

# Integrated Archives and Records Management Programs at Professional Membership Associations: A Case Study and a Model

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## Abstract

Professional membership associations present special problems for archivists because of the highly dispersed nature of their activities (and hence recordkeeping) and the constant turnover of actors. This paper presents a case study and a model for addressing archives and records issues in these types of settings, based on the conception of the archivist as a coordinator of others' activities and not a curator of records. The strategy and tactics employed here may also work well in an era when organizational hierarchies are being eliminated and when electronic recordkeeping systems are becoming dominant.

## Introduction

Professional membership associations play a large and active role in American society. Several large associations are well known for their lobbying efforts, while many others serve highly specialized communities. These groups share many common functions, however, such as holding meetings and conferences, providing continuing education opportunities, giving awards and grants, publishing, lobbying, running licensure and certification programs, and establishing guidelines and standards.

In a detailed discussion of professional and voluntary associations in the health sciences,<sup>1</sup> James Carson notes their role in regulating their professions, formulating public policy, educating their members, providing information to

<sup>1</sup> James G. Carson, "Professional and Voluntary Associations," in *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System*, edited by Joan D. Krizack (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 149–79.

the general public, and promoting good health. Carson provides an extensive typology of these associations and briefly describes their characters.

The number of these associations is enormous. The *National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States 1996* directory lists 7,500 national trade associations, labor unions, professional and scientific societies, and technical organizations.<sup>2</sup> The *Encyclopedia of Associations 1996* contains information on over 22,000 nonprofit national membership associations operating in the United States alone; the *Encyclopedia's* international organizations volume lists another 15,500 worldwide.<sup>3</sup> In the article cited above, Carson mentions approximately 5,000 international, national, and state associations, plus another 2,000 county societies—for the health sciences alone.

The sheer number of these associations presents a problem for those interested in documenting American society, as reflected by the fact that the SAA membership directory (1994) lists under thirty archivists as working in such settings.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the archival world is two to three orders of magnitude shy of comprehensively documenting these important institutions, a fact Carson confirms for associations in the health sciences. Carson also notes that even among associations that collect historical materials, few have comprehensive professional programs, few cooperate with external collecting repositories, and those that do often limit themselves to a one-time transfer of records. What Carson does not discuss is the nature of professional membership associations and how that nature makes developing their comprehensive archives and records programs problematic. Professional membership associations provide archivists with unique challenges because of their highly dispersed activities and their constant turnover of personnel. The purpose of this paper is to provide both a strategy and a set of tactics for implementing integrated archives and records programs for these associations.<sup>5</sup>

This paper is based on my experience as Director of the Department of Archives and Records at the Oncology Nursing Society from 1992 through 1995. Despite my education and experience, I quickly encountered a very unfamiliar situation that merits its own study. The case study represents one particular attempt at documenting the activities of a professional membership association, while the model broadens this experience for archivists and records

<sup>2</sup> *National Trade and Professional Associations of the United States 1996*, 31st ed. (New York: Columbia Books, 1996). I do not address issues related to labor archives.

<sup>3</sup> *Encyclopedia of Associations 1996*, 30th ed. (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995) and *Encyclopedia of Associations: International Organizations 1996* (Detroit: Gale Research, 1995).

<sup>4</sup> *1994 Directory of Individual and Institutional Members* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1993). I exclude historical societies, for my focus is on institutional archives and records programs and not on collecting efforts.

<sup>5</sup> For historical background on professionalization and professional membership associations, see Magali Larson, *The Rise of Professionalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977); Burton Bledstein, *The Culture of Professionalism* (New York: Norton, 1978); and Thomas Haskell, *The Emergence of Professional Social Science* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1977).

managers working in similar, but not identical, settings. The case study provides a level of detail difficult to include in a more general model, but useful for a full understanding of the scope and nature of the problem. I also believe that both the case study and model can be adapted to many other settings.

## Case Study

The Oncology Nursing Society (ONS), a professional membership association for cancer nurses, dates its origin to September 1973. Shortly after the First National Cancer Nursing Conference, an ad hoc committee formed to explore the need for a specialty organization for oncology nurses. This organization's goals were to promote networking among these professionals and to advance their specialized education. The result was the formation of the Oncology Nursing Society, incorporated in 1975. Since then, ONS has grown from about five hundred members to over twenty-five thousand members.<sup>6</sup>

Efforts to preserve ONS's history began early with the 1980 appointment of a historian. This volunteer was an oncology nurse with no training in history or archives. The nurse/historian created a scrapbook, collected memorabilia, and conducted a number of interviews. With this first step, ONS recognized the importance of its own history, although not necessarily an understanding of how fully to capture it.

Later, in order to extend archival activities and distinguish them from historical work, ONS formed a standing committee, the Archives Committee, which first met in 1988. The Archives Committee was (and still is) also composed of volunteer members and thus is not the same as an archives committee discussed elsewhere, which is composed of members of upper management, legal counsel, and other information professionals on staff. While the ONS Archives Committee continued to collect various historical materials, it also began to evaluate the need for other archival programs. As ONS's fifteenth anniversary approached, both the Archives Committee and the Executive Director became concerned that the histories of the organization and the discipline were vanishing, while at the same time ONS's records were becoming increasingly voluminous and disorganized. They sensed the general problem with contemporary records: too much (volume), yet too little (information).

<sup>6</sup> For background on the history of the Oncology Nursing Society, see Connie Yarbrow, "The Early Days: Four Smiles and a Post Office Box," in *Oncology Nursing: Recollections* [Supplement to the *Oncology Nursing Forum* 12 (January/February 1985)] (Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 1985): 49–55; Stephen C. Wagner, "Reflecting on 20 Years of Excellence," in the *Oncology Nursing Society/Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation/Oncology Nursing Foundation 1994–1995 Annual Report: Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence* (Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 1995), 3–5; a series of eighteen historical articles by Stephen C. Wagner in the *ONS News* between February 1994 and October 1995; and several essays in Brenda Nevidjon, ed., *Building a Legacy: Voices of Oncology Nurses* (Boston: Jones and Bartlett, 1995).

As a result, in 1990 ONS hired an archival consultant to study its current recordkeeping practices. He identified several problems: duplication of records, uneven decision making with respect to records disposition, storage of unnecessary records, purchase of filing equipment in lieu of adopting a well-planned disposition schedule, lack of security copies of vital records, and an inadequate sense of which historical records should be retained or how they should be maintained. While noting these difficulties, he also identified several organizational strengths: a strong structure; a strong mission statement and sense of mission; good communications among staff members; a well-developed sense of professionalism; early stages of office automation; and a recognition of the need for an archives and records management program, along with the understanding that such a program requires full support.<sup>7</sup> The consultant then drafted a tentative schedule for records retention and disposition, which was to be implemented when a full-time professional archivist and records manager was hired. In January 1992 ONS hired a full-time director of a new Department of Archives and Records.<sup>8</sup>

Based on the consultant's report, the task seemed straightforward enough: implement a records management and archives program for a well-organized, relatively small association (National Office staff numbers fifty-eight). But what had appeared to be "straightforward enough" quickly proved to be a significant challenge, for the consultant's report examined only the records at the National Office. To understand better the nature of this challenge, one needs to examine ONS's structure and activities in some detail.<sup>9</sup>

As mentioned above, the Oncology Nursing Society is a professional membership association representing more than 25,000 cancer nurses, with 5,000 nurses attending its annual spring Congress and 1,200 attending its more specialized Fall Institute. Members may join any of 185 chapters, twenty-nine special interest groups (SIGs), or nineteen Focus Groups (pre-SIGs). ONS has two closely related corporations and one subsidiary: the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation, which administers basic and advanced certification examinations and maintains records for over 15,000 certified and over 200 advanced certified oncology nurses; the Oncology Nursing Foundation, which oversees a development program; and the Oncology Nursing Press, which publishes the *Oncology Nursing Forum*, the *ONS News*, and several other ONS publications. Thus there are four governing boards, with a total of nine board subcommittees, thirty-one standing committees (including four editorial boards), and two advisory councils. Additionally, at any given time there are several task

<sup>7</sup> See Richard J. Cox, *Managing Institutional Archives: Foundational Principles and Practices* (New York: Greenwood, 1992), 263–79.

<sup>8</sup> It was later renamed the Department of Archives, Records, and Library Services in order to reflect better the range of departmental functions and activities.

<sup>9</sup> All data on ONS are drawn from the *Oncology Nursing Society/Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation/Oncology Nursing Foundation 1994–1995 Annual Report: Celebrating 20 Years of Excellence*.



forces, working groups, and numerous ongoing formal, informal, and information-sharing liaisons. Supporting all of these activities is a National Office with an executive director and twelve departments. ONS's current mission is to promote professional standards in oncology nursing; to study, research, and exchange information, experiences, and ideas leading to better oncology nursing practice; to encourage nurses to specialize in oncology; to foster professional development of oncology nurses; to foster a culturally diverse organization; and to maintain an effective organizational structure. Among the activities that support this mission are annual conferences, continuing education courses, lobbying, publications, awards and grants programs, certification examinations, leadership development programs, and health promotion campaigns.<sup>10</sup>

The challenge of documenting these activities is that of any professional membership organization: with the exception of the National Office departments, none of these organizational units, nor their activities, are localized. Even chapters (in 185 different locations) are not centralized, nor do they have permanent offices. Since the activities are highly dispersed, the resulting documentation is highly dispersed as well. Although the standard tools of developing a records schedule and creating an archival repository work well for the National Office departments, other strategies are needed for the rest of ONS. Only then will the purpose of the ONS archives—to document the organization's activities and be able later to answer questions about who did what, when, why, and how—be fulfilled. The ONS archives and records management program was designed to accommodate all units within each of these four organizations (ONS, ONCC, the Foundation, and the Press).

