Commentary on *Archival Strategies*

Empowering Archival Effectiveness: *Archival Strategies As Innovation*

ANN PEDERSON

Abstract: The ideas and arguments attributed to David Bearman over the last decade have triggered unparalleled controversy and debate among archivists around the world. In *Archival Methods*, Bearman initially de-constructed traditional archival endeavor in search of its true mission and functionality. Then, in association with a small circle of multi-national colleagues, he evolved his findings into *Archival Strategies*, a new, proactive regimen of purpose and activities which he believes will transform and revitalize the archival profession. This paper discusses Bearman's role and contributions as an innovator, and comments on a selection of the ideas and activities proposed, with reference to recent studies of innovation diffusion.

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AS AN ARCHIVIST AND educator born in the United States and living in Australia, it is a pluralistic perspective that I bring to my task: to comment upon David Bearman's pioneering efforts over the past decade— initially in *Archival Methods* to articulate and, now, with *Archival Strategies* to transcend, the paradox and duality of archival work into a single, purposeful enterprise.[1] For many years now, we have been striving to accommodate two major responsibilities within our programs:

1) to identify and re-assemble significant vestiges of the past; and
2) to document the present.

These competing priorities create inherent tensions which are acknowledged in our choice of the Roman god Janus, with his two faces, one looking backward and the other forward, as our professional symbol. Furthermore, our present mandate requires us to devise tools to fulfill our responsibilities within two recordkeeping domains, the traditional, material world of paper and the newer virtual world of electronic transactions. In confronting these challenges, we experience an ever more intense "disease," meaning not an illness (although many of us may suspect we are losing our minds), but rather a lack of ease, a profoundly disturbing disquiet that not only calls forth a need for soul searching, but which also evokes the contemplation prerequisite to creativity.

So, for the next few minutes, let us examine our recent efforts as professionals to reconcile the tensions between more traditional views of our mission and ways of operating, and David Bearman's proposed new strategies and tactics for re-inventing our profession.

I will review, both textually and illustratively, some of the main ideas David Bearman initially posited in *Archival Methods*—views which have now evolved into *Archival Strategies*, and assess the implications and impact these ideas have had, are having, and may, in the future, have on our work. In so doing, I will discuss the opportunities and benefits which Bearman's proposals represent, but will also examine some of the loose ends and lingering concerns which I believe they neglect. AND, I have chosen to attempt this in a non-traditional way, because what we are grappling with here, after all, is understanding and accepting innovation within our profession. And as we all know, the process of innovation involves varying degrees of pain which I hope to soothe with strategic injections of visual humor.*

BEARMAN & ARCHIVAL METHODS—the Confrontation We Had to Have

"The first key problem in the management of innovation, then, is how to get people to pay attention—how to trigger the action thresholds of individuals to appreciate and pay attention to new ideas, needs and opportunities."—Rosabeth M. Kanter.[2]

We, as a profession, have long suffered from denial and self-delusion. *Archival Methods* provides us with a much needed "reality check." Not only are we not getting the resources needed to do our basic

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*Editor's Note: Ann Pederson illustrated her commentary on *Archival Strategies* at the 1994 annual meeting with a series of cartoons from the *New Yorker*.

[2] Rosabeth M. Kanter, "When a Thousand Flowers Bloom: Structural, Collective and Social Conditions for Innovation in Organizations," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 10 (1988): 173. Cited in Carmel Maguire, Edward J. Kazlauskas, and Anthony D. Weir, *Information Services for Innovative Organizations* (New York: Academic Press, 1994), 264.

[1] David B. Gracy II, "Our Future is Now," *American Archivist* 48 (Winter 1985): 12–21, delineates some of the enduring paradoxes we have been struggling to encompass.

work[3] but, if we continue to resist new approaches, we might soon be out of a job. In the new world order, employers or others are no longer basing decisions on stereotypes, longevity, previous power or status; *knowledge, action,* and *outcomes* are the new arbiters. Henceforth, players at the policy and decision-making table will be more or less welcome, based on what they can contribute to corporate and societal success.

Like the crack of a two-by-four on the head of a recalcitrant mule, *Archival Methods* stunned us into paying attention, the precursor to achieving readiness for innovation.

BEARMAN'S ROLE: INVENTOR/ INNOVATOR

"...it is striking, though, how often innovators are those that are . . unencumbered by or unconcerned with conventional wisdom."

—Michael E. Porter[4]

As with the mule, breaking through archivists' entrenched professional attitudes required a shock administered by an outside critic/innovator. As we now know, from recent studies of innovation, this role is critical to the process and requires an independent individual with a confluence

Chart 1. Types of Roles Pertinent to Organized Activity

TYPE			
Dreamer	*seeing*	*personal*	*unworldly*
Artist	⇑	⇑	⇑
Inventor	⇑	⇑	⇑
Innovator			
Entrepre-neur	⇓	⇓	⇓
Trader	⇓	⇓	⇓
Mandarin	*doing*	*social*	*financial*

of attributes.[5] Chart 1 illustrates the key characteristics of the innovator who operates midway between the extremes of visionary and pragmatist, of rugged individual and team player, between altruist and rationalist.

In our case, the 2 by 4 wielder was a sassy systems analyst named David Bearman, a newly-independent consultant, whose commitment to archives stemmed from his experiences designing automated systems for the Smithsonian museums (including the archives) and concurrent leadership within the National Information Systems Task Force (NISTF) responsible for the recently (1983) adopted MARC AMC format. By 1986, Bearman's expertise and his willingness to do battle on behalf of cultural heritage issues were well-known. He was versatile, demonstrably able and deeply committed to effective long term solutions, but he also often said things that made people uncomfortable or downright mad.

Finally, in forming Archives and Museum Informatics (AMI) in 1986, Bearman created the independent platform necessary to perform his preferred role of innovator and critic, a position seminal to achieving

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[3]Sidney J. Levy and Albert G. Robles, *The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators' Perceptions* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984) and a follow-up document framing an action agenda, "Archivists' Resource Allocators: The Next Step" (December 1985) and Lisa B. Weber, *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of Historical Records in the United States* (Atlanta: National Historical Publications and Records Commission and National Association of State Archivists and Records Administrators, 1983).

[4]Michael E. Porter, "The Competitive Advantage of Nations," *Harvard Business Review* (March/April 1990): 73. Cited in Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 1.

[5]Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 5. This figure identifying the key "roles" inherent in the innovation process has been adapted by the authors from W. Kingston, *Innovation: The Creative Impulse in Human Progress—Industry, Art, Science* (London: John Calder, 1977).

innovation within any context. AMI was not only a consultancy, it was also a publisher of *bearmania*[6]—initially in the form of a quarterly newsletter to announce or promote interesting new activities, accompanied by occasional technical reports to disseminate more substantial research.[7] Thus, Bearman was no longer dependent on a single employer or on the established journals to provide a forum for the controversial ideas which now clamored for an airing. In transition between employee and self-employed, David spent the summer of 1986 at the Institute for the Study of Modern Archives at the Bentley Historical Library in Ann Arbor, Michigan as a Mellon Fellow, engaging in his favorite activities: analyzing, provoking, and discussing.

Adopting a no-holds-barred, "blue sky" approach, with nothing sacred or assumed, Bearman began a devastating post-modern deconstruction of the archival enterprise which became the first draft of *Archival Methods*. He circulated it among other Fellows and close colleagues for comment; but it was not until 1989 that *Archival Methods* was published. Why did it take so long to appear in print? True, Bearman was busy establishing his practice as a consultant and specialist publisher, so he was heavily engaged on a number of projects. Also, Bearman's style has always been to circulate new material for comment. Certainly, the draft ideas benefited from informal criticism and were expanded and refined during their three year "passage," but in the end, the views expressed were still so unconventional in form and content that no traditional publisher could handle them. Thus, Bearman ultimately decided to present *Archival Methods* himself under his own Archives and Museum Informatics imprint.

Archival Methods—the messages

"We have a problem . . . and we have to talk about it—NOW!"
                                           —Anonymous.

The messages of *Archival Methods* were devastatingly clear: 1) the traditional activities we carry out on records of enduring value fall short of the task by more than one order of magnitude; 2) archivists, as keepers of other people's cast off "stuff," have no unique societal mission and therefore no justifiable claim to professional status; and 3) archivists need to develop effective methods and a valid mission or face professional extinction. Bearman's admittedly cursory analyses illustrated that, not only were we not effectively managing our archives, we were falling further and further behind in our efforts. The fault lay not in any lack of dedication or enterprise on our part, but in the way we conceived and defined our mission and organized our activities. *Archival Methods* dispassionately demonstrated that we had mistakenly identified the work functions/activities performed by archivists, i.e., *our methods*, as our profession's overall purpose or mission. Thus, the methods we had devised for carrying out our work (appraisal, arrangement/description, preservation, and reference) had become *ends in themselves*, rather than the means for achieving some larger, societally-valued objective. Finally, Bearman cautioned that Pavlovian persistence in adhering to the old ways would lead to only one destination—professional obsolescence.[8]

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[6]*bearmania* is a term I coined. It has two meanings: 1) any idea, phenomena or activity deemed interesting, contentious, or useful by David Bearman and his circle of colleagues and 2) a wave of enthusiastic interest in and endorsement of the ideas and activities espoused or promoted by David Bearman.

