

Editor's Special Forum on Needs in Archival Research and Publication

The Contribution of *Archivaria* to the Development of the Canadian Archival Profession

JAY ATHERTON

ARCHIVARIA IS THE SCHOLARLY JOURNAL of the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA). Therefore, any attempt to analyze the contents of this journal must start from an understanding of the genesis of the association itself. The ACA actually grew out of the Archives Section of the Canadian Historical Association (CHA) in a burst of professional maturity and independence in 1975. The creative tensions and intellectual stress that accompanied that achievement, centering on the debate over the role of the archivist as historian or information manager, continued to find a place in the pages of the journal over its first ten years.

In this article I intend to describe the origins and purpose of *Archivaria*; summarize its contents, with some indication of the themes that have been reflected in its pages; and conclude with some suggestions for future development of the publication.

The origins of *Archivaria* may be found in *The Canadian Archivist*, the periodical issued by the CHA Archives Section, starting in 1963. As the origins, content, and impact of this earlier publication have been analyzed very well elsewhere, they need

not be repeated here.¹ Nevertheless, it is useful to know that, although it began as a newsletter (and was actually labeled as such), *The Canadian Archivist* grew into a respectable small journal over the course of a decade. The last issue, for the year 1974, contained eight serious articles, two book reviews, and several reports on happenings

About the author: Jay Atherton is the current general editor of *Archivaria*. He has been a staff member of the National Archives of Canada since 1961. Atherton also served as president of the Association of Canadian Archivists in 1989–90.

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¹Gordon Dodds, "Canadian Archival Literature: A Bird's-Eye View," *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983–84): 20–26.

at Canadian archival institutions. One element of the establishment of the new Association of Canadian Archivists in June 1975 was to be the creation of a scholarly journal to replace *The Canadian Archivist*. The first editor of the new publication was Peter Bower, then a manager in the Manuscript Division of the Public Archives of Canada (and now Provincial Archivist of Manitoba). Bower was determined to expand the scope of the publication beyond the traditional geographical and intellectual boundaries—or, as Robert Gordon explained the process ten years later, “to expand the horizons of our profession.”² Out of this analysis came a new title, to reflect the new mission: *archivaria*, a Latin term acceptable to both English- and French-speaking archivists. It was, in Gordon’s words, formed from “a combination of *archivum* and *varia*, denoting archival records . . . and the plural form of *archivarius* (stressing the voice of archivists).”³

Canada has two official languages and strong archival traditions in both the English- and French-speaking communities. Nevertheless, the Association of Canadian Archivists conducts all its business in English. This situation is the result of an agreement struck with the already existing Association des archivistes du Québec at the time of the establishment of the ACA in 1975. In the interests of efficiency, and to avoid conflict, the two organizations agreed to carry on separately, one in English and the other in French, with a formal liaison mechanism (the Bureau of Canadian Archivists), which also serves as the two organizations’ official point of contact with the federal government bureaucracy and other national institutions.

One aspect of this *modus operandi* may be seen in the language that predominates

in the journal of each association. The originators of *Archivaria* wanted it “to become the medium of expression of archivists of both linguistic groups.”⁴ However, over the years *Archivaria* has been essentially an English-language publication. In all of its first thirty-six issues, only seven articles have appeared in French (three of them by the same author).⁵ Short French resumsés of English articles appeared in the first thirteen issues but not thereafter. Two interesting examples of the application of this language policy are the two articles by Michel Duchein, inspector general of the Archives de France. One of them was originally written in French but was deliberately translated into English for dissemination to the readers of *Archivaria*.⁶ In the other case, Duchein’s English-language article was accompanied by a French resumé.⁷ Recently, having determined that the proportion of material appearing in the journal in the French language should be increased, the association has appointed a French-language editor and instituted the practice of publishing abstracts of formal articles in both English and French.

Undoubtedly, the members of the ACA understood the purpose of their new journal in 1975. Indeed, the first issue contained an introductory essay by the first president of the association, Gordon Dodds, proposing a number of attributes of a fully professional archivist and urging ACA members to think of *Archivaria* as “their official journal for publication of research and study towards the advancement

⁴Gordon, “Naming,” 4–5.

⁵Carol Couture, in *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989–90) and 35 (Spring 1993). French-language articles also appeared in volumes 7, 17, 21, and 26.

⁶Michel Duchein, “Theoretical Principles and Practical Problems of *Respect des fonds* in Archival Science,” *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 64–82.

⁷Michel Duchein, “Archives in France: The New Legislation of 1979,” *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980–81): 127–33.