The key to developing an archives program for this type of organization is to realize that the archivist cannot adopt the role of *curator* of the organization's records as much as serve as a *coordinator* of others' activities. In other words, he must assist others with their own recordkeeping practices and, when appropriate, with their own archives. In this manner, all organizational units will be well represented in the archives. So the archivist's job places less emphasis on records surveys, arrangement, description, and other standard archival functions—although such functions are carried out—and more emphasis on outreach, training, and developing recordkeeping guidelines and standards. In other words, the archivist guides others in doing many of the standard archival functions. The incorporation of records management into the archives program means that these guidelines and standards go into effect as soon as—or even before—records are created, thereby avoiding the uneven quality of the collections resulting from less proactive archival programs.

<sup>10</sup> ONS underwent a radical restructuring that greatly altered its staff and committee structures. However, many professional associations have structures similar to the one described here, and the ONS archives and records management program developed in this environment. If anything, the current move towards "destructuring" professional associations will require an archivist to be even more of a coordinator and less of a curator (see below).

Departmental activities reflected this emphasis on coordination rather than curatorship.<sup>11</sup> For the National Office departments, a records survey provided the basis for a detailed records retention and disposition schedule. This schedule served both as an appraisal tool and as the acquisitions policy, in that whatever was deemed to have permanent value was to be automatically transferred annually to the ONS Archives. Records have permanent value because they protect legal rights (e.g., copyrights and trademarks), are required by external organizations (e.g., financial records, continuing education files for accredited programs), maintain accountability to the leadership and the general membership, provide an organizational memory that contributes to better management, or fulfill a historical purpose. These categories are not mutually exclusive. Because the National Office maintains copies of important records for committees, chapters, and other ONS units, these transferred materials form the “core collection” in the ONS Archives.<sup>12</sup> Some examples of records of longstanding value in the ONS Archives are: policy and procedures manuals, meeting minutes, reports, publications, correspondence, budgets, audit reports, and personnel records. During an annual review by the ONS archivist and records manager, National Office filing systems are reviewed and records examined for proper disposition. The records schedule thus can be continuously revised and rewritten in light of the most recent records survey and accessioning. Acquisitions at the National Office are thus directed by a records retention and disposition schedule, after which standard practices of arrangement, description, preservation, reference, and access are accomplished. This process is that of any institutional archives and records program.

In order to supplement this collection and also to serve the archival needs of other units, additional projects were undertaken. First, for organizational units able to maintain their own archives (chapters and SIGs), the Department developed archival and records management guidelines. The first version of *Archival Guidelines for Chapters* was distributed in March 1992, and it has been extensively rewritten and redistributed.<sup>13</sup> The ONS archivist also worked extensively with the closest local chapter, the Greater Pittsburgh Chapter, in order to examine chapter records closely and to determine how easily the guidelines could actually be implemented. The guidelines later became part of the *Chapter Policy and Procedures Manual* (see Figure 1). The Department then developed a parallel set of guidelines for Special Interest Groups.<sup>14</sup> These guidelines were

<sup>11</sup> This case study is based on my efforts from January 1992 to September 1995. Under a different department director, current emphasis has refocused onto the standard archival functions, especially processing.

<sup>12</sup> This concept is borrowed from Joan Krizack's work on documentation plans.

<sup>13</sup> Available as *Archival Guidelines for Chapters of the Oncology Nursing Society*, revised 2d ed. (Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 1993).

<sup>14</sup> Available as *Archival Guidelines for Special Interest Groups of the Oncology Nursing Society* (Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 1994).

ARCHIVAL GUIDELINES FOR CHAPTERS  
OF THE ONCOLOGY NURSING SOCIETY

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FIGURE 1.

distributed in packets that also include informational flyers and pamphlets.<sup>15</sup> Because chapters and SIGs must follow regular reporting schedules, the National Office already has many of these records. The purpose of the guidelines is to assist chapters and SIGs with their own archives, which in turn contributes to continuity, better management, and sense of history.

These guidelines proved useful for chapter and SIG archivists, who are nurses untrained in archives and records management work. However, it soon became apparent that chapter and SIG leadership needed guidance for their own recordkeeping activities—a point that was brought home clearly as the first generation of SIG leaders gave way to the second generation—or there would be little available for the archivist. To remedy this situation, the department wrote *Recordkeeping Guidelines* for both chapter and SIG leaders.<sup>16</sup> The SIG guidelines were soon incorporated into the *SIG Policy and Procedures Manual* (see Figure 2). The briefer recordkeeping guidelines contain material from the archival guidelines that directly relate to managing current records and were written specifically for current chapter and SIG leaders. Perhaps most important were the records retention and disposition schedules for chapter and SIG records (see Appendix 1), along with an organizational scheme for the archives that reflects the full range documentation for review (see Appendix 2).

In either case, it was important to incorporate archives and records practices into routine committee and SIG activities. Having the guidelines written into the policy and procedures manuals that direct chapter and SIG activities helped ensure that good recordkeeping practices became the norm rather than the exception, and also that effective recordkeeping did not seem to be an additional unwarranted burden.

Second, for organizational units that turn over their membership regularly (governing boards, committees, advisory councils, task forces, working groups, liaisons), the department was developing recordkeeping guidelines based on interviews with board members and committee chairs concerning their patterns of communication and their current recordkeeping practices.<sup>17</sup> These guidelines were to consist of a model filing system and a retention schedule,

<sup>15</sup> Pamphlets include the following: *Archives, Discipline History Centers, Information Resource Centers, Oral History, Preservation, and Records Management*. Informational flyers include: *Ask an Archivist, Creating an ONS Chapter Scrapbook, Creating an ONS SIG Scrapbook, Sources for Archival Supplies, Sources for ONS History, Starting an ONS Chapter Archives, Starting an ONS SIG Archives, Surfing the Internet, Writing an ONS Chapter History, and Writing an ONS SIG History*.

<sup>16</sup> Available as *Recordkeeping Guidelines for Officers of Chapters of the Oncology Nursing Society* (Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 1994), and *Recordkeeping Guidelines for Coordinators of Special Interest Groups of the Oncology Nursing Society* (Pittsburgh: Oncology Nursing Society, 1994).

<sup>17</sup> As with chapters, it is important to get a sense of what records committees and governing boards create, use, and discard that may never have been seen at the national headquarters. Even more important is to get a sense of patterns of communication, for, in an organization such as a professional membership association, records are a natural byproduct of communication, and following these patterns can reveal much about the strength of the written record as well as the processes that created it. See JoAnne Yates, "Internal Communication Systems in American Business Structure: A Framework to Aid Appraisal," *American Archivist* 48 (Spring 1985): 141–58.

**RECORDKEEPING GUIDELINES  
FOR COORDINATORS OF SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS  
OF THE ONCOLOGY NURSING SOCIETY**

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**FIGURE 2.**

along with instructions for transferring records to the ONS Archives at an appropriate time (e.g., once the individual's term of office is complete, for board members; at the expiration of a task force's or working group's charge; or every other year as committee and council chairs rotate). In some cases, the ONS Archives sought unique records of important individuals not captured elsewhere (e.g., records of members of the four governing boards). In other cases (committees, advisory councils, task forces, working groups), it sought a focal point through which all records passed, almost always the records of the group's chair. In a couple of cases, notably the Chapter and SIG Committees, individual committee members held records that had never gone to or through the committee chair, such as liaison files between each committee member and the chapters or SIGs assigned to them. In these cases, the net had to be broadened to ensure that a complete record of ONS activities was adequately reflected in the national archives.

These records are especially important for supplementing core documentation. For example, meeting minutes are schematic and provide little sense of the meeting itself; notes from board members' papers can provide much more

detail. Other activities are, at best, sparsely represented in the core collection. Because committees and advisory councils have their own historical continuity, categories for disposition of committee and council chair records included transfer to ONS Archives, transfer to incoming committee chair, or destroy. The emphasis is twofold: (i) to provide better overall documentation on ONS, and (ii) to provide committees and councils with records that support their own activities. The records of governing board members, task forces, working groups, and interorganizational liaisons were typically to be transferred to the national ONS Archives.

Third, we explored the use of oral history, photography, and videotaping projects for topics that would otherwise be poorly documented in the written record but that are important enough to justify additional documentation. An ongoing joint project between the Archives Committee and the Department of Archives and Records is a well-organized oral history program focusing on both the origins and history of ONS as well as the origins and development of oncology nursing as a nursing specialty.

