

The Way Things Work: Procedures, Processes, and Institutional Records

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Abstract: This paper looks at the writings of selected organizational theorists and how they reflect or contradict diplomatic principles, particularly the concept of *genèse* or process. The potential contributions of organizational theorists to archival theory and management are discussed. Specifically, processes are examined both as standard operating procedures that can easily be articulated and as work practices that evolve over time and often defy explanation. Finally, the relationships between processes, records, and record-keeping systems are explored along with issues of accountability and organizational culture. It is argued that a more sophisticated view of organizational processes can change the interpretative context and thus alter archivists' understanding of the role of records and recordkeeping systems in organizations.

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Introduction: Diplomats and Modern Bureaucratic Organizations

RECENTLY, NORTH AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS have been examining the principles of diplomacy and speculating about how diplomatic practices could be applied to archival materials found in the bureaucracies of the late twentieth century.¹ Among their arguments is the need to reexamine the concept of *genèse*, or the genesis of documents. This would entail an analysis of modern records through a more scientific or diplomatic examination of the processes (e.g., recordkeeping practices) which led to their creation.² This line of critical inquiry asks archivists to conceptualize their work differently and is most notably demonstrated in the dichotomy between documentation and description highlighted by David Bearman.³ This shift in focus, though, could also be characterized as a broadening of the traditional concept of context through which archivists view records. Archivists who alter their perspective will focus less on administrative history and more on the detailed examination of organizational processes. This emphasis on procedures links archivists with the intellectual tradition of diplomacy as well as that of organizational theory. It is the latter discipline, that of organizational theory and its applications to modern archival records, that is the subject of this paper.

Approaching records with a view towards documentation and the explication of office routines and processes requires archivists to modify the way they now approach records. This line of inquiry changes the object of study from the records themselves, which are the basis of modern descriptive practices in the United States, to records-creating and recordkeeping processes which are a basis for an understanding of how organizations work. Using a primacy of process approach signifies a fundamentally different strategy and shifts the focus from content to context. This approach owes much to diplomacy, yet the strict diplomatic focus on an individual document is switched to the examination of the entire records-creating event and its context. Although the advent of electronic records may have been responsible for the new interest in records-creating events and recordkeeping processes, a more thorough understanding of recordkeeping processes will enhance the knowledge of records in any medium.⁴

In the past, archivists in the United States have focused more on records description. Archivists described the content of records series at a point in time, rather than as a part of any dynamic, bureaucratic system. The focus on records description has led to a series

¹Luciana Duranti's series of six articles, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science" are serialized in *Archivaria*, Part I, 28 (Summer 1989): 7-27; Part II, 29 (Winter 1989-90): 4-17; Part III, 30 (Summer 1990): 4-20; Part IV, 31 (Winter 1990-91): 10-25; Part V, 32 (Summer 1991): 6-24; and Part VI, 33 (Winter 1991-92): 6-24. Duranti's articles provide an excellent English language introduction to diplomatics and offer clear illustrations of how diplomatics might be applied to modern records. Other articles which offer suggestions for the application of diplomatics to modern records are Hugh Taylor, "'My Very Act and Deed': Some Reflections on the Role of Textual Records in the Conduct of Affairs," *American Archivist* 51 (Fall 1988): 456-69, David Bearman, "Diplomatics, Weberian Bureaucracy, and the Management of Electronic Records in Europe and America," *American Archivist* 55 (Winter 1992): 168-81, Don C. Skemer, "Diplomatics and Archives," *American Archivist* 52 (Summer 1989): 376-82, and Terry Cook, "The Concept of the Archival Fonds in the Post-Custodial Era: Theory, Problems and Solutions," *Archivaria* 35 (Spring 1993): 24-37.

²Duranti, "Diplomatics," Part IV, 11.

³David Bearman, "Documenting Documentation," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992): 33-49.

⁴Charles Dollar, *Archival Theory and Information Technologies: The Impact of Information Technologies on Archival Principles and Methods* (Macerata, Italy: University of Macerata, 1992). In the editor's preface to this volume, Otto Bucci states that "conformity with [provenance] is no longer a matter of identifying the office or agency whose activities generate the body of archival documentation in question. Conformity with the principle of provenance is now guaranteed by identification of the context in which an electronic record is created." (p. 9).

of assumptions based on static views of the structure and operations of organizations. These assumptions include a belief in an almost causal relationship between the function of a department and the types of available documentation, and a linear view of standard processes and their ensuing documentation which does not exist in today's bureaucracies and adhocracies. The formal structure and the actual operating practices often diverge in modern organizations. Greater understanding of the actual processes surrounding creation of records and intervention in the early life cycle of records by archivists are necessary in order to understand what is actually being documented.

