PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESS

The Society: From Birth to Maturity

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Abstract

The author takes a statistical "snapshot" of the Society of American Archivists at three different periods in its history—each separated by twenty-five years—to illustrate the continuity and changes that have occurred. For the years 1940, 1965, and 1990, the author examines the composition of the Society's membership, its leadership, its scholarly journal, its annual meetings, and the perspective of its presidents. The article concludes with some comparisons with allied professional organizations, such as the American Library Association, the American Historical Association, and the Organization of American Historians, placing the Society's experience in a larger context. A briefer version of this article was delivered 28 August 1997 as the author's presidential address at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists held in Chicago.

Introduction

At last year's meeting in San Diego, I highlighted the changes before us and suggested how we might respond—as archivists and members of the Society.[1] The short year that a president has to influence the Society's development convinces me that it is much easier to recognize the

[1] Nicholas C. Burckel, "Archivists Facing the Millennium: Preparing for an Unknown—but not Unknowable—Future," 31 August 1996, Sixtieth Annual Meeting, Society of American Archivists, San Diego, California, published as an insert in the January 1997 issue of *Archival Outlook.*

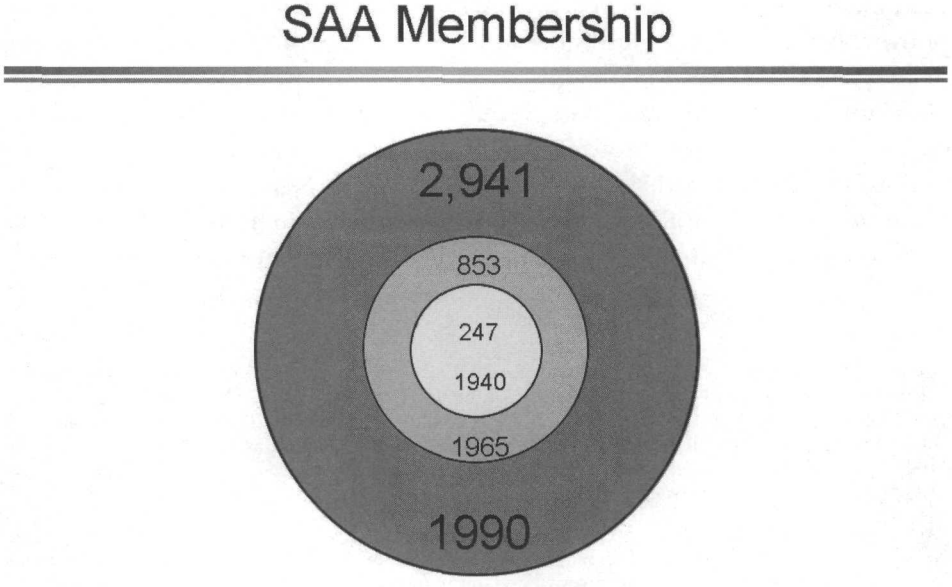
In preparing this address, the author had the generous assistance of a number of colleagues: Marquette University graduate student Jeff Steely was especially diligent in locating essential information from among myriad sources; J. Frank Cook worked with the author to locate needed information in the Society's archives at the University of Wisconsin, Madison; Steve Masar (UW, Madison) and John LeDoux (Marquette University) assisted with scanning and transferring files; and Bill Schulz provided graphic enhancements. Frank Cook, Marquette University Archivist Charles B. Elston, and the author's wife Lenore read and critiqued earlier versions of the text.

challenges and prescribe the solutions than to implement them. Rather than offer further hortatory remarks, therefore, I thought I might instead share with you how the Society has changed over its sixty years. Some of that change has come from outside the Society, some as a result of conscious decisions from within about our membership, leadership, research agenda, and financing. Those changes suggest to me that we are capable of responding to today's challenges and should not be overwhelmed by them. Last year I looked to the coming millennium; now I'd like to look at where we've been.

A thorough examination of the Society's evolution requires more time than is available for this address. For those interested in our history, I commend Frank Cook's excellent presidential address, "The Blessings of Providence on an Association of Archivists."[2] I will present a more eclectic approach—focusing on different points in the Society's history that reflect its evolution. I chose to take three "snapshots" of the Society—each separated by twenty-five years—to examine a number of variables. The composite of those variables shows a Society at three distinct stages of development analogous to human growth—childhood (1940), youth (1965), and maturity (1990).

SAA Membership

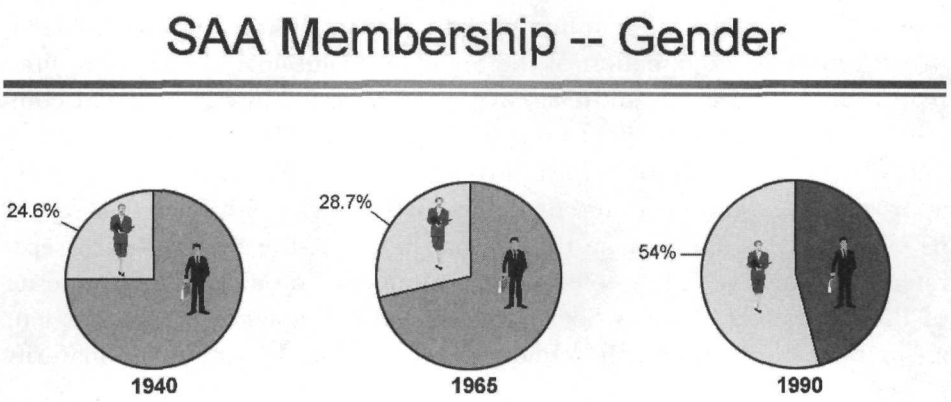
Four years after its founding, the Society had fewer than 250 members; twenty-five years later that number had increased three-and-a-half times, and by 1990 it had grown by an almost identical percentage to nearly three thousand members. In the fifty-year period from 1940 to 1990, the Society had



[2] J. Frank Cook, "The Blessings of Providence on an Association of Archivists," *American Archivist* 46 (Fall 1983): 374–99.

increased nearly twelve-fold. Since then our membership size has been relatively constant.[3]

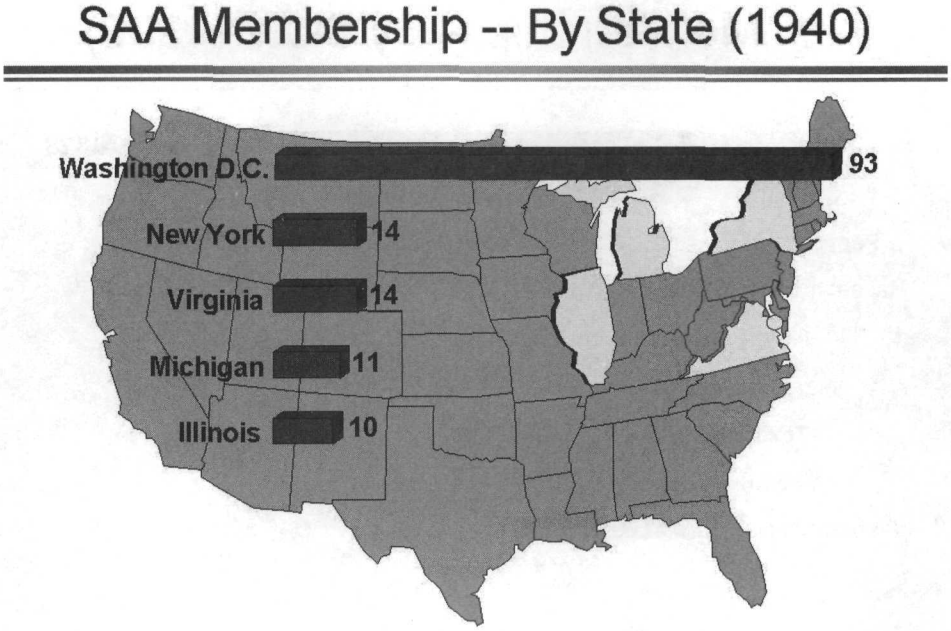
During that same period the composition of the membership became more diverse. In those early years slightly less than 25 percent were women, a figure that had increased by only 4 percentage points twenty-five years later. But by 1990 that figure had risen dramatically to 54 percent.[4]