Finally, the department conducted a number of outreach and training efforts. Outreach was particularly important, both to obtain ongoing support for the archives and records program and also to ensure cooperation necessary for its successful implementation. The department director regularly contacted members of the governing boards and committee chairs. Periodic mailings to chapters and SIGs, along with articles in newsletters mailed to chapter and SIG leaders, guaranteed constant awareness of archives and records activities. The department also staffed archives booths at each March meeting for all ONS leadership (board members, committee and council chairs, chapter presidents, SIG coordinators, and newsletter editors) and at each large annual conference, thereby providing an opportunity for contact with the association leadership and the general membership.

Similarly, training was necessary to ensure *effective* cooperation with archives and records efforts. The department conducted in-house training at the National Office on special topics, such as the organization and disposition of computer and e-mail files, along with roundtable sessions for the general membership at the annual conference (e.g., on records and information management for individuals, thereby planting the seeds of effective recordkeeping practices among the membership). The department led training sessions at the March leadership meeting on archives, records, and history topics. The archives booths at meetings and conferences provided the opportunity for one-on-one consultation. The department also advertised a wide range of consulting services (see Figure 3). The pamphlet and information flyer series provided tools both for outreach and training.

In addition to the association's archives and records activities, the Department also supported the activities of the Archives Committee. Since a professional archivist had been hired to develop guidelines and standards, the

## DEPARTMENT OF ARCHIVES AND RECORDS

### CONSULTATION SERVICES

#### PURPOSE

All of us have office files at work, personal papers at home, and ONS-related records. Unfortunately, few of us have any of this material in good order! The Department of Archives and Records is here to serve you and try to make your volunteer efforts as rewarding and productive as possible. Look for our "Ask an Archivist" booth at Congress.

#### TYPES OF CONSULTATION AVAILABLE

- *Advice on organizing your personal and office files.* Do you file by pile? Does it seem like nothing ever gets discarded? Do you wonder if you will ever find that paper or report again?
- *Suggestions for establishing a Chapter or SIG Archives.* Have you just begun thinking about your archives but have no idea how to begin? Where do you start?
- *Pointers on managing your computer files.* When you look at a list of your computer files, is it endless? Do any of the names make sense? How long does it take you to find that document?
- *Intructions for creating a SIG or Chapter Scrapbook.* Now that you have this new scrapbook, just what do you put into it? How do you attach items in a scrapbook?
- *Directions for obtaining archival supplies.* If you are not supposed to use glue, staples, or tape, what do you use? Where do you get it?
- *Guidelines for writing a Chapter or SIG History.* Is there an outline for writing a history? What do you include?
- *Recommendations for preserving your photographs.* Are your photographs and videotapes important to you? How then do you know that they will last?
- *Explanations of work in archives, records management, and preservation.* Just what is records management? What do archivists do? What are the typical preservation activities?
- *Guidance on library and information resources in nursing and cancer care.* Where do you go to locate reference materials for work or class?
- *Information on ONS archives and history projects.* What are the Archives Committee and the Department of Archives & Records up to?

FIGURE 3.

Archives Committee had begun two historical projects that took full advantage of committee members' knowledge, skills, and long-term involvement in ONS. First was an oral history project focused on the origins and early history of ONS, a topic only sparsely represented in the written record. Other topics under consideration included oncology nurses with cancer and interviews with past presidents. All projects have twin focuses of documenting the development of ONS



and the growth of oncology nursing as a specialization, two closely intertwined but not identical topics.

Second was the development of a historical showcase at the National Office, divided into thematic sections that were then converted into travelling exhibits. These displays not only reflected the history of ONS and oncology nursing, but also served as a recruitment tool for the Society and a mechanism for outreach. The first exhibit was on the origins and early history of ONS; it was on display at the National Office for a year and then at the two major ONS conferences for the twentieth anniversary. The second exhibit was on the evolution of the *Oncology Nursing Forum* from its origins as a newsletter to a journal now included in *Index Medicus*.

The Department of Archives and Records outlined plans for two future endeavors: a discipline history center for oncology nursing and an information resource center for ONS. However, these were in the planning stage, have yet to be implemented, and are tangential to our topic here.

One can only speculate about what would have happened had ONS not adopted the archival consultant's recommendations. Active records would have been less available for administrative use, and historical records would have been lost. Many units and activities would be undocumented and hence ultimately unremembered, and an institution without a memory cannot hope to function well over time. By acting while the organization was still relatively young, ONS has been able to ensure the efficient management of its active records and the preservation of its historical records.

Based on this case study, the following is proposed as a useful model for archivists and records managers at other professional membership associations. While the model will have to be tailored to the individual organization, efforts at ONS may well help others avoid reinventing the wheel.

### **A Model for Implementation**

Eight basic principles serve as the foundation for this model. The first is that *associations are responsible for their own records and recordkeeping*. This model assumes a strong centralized office. Only with a central office can there be a full-time professional archivist and records manager on staff to provide the knowledge and guidance required of a successful program. Similarly, a strong central office will be able to implement an effective program. But many professional membership associations do not have central offices at all. In such cases, the organization should consider working closely with an appropriate repository for the routine transfer of records of continuing value. Examples include agreements between the American Red Cross and the U.S. National Archives or between Planned Parenthood and Smith College.<sup>18</sup>

<sup>18</sup> Carson, "Professional and Voluntary Associations," 173.

The second principle is that *an effective program must be designed—and must be implemented—by a professional archivist and records manager with education, experience, and training in both archives and records management*. A good consultant can design an effective program, even in detail, but even a well-designed program will fail without professional input during implementation. Similarly, merely assuming that a current staff member (e.g., the office manager) can instantly be transformed into an archivist and records manager after reading some manuals and taking a workshop is, to put it kindly, a misconception, as much as it would be with finance and accounting or automation services. For smaller organizations, a cooperative plan with a helpful repository may provide an adequate, if not ideal, solution.

The third principle is that *the goal of an integrated archives and records program is to provide a complete, comprehensive account of an organization's activities and structure, i.e., based on the archives, the questions of who did what, when, why, and how can be answered*. The ability to answer these questions addresses the issues of protecting the organization's legal rights, meeting external recordkeeping requirements, maintaining accountability, and providing an organizational memory. The overall purpose of an archives and records program should *not* merely be to satisfy internal and external recordkeeping requirements;<sup>19</sup> these are constraints on implementing a program and should not be confused with goals.

The fourth principle is that *records management and archives efforts must be integrated in order to be effective*. Although generally true, it is even more so for documenting highly dispersed activities carried out by geographically scattered individuals and groups with a high rate of turnover. Otherwise, valuable records can and will be all too easily lost.<sup>20</sup>

The fifth principle is that *the archivist must be a coordinator of others' activities and not merely a curator of records*. A similar case can be built with regard to electronic records, where it is often far better to have groups maintain their own records on their own systems rather than try to collect a wide variety of data sets in many different formats into a single repository,<sup>21</sup> and in other settings, such as universities or research and development laboratories that are conducting classified research. In the latter two cases, the archivist either lacks the technical capability, resources, or access to records and thus must cooperate and provide guidance without necessarily doing all the work. For professional membership associations, even an archives and records program with lots of resources could

<sup>19</sup> As is the emphasis with, e.g., Donald Skupsky, *Recordkeeping Requirements* (Denver: Information Requirements Clearinghouse, 1989).

<sup>20</sup> One long-time ONS leader reported that the squirrels had gotten into her cartons of ONS records stored in her garage. These records were, not surprisingly, tossed out long before the archivist had an opportunity to review them.

<sup>21</sup> See, e.g., David Bearman, "An Indefensible Bastion: Archives as a Repository in the Electronic Age," in *Archival Management of Electronic Records*, Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report 13 (Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1991), 14–24.

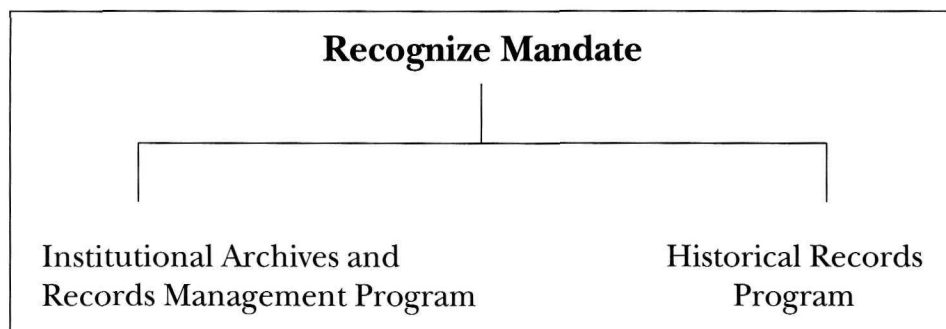


FIGURE 4.

not possibly carry out the standard functions of records surveying through processing to access for an organization so dispersed in its activities and records.