²Robert S. Gordon, “Naming *Archivaria*” (letter to the editor), *Archivaria* 20 (Summer 1985): 4–6.

³Gordon, “Naming,” 5.

of archival science.”⁸ The masthead clearly indicated that the journal was published by the ACA. Aside from this, however, the early numbers contained no formal statements of policy or intent. The journal’s sections—articles, notes and communications, book reviews, a bibliography, and a lively section of opinion and ideas titled “Counterpoint”—were not explained or defined.

The first definition of the journal’s sections occurred in *Archivaria* 13 (Winter 1982–83), when new editor Terry Cook inserted a page of “Advice to Authors for Submissions.” He defined them as follows: Articles (“full length scholarly treatment of a subject based on research and/or extensive reflection”); Counterpoint (“argumentative pieces, longer rejoinders, trial balloons, shorter articles”); Potpourri (“edited documents, relating to archives, having amusing, poignant, or piquant appeal”); Notes and Communications (“technical notes, happenings in the archival community in Canada worthy of permanent preservation, regional and national associations’ news, research notes, grants, special projects, etc.”); Letters to the Editor (“short rejoinders to previous issues, new information, corrections, criticisms, etc.”); and Book Reviews (“any book judged to contribute to the themes which the journal attempts to explore”).⁹

From the outset, the quality of *Archivaria* was very high. In his report to the executive in May 1976, the journal’s first editor, Peter Bower, modestly claimed to have produced “a technically acceptable journal.”¹⁰ In fact, he had set a high standard of excellence, which his successors

generally managed to meet.¹¹ In this they have been aided by consistent financial support from the association itself and from two federal funding agencies (the Canada Council first, followed by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council). In addition, the National Archives of Canada over the years has provided a solid base of core support, in terms of staff and infrastructure. (All but two of the editors were members of its staff during their tenure.)

The solid core of *Archivaria* has always consisted of Articles, the related Counterpoint feature, Notes and Communications, and Book Reviews. Virtually every issue has contained all four of these sections. Two-thirds of the issues, most concentrated in the last eight years, have published review articles. The first six issues presented, in installments, a bibliography of the field of archival science. However, aside from a specialized bibliography in *Archivaria* 15 and occasional specialized lists, this initiative has not been repeated.¹² During the last decade, three other features have appeared more or less consistently. At the beginning of each issue, the Letters to the Editor section has carried responses to articles and other controversial or otherwise pointed pieces that are too short to be considered for the Counterpoint section.¹³ The appearance of a Studies in Documents section reflects the increased interest in “the history, structure, evolution, and research value of archival material,” that is, of diplomatics.¹⁴

¹¹The past general editors of *Archivaria* have been Peter Bower (volumes 1–4), Edward Dahl (5–6), Gordon Dodds (7–12), Terry Eastwood (13–14), Terry Cook (15–18), Tom Nesmith (19–22), Bruce Wilson (23–26), Peter Robertson (27–30), and Barry Cahill (31–35).

¹²*Archivaria* 15, a festschrift in honor of a former Dominion Archivist, W. Kaye Lamb, contained a bibliography of Lamb’s published works.

¹³Terry Cook, “From the Editor: Dead or Alive?” *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 4.

¹⁴Tom Nesmith, “*Archivaria* After Ten Years,” *Archivaria* 20 (Summer 1985): 16. See also Editor’s Note in the same issue, p. 127.

⁸Gordon Dodds, “The Compleat Archivist,” *Archivaria* 1 (Winter 1975–76): 80.

⁹Terry Cook, “Advice to Authors for Submissions,” *Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982–83).

¹⁰“Annual Report, *Archivaria*,” May 1976, typescript, copy in possession of author.

During the last decade, *Archivaria* has also published obituaries of well-known Canadian archivists, reflecting an increased sense of community within the profession in Canada. Between 1983 and 1986, editors Terry Cook and Tom Nesmith opened issues of the journal with an introductory From the Editor column, summarizing the contents of each issue and setting the articles in their context—a useful initiative that, for one reason or another, has not been continued.

