arguments that often seem to smack of personal and professional interests rather than commitment to professional ideals and related aspects—these reports have provided an extremely valuable benchmark for the profession, and archival educators in particular, to use along with the MAS degree guidelines. Ending the meaningless debate about the validity of one aspect of knowledge over another, or about where such education should take place, would restore some order and help us to focus on some other essential challenges facing the profession—the ethics of professional conduct, the public profile of archivists and our mission, the rapid and recent demise of our National Archives as an effective leader in the archival community, and so forth. Hopefully, as the substance of graduate archival education matures, archival knowledge will point the way to resolving some of these other professional concerns.

David Wallace's review essay amply demonstrates that the world of records and information should never be seen as a sanctuary for archivists or any other professional. For a long time, archivists have been content to see their names acknowledged as helpers in the works on contemporary history. But, as Wallace points out, archivists should be more interested in determining what they can learn from the challenges researchers face in gaining access to recent records and from the insights of these researchers on the mechanics of records and information systems. Wallace's review of just three works on recent history reveals a lengthy litany of accessibility controversies, ethical issues, and practical obstacles to the effective preservation of archival records. The *American Archivist* will make an effort to review such works, from an archival perspective and on a regular basis.

Finally, it seemed very appropriate to publish in this issue Anne Kenney's recent

presidential address on leadership in the Society of American Archivists. This paper effectively summarizes a year of turbulent activity for the SAA and for archivists in general. President Kenney primarily describes recent actions the SAA has taken and activities our professional association will be engaged in over the next few years. While her comments are a call to action, a characteristic consistent with many SAA presidential addresses, they are also a reminder that the Society is engaged in work that will prepare it to meet future controversies similar to those described in this issue. Our institutional and professional walls have been opened by us and, where we have resisted, the walls have sometimes been broken down. I suspect that the pages of many future *American Archivist* issues will concern ethical matters, legal dilemmas, leadership, and related topics. I say this not because I am out soliciting such essays but because such problems, challenges, and opportunities are commonplace in our professional lives.