The sixth principle is that *the archives program must be highly placed, visible, and accessible*. An archivist and records manager too far down the administrative hierarchy will not have the authority to implement an effective archives and records program.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, a program that is not visible and accessible will have little or no impact on the association as a whole and thus will ultimately fail in its mission. *Only a highly proactive program—our seventh principle—will be able to document fully the activities of the association.*<sup>23</sup> A passive approach that emphasizes collecting “historical” records over guiding the creation and management of current records will result in a highly distorted representation of the organization and its activities.

The eighth and final principle is that *it is often desirable, and perhaps necessary, to distinguish between historical and current records*. Although this distinction may seem arbitrary given continuity in activities and records, the management of historical records is significantly different from implementing an archives and records program that guides recordkeeping at or before the point of creation. If the mandate of the archives and records program is to focus on current records and get a system into place to control them, then the processing of, and access to, older “historical” records will initially be of secondary importance. On the other hand, if the mandate is to organize historical records in light of an upcoming major anniversary, the relative importance of historical versus current records is reversed. In general, this distinction is more tactical than genuine, for the historical records will eventually have to be incorporated into the archives.

Before starting design and implementation, the archivist must recognize the mandate of the archives program (see Figure 4). Should the organization

<sup>22</sup> The same case can be made for the placement of a preservation officer in a major library.

<sup>23</sup> A belief echoed by Nancy McCall, Lisa Mix, John Dojka, and Gerard Shorb, “Making Provisions for the Management of Contemporary Records,” in *Designing Archival Programs to Advance Knowledge in the Health Fields*, edited by Nancy McCall and Lisa A. Mix (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 165–83.

be interested in a historical records program to support an anniversary celebration, then the standard practices from surveying through appraisal to processing and access may be followed.<sup>24</sup> However, should the focus be on developing an institutional archives and records management program that encompasses current records and recordkeeping practices, following a pattern similar to the ONS case study would be more suitable.<sup>25</sup> The following model is based on both the strengths and drawbacks of the ONS program described above, along with incorporation of archival models developed since the inception of the ONS archives and records program. The steps are indicated in Figure 5, which should provide the reader with a roadmap through the model and also an outline to be used later.

The first step is to promote both the archives and records program and an understanding of its goals. Some individuals will believe that good recordkeeping applies only to a select few types of documents (e.g., financial records). Others will believe that an archives is concerned only with dusty old ephemera, artifacts, and “historical records” (e.g., the first association newsletter, buttons). While some of these objects have value, they are far removed from the realm of records of continuing value. Relevant topics include making clear distinctions between historical records and the management of current records, emphasizing the benefits of good records management, recognizing that good recordkeeping practices are necessary for everybody, and realizing that cooperation will be required for a successful archives and records effort. The sooner association leadership and membership are aware of the archives and records program and its goals, the better. All too often leaders and members have learned the hard way the harm of poor recordkeeping practices.<sup>26</sup> Promoting the archives and records program is a permanent, ongoing effort.

The second step is for the archivist and records manager to draft a documentation plan. A documentation plan is essentially a strategic plan for archival appraisal and acquisitions. On the surface, a documentation plan resembles a collecting policy or a records retention and disposition schedule. However, it is based on an extensive analysis of the institution and its context (other professional membership associations; other organizations in nursing, cancer care, and the health care system). What follows is an explication of the documentation planning model developed by Joan Krizack and its modification to suit the

<sup>24</sup> Useful guidelines for such practices are covered in the Society of American Archivists’ *Archival Fundamentals Series*.

<sup>25</sup> As one anonymous reviewer of this article pointed out, the distinction is not hard and fast. An event such as an anniversary (or a lawsuit) can motivate an organization to manage its records better. Such was the case with ONS’s fifteenth anniversary. The issue is, however, where initially to focus efforts with limited resources. In some cases, that focus needs to be on current records and recordkeeping practices.

<sup>26</sup> One past president reported just this in a telephone interview. After one unfortunate incident, she began to document all communications, including those that typically leave no written evidence (e.g., telephone calls). Among the forms distributed to ONS leadership were telephone and mail logs, in order to record such transactions.

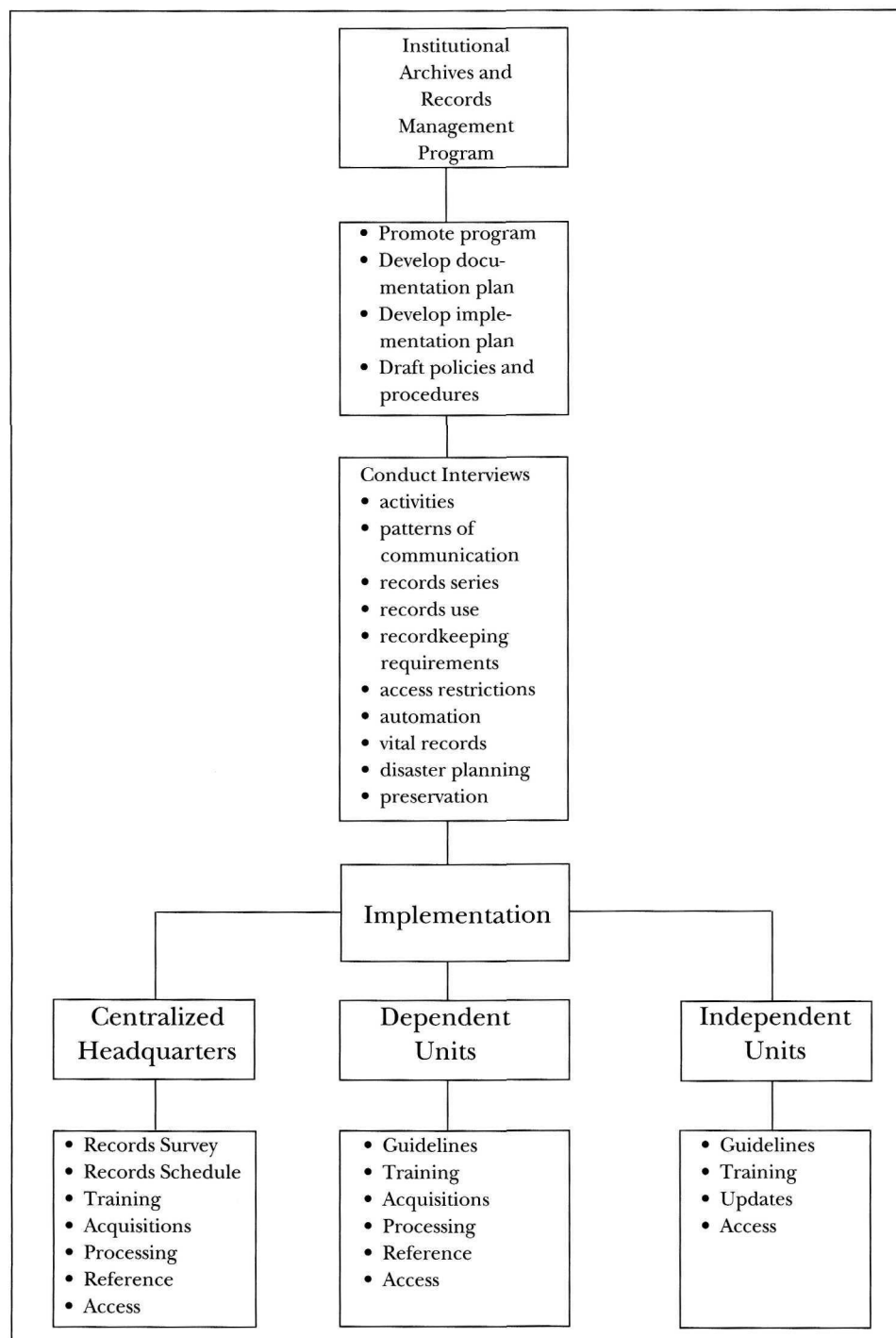


FIGURE 5.

## DEVELOPING A DOCUMENTATION PLAN

### I. Analysis

#### *Institutional Analysis*

- understanding the institution's mission and activities
- identifying whether the institution is freestanding or not
- noting how the institution interacts with other institutions
- learning about the institution's history and culture
- recognizing the institution's trajectory into the future
- understanding institutional constraints

#### *Comparison with Similar Institutions*

#### *Relation of Institution to Its Broader Context (Field Analysis)*

### II. Selection

#### *Define Core Records Series*

#### *Conduct Retrospective Analysis of Existing Historical Materials*

#### *Conduct Departmental Studies*

#### *Identify Significant Records Series for Archival Preservation*

FIGURE 6.

needs of a professional membership association (see Figure 6).<sup>27</sup> In particular, the description here incorporates records management activities into the model, which previously has had solely an archival focus. Also, although a documentation plan is part of a series of archival appraisal efforts that select documentation from the top down (by understanding its context, functions, and activities) rather than the bottom up (a records survey), in practice these two approaches can and do overlap, to the benefit of both. Separated for analysis, they often are carried out simultaneously in a process that involves continual feedback and revision.