Although the scope of *Archivaria's* Articles and Counterpoint pieces has been varied, specific themes have emerged at different times, usually reflecting developments in the field or special areas of interest. *Archivaria* 4 (Summer 1977), for example, contained a supplement on the topic of labor archives, consisting largely of descriptions of sources for labor history. Almost twelve years later, *Archivaria* 27 (Winter 1988–89) appeared as a theme issue on the same subject. The 1980s also saw the appearance of several other theme issues, on archival matters concerning medicine (*Archivaria* 10, Summer 1980), social history (*Archivaria* 14, Summer 1982), the law and legal matters (*Archivaria* 18, Summer 1984), military history (*Archivaria* 26, Summer 1988), and religious records (*Archivaria* 30, Summer 1990). Each issue contained a mixture of articles on sources for the study of the topic, archival questions pertaining to the particular subject, and, in one case (*Archivaria* 18), legal issues concerning the field of archives (including tax credits, copyright, and the admissibility of records in court).

Photographic archives was the theme for *Archivaria* 5 (Winter 1977–78), which contained an annotated bibliography and articles on particular sources, photographers, and the cataloging and preservation of photographs. Cartographic records were the subject of a theme issue four years later, in *Archivaria* 13 (Winter 1981–82). The articles in this issue concerned the de-

velopment and administration of several institutions, sources for study of the field, description of cartographic records, and contingency planning. Meanwhile, *Archivaria* 7 (Winter 1978), reflecting a growing awareness of international archival development, presented thirteen shorter articles on the work of foreign repositories and descriptions of ethnic archives programs at the Public Archives of Canada.

Four special series of Articles and Counterpoint essays are worthy of note. *Archivaria* 8 (Summer 1979) featured four articles on the management of current records: Three of them dealt with the development of records management programs in two of the provinces and at the federal government level, and the fourth described a significant micrographics program in a large city. A spirited debate on the tendency among large archival institutions to organize their operations according to the various archival media began and ended with pointed essays by Terry Cook in *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979–80) and *Archivaria* 12 (Summer 1981). Although the four articles were directed at the organization of the Public Archives of Canada (and were all written by staff of that institution), they provoked a great deal of comment throughout the archival community in Canada.¹⁵

An even more lively interchange occurred in 1983 and 1984, on the role and formation of the professional archivist, as either a historian or an information manager.¹⁶ This specific debate encouraged an

¹⁵Terry Cook, "The Tyranny of the Medium: A Comment on 'Total Archives,'" *Archivaria* 9 (Winter 1979–80): 141–49; Andrew Birrell, "The Tyranny of Tradition," *Archivaria* 10 (Summer 1980): 249–52; Ernest Dick, et al., "Total Archives Come Apart," *Archivaria* 11 (Winter 1980–81): 224–27; Terry Cook, "Media Myopia," *Archivaria* 12 (Summer 1981): 146–57.

¹⁶George Bolotenko, "Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well," *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 5–25; a special feature containing seven shorter articles by Patrick A. Dunae, Carl Spadoni, Thomas T. Spencer, Anthony Rees, R. Scott James, Ernest J.

ongoing interest in a subject that obviously remains of great interest to archivists at large and that has been reflected in the pages of *Archivaria*. Finally, between the summer of 1989 and the winter of 1991–92, there appeared six successive and highly significant articles by Luciana Duranti on the application of the science of diplomatics to modern archival practice.¹⁷

How might one analyze the contents of *Archivaria*, especially its Articles and Counterpoint pieces, over its first eighteen years? While there are a number of alternatives, one convenient categorization would be along a scale moving from the very practical to the highly theoretical, as follows (with examples cited in the notes):

Professional Issues: Comment and explanation on operational topics of concern to members of the archival profession in Canada (e.g., copyright, education, access, management, and development of descriptive standards).¹⁸

Case Studies: Practical “how-to” examples of archival practices in action, descriptions of institutions and their programs, and historical narratives on the development of archival institutions and practices.¹⁹

Sources: Descriptions of sources in repositories and examples of how these sources can be used.²⁰ (The Notes and Communications section also has served as a vehicle of communication of information on the above three categories.)

Documentation: Studies of the nature, origins, and purpose of specific sets of archival documents, intended to increase understanding of their relative value and significance.²¹

Theory: Exposition of theoretical or philosophical concepts and ideas concerning records, information, and archival science.²²

In the first thirty-six numbers, all five of the above categories were represented about evenly. Coverage of professional concerns has remained quite constant, accounting for 20 percent of the articles over the entire period. Since its inception, *Archivaria* has had a major research interest in what Tom Nesmith, a former editor of the journal, called “study of the origins, purposes, and effects of documentation.”²³ The number of articles in this field increased quite markedly

Dick, and Bob Tailor-Vaisey in *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983–84): 286–308; George Bolotenko, “Of Ends and Means: In Defence of the Archival Ideal,” *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984): 241–47.