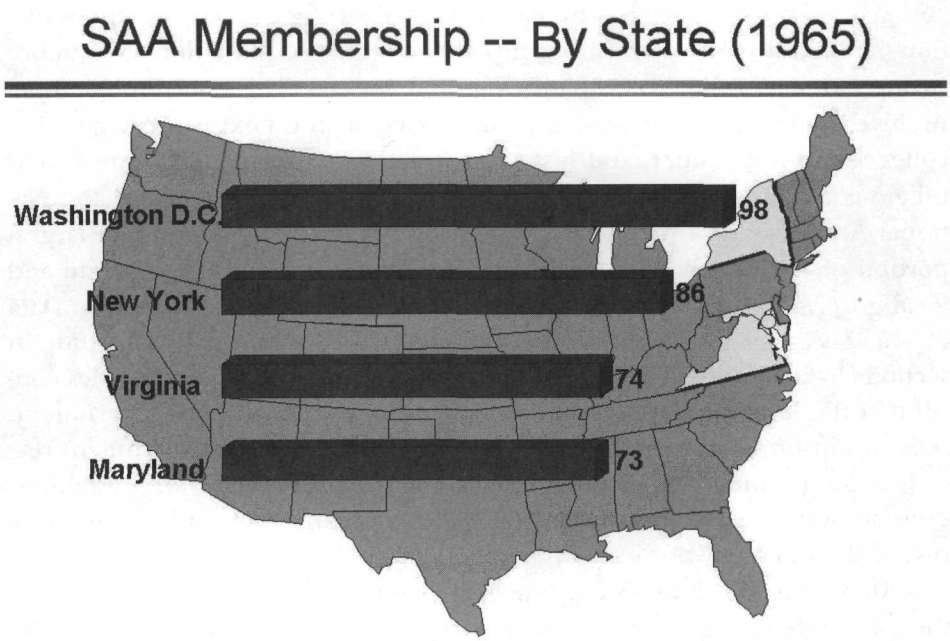


In 1940 the District of Columbia accounted for the largest number of SAA members—nearly one hundred—reflecting the early dominance of the National Archives. The next four states combined—New York, Virginia, Michigan, and Illinois—equaled only about half of the members from the District of Columbia. Ten states had no members. This pattern changed only slightly over the next twenty-five years. In 1965 the District of Columbia still represented the largest number of members, but the number had increased only marginally. New York, however, had increased six-fold and Virginia by a factor of five. Maryland displaced Illinois and Michigan for the next highest number of members. A closer look at this suggests that a significant number of the Maryland and Virginia members were, in fact, employed by the National Archives. Four states were not represented in the Society. By 1990 the distribution of members had shifted more substantially. New York had over three hundred members, followed by California, Pennsylvania, Massachusetts, Illinois, Maryland, Texas, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. All states were

[3] Actual figures for each year: 1940 (247 members), 1965 (853 members), and 1990 (2,941 individual members). Society membership at the end of June 1997 stood at 3,145. Membership information for 1940 was taken from the December 15, 1939, mailing list in Series 200/3/2, Box 2, Folder 25 of SAA Archives, University of Wisconsin, Madison (hereinafter cited as SAA Archives). Data for 1965 was taken from the *Biographical Directory of the Society of American Archivists, 1965*, and data for 1990 was taken from *SAA Yellow Pages*, 1990.

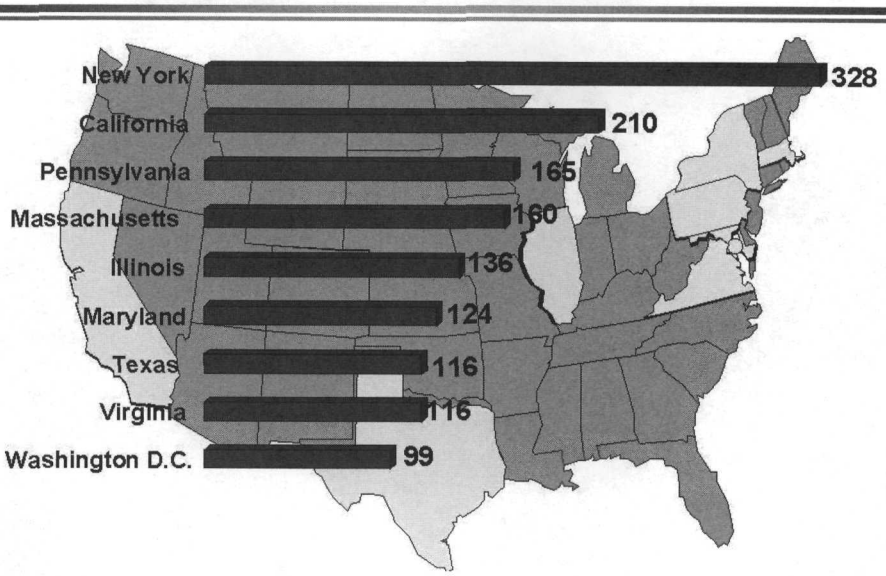
[4] Actual percentages for each year: 1940 (24.6%), 1965 (28.7%), and 1990 (54.0%). Directory information does not specify gender. Calculations are based on the author's knowledge of the individuals or his best guess on the gender in cases where the name may be ambiguous.





represented, and there was a large number of members from Canada and European countries. The Society had become a worldwide organization.[5]

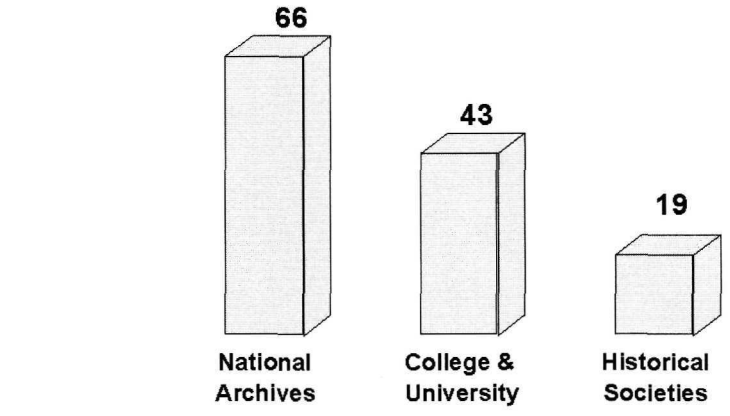
[5] Directory information did not always distinguish between business and home addresses. The author was more interested in which states archivists worked in than in where they lived. Examining this data in conjunction with institutional affiliation provides a more complete picture.