[7]For a review of Archives & Museum Informatics publishing activities to 1990, see Ann Pederson, "Do *Real* Archivists Need Archives & Museum Informatics?" *American Archivist* 53 (Fall 1990): 666–75.

[8]David Bearman, *Archival Methods*, Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report, vol. 3, no. 1 (Spring 1989), especially 1–5 and 59–67.

While his salvos and prods to the profession in *Archival Methods* were themselves harsh and unrelenting, underlying them was Bearman's unwavering confidence in the capacity of archivists to revitalize themselves and their profession once their attention had been attracted and focused to the task. Thus, in closing his arguments, Bearman exhorted archivists to work cooperatively to effect an immediate, thorough, and realistic re-shaping of the whole archival endeavor directed towards achieving archival effectiveness.

Archival Methods—the profession's response

The short-term professional response to *Archival Methods* was fitful and ranged from laudatory to defensive to dismissive, but was mostly indifferent.[9] Since some key ideas had circulated informally long before *Archival Methods* was finally published, the prospect of mass outrage was defused. Besides, only a minority of archivists received Bearman's Archives and Museums Informatics publications prior to 1991.

Part of the reason for the lack of significant response was also timing. Even as Bearman was writing *Archival Methods*, the 1986 Report of the Society of American Archivists' Task Force on Goals and Priorities (GAP) had just been published defining the archival mission as "to ensure the identification, preservation and use of records of enduring value."[10] *Planning for the Archival Profession*, familiarly known as the GAP Report, thus enshrined the very methods that Bearman had found wanting as the raison d'être of the profession.

However distasteful Bearman's message, it was not so much what he had said or even how he expressed it that was upsetting. He had simply pointed out that the profession had misdefined its mission and that mistakes are, after all, preludes to learning and improvement.

What really rankled many (although few realized and even fewer would admit it) was the realization that we had ignorantly, even arrogantly, repeated these mistakes over a very long period and had magnified our embarrassment by attempting to blame others for them.

Bearman's revelations, coming as they did upon the heels of the 1984 *Levy Report* which confirmed that archivists are virtuous but "don't get no respect" from their own host organizations when it comes to funding and influence, were doubly devastating.[11] Bearman's findings confirmed our worst nightmare—that traditional archival methods really were ineffective and could not be used to justify more funding. In reality, resource allocators were only behaving responsibly in refusing to resource bottomless archival pits.

Not only were our methods flawed and our mission tautological, but we had trapped ourselves within a victim mentality which fostered professional irresponsibility. For years we had identified the locus of our problems as "them"—those hard-hearted managers, resource allocators, Boards of Trustees, legislators, and ignorant constituents. If only "they" would accept their responsibilities and give us adequate resources, then "we" could do our jobs. Without such resources, archivists had a viable excuse for institutional inadequacies, even for failure. However, having read *Archival Methods*, we could no longer hide behind "the virtue of impotence." At last it was clear that we were

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[9]David Bearman, "Archival Strategies," *American Archivist* 58 (Fall 1995): 381–82.

[10]*Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1986), vi.

[11]Levy and Robles, *The Image of Archivists* and "Archivists' Resource Allocators: The Next Step."

wallowing in self pity over problems which we had ourselves refused to address and which now threatened the documentary heritage we were pledged to protect. Suddenly we had met the ''enemy'' and it was US! It is no wonder people were furious and/or dismissive. Bearman had stripped away all our excuses and illusions. Could we bright, honest, rational, hard-working, committed professionals accept that WE HAD GOTTEN IT SO WRONG? These were very frightening and dangerous admissions, to which we will return shortly.

Despite the number of people who were verbally shocked or offended, no one has ever challenged the analyses or conclusions posited in *Archival Methods* in the literature or from the podium. The fact that there has been no serious effort to debate Bearman's speculative observations indicates several possibilities:

a. Few in ''the profession'' have read, understood, or utilized the views expressed in *Archival Methods*. In the four years following its publication in 1989, *Archival Methods* was one of the most frequently cited works in leading journal articles dealing with current issues in archival management, specifically those addressing electronic records.[12] And, as Bearman asserts, these citations were largely documented uncritical quotations or descriptions of the ideas by the small number of writers who dominate the discourse.[13] It is also true that citation is once

or twice removed from reading and that the majority of rank-and-file practitioners may not have read *Archival Methods*. The question becomes, ''Is it really necessary that a majority of practitioners do so in order to participate in meaningful change within the field?'' Certainly those who are writing and are thus shaping the knowledge base of the profession are familiar with the ideas. So, at least through indirect dissemination, the profession has been exposed to *Archival Methods*.

Assessing the degree to which Bearman's ideas have been understood or utilized is much more difficult. Whether or not the literature has been thoroughly read cannot be determined with any accuracy (people lie).[14] Then there is the murky issue of measuring clarity of understanding. David Bearman's writings are not an easy read—the ideas, although clear and well-expressed, are intellectually complex, tightly argued, and, to many, intimidating. Thus, I suggest that people might be reluctant to analyze his work in print. For this reason, Bearman is most often quoted or cited, rather than rigourously criticized or interpreted.[15]

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[12]Bearman, ''Archival Strategies,'' 381–82, nn. 3, 4.

[13]Mary Sue Stephenson, ''The American Archivist, 1971–1990: A Demographic Analysis of the Articles,'' *American Archivist* 55 (Fall 1992): 538–61, especially 549–50. Richard J. Cox, ''Annotated Bibliography and Analysis of the Literature'' in Margaret Hedstrom, editor, *Electronic Records Management Program Strategies*, Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report No. 18 (Pittsburgh: Archives & Museum Informatics, 1993), 99-150. Anne J. Gilliland-Swetland, ''From Education to Application and Back: Archival Literature and an Electronic Records Curriculum,'' *American Archivist* 56 (Sum-

mer 1993): 532–44. For an example of the intellectual hegemony of a minority, note the number of authors whose articles have originated as a result of their participation in the Research Fellowship Program for the Study of Modern Archives of the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan. A small study I completed in 1991 indicated that of the 43 Fellows (1983-1989), 40 have either published (29), or were in the process of doing so (11). These authors dominated the *American Archivist* between 1984 and 1988.

[14]An unpublished 1990 poll of professional members of the Australian Society of Archivists (ASA) indicated that 100% of respondents read the Society's journal, *Archives & Manuscripts (A&M)*. However, the term ''read'' was not defined, nor were the contents (articles vs. reviews vs. news notes vs. publications notes) of *A&M* differentiated. This sort of ''fact-finding'' poll has a similar validity to asking priests if they have read the Bible.
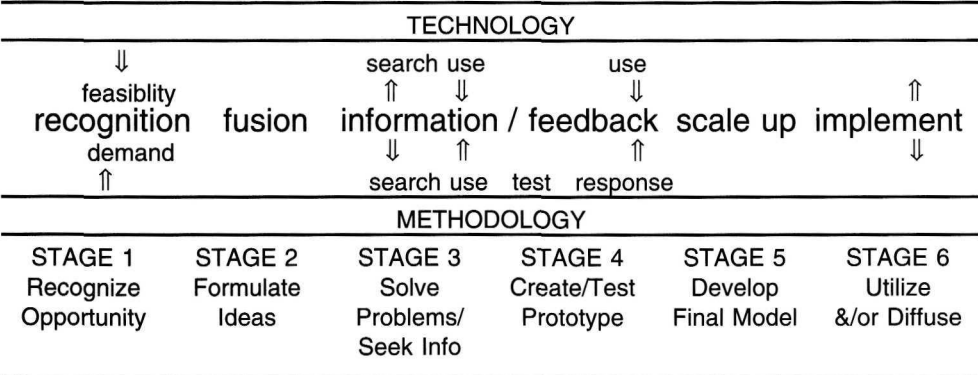
[15]Bearman, ''Archival Strategies,'' 381–82, n. 3. Bearman cites Gerald Ham's assertion in *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* that *Archival Methods* advocated ''archival Darwinism'' as an example of misinterpretation. Ham's book is one

Chart 2: Multi-Stage Model of Innovation

TECHNOLOGY					
⇓ feasiblity **recognition** demand ⇑	**fusion**	search use ⇑ ⇓ **information** / ⇓ ⇑ search use	use ⇓ **feedback** ⇑ test response	**scale up**	⇑ **implement** ⇓
METHODOLOGY					
STAGE 1 Recognize Opportunity	STAGE 2 Formulate Ideas	STAGE 3 Solve Problems/ Seek Info	STAGE 4 Create/Test Prototype	STAGE 5 Develop Final Model	STAGE 6 Utilize &/or Diffuse

