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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ARCHIVAL AGENCIES AND LIBRARIES¹

I APPEAR on your program through tolerance rather than through right since, by training and experience, I am what is loosely called a humanist, and more loosely, I expect, a librarian. Since, however, I act in an administrative capacity in an institution concerned in handling both archival and library material, I am presumed to have some knowledge of problems common to both, and it is on this presumption, perhaps, that I have been asked to talk to you concerning the relationship between librarians and archivists. In order to be impersonal, however, I am going to limit my discussion, in theory, to the relationship between archival agencies and libraries.

Despite the fact that I have many friends in this group, and despite the fact that I consider the growth of your association to be one of the significant facts of scholarship in the last decade, I will be disappointed if I do not succeed in raising questions in your mind before I am through, for I am in disagreement with many limitations you have imposed upon yourself, and this is my first opportunity to tell you why. If I offend, please believe, however, that, even as Peter Quince, I do so only with my right good will.

I first wish to speak of what seems to me to be the indissoluble connection between archival agencies and libraries, a connection that cannot be severed without grave danger. It is of course true that a library can exist without being an archival agency, but likewise it is true that no archival collection serves a useful purpose unless there is a library to supplement it. When an archival agency is not affiliated with a library, it must attempt to build one up within its own walls, a task which many times it is not prepared to undertake. The fact that libraries and archival agencies must co-exist in close relationship to be useful would seem much too obvious to argue, but I think that there is a definite lack of understanding that this is so, a lack of

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understanding largely stemming from the fact that archivists are loath to admit the change that takes place in material in that period in which the material loses the immediate purpose for which it was created, and becomes what is usually termed a noncurrent record.

When a group of noncurrent records reaches an archival agency for custody, it is not the common thing for it again to be referred to for its record status. To be sure such references are made, but mainly to well established series of prime legal importance. The larger part of the collection becomes, however, a body of source material held for its educational value to posterity. The older the record becomes, the more true this statement. When its value as a record is replaced by its value as a piece of subject information, it is very definitely open to question whether such material should be filed and housed in the order in which received or even with material from the same agency of file. *Respect pour les fonds* under these conditions may become a serious impediment to the use and hence to the value of the record, and frequently blocks the way to subject approach. I am sure that you will agree with me when I say that the fond frequently cannot be adequately determined in cases where the office of filing was an improvisation to meet an unusual need at the time of filing. This is not to say that all archival series should be ignored for the purpose of arrangement and cataloguing in any archival agency, but it is to emphasize the fact that there must be a subject approach to archival material if it is to warrant the effort to keep it. The question of how archival collections are to be arranged is merely a question of how they can be made most useful.

The fact that most inquiries to an archival agency ask for specific subject information is, then, the main reason why an archival agency must co-exist with an adequate library. In the realm of my own experience, it has been demonstrated over and over that inquiries must be referred to both our archives division and our general library division in order to be answered properly. The answer that either might give alone would often be far from complete. Since the printed source and the archival source supplement each other and must be used in conjunction, it is reasonable to assume that the approach to both classes of material should have a similarity, which in turn means that the arrangement of both classes of material should be as nearly alike as possible. This, of course, does not mean that a library classification may be laid down over an archival collection, or that library

cataloguing can be used without modification, but it does mean that many library practices are both useful and necessary in the administration of archival collections.

Since the dictionary card catalogue has been widely accepted in both library and archival agencies, there is no question, I believe, that its use represents the best practice. Furthermore, there can be little doubt that author entry and office of file entry, as different as they are in certain ways, are the best approach to the two types of material. The latter is used widely both for archival and printed material and is not a peculiarity of archival cataloguing. Printed bibliographies of both state and federal documents would bear examination as to the principles that have there been followed. There is, however, one field of library practice that is less familiar, perhaps, to archivists than any other field, the technique of which would make profitable studying. This is the field of serial cataloguing.

What you as archivists term series are closely approximated by what a librarian terms a serial or continuation which is represented in its most simple form by a file of magazines. The handling of this material by libraries has in recent years been the object of close study, and substantial contributions have been made to existing systems of recording and filing. The archival series, with its continuing file of papers, reports, documents, and correspondence from or to an agency and its subdivisions, with its varied problems of transfer of function from agency to agency has its duplicate problem in the field of serials with all their vagaries of sub-serials, irregularities of publication, and change of corporate author and title. So closely may the parallel between the two be drawn, particularly in the field of government documents, that a course in library serial recording would doubtless be of much value to the archivist. Library practice in the drawing of analytical cards whereby serials are broken down into their component parts, whether these be monographic or sub-serial in character, makes use of precisely the same techniques as an archivist needs in order to list properly the component parts of an archival series, and provides further a framework of tested principles which should not be disregarded.