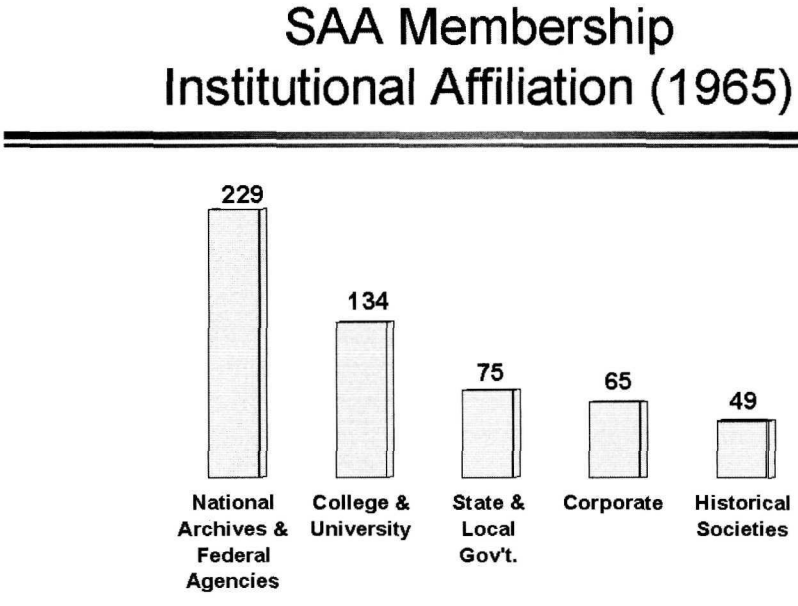


While SAA membership by state reflected strong East Coast representation in the early years, membership by institutional affiliation even more strongly reflected the role of the National Archives. In 1940 the National Archives had as many members in the Society as the next two categories—colleges and universities, and historical societies—combined. Corporate and religious archives were almost nonexistent. Twenty-five years later the National Archives and other federal agencies again accounted for the largest portion of the membership, followed by colleges and universities, state and local government archives, corporate archives, and historical societies. Data for 1990 is easier to categorize because members reported their affiliation in sections by institutional employer. By that time colleges and universities constituted the largest group, followed by manuscript repositories, government, religious institutions, business, and museums. In all but the government records section, women represent a majority of members. The split was almost even among colleges and universities. As noted earlier, overall, women represented 54 percent of the total membership in 1990.[6]

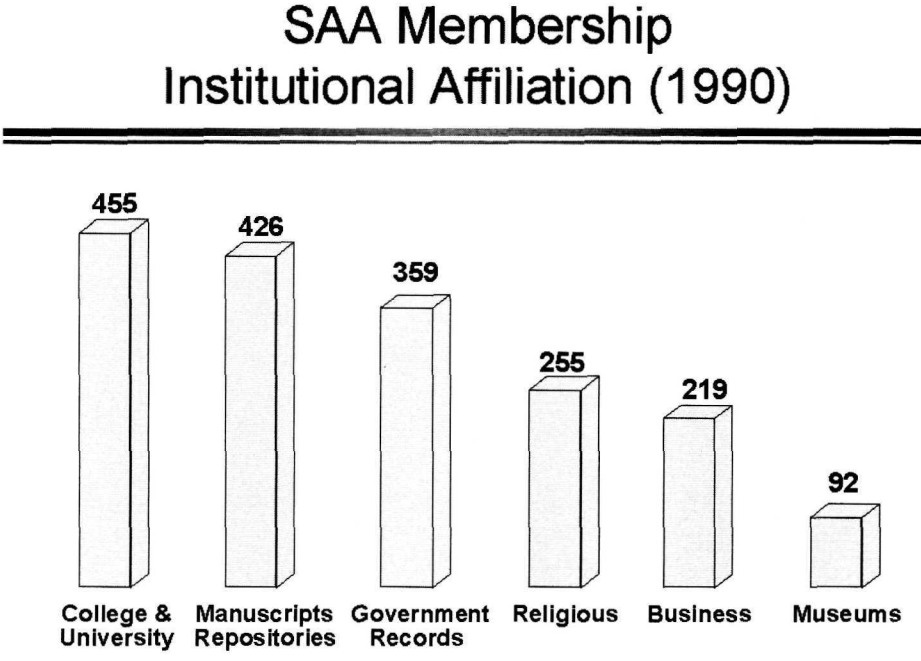
Men from the East Coast, especially from the National Archives, were the backbone of the Society from its formative years well into the 1960s. By 1990 the membership profile had shifted, reflecting three trends: (1) women constituted a majority, (2) the largest growth occurred in the Midwest and

[6] Actual numbers for each category are provided in the bar graphs. The numbers for each year do not equal the total membership numbers because it was not always possible to determine the type of employer or to include categories for all types of employers. The 1990 data assumes that members who selected an institutional section (e.g., college and university) were also reflecting their institutional affiliation.





California, and (3) college and university archivists displaced government archivists as the largest group within the Society. The formation in 1974 of the National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators (NASARA, which was changed in 1984 to NAGARA) either contributed to the loss of dominance of government archivists, or, perhaps, reflected their loss of influence and their desire to establish a separate organization that better met their needs. NAGARA is an institutionally based organization represent-



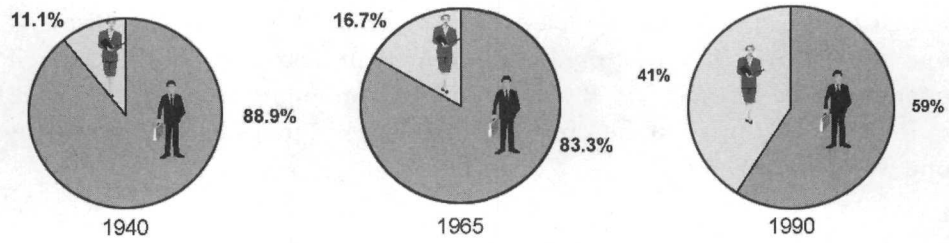
ing the National Archives and Records Administration, nearly every state in the Union, and approximately 250 local government units. Clearly the incredible growth in the 1960s of higher education contributed to the emergence and then prominence of college and university archivists in the Society. One survey reflected that, by 1980, employees of colleges and universities constituted nearly 40 percent of the membership.[7] The sharp increase in women in the field may be accounted for by an increasing number of new members entering the profession from a library science, rather than a history background. Women are overwhelmingly represented in librarianship.[8] More women than men are graduating from college, further increasing the pool of potential female archivists.

SAA Leadership (Council & Officers)

Changes in the composition of the Society's leadership clearly reflect how the Society itself has changed over this fifty-year period. The nine-member Council of 1940 had only one woman and no minorities. By 1965, the size of the Council had grown to twelve, two of whom were women, but there were

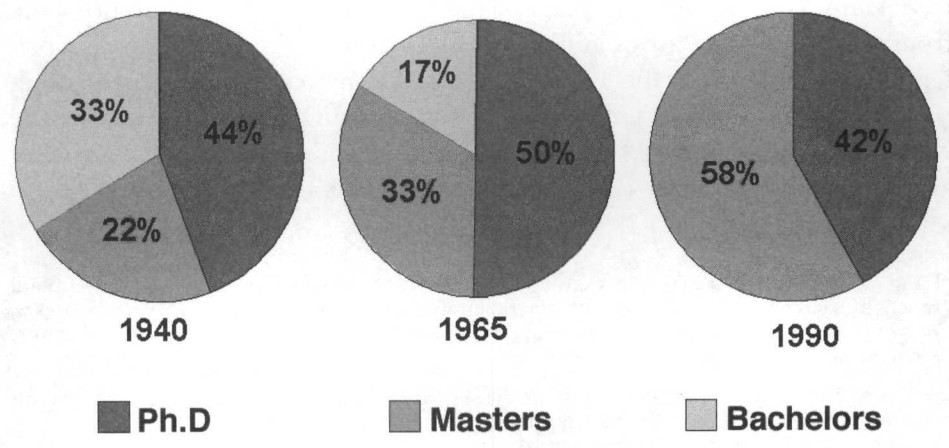
[7] Mabel E. Deutrich and Ben DeWhitt, "Survey of the Archival Profession—1979," *American Archivist* 43 (Fall 1980): 532.