The first stage of documentation planning is analysis, including of the institution itself, similar institutions, and the institution with regard to its broader context. Institutional analysis consists of five aspects: understanding the insti-

<sup>27</sup> See Joan D. Krizack, "Documentation Planning and Case Study," in *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System*, 207–35. The concept of a documentation plan was not publicly developed at the time the ONS archives and records program began. However, many of its elements were, in practice, adopted. A documentation plan is a strategy for developing an archives program; the efforts at ONS were more tactics for implementing a plan in a particular type of setting. Also, the documentation plan does not explicitly address records management issues, although it should and can do so. For a related model, institutional functional analysis, see Helen W. Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, N.J.: Scarecrow Press, 1992).

tution's mission, structure, and activities;<sup>28</sup> identifying whether the institution is freestanding or not; noting how the institution interacts with other institutions; learning about the institution's history and culture; and understanding institutional constraints. To this list must be added, in addition to an institution's past, recognizing its trajectory into the future. Many associations work hard on planning for the immediate, intermediate, and long-range future, and this affects both the activities to be documented and also the archives and records program itself.

The mission of the professional membership association, along with its activities and organizational structure, can be learned from sources such as a mission statement and recent annual reports. For the most part, associations are freestanding, although they may well fall under a broader voluntary umbrella (e.g., the National Federation for Specialty Nursing Organizations) or a stronger organizational link (e.g., the American Institute of Physics). Still, professional membership associations are relatively independent.

Interactions with other organizations may take many forms, from intimate ties (e.g., of the Oncology Nursing Certification Corporation and Oncology Nursing Press to ONS), to close ties in very specific areas (e.g., accreditation of continuing education programs, funding of special programs), to ad hoc alliances (especially noteworthy during the health care reform movement of the early 1990s), to formal or informal liaisons with organizations sharing some similar interests. The level of interaction will affect both the nature of the written record and its ultimate placement in repositories. Some of these interconnections will be obvious from bylaws, annual reports, policy manuals, and organizational charts; others will be learned as the archives and records program progresses.

Becoming familiar with the association's past and future is extremely important not only for understanding the records, but also for recognizing how best to intervene in order to ensure that good recordkeeping practices are in place. Understanding the association's past will help identify the strengths and weaknesses of the written record to date, shed light on past and current patterns of communication and recordkeeping practices, recognize the ease or difficulty of changing those practices for the better, and identify definite breaks

<sup>28</sup> Krizack and Samuels focus on functions, or groupings of institutional activities with common goals into a few categories, rather than on activities. This works well for analyzing the organization on a broad scale. Records, however, arise out of specific activities, and a program that encompasses archives and records management in practice needs to work at this more detailed level too. Perhaps the true art of appraisal is the ability to combine both macroanalysis and microanalysis. Similarly, this paper tends to focus on organizational structure at least as much as on functions or activities. Once again, the difference between broader preliminary (or ongoing) analysis and implementing a program in practice becomes clear. Certainly the archivist and records manager wants to understand an organization in terms of functions and activities, but the actual implementation of a records management program in any one setting will necessarily be through organizational units. Hence the emphasis on structure in the case study, and indeed structure will be an emphasis in any setting—just not necessarily the same structure.



in the surviving record.<sup>29</sup> For example, the nature of the written record will be qualitatively different before and after the founding of the association's national headquarters, along with identifying the likely places for retrieving "lost" records. Understanding the association's future will enable the archives and records program to identify new areas to document, new technologies with which to cope, and effective ways to incorporate good recordkeeping practices into the routine business of the association. A professional membership association's past can be learned from historical articles and books, annual reports, and newsletters.<sup>30</sup> The future trajectory may be identified if the association has a comprehensive, detailed, monitored, and updated strategic plan.

Understanding institutional constraints informs the archivist and records manager of the potential nature and extent of his program in terms of staffing, space, and budget. An examination of annual budgets, audits, and staff and space planning documents can shed some light on this factor.

The next stage of analysis is understanding the nature of professional membership associations. Such a comparison helps the archivist and records manager recognize the idiosyncrasies of his or her own association, along with its potential additional activities, different records-related issues, and previously unrecognized activities or records. Comparison with other organizations may help identify the future trajectory of the association, along with potential new ways of recordkeeping and other issues that arise for associations either significantly larger or smaller than one's own. In many cases, similar associations have banded together under a larger umbrella (e.g., the National Federation for Specialty Nursing Organizations), whose publications may well place the association in a broader context. Also useful are the materials and publications of the American Society of Association Executives (such as its journal, *Association Management*).

The last stage of analysis is an understanding of the broad context in which the association operates. For professional membership associations in the health sciences, the book *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System*, which includes the description of the documentation planning model, contains an exhaustive description of the health care system in the United States. Archivists and records managers in other areas need to locate similar materials. Because professional membership associations operate actively within their respective communities, understanding this broader context is vital to the work

<sup>29</sup> Part of this process also involves getting beyond formal documents and into actual practices. Many organizations simply do not document themselves very well, or what is written fails to accord well with actual practice. Hence my emphasis on weaknesses of the written record and on patterns of communication.

<sup>30</sup> Examples for nursing include Lyndia Flanagan, comp., *One Strong Voice: The Story of the American Nurses' Association* (Kansas City, Mo.: American Nurses' Association, 1976); Marianne Bankert, *Watchful Care: A History of America's Nurse Anesthetists* (New York: Continuum, 1989); and Nevidjon, *Building a Legacy: Voices of Oncology Nurses*. Often histories of a discipline contain useful information about the professional membership association for that discipline. A non-nursing example includes *The British Astronomical Association: The First Fifty Years* and *The British Astronomical Association: The Second Fifty Years*, respectively, B.A.A. *Memoirs* 42.1 (December 1989) and 42.2 (December 1990).

of the archives and records program. Also, associations depend upon these communities for their membership base, another reason that behooves the archivist and records manager to understand this broader environment.

The first stage of the documentation plan, analysis, is complete at this point. The second stage, selection, will be discussed below. But within this overall strategy, we still need tactics to map general documentation plans to actually implementing a program in an organization with such highly dispersed activities and records.

Continuing with the early steps towards designing an integrated archives and records program (see Figure 5), the third step is for the archivist and records manager to develop a plan to implement an effective program based on the analysis done in the documentation plan for strategy and a knowledge of professional membership associations for tactics. Most important is the identification of organizational units that require different approaches. National headquarters offices, even if they are located in more than one place (some associations maintain two or more offices, often with one in Washington, D.C.), are most amenable to standard archives and records management techniques. All departments should be examined for the activities for which they are responsible, along with the most obvious points of contact (very often department directors and secretaries).

Also to be identified are dependent units, by which is meant those organizational units that cannot sustain their own archives. These units may be permanent (e.g., governing boards, committees, councils) or temporary (e.g., task forces, working groups, ad hoc committees). In any case, because of the rapid and complete turnover of their membership, these groups require record-keeping guidelines and training, with the eventual placement of their records of continuing value into the national headquarters' archives. Key focal points, i.e., those through whom all communications and records pass, should be identified (most often chairs). For some units, such as governing boards, all members may fall within the scope of routine interaction with the archives and records program.

A third group to identify are the independent units, such as local chapters and special interest groups, which may turn over leadership regularly but have a stable continuous membership and sometimes independent resources. These units are candidates for creating and maintaining their own archives and records programs, under the direction and supervision of the national archives and records program. Each of these three types of units will require a different type of effort on the part of the archivist and records manager.

A fourth step towards designing and implementing the archives and records program is to draft archives and records policies and procedures. While these cannot be fully written immediately, the outlines can be completed in time, and they also will provide a basis for many of the questions that the archivist and records manager needs to ask when later meeting with each organizational unit. Policies may include collecting, arrangement and description,

## SAMPLE RECORDS POLICY

All employees are responsible for managing ONS records in accordance with standard records management procedures. Records consist of any recorded information, regardless of format, that is generated in the conduct of ONS business. Records include, but are not limited to, publications, paper documents, computer files, electronic mail messages (cc:Mail and Internet), photographs, and any audiovisual recordings.

All records generated in the course of ONS business are solely the property of ONS. Records may not be removed from the office without permission of an employee's immediate supervisor. Upon separating from ONS, employees may take duplicate copies of certain products as examples of their work, but only with permission of their supervisor.

Certain records must be kept confidential, either because of the nature of the record (e.g., personnel files) or legal agreement (e.g., oral history taped interviews). When required, for reasons of confidentiality or by external requirement (e.g., continuing education files), certain records must be kept secured in locked cabinets.

Certain records must be destroyed in a shredder instead of in the trash. These include any records with social security numbers, credit card numbers, or other confidential information.

Source: *ONS Personnel Policy and Procedure Manual* (1995)

FIGURE 7.

preservation, electronic records, and access; for procedures, perhaps surveying, scheduling, accessioning, processing, reference, vital records, and disaster planning.<sup>31</sup> It is much easier continuously to update and complete an outline than later to try to write a large number of policies and procedures from scratch all at once. One policy that can be drafted immediately is a general records policy for inclusion in the overall policy manual and/or a personnel policy and procedures manual (see Figure 7 for a sample policy).