Organizational Theory and Archives

Some archivists such as Michael Lutzker and, more recently, David Bearman argue that the analysis of organizational routines and office processes is a necessity for archivists. In the United States, however, the research in this area has been left largely to organizational theorists in schools of business administration and management and in departments of sociology and political science, who are only incidentally interested in the documentation resulting from these activities.⁵ A brief examination of the studies of documentation and recordkeeping practices provides a framework with which archivists can approach modern records. It also points to areas of archival and diplomatic concern, such as evidence, authenticity, authority, and reliability of information, which are implicitly and explicitly discussed in these studies.

The current attention of archivists to the question of documenting the context of creation mirrors recent inquiries in organizational theory. Although specific mention of the role of records is scarce in the organizational theory literature, the role of records and recordkeeping in organizations has been considered. Organizational theorists have gone from thinking about records as a means of institutionalizing organizational memory and playing a small part in the decision-making process, to viewing recordkeeping practices as a reflection of significant organizational processes, dynamics, and culture. Thus, some organizational theorists and sociologists have found that tracing methods of records creation and recordkeeping practices also provides a unique insight into organizations and a new strategy for thinking about organizations.

Records as a Mnemonic Device

In the 1950s, at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, a group which included Herbert A. Simon, Richard M. Cyert, and James G. March began to systematically study organizations. These three men shared an interest in business administration, which was the main area of Simon's studies. Cyert contributed expertise in economics, and March specialized in political science and sociology. Their particular focus was on decision making in organizations. In Simon's words, "decision making is the heart of administration."⁶ Implicit and explicit organizational functions, routine processes, and any resulting documentation are ancillary and only considered in light of their relationship to decision making. However, decision making, in their view, is not the result of a series of rational choices, but a selection of several possible choices recognized by decision

⁵Bearman, "Documenting Documentation," passim; Michael A. Lutzker, "Max Weber and the Analysis of Modern Bureaucratic Organization: Notes Toward a Theory of Appraisal," *American Archivist* 45 (Spring 1982): 119-30.

⁶Herbert A. Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, 3d ed. (New York: Free Press, 1976), xlviii.

makers at a given point in time. In this way, rationality is bounded by personal perspective, time constraints, and the information available. Decision makers must “satisfice.”⁷ In Herbert A. Simon’s classic book, *Administrative Behavior*, he states

Organizations, to a far greater extent than individuals need artificial “memories”. Practices which would have become simply habitual in the case of the individual must be recorded in manuals for the instruction of new organization members. Among the repositories which organizations may use for their information are records systems, correspondence and other files, libraries, and follow-up systems.

All these devices are familiar. They in themselves create difficult problems of organization—what types of information are to be recorded, in what manner they are to be classified and filed, the physical location of the files, and so forth; but it is hardly profitable to discuss these problems in the abstract.⁸

This is a somewhat simplistic view of the important role of operational records. While acknowledging the needs of potential users within the organization Simon does not note the evidential needs of an organization to document itself legally, financially, and administratively. In addition, he does not seem to be aware of the established principles for the organization of archival materials, specifically provenance. Simon cites the need for specific information gathering and analyzing functions within an organization, but, he does not tie this in with the archival or records management function. In the United States, many institutional archivists have become information gatherers, retrievers, and analysts. This trend is not widely acknowledged.

Cyert and March build on Simon’s work and assert that “standard operating procedures are the memory of an organization.”⁹ Cyert and March make a significant shift in their thinking here. Decision making is no longer the heart of the organization—standard procedures and routine practices are. Decision making then becomes a stethoscope, one means among many of examining the heart. Standard operating procedures consist of four areas: 1) task performance rules, 2) recordkeeping, 3) information handling rules, and 4) plans. These procedures communicate memory in different ways. The task performance rules contain knowledge of past learning and provide a basis for consistent (and acceptable limits of) behavior in the organization. According to Cyert and March, records and reports serve two purposes: control and prediction. Control is again based on the establishment of behavioral limits and the ability to monitor behavior through the reports. Prediction is a more difficult purpose to serve. It is based on the assumption that future actions can be based on past activities as interpreted from the records.