Adapted from E.B. Roberts and A.L. Frohman, "Strategies for Improving Research Utilisation," *Technology Review* 80 (1978): 32 as cited in Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 15.

b. That Bearman was so obviously right, there was no need to "debate" his major assertions. In fact, it was professionally dangerous to do so. This second factor is, I believe, more responsible for the silence than the first. Because *Archival Methods* merely stated clearly and dispassionately what many knew in their hearts to be true, there was no need for debate. Moreover, there was also an unarticulated fear that too much exposure, especially in the wider community, might be dangerous. Could not such public admissions discredit the whole profession as grossly incompetent and endanger archival jobs? Perhaps the best stance was, after all, to keep quiet and concentrate on doing something to remedy the situation, FAST.

c. "The profession" has been and is taking the ideas aboard, following a characteristic pattern of innovation diffusion. Certainly, in 1994, there was little tangible evidence that the rank-and-file members of the archival community had

registered the importance of Bearman's ideas, that they had *incorporated* them within their cycle of decision-making or that archivists were *acting* upon his concepts. For reasons mentioned above, and especially because the vast majority of archivists do not participate in formalized research and scholarly writing, published responses to Bearman's views are not the best indicator of his influence on wider professional practice. A more formal research study awaits undertaking. Certainly a citation analysis of proceedings of professional meetings and/or a KWOC or full-text search of institutional or "grey" literature using as keywords terms coined or closely associated with Bearman such as "recordkeeping requirements," "evidential historicity" and "recordness," should provide exploratory data.

In any case, from what we now understand about innovation take up as a phenomenon, I am convinced that Bearman's ideas are being absorbed, following the "rite-of-passage" characteristic of most change evoking stimuli. Studies of innovation across numerous fields, including information management, characterize the metamorphosis of ideas, materials, methods or products from new to mainstream as

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among a very few published pieces which attempt to analyze, rather than simply cite, Bearman's ideas.

a "life cycle" process animated by various groups of "actors."[16] What we now know about this "life cycle" of innovation diffusion is summarized in Chart 2.

Among the numerous models of innovation from the literature is that developed by Roberts and Frohman, who identify six stages in the take-up process, beginning with recognition of opportunity and culminating in final utilization and diffusion. Naturally, there are numerous factors which promote or retard progress along the way so that the full cycle may take several years.[17] However, since most of the models are based upon the introduction of specific products, technology, or methods within organizations or industries, a full-scale "re-invention" process for a profession as diverse and individualistic as ours should be longer and more diffuse. Applying the Roberts and Frohman model to Bearman's efforts, I would say that *Archival Methods* comprised Stages 1 and 2. Its exposure of the bankruptcy of traditional methods mandated the re-purposing of our profession. This call, coinciding as it did with the full force of the information technology revolution, presented the profession with the unprecedented opportunity for a re-definition of its methods and activities to focus on the management of processes and outcomes, not products or outputs. Now, after five years of interactive, multi-national research and discourse, Bearman has developed his "prototype solution" in *Archival Strategies* which he and others are testing across a variety of applications representing mid to late Stage 4 activity.

Aftermath of *Archival Methods*

Thus Bearman's line of thinking which began in 1986 with *Archival Methods* has now come full cycle—from problem identification through problem resolution, at least within the institutional or in-house context of practice. *Archival Methods* and *Archival Strategies* are, in essence, the negative and positive aspects of a continuing discourse. Like *Archival Methods* between 1986 and 1989, Bearman's *Archival Strategies* have, between 1991 and 1994, gone through a cycle of refinement to the point where they are now coherent enough for presentation to the wider community. In addition, *Archival Strategies* has benefited from the rough treatment meted out to *Archival Methods*. Bearman has spent much more time working with colleagues to test, modify, and refine the ideas offered, choosing his collaborators carefully to include leading opinion shapers and disseminators. Over the past five years, Bearman and his collaborators have energetically dominated the profession's research agenda and professional discourse, initiating a series of grant-funded studies, "think-tanks," institutes, and conferences devoted to equipping the archival profession for duty in the electronic age.[18] This does not mean that *Archival Strategies* is any less provocative than its predecessor; there is still plenty of vintage outrageous and irreverent Bearman, but he has attended more to the PROCESSES involved in nurturing collaborative partnerships and promoting idea dissemination, thus improving the prospects that the OUTCOME

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[16]Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 36-67; Victoria Irons Walch, "Innovation Diffusion: Implications for the CART Curriculum," *American Archivist* 56 (Summer 1993): 506–12. Both works affirm the authority of Everett M. Rogers' *Diffusion of Innovations: A Cross-Cultural Approach*, 3rd ed. (New York: Free Press of Glencoe, 1983).

[17]Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 14–15.

[18]Sue McKemmish, "Understanding Electronic Recordkeeping Systems: Understanding Ourselves," *Archives & Manuscripts* 22 (May 1994): 150-62, explains the impact of such activities. *Electronic Records Management Program Strategies*, edited by Margaret Hedstrom, Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report No. 18 (Pittsburgh: Archives & Museum Informatics, 1993), was a by-product of the first cycle of seminars.

he seeks—an archival renaissance—will be attained. In short, he has broadened his role beyond that of innovator to incorporate activities more characteristic of team leader, entrepreneur, and project champion profiles. But more on that aspect later.

The Electronic Revolution: A Now, If Ever Opportunity

"Only in this decade have we witnessed the suprisingly rapid emergence and easy acceptance of technology as a major strategic variable throughout the globe for both corporations and national governments."

-M. Horwitch and K. Sakakibara.[19]

The catalyst for all this activity was the final advent of the long-anticipated "paperless office," and the fear and loathing it inspired across all sectors of society. Certainly, there were plenty of organizations struggling to recover from the financial hemorrhaging of information technology gone wrong in the "go-go" '80s when many managers who had embraced technology as the cure for all ills learned otherwise.[20] Similarly, those responsible for recordkeeping and accountability were battling to coordinate the growing diversity and decentralization of record–making products and processes. All were aware that our human capacity to re-

trieve poorly identified and controlled records in the paper world was being totally overwhelmed as recordkeeping disappeared into the transparency of virtual business domains.[21] It was in this infusion of new technology that the continuity inherited from the paper world would either be maintained or lost forever. This concurrent focusing of attention by a number of "key players"[22] on the need to ensure effective recordkeeping within technological environments provided an unprecedented "window of opportunity"—the necessary receptivity to innovate.

It is among Bearman's most impressive achievements that he realized this opportunity in the very early 1980s and dedicated himself unstintingly to empowering the profession to grasp it. In doing so, he provoked, prodded, pulled, and pushed in every way possible, often at his own expense, to highlight effective recordkeeping as a critical issue. He was omnipresent, attending every meeting where he could influence opinions or inform debate. He developed grant proposals, undertook research projects, presented papers, wrote articles, and published reports. Often he upset people, but he *kept them moving*. As a result, no one has done more than David Bearman to re-orient archival attitudes from defeatism and complacency to positive activism.

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[19]Horwitch and Sakakibara, "The Changing Strategy-Technology Relationship in Technology-Based Industries: A Comparison of the United States and Japan," *Research on Technological Innovation, Management and Policy* 3 (1986): 86. Cited in Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 193.

[20]Tom Forester, "High-Tech Hype: Myths and Realities of the IT Revolution: Part I Megatrends," *New Zealand Archivist* IV/1 (Autumn/March 1993): 1-5 and "Part II: Megamistakes," *New Zealand Archivist* IV/2 (Winter/June 1993): 3–6, and Frank G. Burke, "Chaos Through Communications: Archivists, Records Managers and the Communications Phenomenon," in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, edited by Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 154–77.

[21]The time frame during which human memory may substitute for appropriate classification, titling, sequencing and indexing is less than 2 years, depending on the volatility, complexity and technological sophistication of the recordkeeping system. Many workplaces were transformed by huge purchases of information technology in the early 1990s and are experiencing the crunch of memory overload now.

[22]So-called key players included internal and external legal and fiscal experts, compliance managers and regulators (e.g., lawyers, accountants, auditors, FOI officers); line and staff managers; risk managers, IT managers; and data administrators; among others.

Strategic Thinking and the Shift to Process-Oriented Management

Whereas *Archival Methods* clearly demonstrated that efforts to manage end-of-life-cycle products (i.e. records) were futile and professionally suicidal, *Archival Strategies* promotes a paradigmatic shift in focus toward management of the functions and activities that generated the records as the key to transforming the archival enterprise. The secret weapon Bearman employed to effect this change was strategic thinking. This, he maintains, along with systems analysis and strategic planning, is the key to dealing with the dynamics of modern recordkeeping.