[8] Although the American Library Association does not publish membership data by gender, a sampling of individual members listed in the *Handbook of Organization and Membership Directory, 1990/91,* indicates that approximately 70 percent of ALA members are women.



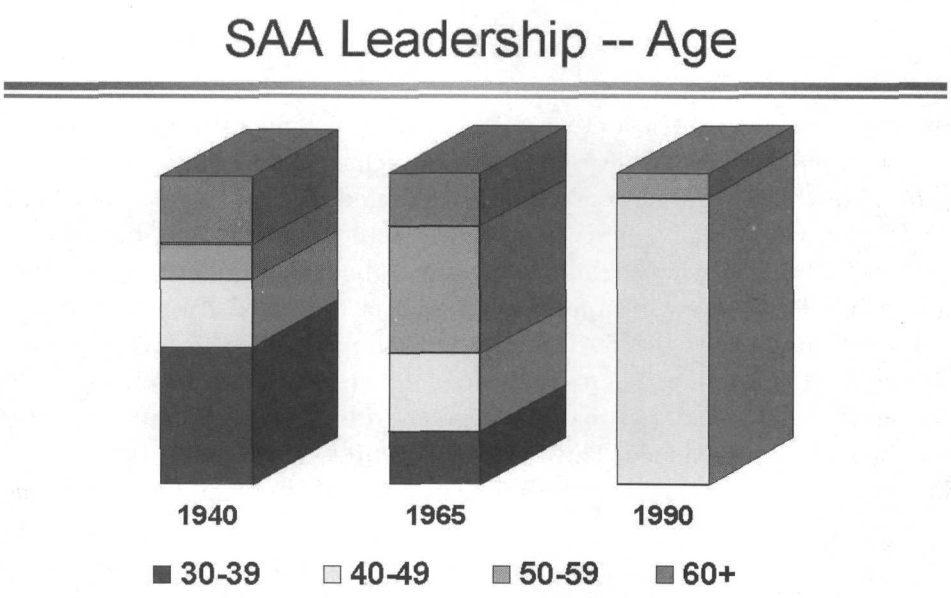
still no minorities. By the beginning of this decade, the change was dramatic—five of the twelve members were women; an additional member was a minority.

The gender shift is only one measure of change. The educational background of the Society's leaders has also changed. In 1940, 44 percent held Ph.D.s and virtually all Councilors' degrees were in history. By 1965 the percent of Ph.D.s had risen slightly (50 percent), but the number of those with a master's degree grew from less than a quarter to a third. Twenty-five years later, the number of the Society's leaders who possessed a doctorate had declined, while those with a master's degree increased dramatically to nearly 60 percent. Some held dual master's degrees, with a growing number holding a master of library science. Thus while the trend is increasingly toward post-baccalaureate professional education, especially in schools of library and in-



formation science, the Ph.D. in any field has declined in importance for membership on Council.[9]

As the size of the Society has grown, the age of those in leadership positions has dropped, meaning that members are moving into leadership positions at an earlier age and stage of their careers. This has important implications as the profession matures and membership growth stabilizes. As one might expect in a new organization, in 1940 nearly half of the Council members were in their 30s. By 1965 the largest number of Councilors were in their 50s, but by 1990 the range of ages clustered in a single area—all but one were in their 40s.[10]

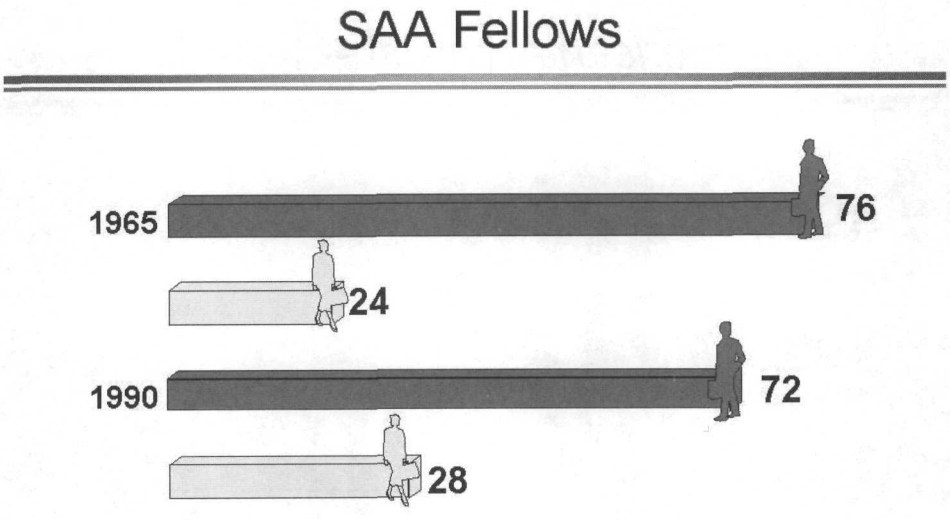


Just as age, educational attainment, and gender have changed over these fifty years, so too has the type of employing institution represented by our leadership. During the early years of the Society, leadership came primarily from the National Archives and state historical societies and archives, a pattern that persisted into the 1960s. By the 1990s, however, those representing colleges and universities emerged as the largest single unit, followed by the National Archives and Records Administration and state historical societies and archives. A category not represented in 1940—consultants—was represented in both 1965 and 1990.

[9] Information on the educational background of SAA officers and council members came from a variety of sources, including candidate biographical sketches accompanying the election packet, *Biographical Directory of the Society of American Archivists 1965*, and various editions of the *Directory of American Scholars* and *Who's Who in America*.

[10] When date of birth was not provided, but college graduation date was available, the date of birth was calculated by subtracting 22 years from the graduation date.

Yet another way to show the changes in the Society's leadership is to look at those who have been selected as Fellows, the highest honor the Society bestows on a small number of its members. In 1958 the Society began naming Fellows for all past years, and then selecting a few each year to join the original group. By 1965 eighty SAA members were also Fellows—more than three-fourths were men. By 1990 the number of Fellows had grown to over one hundred, but the percentage of women grew by only 4 percentage points to 28 percent. If one looks only at those elected Fellow in the twenty-five-year period between 1965 and 1990, the number of women rises to nearly a third. Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia accounted for roughly half of the Fellows in 1965, most coming from the National Archives.[11]



Viewed from today's perspective of accelerating change, these fifty years represent more evolution than revolution. And yet, the changes are significant for the trends they reflect. The profession has evolved from its early historical roots to a more educationally, ethnically, and sexually diverse group with younger leadership.[12] While the Society has not reached its full potential, its growth has slowed. As a mature organization, it takes on the characteristics of stability. Even though this may be true of the size and composition of our Society, it cannot be true of the work we do and how we do it. That must continue to be reexamined and renewed by vigorous debate and new initiatives. The challenge for us as a maturing organization is how to retain the zest that brought us into the profession as we face a period of little or no