Cyert and March claim that records and reports can possibly tell much about a firm’s decision-making processes, its internal structure, and how it views the world. From an archival standpoint, however, there are several problems with these assertions. Chief among these is the problem of ambiguity later acknowledged by March. Ambiguity is the presence of multiple possible interpretations of information. Therefore, while the authenticity of documents can be ascertained, the interpretation of records (reliability) is not nearly so clear-cut. Organizational theorists are interested in the interpretation of infor-

⁷Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, xxv, 81, passim.

⁸Simon, *Administrative Behavior*, 166–67.

⁹Richard M. Cyert and James G. March, *A Behavioral Theory of the Firm* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1965), 100–1.

mation; archivists in the United States have primarily concerned themselves with the authenticity of records.

Records As Process, Recordkeeping as Culture

Records often do not adequately describe the processes from which they result. Furthermore, records are usually created with specific goals in mind (e.g., legal, administrative, fiscal), therefore many aspects of organizations are left undocumented. Harold Garfinkel is a sociologist and the originator of ethnomethodology, the study of the routine activities of organizations. In "Good Reasons for 'Bad' Clinic Records," he provides insight into record creation and recordkeeping.¹⁰ Garfinkel acknowledges that, although the records have legal and evidential properties, recordkeeping practices are also influenced by culture (e.g., the specific way an organization translates procedures into established ways of reporting). "Reporting procedures, their results, and the uses of these results are integral features of the same social orders they describe."¹¹ In spite of an organization's recordkeeping rules and regulations, records, in Garfinkel's case, clinical records, "constitute rules of reporting conduct" by their very form and the choice of information to be included.¹² Intervention in the reporting mechanisms by an archivist, records manager, or researcher, can impose a false structure "derived from the features of the reporting rather than from the events themselves."¹³ This raises an essential dilemma for Bearman, who states "documentation of organizational activity ought to begin long before records are transferred to archives . . . when it acquires a function, an organization establishes procedures for activities that will accomplish it and implements information systems to support it . . . Documenting procedures and information systems is fundamental to the management of organizations."¹⁴ Documentation of processes can easily shift to intervention if the archivist is not fully aware of the potential effects of his or her activities.

Sociologist Aaron Cicourel discusses the implications of written information in the juvenile justice system.¹⁵ His study demonstrates how only certain information received orally during interrogations and other contacts with youths is recorded differently in the two police departments under study. Written information is selected on the basis of legal requirements as well as cultural needs within the organizations. Furthermore, the correct interpretation and utilization of that information relies as much on knowledge of the culture and cultural context as on the legal and administrative impetus for their creation.¹⁶

These points are taken to the extreme in a passage by James Thompson, who approaches the study of organization from the field of business administration. Thompson cites instances of the deliberate creation of ambiguity or even falsification of records.

Distortion of organizational records is a widespread phenomenon. Frequently those receiving the reports or records are as aware of discrepancies as those making the reports, having practiced the same or similar deceptions themselves. We would ex-

¹⁰Harold Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1967), 186–207 and passim.

¹¹Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, 192.

¹²Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, 195.

¹³Garfinkel, *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, 195.

¹⁴Bearman, "Documenting Documentation," 38–39.

¹⁵Aaron V. Cicourel, *The Social Organization of Juvenile Justice* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1968).

¹⁶Cicourel, *Juvenile Justice*, 121–23.

pect “favorable biases” to appear wherever rewards are influenced by records, and alternative ways of reporting are available; we would expect other than random errors on matters which do not affect the distribution of rewards. Under some conditions individuals are induced to falsify records completely, but the more subtle and perhaps serious cases occur where estimates or judgments of accomplishments are involved. In a great many instances the outcomes of action do not fall within periods covered by organizational assessments, and one must resort to projections. In other cases, the ramifications of action are not fully determined because cause/effect understanding is incomplete. In either event, our expectation is that the individual will emphasize that evidence or estimate which resounds to his credit and will de-emphasize the damaging evidence or estimate.¹⁷

For organizational theorists, the recordkeeping practices are interpreted almost exclusively as cultural phenomena. Archivists need to temper this trend and reintroduce traditional archival filters of legal, financial, and administrative recordkeeping requirements, as well as look at how organizational culture affects records creation and documentation.