¹⁷Luciana Duranti, “Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science,” *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989): 7–27; *Archivaria* 28 (Winter 1989–90): 4–17; *Archivaria* 30 (Summer 1990): 4–20; *Archivaria* 31 (Winter 1990–91): 10–25; *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 6–24; and *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–92): 6–24.

¹⁸See, for example, Jean E. Dryden, “Copyright in Manuscript Sources,” *Archivaria* 1 (Winter 1975–76): 39–47; Robert J. Hayward, “Federal Access and Privacy Legislation and the Public Archives of Canada,” *Archivaria* 18 (Summer 1984): 47–57; and Kent M. Haworth, “The Development of Descriptive Standards in Canada: A Progress Report,” *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992): 75–90.

¹⁹See Marion Beyea, “Records Management: The New Brunswick Case,” *Archivaria* 8 (Summer 1979): 61–77; Michel Roberge, “SAPHIR: la mémoire des Québécois,” *Archivaria* 17 (Winter 1983–84): 188–

200; or Glen Isaac and Derek Reimer, “Right from the Start: Developing Predescriptive Standards at the British Columbia Archives and Records Service,” *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993): 86–98.

²⁰Examples are Edward Laine, “Archival Resources Relating to Finnish Canadians,” *Archivaria* 7 (Winter 1978): 110–17; and Carman Miller, “Research Resources on Canada and the South African War,” *Archivaria* 26 (Summer 1988): 116–21.

²¹See Judith Hudson Beattie, “Indian Maps in the Hudson’s Bay Company Archives: A Comparison of Five Area Maps Recorded by Peter Fidler, 1801–1802,” *Archivaria* 21 (Winter 1985–86): 166–75; Bill Russell, “The White Man’s Paper Burden: Aspects of Records Keeping in the Department of Indian Affairs, 1860–1914,” *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984–85): 50–72; or any of the series of articles by Luciana Duranti on diplomatics (cited earlier in Note 17) in *Archivaria* 28 through 38.

²²See Terry Cook, “The Tyranny of the Medium”; Hugh A. Taylor, “Transformation in the Archives, Technological Adjustment or Paradigm Shift?” *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 1987–88): 12–28; or Catherine Bailey, “Archival Theory and Electronic Records,” *Archivaria* 29 (Winter 1989–90): 180–96.

²³Nesmith, “*Archivaria* After Ten Years,” 15.

during the last decade, especially since the introduction of the Studies in Documents section in *Archivaria* 20. The six articles on diplomatics by Luciana Duranti may be seen as the culmination, in highly technical form, of this trend.

There also has been a marked growth in the number of theoretical or philosophical articles. It is in this last of the five categories that the journal has achieved its greatest impact in terms of intellectual stimulation and reaction. As Gordon Dodds, an early editor of *Archivaria*, has indicated, the journal has always tried to strike a balance, "to encourage thoughtful and interesting articles on matters of theory and philosophy as much as in the use of archives as sources."²⁴ It appears to have played a significant part in what another former editor termed "a real flowering of archival thinking and writing in Canada."²⁵ During the past decade, Canadian archivists have participated in the general trend of archival research in North America, characterized by Tom Nesmith as "the North American re-discovery of provenance." He has noted "the emergence of the study of archives in English-speaking Canada—a field of study which is marked by increasing awareness of the fundamental significance of provenance information about records in all aspects of archival administration." Nesmith uses this theme to bring coherence to a compilation of articles by Canadian authors published for the American archival community (jointly by the Society of American Archivists and the ACA) in 1993.²⁶

²⁴Dodds, "Canadian Archival Literature," 29.

²⁵Terry Cook to David Leonard, 19 May 1984, annual report for *Archivaria* for 1983–84, copy in possession of author.

²⁶Tom Nesmith, "Archival Studies in English-Speaking Canada and the North American Rediscovery of Provenance," Introduction to *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, edited by Tom Nesmith (Metuchen, N.J.: Society of American Archivists and Association of Canadian Archivists in association with Scarecrow Press, 1993), p. 1.