Also helpful is a chart or timeline that lists different projects (e.g., policies and procedures to be fully written) and that can be used as a checklist, a way of measuring progress, and the basis for department quarterly or annual reports. Since in reality much of this process will occur simultaneously and chaotically rather than sequentially and orderly, it is almost necessary to have some type of tracking mechanism for ensuring adequate progress on several fronts.

At this point, the archivist and records manager needs to begin the fifth step towards designing and implementing the archives and records program, which is to collect information from each of these different units or, in some

<sup>31</sup> Works that were useful at ONS included Mary F. Robek, Gerald F. Brown, and Wilmer O. Maedke, *Information and Records Management*, 3d ed. (Mission Hills, Calif.: Glencoe, 1987); Skupsky, *Recordkeeping Requirements*; Ann Pederson, ed., *Keeping Archives* (Sydney: Australian Society of Archivists, 1987); Cox, *Managing Institutional Archives*; and the manuals in the Society of American Archivists' *Archival Fundamentals Series*. Newer editions of two of these works are Judith Ellis, *Keeping Archives*, 2d ed. (Port Melbourne: Australian Society of Archivists, 1993) and Mary F. Robek, Gerald F. Brown, and David O. Stephens, *Information and Records Management*, 4th ed. (New York: Glencoe, 1995).

cases, a sampling of units. The goal is to learn about a wide range of topics: unit activities, patterns of communication, records (especially the identification of records series), recordkeeping habits, records use, internal and external recordkeeping requirements, access restrictions (required and/or desirable), current and immediate future uses of automation, possible vital records, information for a disaster prevention and recovery plan, and issues concerning preservation (such as the creation of records of continuing value on more permanent media, such as acid-free paper).<sup>32</sup> This information will ultimately provide the basis for the records retention and disposition schedule, recordkeeping guidelines, a disaster plan, the vital records program, and a plan for managing electronic records. At the national headquarters, meetings with the department directors should be soon followed by meetings with the entire staff, department by department, in order to get a fuller grasp of activities, records, and recordkeeping practices, as well as to inform each staff person about the archives and records program. For dependent units, selective interviews (with, e.g., committee and council chairs) may be adequate, although in some cases all members of a unit (e.g., the governing board) may need to be interviewed. For independent units, such as local chapters or special interest groups, one or two in-depth interviews can serve as case studies. Two obvious candidates are the closest local chapter(s) and the special interest groups interested and willing to cooperate. In these cases, the president or chair should also help identify one or more persons willing to serve as unit archivist(s) for at least two years.

For the national headquarters especially, the documentation plan offers some additional useful guidance. According to the model for the second stage, selection, the four steps are: (1) define the core records series, (2) conduct a retrospective analysis of existing historical materials, (3) conduct departmental studies, and (4) identify significant records series for archival preservation.

Core records series comprise the minimum documentation necessary to reflect broadly the activities and structure of the association, to which the records manager must add records that the association is required to keep or is in its best interests to maintain. Krizack recommends addressing the administrative function first, for it provides a general overview of the organization and its activities, as well as being comparatively similar from one association to another. Areas for review include governance, external relations, fiscal management, facilities management, human resources management, and even archives and records management—for documenting regular recordkeeping practices is definitely in the best interests of the association.<sup>33</sup> Useful records might include governing board meeting minutes, articles of incorporation and bylaws, annual reports, organizational charts, policy and procedures manuals,

<sup>32</sup> For a useful set of questions adopted for departments in an entirely different type of institution, a pediatric hospital, see Krizack, "Documentation Planning and Case Study," 230–31.

<sup>33</sup> For several examples of the importance of documenting what are routine, regular, accepted recordkeeping practices, see the examples at the beginning of Skupsky, *Recordkeeping Requirements*.

annual budgets and audits, personnel records, and contracts for major services.

In the documentation plan, the second stage of selection is doing a retrospective analysis of existing historical materials. This aspect is here de-emphasized (unless the mandate of the archives and records program stresses historical records), for the archives and records program's hands will be full enough with developing a program to manage recent and current records. Collections of "historical materials" are often near random deposits of ephemera and other non-records materials that are of limited value. Also, these historical collections are not going anywhere, whereas haphazard management of current records can lead to the inadvertent destruction of important files. Finally, the problems of increasingly large volume and varying formats (including electronic records) with current and recent records become compounded if too much emphasis is placed on appraising, arranging, and describing the historical collections. These latter functions are important and should be done at some point, but only after a general archives and records program is well underway.<sup>34</sup>

Stage three of selection in the documentation plan is conducting departmental studies. These document nonadministrative activities that for associations fall under the broad categories of membership, meeting planning, education, certification and licensure, government relations, research, and publishing. Core records need to be determined by each department in consultation with the archivist and records manager. In general, analyzing the organization department by department provides a reasonably comprehensive sweep of activities (routine and otherwise), projects, records, and recordkeeping practices. For example, an education department or publisher issuing standards or guidelines needs to document each phase of a publication's production to limit liability. This example also serves to remind the archivist and records manager that many activities are now conducted across departmental lines, or sometimes entirely outside departmental auspices. Carefully reading through annual reports and newsletters ought to help identify some of these activities. In any case, general documentation, such as meeting minutes and annual reports, will likely be generated by each department and committee. In many cases, department and committee activities will be intertwined, with similar but nonidentical records residing with each. In such cases, the archives and records program should probably emphasize national headquarters' department records and supplement them with nonduplicate committee records. This emphasis is stressed because full-time staff members in a single location are more likely to have a more complete set of records that have been more systematically maintained, and these records in turn are much easier for the archivist and records manager to review. The end product of this process is stage four of the documentation plan, identifying significant records series for

<sup>34</sup> As always, there are exceptions. In some cases historical records can be used to advocate for an archives and records program, much as anniversaries often mark the beginning of archives.

archival appraisal,<sup>35</sup> a step which looks suspiciously like developing a well-informed records retention and disposition schedule.<sup>36</sup>

Krizack also mentions some practical elements to implementing a documentation plan: administrative founding, the archives committee, and documentation plan articulation. These steps are more appropriate for larger organizations, for professional membership associations tend to be smaller (in terms of national headquarters staff) than the hospital that formed the basis of Krizack's study. Noncentralized association units are more dispersed and thus require techniques suggested earlier in the case study. Still, for the sake of completeness, let us review these aspects of the documentation plan.

Administrative foundation is the building of administrative support for the documentation planning effort. Within a professional membership association, this means that the archives and records program should be at the same organizational level as other key administrative functions, such as finance. At ONS, the Department of Archives and Records was so placed. As such, it reported directly to the Executive Director and had support at that level. Continuous contact with members of the Board of Directors and other volunteer leadership solidified both awareness of, and support for, the archives and records program.

Establishing an archives committee, composed of key administrators and other figures (e.g., legal counsel), seems less necessary in a professional membership association, where such contact can take place informally. As it is, the archivist and records manager will be working personally with national headquarters administrators and volunteer leaders and thus will have abundant opportunity for feedback and outreach. Legal counsel can be consulted as needed. Should the professional society be exceptionally large, the value of an archives committee at headquarters increases substantially, however.

Implementation of the documentation plan is best described below with specific application to professional membership associations. However, it is clear that the documentation planning process provides an analysis of the association that greatly aids the archivist and records manager with his or her work. Based on the knowledge of the association derived from the documentation plan and select interviews, the program should be ready for full articulation and

<sup>35</sup> For examples with more of a focus on determining significance, see Terry Cook, "Many are called, but few are chosen": Appraisal Guidelines for Sampling and Selecting Case Files," in *Archivaria* 32 (1991): 25–50, and his *The Archival Appraisal of Records Containing Personal Information: A RAMP Study with Guidelines* (Paris: UNESCO, 1991).

<sup>36</sup> One difference between the documentation plan and a records schedule is that a records schedule also includes nonpermanent records. It seems a poor use of time and resources to survey an entire organization, its activities, and its records, and not determine the disposition of all records. Second, any archives program will be much more effective when integrated with a records management effort. It may also be an easier sell to gain cooperation between organization units and a joint archives and records program. Among other factors, a joint program has a lot to offer organizational units in terms of managing their current records. This last point also highlights perhaps a difference in attitude, for a joint archives and records program is part of the effective management of the association, a point less convincing for an archives program alone.



implementation. At this point the archivist and records manager needs to work along three different lines: national headquarters' departments, dependent units, and independent units.

For the national headquarters, the departmental interviews should initiate the chain reaction of surveying, establishing records schedules, acquisitions, processing, reference, and access. Training will likely be necessary for the entire staff on the use of records schedules, developing filing systems that accommodate both department needs and good recordkeeping practices (such as identifying, or more likely creating, good records series), and managing computer files (especially word processing files, electronic mail, in-house databases, and public access avenues such as World Wide Web pages). Enough information should have been gathered at this point for the archives and records program gradually to write policies and procedures, develop a full records retention and disposition schedule, begin a vital records program, form a disaster prevention and recovery plan, write recordkeeping guidelines, and recognize where additional training needs to take place.<sup>37</sup> Special care should also be taken to ensure that records in electronic format are included along with paper records.