Which brings us to the major issue now at hand: What are Bearman's proposed "archival strategies" and what do they have to offer? Are they really a promised "cure" for professional "impotence"? Are they entirely "unmixed blessings?"

The Essence of *Archival Strategies*

"There is now a body of findings, principles and hypotheses by which we can attempt to explain, predict, and we hope influence the process of innovation in industry, commerce and services."

—M.A. Sirbu.[23]

The collegial discourse, now increasingly international and electronic, which Bearman ignited in *Archival Methods* and which he and various contributors have now developed into *Archival Strategies* embodies three major themes:

RE-PURPOSING THE ARCHIVAL ENTERPRISE: The creation and articulation of a sound, achievable professional mission which includes devising and

utilizing appropriate concepts to create a "language of recordkeeping purpose" which will establish and promote an effective records management regime within organizations.[24] Such a shift in focus and alignment calls for—

RE-DEFINING THE METHODS FOR REALIZING ARCHIVAL EFFECTIVENESS: The shaping of a management framework based on *processes* and *outcomes*, not on products, an approach which articulates the functions underpinning our mission and which develops and utilizes recordkeeping requirements, automatic or other actualizing tools, pro-active strategies and tactics to achieve archival effectiveness.[25]

Finally, *Archival Strategies* exhorts archivists to recognize that ensuring evidence is an innately cooperative venture. Records do not make and keep themselves; numerous individuals contribute to the process and have an investment in the outcome. Therefore, it is important that we spend time—

RE-ALIGNING ARCHIVISTS TO JOIN FORCES WITH OTHERS WHO REQUIRE AUTHORITATIVE RECORDKEEPING: Identifying attitudes

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[23]M.A. Sirbu, "The Innovation Process in Telecommunication," in Mitchell L. Moss, editor, *Telecommunications and Productivity* (Reading, Mass.: Addison Wesley, 1981), 185. Cited in Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 35.

[24]Bearman, "Archival Strategies," 386. Frank Upward and Sue McKemmish, "Somewhere Beyond Custody," *Archives & Manuscripts* 22 (May 1994): 136–49 and Frank Upward, draft manuscript proposing a new strategic agenda for Australian records managers (June 1994) courtesy of the author.

[25]Bearman, "Archival Strategies," 386, 389–90, 396. Some of the other regular contributors to the recent English-speaking discourse are: AUSTRALIA: Sue McKemmish, Frank Upward, Glenda Acland, David Roberts, Barbara Reed, Anne Picot, Adrian Cunningham, and Chris Hurley. CANADA: Terry Cook, Luciana Duranti, Terry Eastwood, John McDonald, and Charles Dollar; USA: Margaret Hedstrom, Richard Kesner, Marion Matters, Lisa Weber, Richard Barry, Avra Michelson, Richard Cox, and Vicki Walch. The long-standing Australian concern with pro-active strategies to achieve business and regulatory accountability and articulation of the function of the archival document as evidence has contributed significantly to the substance of Bearman's *Archival Strategies*.

and roles for archives/records managers which will develop and strengthen confidence, attract powerful allies and ensure that archival requirements are addressed.

Let us look at each major theme in turn.

Major Theme One: Re-Purposing *the archival enterprise*

FROM: Identifying, acquiring, organizing, maintaining, and making available other people's "old stuff"

TO: Capturing and protecting evidence over time.

In Bearman's vision, the aim of the recordkeeping function is to capture and maintain useful and useable evidence of ideas, decisions, activities, and transactions which people require to conduct their lives and enterprises over time. Once created and protected, records-as-evidence stand immutable.

BENEFITS: The concept of evidence is especially valuable because it possesses clear, definable attributes which have evolved over time, yet it is neither media-specific, nor limited to any particular purpose or occasion. Understanding this critical aspect of records-as-evidence, *their multi-functionality over time*, is vital. It is this inherent capacity for records to serve many different purposes and uses, concurrently and sequentially, that makes them the building blocks of organized societies—the managerial and societal "glue" which enables us to legitimize, authorize, organize, plan, act, transact, account, and memorialize. Records are the raw material on which law and responsible government depend and of which culture is constructed. No other "information product" has a role of such breadth or requires such vigilant protection.[26]

A further advantage of nominating "ensuring evidence" as the archival mission is that such a role is more inclusive and likely to attract a wider and more powerful range of allies than our previous "old stuff" orientation.

People do have some understanding of and respect for the concept of evidence, which offers a better starting point for communication than the stereotypical images evoked by the terms "archives" and "archivist."

CONCERNS: But, eventually, when people inquire as to why ensuring evidence is important, *Archival Strategies* leaves us vulnerable to vagueness, a position that we, in Australia, find unsatisfying. Some of us stress accountability as our major theme, others believe in emphasizing the wider cultural role, but we all agree that it is important to have articulate illustrations of the *usefulness* and, therefore, of the *value* of evidence across circumstances and time.

For instance, it must be generally understood that ensuring evidence enables people to be held responsible for their words and actions which underpin societies based on respect for the rights and the dignity of individuals. Without documentary integrity, the processes of law and ethics become mere mechanisms which can be turned to serve any purpose. We ensure evidence to fulfill our responsibilities to promote the best in ourselves, to build accountable, productive organizations, to construct and protect a representative "record" which cannot defend itself, and to realize the ideal of a lawful and humane society. To illuminate this and other reasons, I would propose expanding the compendium section of *Archival Strategies* to include further explanations and examples along the following lines:

"We ensure evidence to achieve managerial, social and cultural accountability on which ethical, equitable, responsible and responsive

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[26]Bearman, "Archival Strategies," 391, 411. See also Ann Pederson, "Unlocking Hidden Treasures Through Description: Comments on Archival Voyages of Discovery," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994): 55–57.

societies depend. Our responsibility as recordkeeping professionals then must be to ensure that information systems supporting individual and organizational endeavor create evidence in the form of accurate, authentic and accessible records for as long as they are needed. The needs for records are multifaceted and include, but are not limited to, the support of current business, professional and personal activities, to meet regulatory requirements, to establish status, rights or entitlements and, in the longer term, to become the source material for research, education and the construction of culture.''

In order to carry out our professional responsibilities, we must concentrate our attention on the *processes* of evidence making and keeping, and on identifying the tools, methods, and alliances needed to achieve our desired *outcome*: the creation and protection of evidence. As a next step we must attend to—

Major Theme Two: Re-Defining *Locus, Function, and Activities*

FROM: Managing Residue at End-of-Life-Cycle appraisal, description, preservation, reference

TO: Managing Recordkeeping Processes during Workflow ensuring creation, documentation, maintenance, use, evaluation.

Thus, the central base of *Archival Strategies* is two-fold. The second theme of the essay is really a corollary to the first, in that it moves us pro-actively into the ongoing workflow within organizations to identify points where evidence is needed. Bearman then delineates the key functions or *processes* involved in ensuring evidence—creation, identification, workflow-recordkeeping relationship documentation,

maintenance, and evaluation—and uses each as a discussion platform for proposing and explaining *tactics*—i.e., *how* the desired outcome of effective recordkeeping might be achieved.

BENEFITS: Bearman's specific suggestions, illustrated with examples, are provided partly in response to earlier criticisms that *Archival Methods* had left readers without direction; but, more importantly, they are offered as evidence that the ideas presented in *Archival Strategies* have been tested and found valid in practice. Initially, the outcomes of intensive, collegial ''brainstorming sessions'' employing the tools of systems analysis and critical thinking, many of the tactics evolved out of real experiences or were subsequently workplace–tested. As a result, Bearman offers readers an ''arsenal'' of reliable testimonials describing contexts, methods, and activities that might be adapted to achieve archival effectiveness. Particularly noteworthy are those practices utilizing structures and forces which are already in place and operating as part of workflow or regulatory regimes or goals which have been achieved through changing attitudes towards a practice or circumstance *apropos* the old ''half–full vs. half–empty'' adage.

In Bearman's view, the first step is for archivists to alter their management locus and context of activity. Much of our difficulty stems from the fact that we traditionally deal with other people's records at the end of their administrative/managerial ''life cycle.'' Because these records are no longer needed to conduct their lives or business affairs, record creators don't really care what happens to them or that they are in a mess. Thus, the two main activities which dominate archivists' energy are 1) attempting to persuade others to create and maintain proper records and 2) dealing with the results when they don't listen. Bearman refers to these activities as ''rowing'' against impossible odds.

From our traditional vantage point, we lack and will continue to lack the tools to make any headway. However, in order to proceed, we must first discard the dearly held, but demonstrably false, premise that we act as objective arbiters and accept the fact that our work is inherently subjective and interventionist.

Having done so, we are free to reclaim and relish our unique role as documenters of our own times and shapers of a cumulative cultural record.[27] We archivists should promote our unique skills and services as "designers of documentation" and act to *institute effective recordkeeping regimes wherever work or life activities take place*—the office, the factory, the home, as well as the repository.