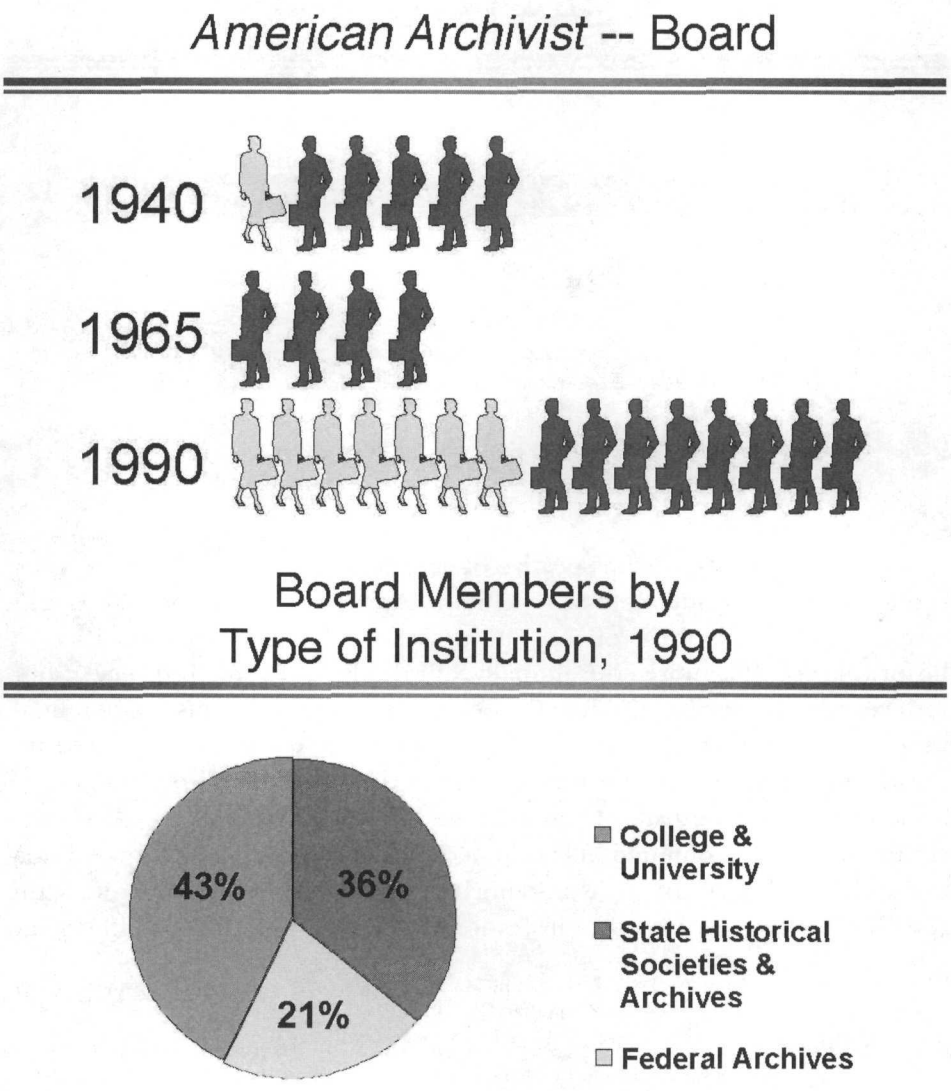
[11] SAA Fellows as of 1 January 1965, listed in the *American Archivist* 28 (January 1965): inside cover. Fellows listed for 1990, *SAA Newsletter* (January 1991): 4.

[12] For a discussion of the early influence of historians, see Mattie U. Russell, "The Influence of Historians on the Archival Profession in the U.S.," *American Archivist* 46 (Summer 1983): 277–85.

membership growth and increasing job pressure driven by ever growing user expectations. How do we continue to serve without becoming servants?

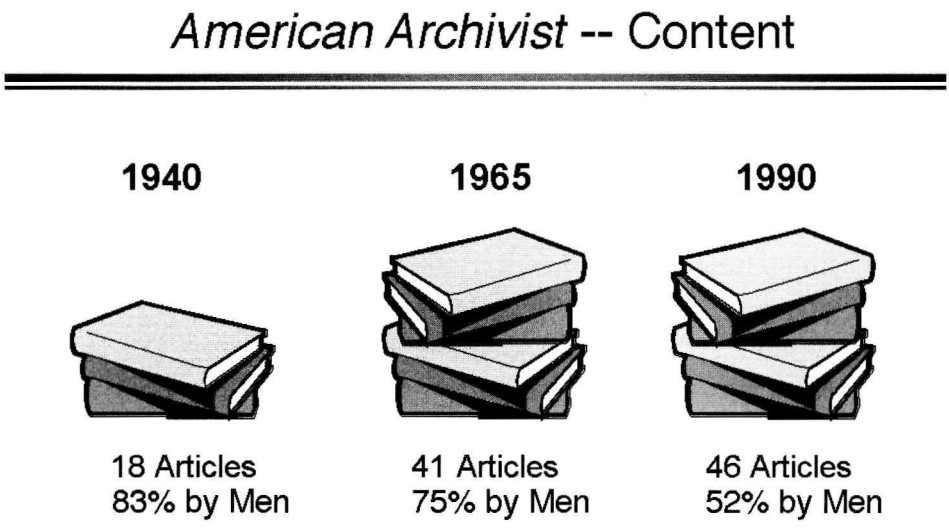
Research and Publication

The Society's growth and change can be traced as well through its major publication—the *American Archivist*—during this fifty-year period. In 1940 its editorial board consisted of only five members, one of whom was a woman. As late as 1965 there were no women on the board. By 1990, however, the board had expanded to fourteen members—over 40 percent women. The kinds of institutions represented on the board also changed, but less dra-



matically. In 1940, for instance, the board was split evenly between college and university archives and state libraries/archives. Fifty years later 43 percent of the board members came from academic institutions, followed by 36 percent from state historical societies or archives, with the remainder from national archives, including one from Canada.

The number and kinds of articles also reflected a changing research agenda, one in which women made an increasing contribution. The *American Archivist* of 1940 was a modest volume of less than three hundred pages and included only eighteen articles, 83 percent written by men. By 1965 the journal had more than doubled in length and carried more than twice as many articles; of those forty-one articles, a quarter were written by women. Again, the most dramatic shift occurred between then and 1990, when the *American Archivist* ran to 726 pages with forty-six articles, nearly half of which were written by women.[13] During those same years, the journal moved to a double-column format (1979), increasing the density of text per page.



Categorizing the types of articles that appeared in the journal over this same period presents a greater challenge. In 1940 the journal regularly carried extensive international bibliographies of archival publications. The remaining articles reflected no dominant topic. By 1965 there were enough articles in the volume to detect some areas of emphasis, including preservation (6), oral history (4), religious archives (3), and records management (3). As a genre, case studies appeared frequently (7), describing how a particular institution dealt with a specific issue. International articles also appeared regularly. Twenty-five years later, the case study approach and the international scene continued to be important parts of the journal. Using the

[13] Although there were forty-six articles, there were fifty-six authors, 48 percent of whom were women.

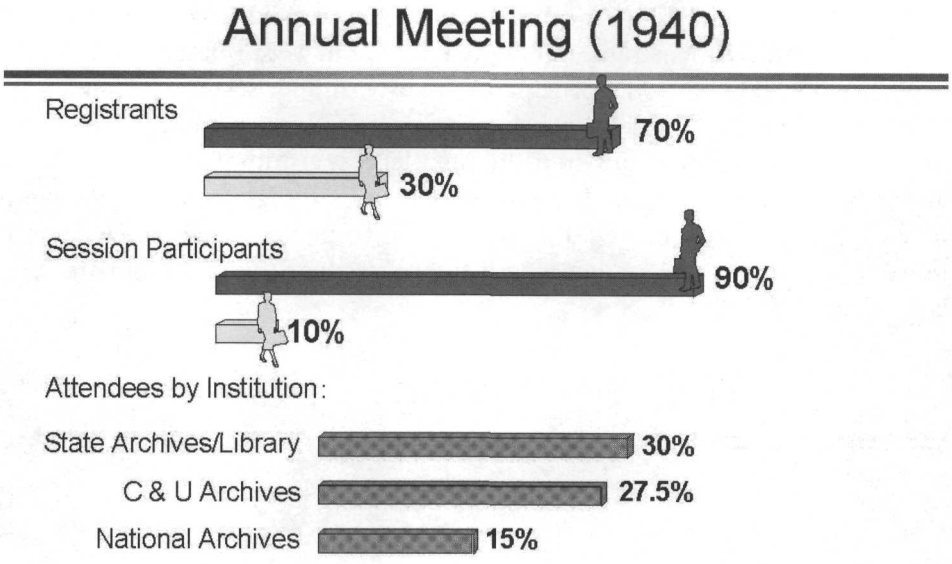
American Archivist -- Content

	1940	1965	1990
Appraisal	1	0	3
Arrangement & Description	1	3	11
Case Studies	2	7	6
Education & Theory	1	1	3
International	5	5	8
Oral History	0	4	0
Preservation	1	6	13
Records Management	2	3	1
Religious	0	3	0
Miscellaneous	5	9	1