For dependent units, based on the interviews, the archivist and records manager can establish a records schedule and begin implementation through guidelines and training. Every opportunity for contact and formal or informal training should be used. At ONS, the spring leadership meeting (for Board of Directors, committee and council chairs, chapter and SIG leadership, and newsletter editors) provided ideal training time. Booths and roundtable presentations at national meetings are also effective venues. Regular contact with incoming and continuing board members and chairs should be part of the archives and records program's routine.

For independent units, guidelines and training should get the process started. Again, the archivist and records manager should take advantage of whatever avenues for contact and training exist (such as newsletters targeted specifically for the leadership of these units). Routine contact with unit leadership and the designated archivist(s) should be established once guidelines are fully written.

At this point the program is established and in place. Many of these activities, once begun, will become routine. Perhaps only now will the archivist and record manager have the opportunity to review extensively whatever historical materials have been collected.

<sup>37</sup> Because the national headquarters may not have sufficient space in more than one area, it may help to contract with a records storage company for off-site storage of vital records (such as policies and procedures manuals). Off-site storage can also be used effectively for records that cannot or should not be destroyed for several years, as is the case with many financial records. Based on my experience, one should be certain to do a site visit, as many facilities I examined were not even close to being acceptable storage conditions. Useful guides include the standards produced by the Association of Records Managers and Administrators (ARMA), *Guidelines: Records Center Operations* (1986), and the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations, *Facilities Standards for Agency Records Centers* (36 CFR § 1228.222).



Finally, a number of caveats must be raised, based both on the experience at ONS and elsewhere. First, even with a professional archivist and records manager on staff, there will likely be inadequate resources to support a comprehensive program. In such cases, the association's management must be made aware of the limitations of a small archives and records office, along with a range of options for what is possible given the resources at hand. Priorities for professional membership associations will be meetings, education and publishing programs, and lobbying, so support services such as archives and records will be less well-supported.

Second, exacerbating this first problem, is that professional membership associations share with other organizations the process of initiating new projects without adequate recognition of the resources, especially staffing, required to carry out ongoing functions along with new projects—let alone doing all this well. A program that works well within its limitations will ultimately be more successful than a program that over time is always stretched too thin.

Third, beware major anniversaries. Such events are extremely time-consuming for an archives and records office, which will be assigned the tasks of writing historical articles, developing historical exhibits, and generally supporting the celebration of such major events. Archivists and records managers who do not recognize that the anniversary year and the prior year will be demanding and disruptive to routine department activities will carry on at their own peril. Such celebrations do wonders to increase the visibility and value of an archives program, but not without a severe impact on routine department activities.

At ONS, for example, the Department of Archives and Records not only was responsible for implementing an archives and records program for the association, it was also responsible to the Archives Committee for managing an oral history program, developing and displaying historical exhibits, and developing historical resources to support the celebration of the organization's twentieth anniversary. Because the department director was also the only trained librarian on staff, all library functions (acquisitions, reference, database searching, maintenance of the in-house library) fell to the department as well, thus resulting in the renaming of the department to the Department of Archives, Records, and Library Services in late 1995. Given a staff of one professional and one-half of one secretary's time, all these tasks—plus special projects often appropriately assigned to the department—could not be done both well and simultaneously. Conducting a successful archives and records program itself is a full-time task, let alone in conjunction with a wide range of other projects.

A topic that has been underemphasized here is the role of electronic records in professional membership associations. Computers may be used in any number of different ways now and in the immediate future, with no realistic way of predicting their impact. Whether they like it or not, archivists and records managers are and will be confronted with electronic records, and they will have to develop strategies for learning how to cope with these records and

systems effectively. They will even have to develop new strategies for locating information to aid them with this task.<sup>38</sup> But this is a topic for a whole other paper.

## Conclusion

Professional membership associations are numerous and important contributors to society, yet they are often poorly represented in the archival record. They pose for archivists problems both quantitative and qualitative. Quantitatively, only a very few professional membership associations have an in-house archives and records program staffed by a full-time professional archivist and records manager. Qualitatively, the twin characteristics of highly dispersed activities and a high rate of turnover wreak havoc on traditional archives and records management techniques. The case study and model presented here are intended to help guide archivists and records managers in professional associations, as well as perhaps to promote their presence or even encourage their establishment.<sup>39</sup>

For smaller associations unable to devote adequate resources to developing and maintaining their own archives and records programs, it is still their responsibility to make provisions for managing their own records. Simply occasionally offering "historical records" to a collecting repository is not in the best interests of the organization or the repository. Some repositories may be willing and able to work extensively with the association to provide a systematic ongoing archives and records program that satisfies all parties involved. Unfortunately, the disadvantages of such arrangements often include no strong enforcement mechanism for transferring records, less vested interest in the case of an outside repository than with an in-house operation, and potential conflicts between the needs of the association (for accountability, liability, effective management) and the desires of the repository (for documents of historical value). Nevertheless, successful agreements can and have been made between organizations and repositories in cases where an organization does not have the resources and ability to sustain its own archives and records program. Some of these have been funded special projects, such as the AIDS History Project at the University of California at San Francisco. Whether such efforts can be done widely and systematically without external funding remains an open question. At least this paper lays out the issues that both the association and the repository need to consider before embarking on a cooperative effort.

<sup>38</sup> Some case studies on electronic records are described in the spring 1995 issue of the *American Archivist*. Ongoing research can be found in journals such as *Archives and Museum Informatics*.

<sup>39</sup> Such was the case at ONS. A site visit to ONS by representatives of the American Association of Nurse Anesthetists helped AANA recognize the need for, understand the nature of, and establish its own archives and records program, which exists today.

I hope that this article aids not only professional membership associations but also other types of organizations that have highly dispersed activities.<sup>40</sup> It may even serve as a paradigm for very large organizations with small archives and records programs, for the model for independent units (analysis, guidelines, training) maintaining their own records could be effective, but only if the archives and records program is proactive and accessible—and has the authority to audit recordkeeping activities with substantial consequences for failing to comply with established standards. A similar approach will likely be required for dealing with electronic records in general, for it makes little sense to promote different recordkeeping habits based solely on format. This shift may also represent a smaller role for archives as repositories.

One facet that may need to be de-emphasized is the apparent dependence on organizational structures, which today are constantly changing if not simply being abandoned. Nevertheless, there will still be activities and bodies, groups, or individuals responsible for them. With the increasing recognition that “ad hococracy” is becoming the norm in lots of different types of organizations,<sup>41</sup> the role of the archivist as coordinator may well be the only solution to archives and records issues. In such cases, the model for dependent units (such as task forces) may become the order of the day. Nevertheless, while the goal is ultimately documenting activities, implementing a program to do this invariably is executed through institutional structures, regardless of how ephemeral they are. Activities generally are accomplished by groups responsible for accomplishing tasks, and even short-term teams or task forces still have an obligation to manage records for the institution.

Another facet that deserves exploration is the relationship between macroanalysis (such as documentation strategies, documentation planning, and institutional functional analysis) and microanalysis (such as records surveying and working individually with departments). This relationship mirrors that of differing approaches focusing on function versus those focusing on transactions (where a record is defined as evidence of a transaction).<sup>42</sup> These different strands in recent archival literature are developing in parallel, both in opposition to traditional archival practice, and have yet to be integrated with one another.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>40</sup> For a different perspective on documenting highly dispersed activities, one based on a subject approach, see the work of the Center for History of Physics on documenting high-energy physics (*Documenting Collaborations in High-energy Physics* series of reports) and space science and geophysics (*AIP Study of Multi-institutional Collaborations Phase II: Space Science and Geophysics* series of reports).

<sup>41</sup> Tom Peters, *Liberation Management: Necessary Disorganization for the Nanosecond Nineties* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 185. It is not a coincidence that this statement occurs in the section titled “Beyond Hierarchy.”

<sup>42</sup> See, for example, the essays in David Bearman, *Electronic Evidence: Strategies for Managing Records in Contemporary Organizations* (Pittsburgh: Archives and Museum Informatics, 1994).

<sup>43</sup> Preliminary attempts have been made, however, e.g., Terry Cook: “Mind Over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal,” in *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor*, edited by Barbara Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 38–70.

The eight principles outlined above represent a foundation upon which any institutional archives and records management program should be based. In particular, archivists will have to move beyond curatorship and into the realm of guiding and coordinating others' activities if they hope to be successful. Moreover, as organizational structures become more transitory, archivists must focus more on activities and patterns of communication in order to document an organization adequately. This has been emphasized for multi-institutional collaborations and discipline-based archival activities, but it is just as true for archivists working within a single institution.

### Appendix I. Proposed Records Schedule for Chapters

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#### PRESIDENT

Annual Reports	Transfer full record copy to Archives. Retain previous year's report for reference. Transfer both report to National Office and report to Chapter Board and Membership (if different).
Contracts & Leases	Retain with President while current; then transfer to Archives and retain for at least 7 years.
Legal Agreements	Retain with President while current; transfer to Archives afterwards.
Manuals	Retain most current version; discard old manuals.
Special Projects	Transfer all records to Archives upon completion of project.