When it is realized that archival material, in general, consists of documents which have escaped the accident of publication, and that any archival series, after printing, may be catalogued by libraries without difficulty, the relationship between the handling of printed

books and archives becomes more apparent. The middle ground of the printed government document, which may be claimed with equal propriety by both the librarian and the archivist as an integral part of their collections, is one of the best arguments I know for a close relationship between the two agencies, and the prevention of needless overlapping and duplication. The theory that there exists a necessity, stronger in archival cataloguing than in library cataloguing, for setting out the full history of agencies and their transfer of functions is, I believe, untenable. Library cataloguing, while allowed certain short cuts, must always trace the full history of an agency on its authority cards, if it is to approach cataloguing intelligently. The library which houses and catalogues the documents of a government is, consequently, a better source for the history and development of that government than a sister archival agency where cataloguing is undeveloped.

In the field of classification there likewise exists, or should exist, a close similarity between library and archival practice. Subject classification for libraries is, of course, a relatively modern invention and not without certain disadvantages in a complex collection. In the field of the printed serial concerned with a variety of widely divergent matter, subject classification can hardly be said to exist. As far as I know, subject classification for archival material has never had an open advocate. All classification is, however, primarily a finding medium and secondarily a subject arrangement. Given any classification, comprehensive in nature and capable of expansion, the full demand of the enquirer may be met if that collection has an adequate subject approach. An archival classification scheme must be made independently for every archival agency just as a library classification scheme must be expanded independently for every library making a full collection of printed documents. It seems to me a matter of small consequence whether archivists or librarians study any particular scheme of classification if they have a thorough familiarity with methods of evolving and expanding schemes in general. Here they are both concerned with the same principles, and here both may learn from the same sources.

The printed document is, of course, not the only point where archival and library collections overlap in such a manner as to make their integration necessary. Every archival collection has within its files a variety of printed material largely made up of enclosures and

exhibits. Frequently they comprehend exceedingly valuable and even unique pieces which are bibliographically and historically of the greatest importance. Their frequent absence from library collections makes it necessary that they be made available to the scholar. If they are not to be removed from the archival group of which they form a functional part, the archivist is faced with the necessity of making a description of them and their location. Because of their importance, such a description should be correctly and efficiently made, which presupposes, on the part of the archivist, a detailed knowledge of bibliographical technique. These items comprise not only broadsides, but pamphlets, maps, newspapers and books, and, in some cases, are so extensive that where a library and an archival agency exist as part of the same institution it seems reasonable to allow the archives to have control of all material of a similar group regardless of its original archival character.

Let us suppose, for example, that a state archival agency and a library are administered as a unit, and that this unit owns a large collection of important private papers and manuscripts. It would be absurd under such conditions to set up separately a manuscript division to handle this material and deny its housing to the archival division because it was strictly not of state archival character. Even if the archival agency existed as a separate institution, it could hardly refuse to accept such a collection. Again in this modern period of photography the question of certified records is a case in point. It seems doubtful that an archival agency would refuse to house the photographic copies of archival records even if the government of which it was a part had no law allowing their admission in legal matters as evidence. If they made such an acceptance, they could hardly be expected to refuse admission to copies of other material of a more limited archival nature. These cases may be expanded and multiplied to such a degree that I do not believe it possible for anyone to contend logically that an archival agency must remain solely the custodian of official records. To maintain dogmatically such an attitude is to stultify both the material and the institution. Even as the archival agency houses printed material not created as archives but attached as archival exhibits, so it must also house material with no official archival status. To exist merely as a depository of limited scope is to hinder and not to expedite the use of any records which may be preserved.

By reason of this, it seems to me that there are certain things which an archivist should not be, and certain things which have no place in archival training. I do not believe that an archivist should be either a social scientist or a history professor on vacation. That he should have what has been termed the "historical approach" is correct, but this approach is the common property of all scholars. Further I do not believe that the archivist should be a statistician, a museum curator, or even a glorified clerk of a court of record. This, of course, is not to deny that those who follow any of these professions might not become exceptional archivists with the necessary additional training. I do believe, however, that an archivist should be an administrative official in the broad field of education, subject minded, with a technical training in the fields of records and record making, as well as a sound basic training in the principles of cataloguing and bibliography. Essentially, he is, even as the librarian, a custodian of knowledge and not of records.

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