1990 volume of the journal as an indicator of a substantial shift in archival research, however, would be misleading, since one issue was devoted to archival descriptive standards (11 articles), and a second issue focused on preservation (13 articles). Even so, it is safe to assert that, at the beginning of the 1990s, creating and adopting descriptive standards increasingly helped to integrate archival intellectual control into the larger world of library cataloging standards, made easier by electronic technology.

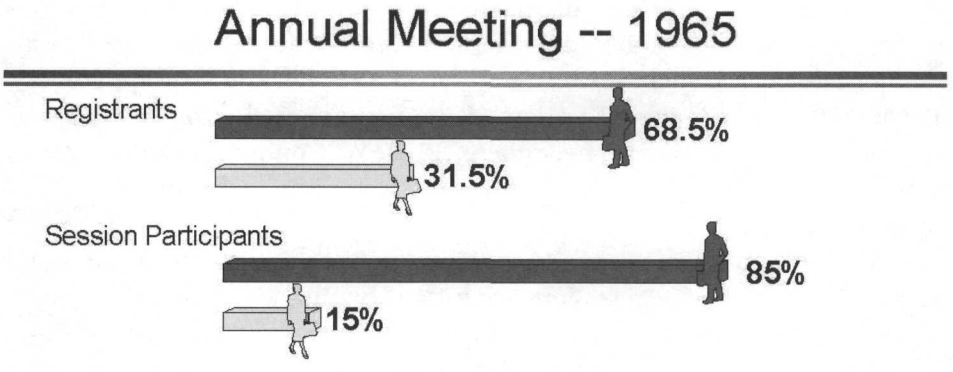
Annual Meeting Analysis

Membership analysis provides a passive picture of the Society—a picture that features only those who paid dues. The leadership analysis reflects those elected to positions in the Society—officers, Council members, and Fellows. Such people are nominated and must be elected. Those who published in the *American Archivist* had to have their article approved by the editor and, usually, by additional outside referees. Between the total membership on the one hand, and its leadership on the other, there are a number of active professionals who attend meetings, present papers, and serve on committees. It is useful, therefore, to analyze the annual meetings to capture this middle level of participation. For the 1940 meeting in Montgomery, Alabama, that task is easy. There were sixty-nine registrants, of which nearly 70 percent were men. For the seven sessions, twenty-six of the twenty-nine session presenters or chairs were men—nearly 90 percent. Thus women were clearly underrepresented on the program, compared with their membership in the profession or their attendance at the meeting. Staff of the National Archives predictably dominated the program, followed by employees of colleges and



universities. Among attendees, however, National Archives staff accounted for only 15 percent, trailing both state archives/libraries and colleges and universities.[14]

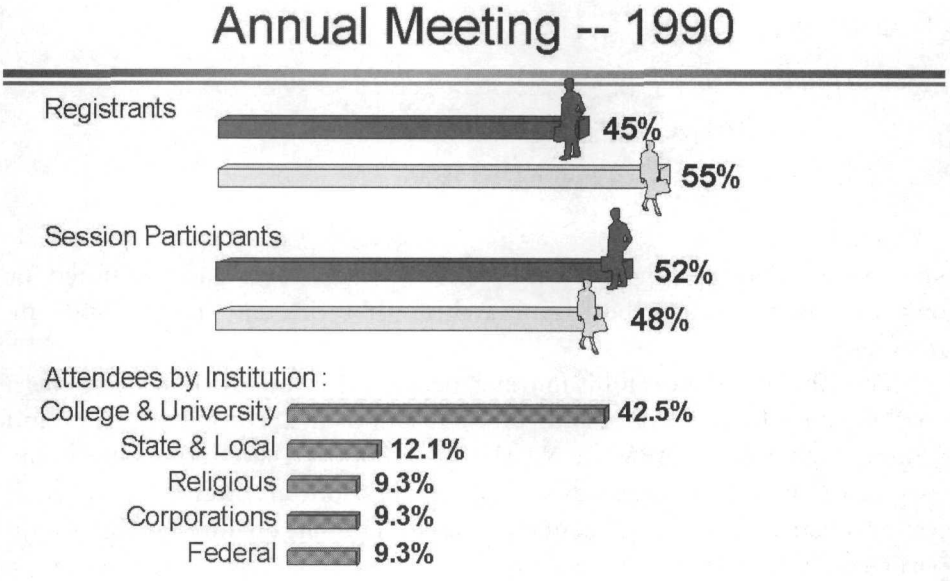
For 1965 the data is a bit murkier because the New York meeting was a joint meeting between SAA and the Association of Records Executives and Administrators (later ARMA). Nearly three hundred attendees were archivists, of whom a third were women. Of the sixty-four archival presenters and session chairs, about 85 percent were men. The largest number of session participants came from federal agencies, followed by colleges and universities, state archives, corporations, and historical societies. This pattern is nearly identical to the 1940 meeting.[15]



[14] The Society of American Archivists Fourth Annual Meeting Program, November 11–12, 1940, Montgomery, Alabama.

[15] AREA—SAA National Conference on Records Management and Archival Administration, October 6–8, 1965, New York, New York.

The fifty-fourth meeting of the Society in 1990 was held in Seattle with just over nine hundred registrants, 55 percent of whom were women. That year's program had 330 session participants in over ninety sessions. There, the breakdown reflected greater participation by men than women. College and university archivists outnumbered the next largest group of attendees—state and local archivists—by nearly a four-to-one ratio. Religious, corporate, and federal government archivists had just under 10 percent each. College and university archivists represented nearly a third of the session participants, the largest number by far.[16]



Throughout these fifty years, speakers and session content have reflected both the leadership of the Society and the issues of interest to contemporary archivists. Excluding the presidential address, there were only seven sessions at the 1940 meeting—none concurrent. Three of those sessions dealt with Southern themes, reflecting the location of the meeting in Montgomery, Alabama. Speakers included leaders of the first generation of American archivists such as Theodore Schellenberg, R. D. W. Connor, Theodore Pease, Ernst Posner, and Solon Buck. Prominent historians included Everett Edwards and Francis Simkins.[17]

The 1965 program contained fourteen archival sessions, twice the number as in 1940, plus eight sessions sponsored by the Association of Records Executives and Administrators. The three-day program included two to three concurrent sessions for each time slot. Sessions were dominated by the sec-

[16] Society of American Archivists, Final Program. August 30–September 3, 1990, Seattle, Wash.