CONCERNS: However, this rosy picture does have its darker hues. This strategy will require some Herculean efforts. First and foremost, adopting a collaborative and "steering" modality requires an exponential shift in both professional attitudes and work activity. Abandoning long-held tenets of archival theory and our propensity for "rowing" in order to embrace an interventionist, present-focused "steering" mentality may just be too much to ask of many archivists, as we will see when we re-visit this topic later on.

Secondly, the scenarios envisioned in *Archival Strategies* require us *either* to abandon the activities we enjoy and have

spent years perfecting in favor of the new "strategic" skills which we must acquire competence in very quickly *or*, more likely, we must *do both*, because we will continue to operate our "traditional" archival programs as we develop our new "strategic" program. The precise balance point will depend upon the nature of our archival program; for example, many collecting archives would be more focused on re-assembling the past than documenting the present.

Also absent from *Archival Strategies* is any description of exactly how new "strategic archivists" will spend most of their time. While Bearman makes it clear that we will no longer be appraising, describing, referencing, and maintaining records, he does not explain in any detail what we will be doing beyond supporting the following function:

> *devising and utilizing new tools and self-or-other-actualizing methods to influence the policy, design, implementation, operation and evaluation of recordkeeping systems, emphasizing compliance with requirements and standards.*

We are told that the drudgery which has weighed us down for so long will disappear and that we will devote our time, knowledge, and skills engaged in truly professional activities requiring judgement and intellect, but *Archival Strategies* suggests no specific competency standards or job description.

However, if one imagines the activities likely to support the function noted earlier, archivists will work primarily as consultants and educators, acting directly and through empowering others. Some of the work activities I envision for "strategic" archivists include developing and revising recordkeeping requirements; interpreting and communicating those requirements to

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[27]Terry Cook, "Electronic Records, Paper Minds: The Revolution in Information Management and Archives in the Post-Custodial and Post-Modernist Era," *Archives & Manuscripts* 22 (November 1994): 300–328, esp. 302–6; 312–14. Cook eloquently describes the impact of the pioneering work of Hugh Taylor on his own and Bearman's thinking regarding the archivist's rightful place " . . .at the right hand of the Pharaohs." See also Clarissa Pinkola Estes, "Clear Water: Nourishing the Creative Life," *Women Who Run with the Wolves* (London: Rider, a division of Random House, 1993), 298–318. This is a fascinating psychoanalytic study of multi-cultural folk tales and the lessons they hold for marginalized groups, especially women.

others; and monitoring, documenting, and evaluating recordkeeping effectiveness.

Most of the work will require systems analysis, planning, management, research, writing, and training skills and will be accomplished through assembling/leading/facilitating/orchestrating collegial work teams.

While this is a most exciting new role, is it one that archivists are temperamentally or intellectually equipped to assume? It seems to me that most of us will face a steep and continuing learning curve to acquire or refresh the knowledge and skills necessary. But this is true for most professionals in our rapidly changing world. You will also be relieved to hear that our temperament may not be an issue, at least in New South Wales, Australia. A preliminary study of personality profiles of practitioner and student archivists indicates that our professional profile is one of "counselor," highly congenial with our new consulting and empowering responsibilities.[28]

By shifting the mental model and management focus of our work, we vastly improve our prospects for success—specifically, our opportunities to meet and influence those stakeholders who share our concerns for effective recordkeeping, and to identify business, regulatory, and professional practices and forces that will encourage them to make common cause with us. Bearman's suggestion that we work pro-actively to service those points where documentary evidence is required to support the workflow of ongoing business activity has great promise.

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[28]Angie Rizakos, "The Personality Profile of Archivists: Summary of Findings of August, 1994 Survey," unpublished essay. Ms. Rizakos utilized Jim Barrett and Geoff Williams, *Test Your Own Aptitude*, 2nd ed. (London: Kogan Page, 1990), 73–111, as the main source of components for her personality trait questionnaire. Her preliminary work is being refined for a larger study.

Major Theme Three: Re-Aligning and Sharing *Responsibilities*

FROM: Sole Care of Others' Records of Enduring Value

TO: Partnership/Collaboration with Other Stakeholders Concerned with Ensuring Evidence to Achieve Managerial and Cultural Accountability

Part and parcel of the new mission is its explicit recognition of interdependence among archivists and other contributors to the recordkeeping process. Archivists have always sought the cooperation of creators, action officers, managers, and auditors in our efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of our archival operations, but *Archival Strategies* requires us to go further. Bearman and his collaborators contend that archival activity is a continuum of shared responsibilities which work best when formally recognized in partnership agreements.

BENEFITS: *Archival Strategies* recommends that archivists ally themselves most closely with in-house professionals, managers, and societal regulators—powerful "insiders" or directly influential "outsiders"—whose own work also depends upon the capture and maintenance of reliable, authoritative evidence. Using the common denominator of concern for evidence, archivists can then assemble a much more powerful and influential list of potential collaborators, individuals such as data administrators, auditors, accountants, lawyers, risk managers, ombudsmen, and freedom of information/privacy law compliance officers, among others. Working cooperatively with prominent and respected contributors to the corporate enterprise vastly increases our prospects of influencing managerial decision-making, and, through that avenue, of achieving archival effectiveness, more so than pursuing our traditional alliances with equally marginalized insiders or powerless outsiders such as records managers, librarians, and historians.

CONCERNS: To some it may appear that Bearman is suggesting that we abandon our collegial links with other information professionals and the heritage community in favor of a more corporate role. Certainly, he would contend that our best hopes for success in an increasingly pragmatic world clearly lie in cultivating mutual understanding and collaborative relationships with those who can ensure that the processes of recordkeeping are effective, rather than those who deal with the end results (i.e. records). But, although I agree with his assertion, I would not want to see archivists alienate anyone. I would press for an all-around strengthening of our network of support, paying particular attention to building partnerships within creating organizations and developing links between managerial and heritage interests. Indeed, archivists need all the friends we can get.

A second concern raised by other writers is whether archivists have sufficient visibility to be noticed by, much less to collaborate with, other stakeholders. However, I believe that this is less of a problem than the inevitable tensions between stakeholders whose short-to-medium–term business and corporate interests clash with archivists' long–term and wider societal role.

All this harkens back to an earlier point—our image: not in the minds of others, but of ourselves. Do we see ourselves as the ''corporate players'' essential to the success of *Archival Strategies*? Most archivists took up their profession because they wanted to safeguard the documentary heritage of society, not to promote the business interests of XYZ Corporation. However, as Bearman asserts, if we fail to develop an effective recordkeeping regime at XYZ Corporation, we also fail to ensure the archival record. While there may be tension between these two roles, they are neither incompatible nor mutually exclusive, but part of a multi–functional endeavor in which some roles fall away and

others strengthen over time. Many archivists have also stated that they don't feel comfortable with ''corporate types.'' It is also possible that the reverse is true. I would suggest that these feelings may have more to do with the rate and magnitude of change we are absorbing than with each other. Undoubtedly, all of us have a bit of work to do to enlarge (or even abandon) our ''comfort zones'' in the interests of meeting our responsibilities to the record and to ourselves as a profession.

Unfinished Business: Empowerment and Inclusion

''The process of innovation . . . could be made much smoother if innovation champions knew more about . . . pursuing their roles as managers of change and orchestrating those of others . . with special attention to the political and social issues.''
—Jose-Marie Griffiths, Ronald G. Havelock, and Ellen A. Sweet.[29]

It all seems so simple. The strategies and the tools are all out there and have been for some time. We have only to grasp them, capitalizing on the opportunity the electronic revolution now affords us. But are we able to do so? Must every one of us do so? Are the choices as polar as *Archival Methods* and *Archival Strategies* imply, or are they more of a continuum?

As mentioned earlier, a prerequisite to *Archival Strategies* is that we stop ourselves from ''rowing,'' Bearman's metaphor for the traditional, self-sacrificing activities which confine us to the lowest levels of organizational influence. This is not a simple matter, nor is it one that af-

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[29]Jose-Marie Griffiths, Ronald G. Havelock and Ellen A. Sweet, *Diffusion of Innovations in Library and Information Science: Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) (ED279350)), 221. Cited in Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 264.

fects only those hoping to become "strategic" archivists. Inertia is epidemic within the whole profession. As the storm howls about us, most of us just want to keep our heads down and stay as and where we are. We cling tenaciously to our oars of dogmatism and uncertainty about the future. We may even experience wistful longing after an illusory "simpler time" characterized by clearer choices and tangible problems, i.e. a growing backlog and shrinking resources.

Which begs the most important question of all. Can we break out of the disabling mindset behind rowing? Attitudes that transform the concept of service into self-sacrificing servility are not healthy or productive in any workplace. But do most archivists realize the problem? Have we fallen in love with our phantom oppressors and our role as righteous victims with all care and no responsibility? Are we prepared to put our "if onlys" into action and make ourselves accountable architects of human memory? How do we empower ourselves to break free?[30]

The phrase that comes to mind is the title of a self-help book *Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway*, or, as the studies of innovation tell us, accept the premise

". . . as risky as innovation is, not innovating is riskier."