Understanding Processes and Documenting Documentation Revisited

In her series of six articles, Luciana Duranti speculates how diplomatics could be applied to modern records. Although traditional diplomatists, as described by Duranti, and organizational theorists share an interest in office routines, their perspectives differ. Diplomatists examine documents retrospectively. Pragmatically, traditional diplomatists have had only the document from which to ascertain authority, competence, and evidence. In traditional diplomatic methods, Duranti states that “procedures are revealed by the examination of forms, not by the direct observation of the procedures themselves.”¹⁸ Organizational theorists examine living organizations. Their approach is, in most cases, at least partly observational. As a result, there is a very different emphasis on how organizations, and in particular the office routines which for the context of records creation or the *genèse*, are viewed. Furthermore, organizational theorists and sociologists have the opportunity to consider the role of organizational culture as a contributing factor in determining what information is collected and how it is recorded. With modern records, archivists, too, have the opportunity to examine records, and, more importantly, recordkeeping systems, *in situ*, in the office setting. The advantages of this have not been emphasized sufficiently nor has the significance of this opportunity been explored by archivists.

The application of diplomatics to modern documentation is problematic. The causal relationship between means and ends, organizational activities and form, is less straightforward. Duranti delineates the more complex problems which arise when dealing with modern records and their relationship to stated procedures.

This direct examination and identification of purpose reveals another difference between the medieval and the modern worlds: whereas in the medieval context, each given documentary form was the result of one specific procedure and aimed at one

¹⁷James D. Thompson, *Organizations in Action: Social Science Bases of Administrative Theory* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), 124.

¹⁸Duranti, “Diplomatics,” Part III, 18.

specific purpose, in the modern context, procedures which are different, not as to their structure, but as to their purpose, may create the same documentary forms; and, vice-versa, procedures having the same purpose may produce different documentary forms.¹⁹

Given this fact, can we continue to analyze procedures primarily according to the form of the product or the logistical placement of the office? Unlike modern documents, "each medieval document contained the whole transaction generating it."²⁰ Signs and/or signatures of the scribes, registrars, daters, and the creator/grantor of an act all appear on each document.²¹ Today, the process is rarely revealed in the document itself, but rather in the records-creating processes which generate fonds. Organizational theorists observe processes to determine what is really going on. For organizational theorists the documentation resulting from many processes must also be interpreted because processes themselves are dynamic and changing. While the records resulting from a process may be static, their meaning is not self-evident. This is far from the positivistic view of diplomatists on the relationship between an action and a document.

Lucy Suchman, an anthropologist and organizational researcher at the Xerox Corporation's Palo Alto Research Center, takes this argument a step further.²² Suchman disputes what she terms the "procedural paradigm," and argues that "the procedural structure of organizational activities is the *product* of the orderly work of the office, rather than the reflection of some enduring structure that stands behind that work."²³ Suchman notes that office procedures have "stubbornly ambiguous properties" and that their meaning is not always self-evident. Furthermore, the artifacts of office procedures, i.e., records, also cannot be taken at face value. "Standard procedure is constituted by the generation of orderly records. This does not mean, however, that orderly records are the result, or outcome, of some prescribed sequence of steps . . . Standard procedures are formulated in the interest of what things should come to, and not necessarily how they should arrive there . . . This is not to say that workers 'fake' the appearance of orderliness in the records. Rather, it is the orderliness that they construct in the record that constitutes accountability to the office procedures."²⁴

Duranti also finds it necessary for any modern diplomatics to address the complexities of office procedure. She quotes Gérard and Christine Naud at length. "It is for this same reason that we have to find a solution that allows us to place the action from which the described unit results in the context of a more general action, that is, of the mission or characteristic in virtue of which the transferring administration acted."²⁵

These notions of processes are imbedded in the early work of March and Simon, who recognized that determining the scope of actions or processes is difficult.

¹⁹Duranti, "Diplomatics," Part IV, 21.

²⁰Duranti, "Diplomatics," Part IV, 14.

²¹The best example of this is Leonard E. Boyle's outline of the expedition procedure for a papal supplication in his book *A Survey of the Vatican Archives and Its Medieval Holdings* (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1992), 149–51.

²²Lucy Suchman, "Office Procedures as Practical Action: Model of Work and System Design," *ACM Transactions on Office Information Systems*, 1 (October 1983): 320–28.

²³Suchman, "Office Procedures as Practical Action," 321 (emphasis in original).