[17] SAA Fourth Annual Meeting Program (1940).

ond generation of archival leaders and covered a range of topics: college and university archives (Herbert Finch, Philip Mason, and Robert Warner), state and local archives (Gerald Ham, H. G. Jones, and Charles Lee), religious archives (Augie Suelflow and Nelle Bellamy), records management (Frank Evans, William Rofes, and Everett Alldredge), manuscripts (Josephine Harper and Ruth Bordin), and historical records (Elizabeth Hamer, Philip Brooks, and Luther Evans).[18]

The Society's fifty-fourth annual meeting in 1990 ran for four-and-a-half days, including three days of concurrent sessions. The Society's size and diversity required a more complex organizational structure, including functional and employer-based sections, topical roundtables, committees, task forces, and ad hoc groups. Programs reflected a similar diversity in structure. While most sessions followed the traditional pattern of scholarly association meetings—one or two formal presentations, followed by a commentary—the program accommodated a wider range of formats designed to meet increasingly diverse members' needs and interests, including:

- work-in-progress presentations, offering speakers a forum for presenting tentative findings at a stage where audience feedback would be especially valuable.
- limited-enrollment sessions, those involving extensive interaction among participants or the use of a demonstration which would be ineffective with a large audience.
- special focus sessions designed to highlight innovative archival programs or new techniques for the profession.
- pre-conference workshops coordinated by the Society's Education Office.

Even more striking is the shift in program emphasis evident at the 1990 meeting, with over ninety sessions, averaging ten concurrent sessions for each program slot. While a few sessions focused on business, religious, or college and university archives or traditional functional areas such as acquisitions and reference, archivists were mainly concerned about issues that were never or rarely discussed twenty-five years earlier. The largest number of sessions—nearly 15 percent—dealt with preservation, followed by electronic issues (either records or software to manage archival information), and documentation issues. Other areas with multiple sessions included legal/ethical issues, appraisal, education, and standards.[19]

[18] AREA—SAA National Conference (1965).

[19] Society of American Archivists, Final Program (1990).

Financial Profile

SAA's growth in membership, publications, and annual meeting attendance is mirrored by the increase of its budget and the rise in its dues. In 1940 registration for the two-day annual meeting was $1, and the annual dues that year of $5 accounted for most of the total annual income of just over $2,000. By 1965 the annual registration fee for the three-day New York meeting had jumped to $30 for members and $40 for non-members. Dues had increased to only $10. Total income that year rose to nearly $22,000, a more than ten-fold increase over 1940.[20]

By the 1990 annual meeting in Seattle, member registration was nearly $100. Dues had changed to a graduated structure, ranging from a low of $30 for students to a high of $75 for members earning $30,000 or more. The

Financial Profile

	Meeting	Dues	Annual Budget
1940	$1	$5	$2,013
1965	$30	$10	$21,806
1990	$98	$30-$75	$828,966

Financial Profile -- Constant Dollars

	Annual Meeting	Dues	Annual Budget
1940	$1.00	$5.00	$2,013
1965	$13.33	$4.44	$9,692
1990	$10.50	$3.31-$8.04	$88,795

[20] Financial Statement, December 31, 1939 to December 31, 1940. Series 200/4/1, Box 1, Folder 3, SAA Archives. Budget data for 1965 in the *American Archivist* 30 (January 1967): 218–19.

Society's income had mushroomed to over $800,000, including substantial grant funding. The largest individual expense category was for personnel, reflecting the growth of our national headquarters staff, both permanent and grant-funded.[21]

An inflation-adjusted analysis of this data presents a more accurate picture. Dues for most of our members have declined, and the cost of our meetings declined in the period from 1965 to 1990. During the same period, our budget grew substantially, aided by significant membership growth.

Presidential Perspective

On a personal level, the attitudes and aspirations of our presidents provide a special perspective on the Society's evolution. For his presidential address in 1940, Waldo Gifford Leland of the American Council of Learned Societies, chose the theme "The Archivist in Times of Emergency." Having never been an archivist, Leland assumed his election meant that "the Society doubtless wished to emphasize the extension of its interest beyond purely technical or narrowly professional matters." His address, delivered only fourteen months after Hitler's invasion of Poland precipitated World War II, was portentous:

> . . .we are apprehensive lest the limited emergency, of more than a year's duration, should—perhaps very soon—deepen and spread into the greatest of all emergencies—total war—a situation which would be experienced by the people of the United States for the first time in their history. . . .we are forced to realize that developments external to us, which we ourselves cannot control may force such an emergency upon us.[22]

Barely a year later, the bombing of Pearl Harbor brought the United States into the war.

The Society's president in 1965 was W. Kaye Lamb, Dominion (now National) Archivist of Canada. During part of his term he also served as President of the Society of Archivists of Great Britain. In his presidential address Lamb examined "The Changing Role of the Archivist," observing that "In many ways it has become virtually a new profession." He noted that "the archivist has ceased to be primarily a custodian—a caretaker—and has become a gatherer of records and manuscripts." Citing the increasing diversity of material found in archives, the growing complexity of archival work, the need to establish standards, and the importance of professional training, Lamb identified emerging trends that have continued to influence the profession and the Society.[23]

[21] *American Archivist* 54 (Fall 1991): 578–82.

[22] *American Archivist* 4 (January 1941): 1–12.

[23] *American Archivist* 29 (January 1966): 1–10.

In 1990 President John Fleckner shared with us a very personal and touching reflection on being an archivist—presented in the form of three letters to a student considering an archival career. As a nonarchivist, Leland had looked at the societal context in which archivists work and its implications for the profession. By 1965 President Lamb anticipated Jerry Ham's activist archival approach in a post-custodial era. Then, in 1990, John Fleckner provided his apologia as a way of explaining to a new generation the attractiveness of our profession.[24]

Completion of a term as president confers a "senior" status, reflecting less a recognition of age than of service. It is fitting to conclude, therefore, with the observations and experience of some of the presidents who responded to my request for their perspective. Opinions varied, making generalizations difficult, but even so, certain patterns are apparent. Nearly half came to the presidency with an agenda, but the annual cycle of elections made it difficult to achieve significant change, and unanticipated issues often displaced a president's plans. These have been both internal—establishing a national office, recruitment of executive directors, grant programs and budgeting, and structural changes to the Society—and external—independence for the National Archives, selection of the Archivist of the United States, Watergate and its aftermath, and reauthorization and/or funding for NEH, NARA, and NHPRC.[25]

Major changes to the profession over the past decade predictably included the increased importance of technology and the emergence of electronic records. H. G. Jones, author of *The Records of a Nation* and 1968 president, reminds us that, "In the 1950s, we looked forward to the 'paperless office' when microfilm would be substituted. In the 1980s computers were substituted. Yet today we use far more paper than ever before. So we still dream the impossible dream, and the forests are groaning."

Former Archivist of the United States Bert Rhoads reflected the perspective of many presidents in noting the increased professionalism—the increase in research and publications, graduate education, and the creation of the Academy of Certified Archivists.

Major changes in SAA differed from those of the profession, but mirrored society to some extent. The activism of the late 1960s and early 1970s was characteristic of SAA as well. The Committee for the 1970's and the role of ACT—one an official committee of the Society and the other an ad hoc group of activists—have been chronicled elsewhere. At the time of the 1972 meeting, Dominion Archivist of Canada Wilfred Smith was a candidate for

[24] John A. Fleckner, "'Dear Mary Jane': Some Reflections on Being an Archivist," *American Archivist* 54 (Winter 1991): 8–13.

[25] The thoughts and ideas of past presidents of the Society of American Archivists presented in the next several paragraphs reflect the results of a questionnaire distributed by the author to past presidents of the Society.

president. He recalled that ACT representatives asked him to meet with the group before the business meeting at which the election was to occur

> . . .so they could decide if they would try to block my election as President. The only time we could agree on was during the time allotted for dinner. I was told that the group would provide a sandwich which I could eat while talking to them. The meeting place was the main lobby of the hotel. . . .We had an amicable discussion, I answered their questions and they agreed not to oppose my election.