—R.N. Foster.[31]

Perhaps it would be wise to repeat both phrases while contemplating what usually happens when powerful, fast-moving forces strike an immobile object. But, undoubtedly, a better understanding of the

Chart 3: Propositions Derived from Study of Innovation as a Phenomenon[32]

Propositions about managing innovation

1. Innovation is centrally a matter of organization, rather than of technology.
2. Invisible assets are important in realizing innovation benefits.
3. Managerial style is a more important determinant of the effects of technological innovations on a organization than the technology employed.

Propositions about the inputs to innovation

4. Progress from invention/discovery to application is not linear.
5. Neither science (or knowledge) push nor market pull can be categorized as the *sine qua non* of successful innovation.

Propositions about the environment for innovation

6. The more complex the system into which an innovation has to move, the more resistance it will meet.
7. Opinions differ on how innovation is more likely to be achieved, whether by strategy or serendipity, in small or large organizations, and in good or bad economic times.

process of innovation will galvanize us to transform our fears into the energy necessary to manage change and help us navigate those difficult passages ahead.

As Chart 3 suggests, just how the process of professional transformation envisioned in Bearman's collective *Archival Strategies* will unfold or progress is unpredictable.

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[30]Estes, *Women Who Run with the Wolves*, Chapter 8, "Self-Preservation: Identifying Leg Traps, Cages and Poisoned Bait," 244–45; Chapter 9, "Homing: Returning to Oneself," 256–97, and Chapter 12, "Marking Territory: The Boundaries of Rage and Forgiveness," 346–73.

[31]R.N. Foster, *Innovation: The Attacker's Advantage* (New York: Summit Books, 1986), 30. Cited in Maguire et al., *Information Services*, 1.

[32]Maguire et al., *Information Services*, Table 6.1, 268. David Wallace, "Satisfying Recordkeeping Functional Requirements: The Organizational Culture Variable," background and working draft published in *University of Pittsburgh Recordkeeping Functional Requirements Project: Reports and Working Papers*, LIS055/LS94001 (Pittsburgh: School of Library and Information Science, University of Pittsburgh, September 1994), 1–39, especially 6–7 and Appendix A.

Chart 4: Interpersonal Communication as a Factor in the Innovation Uptake Process[34]
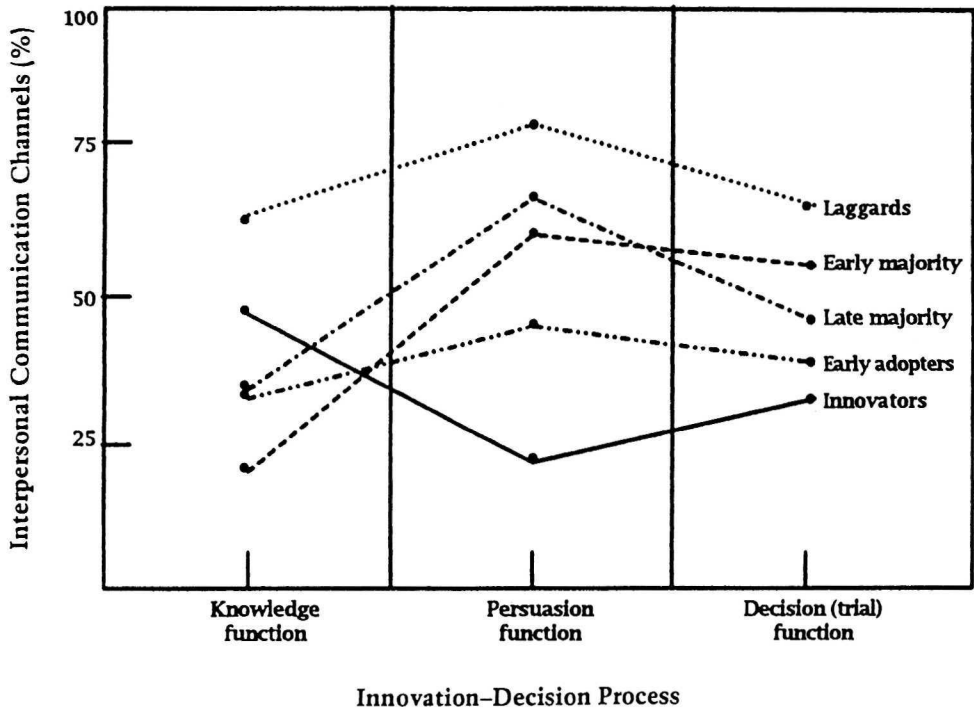
The only certainty we can count on is that our best plans will go awry, that people will misinterpret our intentions, turn down our proposals, and ignore our advice. So, armed with the knowledge that it's all part of the pattern, take heart. There is much wisdom in the old Chinese proverb: "Fall down seven times, get up eight."

One of the most striking features of Chart 3's list of propositions and other research findings about innovation diffusion is their emphasis on the role of inter-personal activity in organizing and managing the process. Innovators who ignore the interpersonal aspect prolong and protract the diffusion process. With *Archival Strategies*, Bearman has made a considerable effort to interact with others and to include colleagues in the development process. He has contributed his ideas within key professional association task forces, specialist

committees, and invited forums of colleagues known to have knowledge, interest or influence in the field. In these settings, the discussion and criticism have been rigorous and interactive, often to the point of discomfort for some, but have yielded important results which were fast-tracked into publication, often under the Archives & Museum Informatics imprint.[33] This investment in interpersonal influence to promote dissemination is now poised to pay off.

As we see in Chart 4, interpersonal channels, exemplified in the Persuasion function, are far more important in a decision to adopt among all groups other than

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[33]McKemmish, "Understanding Electronic Record-keeping Systems," 156.

[34]Maguire et al., *Information Services*, Figure 2.3, 65.
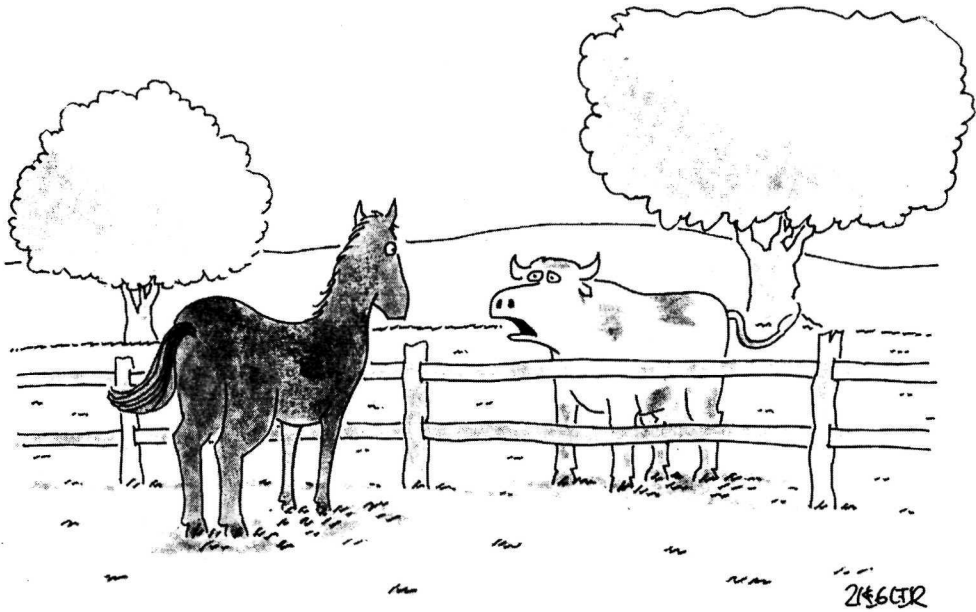
"I've been a cow all my life, honey. Don't ask me to change now."
Drawing by Ziegler; © 1992. The New Yorker Magazine, Inc.

the innovators and *early adopters*. The Persuasion function—making a decision to adopt an innovation more on the advice of respected colleagues than on one's own direct experience—is somewhat less critical to the innovators and *early adopters* because they often work together in developing the innovation. Clearly, the *innovators* are the ones on the "cutting edge". Because they initiate new ideas, the Knowledge function, wherein individuals do their own researching/reading/hypothesizing, and the Decision function, in which those hypotheses are tested and refined, are most important to them.

On the other hand, the *early adopters* are influenced by both the Knowledge and Persuasion functions, attesting to the importance of direct experience with both the innovation and the innovator in their decisionmaking. Characteristically, *early adopters* are collegial confidents of *innovators*, often participating in "think tank" activities with them in refining the innovation or in hosting test sites for its evaluation.