²⁴Suchman, "Office Procedures as Practical Action," 326–27.

²⁵Duranti, "Diplomatics," Part IV, 17.

Similarity of process appears to mean similarity with respect to skills employed, knowledge employed, information employed, and equipment employed. Hence, to classify activities by process, we need a whole series of propositions with respect to what kinds of "similarities" are relevant . . . It might be possible to show that there is only one logically consistent way of analyzing the means-ends connections of a set of activities. Unfortunately, this is almost certainly not the case.²⁶

In actuality, the reality of standard operating procedures is far from the version presented in organizational manuals. If we are to truly understand the resulting documentation, records must be represented in a context of complexity and flux.

The Interpretation of Processes, Standard Operating Procedures, and Recordkeeping Practices

European diplomatists draw a clear line between providing contextual information concerning documents and interpreting the documents themselves. They do not see the latter as the role of the diplomatist. However, can the line between documentation and interpretation be drawn so boldly? Is not the definition of context an interpretation in and of itself? Boyle takes a broader view of diplomatics which encompasses interpretation.

The records which are the material objects of the discipline of diplomatics were devised, composed, and written for purposes of entering into communication. And it is because they communicate something that they were and are preserved . . . and it is because they are still capable of communication that they are examined, transcribed, edited, studied. . . . Since documents were made for communication, then the first task of anyone reading them, whether professional diplomatist or not, is to make them communicate once again. . . . To profess to be concerned only with forms and formulae is to deny their nature. The forms and formulae were designed the better to preserve the burden of the document. They cannot be divorced from the central reality without losing their identity, though, of course, they may profitably be considered in their own right for a better understanding of the whole.²⁷

The works by Simon, Cyert and March, Thompson, Garfinkel, Cicourel, and Suchman, among others, treat records as evidence of organizational processes in a historical or anthropological sense, rather than as evidence of transactions in a diplomatic sense. In doing so, they highlight archival and diplomatic concerns in non-archival terminology. These works implicitly discuss the difference between authenticity of documentation and reliability of the information. Authenticity concerns the authority of the writer to create or alter records in a given system or organization. Reliability concerns the interpretation of information, not only if the information is correct or not, but also how the information is interpreted under conditions of ambiguity. Interpretation relies on knowledge of the organizational authority, records-creating and recordkeeping processes, and functions which necessitated the creation of specific records. Yet, interpretation also requires an understanding of the organizational culture and the internal importance, value, and meaning of that

²⁶James G. March and Herbert A. Simon, *Organizations* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1958), 31.

²⁷Leonard E. Boyle, "Diplomatics," in *Medieval Studies: An Introduction*, edited by James M. Powell (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 90.

information. Currently, archivists in the United States routinely provide users with a historical context in the scope and contents notes of finding aids. Is it not time to provide a much broader interpretative context for users which acknowledges the organization dynamics in which the records were created?

The necessity of interpretation and the complexity of the ties between the purpose, procedures, functions, and forms are apparent. The exploration of record-creating and recordkeeping practices also requires interpretation and is not necessarily clear-cut. This is well illustrated in Martha Feldman's work, *Order Without Design*.²⁸ Feldman, a political scientist and a student of March, studied bureaucratic analysts in the Department of Energy (DOE) in Washington, D.C. In her eighteen-month study as a participant/observer, she came to understand both the procedures and the purposes of the analysts' work. On the surface, the bureaucratic analysts (whether classified as policy analysts, program analysts, regulatory analysts, or general counsel representatives), write reports which lead to policy decisions. In fact, the development of these reports is rarely connected to an actual policy decision. The true point of these reports is neither to inform policy decisions nor to maintain current information on issues.²⁹ Rather, "requests for reports serve to initiate the updating of an agreement" either within DOE or between agencies.³⁰

The DOE's bureaucratic analysts follow a standard procedure for developing reports which can be clearly delineated. Once it has been decided that a report is necessary, the stakeholders in the report are identified (either within or outside the DOE). The stakeholders determine who will research and write which parts of the report. After the first draft, all the stakeholders review the document and either sign off on the parts they approve or refuse to approve sections which do not reflect their concerns. Each stage of the report generation process results in another version of the report and a series of comments from the concerned parties.

The situation described by Feldman is hardly unique in modern bureaucracies. While one could argue that there still are many procedures or functions which result in formalized documents such as driver's licenses or voter registration cards, much of the documentation generated in modern organizations does not have a predictable relationship to a function or, more importantly, the point of the actions which generated the document cannot be so readily deduced from the document itself.