This period also saw the emergence of regional archival organizations that competed with SAA. Finding common ground and reducing friction required finesse. Smith later recalled:

> One of my blunt American colleagues told me that the things I had been able to accomplish were not entirely the result of superior ability because nationality was a factor and I think it is true that it was less difficult for an outsider to bring about agreement in controversial matters than for one who was identified with one side or the other in the turbulent affairs of an American professional association.

Bert Rhoads noted with regret the increased fragmentation that accompanied the changes—"the rise of the regionals, the withdrawal of most records managers from the archival community, and the establishment of NAGARA—the latter a reflection of a sense among government archivists, particularly state archivists, that the SAA was insufficiently responsive." A year later, internal pressures still occupied much of the president's time. Robert Warner noted that one of the issues debated among the Council in 1976 was whether Council meetings should be open or not; the sentiment at the time was that they should not be open. Another contested issue dealt with establishing the right balance between the authority and responsibility of the executive director and SAA's elected leadership.

Reflecting more recent concerns, John Fleckner observed that, "Reductions in funding (in real and/or inflated dollars) have made us leaner, harder working, and less able to volunteer time for the profession. They also may be forcing us to rethink our methods." Frank Burke noted the increase of archival education provided through library schools and the increase in women entering the profession and leading the Society.

When asked what one thing they would change about the Society, presidents did not respond with a single voice, but most emphasized the need for balance and inclusiveness:

- the increase of ethnic diversity within the Society, making it more reflective of the larger society we attempt to document.
- balance between a knowledge of technology and the continuing problems related to textual records and small repositories.

- the need to recognize specialization without losing the commonality that makes us archivists.

Maynard Brichford suggested one change that I'm sure we'd all agree with—"add a digit to all archival salaries."

SAA in Context

	ALA	AHA	OAH	SAA
Founding	1876	1889	1907	1936
Membership				
1940	15,562	2,642	1,158	247
1965	27,000	15,039	7,637	853
1990	50,509	14,854	11,731	2,941

SAA in a Comparative Context

In comparison with the national historical and library associations, SAA is a relative newcomer. By the time of the Society's founding in 1936, the American Library Association (ALA) was already sixty years old, the American Historical Association (AHA) was nearly fifty, and the Organization of American Historians (OAH, formerly the Mississippi Valley Historical Association) was nearly thirty years old. Not only were our sister institutions founded earlier, but their membership is considerably larger. In 1940, when SAA had 247 members, ALA's membership was more than 15,000, AHA's was 2,642, and OAH's was 1,158. By 1965 SAA's membership had more than tripled to 853, while ALA's had grown by 75 percent to 27,000, AHA's membership grew to over 15,000, and OAH reported 7,637 members. By 1990 each association had grown significantly (except for AHA which declined slightly): ALA by nearly 90 percent, OAH by slightly more than 50 percent, and SAA by nearly 350 percent to almost three thousand members. Although SAA's rate of growth has been faster than its older sisters', all of the national library, historical, and archival organizations' growth has been slight in the 1990s.[26]

[26] The data presented in this and the next several paragraphs was obtained from the following sources: AHA data from Sharon K. Tune, Assistant Director, Administration, American Historical Association, Washington, D.C; ALA data from JoAnn Jacoby of the ALA Archives held at the University of Illinois—Champaign-Urbana; OAH data from Arnita Jones, Executive Director, Organization of

Dues and membership benefits are always an issue for nonprofit professional associations. In 1990 ALA dues were $75, with additional dues assessed for membership in any of its major units, such as the Association of College and Research Libraries. The only direct benefit of membership was a subscription to *American Libraries*, a monthly magazine of news and brief articles. ALA publishes no scholarly journal. AHA and OAH had graduated dues structures—from $25 to $85 for AHA and from $30 to $90 for OAH—an honor system tied to salaries. For that, AHA members received a scholarly journal five times a year and a bi-monthly newsletter; OAH members received a quarterly scholarly journal and a quarterly, newspaper-style newsletter. SAA also used a graduated dues structure, but with a narrower range—$45 to $75, for which members received a quarterly scholarly journal and a bi-monthly newsletter.

SAA's significantly smaller membership means a much smaller budget, endowment, headquarters staff, and volunteers to accomplish as much or more than ALA and OAH. In 1990, ALA's endowment stood at more than $5 million, AHA's at almost $1.4 million, OAH's at more than $1 million, and SAA at $247,000. Even so, SAA consistently draws to its annual meetings a larger proportion of its members than do these larger organizations. In 1990, for instance, even though the Society met on the West Coast (typically a low draw because approximately 75 percent of our members live east of the Mississippi River), over 30 percent of our members attended. Although ALA drew a greater percentage of attendees, this was largely due to the fact that

SAA in Context -- 1990

	ALA	AHA	OAH	SAA
Budget	$25.0M	$1.2M	$812k	$800k
Endowment	$5.2M	$1.4M	$1.2M	$247k
Staff	260	20	9	9

American Historians, Bloomington, Indiana; and *Encyclopedia of Associations*, Vol. 1 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1991), 942, 1004, 1032, 8422, 9093.

the meeting was held in Chicago—its headquarters city. The comparable figures for AHA (meeting in New York) and OAH (meeting in Washington, D.C.) were 26 percent and 22 percent, respectively.

Data on gender in the historical organizations is difficult to obtain, but in ALA the percentage of women in 1940 was 85 percent; fifty years later the figure had dropped to under 70 percent. In 1990 ALA had a staff of 260 (including both its Chicago and Washington, D. C. offices) and a $25 million budget. AHA had a staff of twenty at its Washington, D. C. headquarters and a $1.2 million budget. OAH, headquartered in Bloomington, Indiana, had a staff of nine and a budget of $812,000. SAA had the same size staff and budget as OAH, but without the substantial subsidy provided by Indiana University.

These are sobering numbers, sobering because they illustrate how small the Society is in comparison with some of our most powerful allied professions. While we try to do many of the same things those organizations do—provide annual meetings, publish a journal and newsletter, develop professional standards, offer educational programs, seek additional funding, monitor and influence legislation, and educate the public about archival issues—we do so with significantly fewer resources. ALA is more than ten times our size; AHA nearly four times, and OAH more than three times as large. Even so, each organization needs a program, local arrangements, awards committees, task forces, and other governance structures. Larger organizations, of course, can spread responsibility for conducting these activities over a larger membership base. A smaller organization, such as SAA, does not have the same range of expertise and influence to bring to bear on specific issues in a timely way or to run a national office in a major city. That is why last year I advocated the need to build and maintain effective coalitions—because in many instances we are not sufficiently powerful to chart an independent course successfully or to influence an outcome decisively. SAA certainly can do a better job for is members and the profession, but its success is also limited by the size and influence of its members. When we become frustrated with SAA's slow efforts at reform, we need to bear in mind the numbing bureaucracy of ALA and its glacial movement. When we become upset that SAA does not fully represent the diversity of its membership in its elected leadership, we need to bear in mind the virtual lock that academic historians at research universities have on both the AHA and OAH. When we become annoyed by the Society's inability to regularly publish a quarterly scholarly journal, we should remember that AHA and OAH have a ready pool of thousands of scholars who are paid to publish as tenure track historians, and that ALA does not even publish a scholarly journal. This should not make us complacent, but neither should it make us so hypercritical that we fail to recognize the good work we have accomplished as a newer and smaller national organization. My brief year as president has given me the opportunity

both to participate and to observe, and through both I've experienced and seen the talents of our members and the commitment of our staff. Others may be bigger or older, but none is better or more active. For that, you are responsible. Thank you.