With *early majority* folk, the Persuasion function, followed by the Decision function, is most critical, and it is this group which Bearman has targeted with his invitational workshops. The *early majority* folk come to seminars and workshops organized and conducted by *innovators* and *early adopters* and, as an ongoing benefit, develop informal networks which receive and disseminate evolving ideas rapidly through the community, achieving a sort of "ripple effect." At this point, the necessary momentum for change has been achieved and a measurable shift occurs. Gradually, more and more people, the *late majority*, are personally persuaded to jump on the accelerating bandwagon. Finally, once the innovation has been integrated into the knowledge base, with plenty of testing and many advocates, the *laggards* may join in, or retire.

What is most important about understanding this process is that, although the balance in favor of innovation does not require much more than a third of a group to effect a change, I believe that our success

as a profession depends upon achieving a much higher take-up rate and consensus of thinking. Let me explain. Many writers have commented upon the diffuse and individualistic nature of archivists and archives. Our activities are also often sited in specialist and/or isolated work units with small staffs within large and/or diverse host institutions. One of the central themes in the literature of the past decade was the need, still unresolved, to develop an authoritative professional credo which would convey an accurate and cohesive image to outsiders.[35] We can no longer afford the mixed messages to the outside world that an artificial split between "traditionalist" and "strategic" archivist conveys. There is need and plenty of room for those who specialize in one or the other, but we must ensure that outsiders develop a well-rounded appreciation of the extent and richness of archival enterprise, not just one area of activity.

As we face the challenge of ensuring evidence in rapidly changing environments, we ourselves may experience a sudden shift of emphasis. Furthermore, we must not deprive our programs of the professional knowledge possessed by people who cannot see themselves joining the ranks of the "strategic" archivists. These "traditionalists," often senior colleagues, have irreplaceable stores of experience and knowledge. Their understanding of organ-

izational functions and workflow, of the corporate power structure and culture, and of the accumulated records are vital resources which can streamline strategic initiatives. However, if ignored and/or alienated, these same resources can become dangerous liabilities. The point is that it is desirable to devise a pluralistic recordkeeping regime that encourages "traditionalists" to be involved and invested in its success, rather than to be marginalized or allowed to turn off and drop out.[36] In most workplaces, the critical mass of the archival enterprise is so small that we simply cannot afford to lose personnel. We must empower everyone to contribute to the best of their ability and capacity. Our dual responsibilities for reclaiming the past and documenting the present involve many tasks and require different abilities, types of knowledge, and skills. Achieving archival effectiveness is, after all, a journey involving a number of paths and travellers.

Some Missing Pieces

What are some of the gaps or limitations of Bearman's strategic vision? Firstly, as Ian Wilson so capably points out, *Archival Strategies* in its present form depends heavily on utilizing a workplace structure hospitable to centralized direction and control. The management mechanisms Bearman recommends are potentially less adaptable to the eclectic and tumultuous "wild frontier" of the modern office, where a handful of in-house experts struggle to coordinate a rampaging stampede of information technologies and independent work units.[37]

[35]Ann Pederson and Gail Farr, *Archives & Manuscripts: Public Programs* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1982); "Archivist: a Definition," *SAA Newsletter*, (January 1984): 4-5; David B. Gracy II, "Archives and Society: The First Archival Revolution," *American Archivist* 47 (Winter 1984): 7–10; "Our Future is Now," *American Archivist* 48 (Winter 1985): 12–21; "What's Your Totem?" *Midwestern Archivist* 10 (1985): 17-23; Ann Pederson, "User Education and Public Relations," in Judith Ellis, editor, *Keeping Archives*, 2nd ed. (Port Melbourne, VIC: D.W. Thorpe, 1993), 306-49; Richard J. Cox, "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.

[36]Linda Henry, "An Archival Retread in Electronic Records: Acquiring Computer Literacy," *American Archivist* 56 (Summer 1993): 514–21. This article is testimony to the transformation of a traditionalist.

[37]Rob Thomsett introduced the metaphor of the modern office as the "wild frontier" as part of his Master of Ceremonies remarks and his paper "The Emerging Technology Challenge" for the *Playing for*

Secondly, a parallel recordkeeping regime for the world of personal endeavor, the locus of human inspiration, contemplation, and spirituality, is missing from Bearman's strategies as currently proposed. A temporary oversight, perhaps, but a very serious one indeed for a proposal which depends so heavily on individual and societal morality.

However, both issues are noted as "unfinished business" on Bearman's archival agenda.[38] Designing recordkeeping functionality into popular PC software packages would go a long way towards addressing both concerns.

Additional Thoughts About Tenacious Fears

"We have nothing to fear but fear itself."
—Franklin Delano Roosevelt.

Archives on Automatic?

There is concern that when we employ the new technologies to "automate" the capture, maintenance, and accessibility of records of enduring value, we will lose much more than we realize. Most often heard is that we may well automate ourselves out of a job, or, at least our jobs as we have known them. However, this fear may disperse as we concurrently assume our new consulting and empowering role.

Others of us are concerned about applying the emerging Information Superhypeway's "fast food" approach to archives—loading up our more glamorous "smart" records for remote users to access as tasty archival bytes, devoid of continuity and

meaning, but still called "the archives." Is it silly to worry that the ignorant and poorly informed will assume that such snacks are "all there is" or all there needs to be, and indifferently abandon the true archival enterprise to neglect? Is our cherished, but elitist, view of archival exploration as "gourmet fare" a rare experience to be savored by those who have equipped themselves with the required knowledge and skill for navigation and understanding accurate and still valid? Or is it genuinely outmoded, rather than simply politically incorrect? Are not "fast food" and "gourmet fare" equally necessary commodities within civilized societies? If Fubini's Law[39] is to be believed, we have no idea what will happen in the future and, therefore, must battle for flexible systems which ensure and manage both options, as well as accommodate others yet unforeseen. Ultimately, we must trust the process, because there is no other alternative, but will we know when the process is leading us over a cliff?

Some of these concerns are simply our old mindsets blocking the new and ever expanding universe of possibilities from our view, while others are appropriate by-products of a thoughtful and sensible stewardship of our archival future. But which is which? That's the fun part. We don't know and can't tell. The important thing is to keep ourselves moving, alert, and watchful, while learning all we can.

Keeps: Electronic Records Management Conference 8–10 November 1994, Canberra, ACT Australia. However, regrettably the metaphor and his colorful commentary on Fubini's Law does not appear in the published version of his paper in the *Playing for Keeps* proceedings which were published in May 1995. Order information is available at the following URL: http://www.aa.gov.au

[38]Bearman, "Archival Strategies," 410.

[39]As quoted by Rob Thomsett, Fubini's Law identifies four phases in what new technology enables us to do: Application 1: do what we are doing, only better. Application 2: do things previously impossible. Application 3: reconfigure and transform communications, work, jobs and organizations. Application 4: do things never imagined in ways never envisioned using entirely new structures and systems. This echoes maxims from other fields cited in Hugh A. Taylor, "Chip Monks at the Gate: The Impact of Technology on Archives, Libraries and the User," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991–1992): 173–80.

Food for Thought

Active, rapid, and wide dissemination of the concepts and ideas which Bearman and his collaborators have developed is critical to achieving the professional transformation envisioned in Bearman's *Archival Strategies*. We must educate to innovate. However, full implementation of *Archival Strategies* will require no less than a complete change of diet within the "archival knowledge food chain."

The traditional education of archivists does not equip us for process-oriented management. It has concentrated on how to handle the by-products of processes, i.e., the records as static "residue," rather than on understanding archival functionality as an identifiable phase within ongoing recordkeeping *processes*. Certainly, the fact that many archives evolved from "heritage reclamation projects" (i.e., to reconstruct and preserve a record of past achievements for some occasion) has contributed to a traditional emphasis on historical training and to the tenacious characterization of archivists as *voyeurs* to "real life." However, like ourselves and our organizations, our archival enterprises either evolve and grow or atrophy. In the continuum to maturity, most programs expand their focus to assume more responsibility for the documentation of their host organization's achievements, ultimately bringing them into the realm of contemporary recordkeeping. Thus, history, with its emphasis on evidence, longitudinal analyses, and pluralistic perspectives remains a necessary component of professional education, but it must not constitute the total diet.

As a result of Bearman's vision, we have rediscovered our integral role and shared responsibilities within a complex and dynamic recordkeeping enterprise, and must equip ourselves to contribute more appropriately or be by-passed as irrelevant. Ironically, it is not we who are inviting other stakeholders to join us, but rather we who are belatedly "gate-crashing" the enterprise. Whether by design, accident, or stealth, we now have our opportunity to secure a place at the decision-making table within modern organizations. Bearman's *Archival Strategies* provides us with a language of purpose and basic tools to engage the interest and involvement of other stakeholders, but it will require concerted professional commitment to develop these into the comprehensive array of knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for effective recordkeeping regimes.