M.D. Baccus examines some of the other problems inherent in the interpretation, applicability, and results of procedures.³¹ One would imagine that the technical procedure for mounting multipiece truck wheels would be more straightforward than the report-generating procedures described by Feldman. Yet, Baccus's account illustrates important contextual elements which should be noted when studying procedures, such as how governmental oversight agencies, such as the National Highway Transportation Safety Administration and Occupational Safety and Health Administration, view their participation in the regulatory process.

Although Duranti argues that the science of diplomatics focuses on the determination of generalizable elements in a procedure, understanding the documentation at hand nec-

²⁸Martha S. Feldman, *Order Without Design: Information Production and Policy Making* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1989).

²⁹Feldman, *Order Without Design*, 38–50.

³⁰Feldman, *Order Without Design*, 37.

³¹M.D. Baccus, "Multipiece Truck Wheel Accidents," in *Ethnomethodological Studies of Work*, edited by Harold Garfinkel (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1986), 20–59.

essarily involves a recognition that these elements are not linear and can be affected by a specific organizational culture which influences records creation and recordkeeping practices. Baccus points out that a procedure is often phrased in a linear, rational manner which implies that there is only one possible consequence for that given set of actions. Duranti's depiction of procedural steps also implies predictable consequences at each stage. The results of the studies by Suchman and Baccus imply that a predictable, causal relationship between procedures and records cannot be assumed.

Conclusion

The studies of modern bureaucratic organizations cited in this paper reveal that observation of office routines and analysis of recordkeeping practices is essential for an understanding of the resulting documentation. Bearman provides some insight into this point. "In short, documentation of the three aspects of records creation contexts (activities, organizations and their functions, and information systems), together with representation of their relations, is essential to the concept of archives as evidence and is therefore a fundamental theoretical principle for documenting documentation The primary source of information is the functions and information systems giving rise to the records."³²

Bearman continues that "the principle activity of the archivist is the manipulation of data for reference files."³³ Two ideas are implicit in Bearman's argument. First, the development of manipulative tools is based on intelligent choices, examination of the organization, analysis, and interpretation of the documentation by archivists. Second, archivists must choose to be the documentors of documentation or they will become merely retrievers of data. "Documentation of organizational activity ought to begin long before records are transferred to archives, and may take place even before any records are created—at the time when new functions are assigned to an organization."³⁴ To survive in the new world outlined by Bearman, archivists will have to become interpreters and analyzers of information.

For many years, archivists have tried to provide an interpretative context for records users without interpreting the records, the records-creating processes, the administrative history, or the records themselves. However, it is perhaps time to revisit the question of the role of archivists as interpreters of information. Can these tasks be done without interpretation, induction, deduction, and educated inferences? Although our French colleagues may disagree, with the advent of electronic records, the continued onslaught of overabundant documentation, and the call from administrators who want only the best information, not all the information, it is time to re-evaluate the role of the archivist vis-à-vis the information provided. Archivists already make interpretative choices through collection development policies, appraisal practices, and in the conclusions reached concerning recordkeeping practices and their relationship to the functions of an organization. The manner by which archivists make interpretative choices must receive greater acknowledgment and consideration.

Clearly, archivists are not the only ones interested in recordkeeping practices, information flow, and office routines. This paper has brought together different perspectives on

³²Bearman, "Documenting Documentation," 41.

³³Bearman, "Documenting Documentation," 41.

³⁴Bearman, "Documenting Documentation," 39. Bearman continues by arguing for more interaction between archivists and records managers.

organizational procedures, functions, and the creation and use of information from the fields of diplomatics, archives, organizational theory, and sociology. The perspectives on organizational theory all originate in the United States and therefore arise out of a specific modern bureaucratic landscape. However, all organizational theorists would undoubtedly cite Max Weber as a seminal writer in the area of organizational theory and more or less agree that "the management of the modern office is based upon written documents (the 'files'.)"³⁵ Furthermore, these studies provide archivists with different ways of looking at organizations and new tools for thinking about analyzing and interpreting the documentation at hand. Finally, the literature discussed in this article demonstrates that there are other professions with similar concerns which can provide archivists with important research results to follow and debate.

³⁵Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, edited by Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley: University of California, 1978), 957.