The most important Canadian writer on archival theory in general clearly has been Hugh A. Taylor. Formally trained as an archivist in Great Britain, Taylor moved to Canada in 1965. Over the intervening years he established the provincial archival institutions in two Canadian provinces (Alberta and New Brunswick), served in a senior management position with the Public Archives of Canada, and completed his formal career in archives management as provincial archivist of Nova Scotia. He is now a consulting archivist. Throughout this period, his writings on archival theory and practices have stimulated, surprised, and delighted the archival community in Canada. In fact, the ACA has recognized his prominence in this field through the publication of a festschrift in his honor.²⁷ There are a number of other major authors whose thoughts on a theoretical plane have been published by *Archivaria* over the past few years. Although it would not seem appropriate to list them all, four in particular deserve special mention: Terry Cook, a social historian, archivist, and manager at the National Archives of Canada; David Bearman, editor of *Archives and Museum Informatics* and an internationally known consultant on records management, archives, and information systems; Terry Eastwood, chair of the master of archival studies program at the University of British Columbia; and Barbara Craig, former archivist of York University and now responsible for the establishment of a graduate-level archival studies program in the Faculty of Library and Information Science at the University of Toronto.²⁸

²⁷Barbara L. Craig, ed., *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992).

²⁸The latest in Hugh Taylor's prolific output, "'The Valour and the Horror': Hypertext as History," appeared in *Archivaria* 36 (Fall 1993). Terry Cook's writings have also been marked by their coherence, relevance, and number. His latest contribution, typical

Where does *Archivaria* stand at present, and what future directions seem appropriate? The journal currently is receiving manuscripts on a variety of topics, from a wide range of contributors both in and outside Canada. As has already been suggested, the number of French-language submissions has not been adequate. Aside from this, many of the contributions to *Archivaria* are quite sophisticated in their treatment of the issues. In general, authors sincerely try to meet the journal's standards for form and content. Unfortunately, however, manuscripts are sometimes poorly or carelessly written, requiring a large amount of editing. In some cases, intelligent and important ideas are buried in overly complex, obtuse language—taxing the patience and industry of the most conscientious editor.

Any archival journal—certainly any journal that intends to demonstrate continued relevance and interest—must appeal to its readership. In practical terms, this will mean paying increased attention to the impact on archives of developments in information science and technology. It will also involve striking a balance between the theoretical and the practical.

In a perceptive article in 1991, Mary Sue Stephenson, a faculty member with the School of Library, Archival, and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia, described a particular aspect of the undertaking and publication of research in the two related fields of library and archival science. "Whatever the officially stated and promoted goals of the professions,"

she wrote, "there is *in practice* a clear division between those members who do research and those who do not, and generally this is the same line that separates the practitioner from the academic educator."²⁹ This division (she labeled it a "wall") between practitioners and theoreticians is more pronounced in the library science field than it is within archival science, simply because graduate education in the library field is more mature, with a longer history and greater importance within the profession. Stephenson urged vigilance, to ensure the continued involvement of practicing archivists in the development of archival theory—in other words, to prevent the wall from being built.

In 1980, four years after *Archivaria* first appeared, the ACA, in response to criticisms from some members, undertook an evaluation of its journal. All readers were asked to respond to a detailed questionnaire; a high proportion did so, and a large number provided narrative comments. In summary, the readership generally expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the quality and relevance of *Archivaria*. In a message to the membership of the association prior to the discussion of the report at the 1981 Annual General Meeting, three (current and future) editors presented their prescription for the general direction of the journal in these words:

We believe that *Archivaria* should deal with archival concerns in a scholarly and reflective manner in order to address the broad range of problems and challenges facing the Canadian archival community. *Archivaria* should be fresh, original, and stimulating, playing an important

of his output, was "The Concept of the Archival Fonds in the Post-Custodial Era: Theory, Problems, and Solutions," *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993): 24–37. See also David Bearman, "Record Keeping Systems," *Archivaria* 36 (Fall 1993): 16–36; Terry Eastwood, "Nailing a Little Jelly to the Wall of Archival Studies," *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993): 232–52; and Barbara Craig, "Archival Sallies: Words and Deeds from the Ivory Tower," *Archivaria* 36 (Fall 1993): 239–43.

²⁹Mary Sue Stephenson, "Deciding Not to Build the Wall: Research and the Archival Profession," *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 145.

role in the intellectual honing of archivists.³⁰

The future direction of the journal should reflect a combination of these principles and the advice of Mary Sue Stephenson. That is, building on the high

standards established by their predecessors, future editors of *Archivaria* must promote greater innovation on intellectual issues affecting archival practice, and they must search for contributions that place more emphasis on applied archival theory: analysis of practical applications that support or negate theoretical principles. It is in this area that *Archivaria* will continue to make a distinct contribution to the growth and development of the archival profession in Canada.

³⁰Terry Cook, Ed Dahl, and Bruce Wilson, "Last Word: The *Archivaria* Debate," *ACA Bulletin* 6, no. 2 (April 1981): 16. This issue of the *ACA Bulletin* also contained a detailed analysis of the results of the readers' survey (pp. 9–15).