Indeed, as the Society of American Archivists Committee on Automated Records and Techniques (CART) special curriculum development edition (Summer 1993) of the *American Archivist* attests, archivists must be "tricked" off their diet of dogma (definitely "empty calories") and fed intellectually healthier "treats" if we are to develop the strength of will and mind to attain true professional vitality. Similarly, our colleagues in management, in other professions, and across the wider community must also be treated to appropriate portions of the new knowledge. Otherwise, the healthy, respectful client and collegial relationships so essential for achieving the managerial and societal renaissance which we envision, will be stunted by outmoded concepts and stereotypes.

This knowledge base re-tooling may be a lengthy and difficult task, as the few educational programs involved are either relatively new, small, and/or already stretched to capacity preparing students for employment within a wide variety of traditional archival contexts. Moreover, the curricular materials and intellectual resources are still meager and too volatile to support full courses of study. However, we can begin the process with supplements and gradually replace the staples as the body of literature and research expand. Certainly, I would extend Bearman's use of the "literary warrant" to apply to the development of literature and teaching materials for our own

consumption and make such a mandate our number-one priority.

Does Effective Recordkeeping Defy Human Nature?

I worry that Bearman's vision, and, indeed, any scheme to institute a truly effective recordkeeping regime, particularly an automated one, may have a fatal flaw. It might actually work, which insures that it will never be adopted. The human race, including archivists, simply does not want complete documentation of what really happened or to be held fully accountable. Oh, our words say otherwise, but, as always, our behavior betrays us. In fact, much energy and artifice goes into devising, then circumventing societal constraints. Life's fascinating game depends upon the interaction of human frailties. Where would virtue be without the Seven Deadly Sins? Just as the edges of an ever-expanding universe defy definition, sifting inaccurate and incomplete evidence ensures something we value much more than accountability—a continuing latitude for *judgement* in all human affairs.

Towards Archival Effectiveness

The importance of *Archival Strategies* can scarcely be overemphasized. It is to the archival enterprise what the "missing link" is to anthropology—the big breakthrough in making the archival enterprise *understandable* to society as a whole, as well as to archivists.

What David Bearman and his colleagues have accomplished is both simple and profound. Despite the many millennia of human achievements, most of which have been contingent upon documentation, the world has largely ignored recordkeeping as a critical and definable function in its own right. Rather, it was obscured, submerged within the workflow it supported. Recordkeeping processes were thus essential, but invisible, something one had to do but seldom thought about (not unlike breathing) attracting little attention until something went awry.

In the paper world, recordkeeping activities, though themselves transparent, at least created a tangible, human-readable residue—the paper document—so that we knew whether or not records existed and could evaluate their quality and integrity. However, the shift to the virtual and dynamic electronic environment created recordkeeping challenges that paper technology simply could not meet. As the paper trail of evidence began to disappear in the 1960s, concern grew over finding a suitable replacement. Should records be transferred to microfilm, optical disc, digital tape, or something yet to be devised? In the early 80s, after a decade of debate, Bearman realized that we were focusing our attention on the symptom—finding an effective carrier of records, not on the problem itself—to ensure that records were created and kept. He then shifted his investigation to identifying the processes and requirements for effective recordkeeping in any environment, but most specifically to the needs within the electronic environment. In so doing, Bearman has finally, after all these years, articulated the purpose, requirements and processes involved in recordkeeping as a whole. And, in doing so, he has given archivists/records managers a language of purpose and the conceptual raw materials and tools for building a profession.

In *Archival Methods*, Bearman set out to rediscover *the true archival enterprise* by de-constructing the best of existing theory and practice into constituent concepts and principles. After testing them rigorously to identify those of timeless validity, Bearman then renamed and re-assembled them into *Archival Strategies*, a flexible, cohesive, professional management framework, stamped with his own relentless clarity.

Indeed, *Archival Strategies'* compendium of practice contains individual "strat-

egies'' and ''tactics'' which many older generation archivists have been using within their own institutions for decades.[40] What *Archival Strategies* has done is take that next, essential step—to *systematize* and integrate them with theory to create a powerful management regime. As such, *Archival Strategies* represents the first comprehensive contribution towards what the profession has long required: *a genuine archival manifesto*—a cogent, readily consumable, stereotype-free message that can be embraced by all recordkeepers and understood by everyone concerned with ensuring the integrity and availability of evidence in society.

However, there still remains much to learn and do. As Bearman himself has said, *Archival Strategies* is not a destination, but a vehicle for a continuing and expanding journey. Strategic thinking can take us anywhere we need or want to go. Many more discourses and processes invite our involvement. Recordkeeping requirements need redefining as new information systems and technologies evolve and organizational functions change. Similarly, strategies and tactics for ensuring evidence need testing, refinement and further development within a number of environments: large and small, nuclear and distributed, personal and organizational, private and public.

Complementary documents and manuals such as *Planning for the Archival Profession* need re-casting to incorporate evolving theory and practice. Alliances need to be forged or renewed and professional development and educational programs upgraded and expanded. Certainly, our maxims, activities, and achievements should be promoted and disseminated widely, especially outside archival circles. Keeping up with new developments; adopting new attitudes, ideas and approaches in our workplaces; sharing our experiences and insights by writing, speaking, or contributing towards problem- or issues-oriented training sessions with colleagues—these are core responsibilities we must all share and incorporate into our regimens.

Above all, the ideas put forth in *Archival Strategies* should be seen for what they are—proven tools which require commitment and expertise for success. They are not fail-safe formulae or professional imperatives to be adopted indiscriminately. They are an array of possibilities to be individually assessed and chosen or rejected based on their appropriateness for a particular context. By using such tools skillfully, Bearman believes that we can successfully integrate the enduring duality of our archival responsibilities: re-constructing the past and documenting the present. However, he believes that we must begin with the latter task—taming the rampaging modern ''firehose'' blasting forth unmanageable streams of information into a life-ensuring reticulation system of recorded evidence. Effective solutions to the endemic problems of current recordkeeping are prerequisite to our professional survival and to our prospects of recovering vestiges of the past. Certainly, if Bearman's vision is realized, we will find our complex task more manageable as the new recordkeeping regimes produce their seamless outflows of

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[40]For example, in my own experience, the in-house consultancy (creating and embedding recordkeeping requirements through legislation, executive orders, and the tendering process) and ''partnering'' (agency collaboration in preparation of draft retention schedules and record center operations) aspects of *Archival Strategies* were features of the Georgia Department of Archives and History records management program in the early 1970s. Australian colleagues cite numerous instances of ideas and practices ''ahead of their time'' in *The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives First Fifty Years*, edited by Sue McKemmish and Michael Piggott (Melbourne: Ancora Press, Monash University in association with Australian Archives, 1994). Colloquially speaking, many examples contained in *Archival Strategies* are ''vintage wine'' i.e., concepts and practices that have been around and judged valid, but which are now offered in new blends and in new (or differently labeled) bottles.

"smart" documentation with self managing, self-refreshing archives.

This vision does not ensure a "once archival, always archival" cumulative human record, however. As with human memory, where aspects of both working and episodic memory make their way into and interact with long-term and semantic memory to achieve a holistic functionality, each generation will still winnow its cumulative documentary inheritance, subjectively selecting useful aspects for retention and discarding or ignoring the rest. We must learn more about the dynamic and interactive relationships among short-term, "working" archives which operate and document present society and long-term "contextual" archives with which we ultimately create and re-interpret culture.[41]

As managers of recordkeeping systems, we may work in environments which emphasize accountability or culture, but we must all comprehend the totality, interdependence, and dynamism of the *complete* enterprise. There are no clean dividing lines between "re-constructing the past" and "documenting the present," between "current," "regulatory," and "historical"

recordkeeping, or between "public" and "private" or "institutional" and "collecting" domains. All are necessary, concurrent, and ongoing facets of the same whole.

Our profession must commit itself to a continuous, rigorous review of *all* our professional tools and concepts—traditional and new—and forge those found valid into an infrastructure which understands and exploits the strengths inherent in the plurality and paradox of archival enterprise. Such an understanding is preliminary to the forging of a genuine archival *manifesto* which integrates the best of traditional and strategic approaches, concepts, principles, and practices.[42] Through *Archival Strategies*, David Bearman and his colleagues have rescued and resuscitated an ailing profession and prescribed a regimen for recovery. Now it is up to us. Individually, we must choose—to take full responsibility for our mission and professional health or to ignore the symptoms and continue on our way. I hope that each will choose wisely and responsibly; the stakes are very high, and there may not be a second chance.

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[41]David Suzuki, "Memory: Past Imperfect," in the television series *The Nature of Things* (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], 1993).

[42]This point is also an extension of the thinking expressed in Mark Brogan, "Regulation and the Market: A Micro-Economic Analysis of the Strategies for Electronic Archives Management," *Archives & Manuscripts* 22 (November 1994): 384–94 and echoes informal comments received from Barbara Reed.