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#### TREASURER

IRS Employee Identification Number Form	Send official copy to Archives; retain reference copy with Treasurer.
Reports (to Board and Membership)	Transfer copy to Archives, if a written report.
Financial Reports (quarterly)	Retain for 7 years, then discard.
Financial Reports (annual)	Send official copy to Archives; retain reference copy of last 7 years of reports with Treasurer.
Budgets	Send official copy to Archives; retain reference copy of last 7 years of budgets with Treasurer.
Ledger/Cash Journal	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer, transfer older ledger sheets to Archives.
Checkbook	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer; then discard.
Paid Bills & Invoices	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer, then discard. <b>EXCEPTION:</b> Bills and cancelled checks for important payments should <i>not</i> be discarded; transfer to Archives after 7 years.

**Appendix I. Proposed Records Schedule for Chapters (continued)****TREASURER (con't)**

Reimbursement Forms	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer, then discard.
Cancelled Checks	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer, then discard. See <b>EXCEPTION</b> above.
Bank Statements	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer, then discard.
Bank Reconciliation Forms	Retain last 7 years with Treasurer, then discard.
List of Contributors	Retain 7 years with Treasurer, then transfer to Archives.
List of Scholarship/ Honoraria/Grant Recipients	Retain 7 years with Treasurer, then transfer to Archives.
Assets Files	Retain with Treasurer while active, then transfer to Archives

**SECRETARY (FOR BOARD)**

Chapter Goals & Objectives	Send official copy to Archives; retain reference copy with Secretary.
Meeting Agendas & Minutes	Send official copy to Archives; retain reference copy with Secretary.
Strategic Plan	Send official copy to Archives; retain reference copy with Secretary. Transfer process/planning files to Archives.

**SECRETARY**

Correspondence	Retain current and previous year with Secretary; transfer older files to Archives.
Matrix Records	Retain reference copy of Chapter Charter, Standing Rules, and logos with Secretary. All official matrix records should be in the Archives.
Chapter Policies	Retain current version with Secretary; send current and previous versions to Archives.
Chapter Procedures	Retain current version with Secretary; send current and previous versions to Archives.
Board Roster	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous year with Secretary (for reference).
Membership Roster	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous year with Secretary (for reference).
Forms	Retain current versions with Secretary; discard old versions.
Letterhead	Retain current version with Secretary; discard old version.
ONS Reference Files	Retain current versions with Secretary; discard old versions.

**Appendix I. Proposed Records Schedule for Chapters (continued)**

**MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Meeting Agendas & Minutes	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous year with Chair.
Committee Roster	Retain current and previous years with Chair, send official copy of all rosters to Archives.
Committee Process/ Operating Guidelines	Retain current version with Chair, send current and previous versions to Archives.
Periodic Reports	Transfer copy to Archives, if written report.
Annual Reports	Send official copy to Archives; retain last 3 years reference copies with Chair.
Membership Maintenance Files	Retain with Chair; Archivist and Chair should review these files for weeding and possible transfer to Archives.
Membership Files	Retain active files with Chair. Consult with Archivist for possibility of transferring inactive files to Archives.
Attendance Records	Send official copy to the Archives; retain current year with Chair.
Projects	Transfer files to Archives upon completion of project.

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Meeting Agendas & Minutes	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous years with Chair.
Committee Roster	Retain current and previous years with Chair, send official copy of all rosters to Archives.
Committee Process/ Operating Guidelines	Retain current versions with Chair, send current and previous versions to Archives.
Periodic Reports	Transfer copy to Archives, if written report.
Annual Reports	Send official copy to Archives; retain last 3 years reference copies with Chair.
Board Roster	Retain current and previous years (copies exist with Secretary and Archivist).
Election Files	After the election, transfer to Archives criteria, sample ballot, candidate information, and election results.

**PROGRAM COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Meeting Agendas & Minutes	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous years with Chair.
Committee Roster	Retain current and previous years with Chair, send official copy of all rosters to Archives.

**Appendix 1. Proposed Records Schedule for Chapters (continued)****PROGRAM COMMITTEE CHAIR (con't)**

Committee Process/ Operating Guidelines	Retain current version with Chair, send current and previous versions to Archives.
Periodic Reports	Transfer copy to Archives, if written report.
Annual Reports	Send official copy to Archives; retain last 3 years reference copies with Chair.
Program Files	Retain current and previous year with Chair; Archivist and Chair to weed files and determine what is transferred to Archives.
Speakers Files	Transfer to Archives after speaking engagement.

**RESEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIR**

Meeting Agendas & Minutes	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous years with Chair.
Committee Roster	Retain current and previous years with Chair; send official copy of all rosters to Archives.
Committee Process/ Operating Guidelines	Retain current version with Chair; send current and previous versions to Archives.
Periodic Reports	Transfer copy to Archives, if written report.
Annual Reports	Send official copy to Archives; retain last 3 years reference copies with Chair.
Conferences	Transfer files to Archives after conference has ended.
Journal Clubs	Send copies of reading lists, attendance sheets, etc. to Archives on a regular basis.
Projects	Send files to Archives upon completion of project.
Research Grants	Send files (proposal, grant award, budget, reports, final product) to Archives upon completion of grant.
Research Awards	Send lists of reviewers and applicants, reviews, sample correspondence, evaluations, and final products to Archives annually. Retain successful applicant files; discard unsuccessful applicant files after 2 years.

**OTHER COMMITTEES/TASK FORCES**

Meeting Agendas & Minutes	Send official copy to Archives; retain current and previous years with Chair.
Committee Roster	Retain current and previous years with Chair; send official copy of all rosters to Archives
Committee Process/ Operating Guidelines	Retain current version with Chair; send current and previous versions to Archives.
Periodic Reports	Transfer copy to Archives, if written report.



**Appendix I. Proposed Records Schedule for Chapters (continued)**

**OTHER COMMITTEES/TASK FORCES (con't)**

Annual Reports	Send official copy to Archives; retain last 3 years reference copies with Chair.
Projects	Send files to Archives upon completion of project.

**NEWSLETTER EDITOR**

Chapter Newsletter	Send 2 copies to Archives at publication time.
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**HISTORIAN**

Chapter History	Send copy to Archives with each update.
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**HISTORIAN/MEMBERS**

Newspaper Clippings/Articles by Members	Photocopy onto acid-free paper and transfer to Archives.
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**MEMBERS**

Photographs	Send in to Archives with completed photograph indexing form.
Artifacts/Realia	Send in to Archives as soon as possible.

## Appendix II. Proposed Filing Scheme for Chapter Archives

### I. BUSINESS RECORDS

#### A. Matrix Records

1. Chapter Interest Group
2. Chapter Application/Renewals
3. Chapter Charter
4. Chapter & ONS Logos
5. Standing Rules (formerly bylaws)
6. IRS Employee Identification Number
7. Chapter Policies
8. Chapter Procedures

#### B. Board of Directors

1. Chapter Goals & Objectives
2. Board Roster
3. Meetings
  - a. Agendas
  - b. Minutes
4. Strategic Plan
  - a. Process & Planning Files
  - b. Strategic Plans

#### C. President

1. Annual Reports (to ONS)
2. Annual Reports (to Chapter)
3. Award Nominees
4. Contracts
5. Legal Agreements

#### D. Treasurer

1. Treasurer's Reports (to Chapter and Board Meetings)
2. Financial Reports (annual)
3. Budgets (annual)
4. Ledger
5. List of Contributors
6. List of Scholarship/Honoraria/Grant Recipients
7. List of Assets

#### E. Secretary

1. Correspondence—incoming
2. Correspondence—outgoing

#### F. Membership (General)

1. Membership Roster (end-of-year)
2. Business Meetings
  - a. Agendas
  - b. Minutes
  - c. Attendance

#### 3. Conferences

- a. Planning Files
- b. Conference Packets & Promotional Materials
- c. Evaluations

#### 4. Journal Club

- a. Schedule
- b. Reading Lists
- c. Attendance

### G. Membership Committee

1. Committee Roster
2. Committee Process/Operating Guidelines
3. Meetings
  - a. Agendas
  - b. Minutes
4. Reports
  - a. Annual Reports
  - b. Periodic Reports (at Board and Chapter Meetings)
  - c. Membership Status Reports (at Board Meetings)
5. Projects (e.g., membership needs assessment)

### H. Nominating Committee

1. Committee Roster
2. Committee Process/Operating Guidelines
3. Meetings
  - a. Agendas
  - b. Minutes
4. Reports
  - a. Annual Reports
  - b. Periodic Reports (at Board and Chapter Meetings)
5. Ballots (sample)
6. Election Results

### I. Program Committee

1. Committee Roster
2. Committee Process/Operating Guidelines
3. Meetings
  - a. Agendas
  - b. Minutes
4. Reports
  - a. Annual Reports
  - b. Periodic Reports (at Board and Chapter Meetings)
5. Program Planning Files
6. Speakers' Files

## **Appendix II. Proposed Filing Scheme for Chapter Archives (*continued*)**

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### **J. Research Committee**

1. Committee Roster
2. Committee Process/Operating Guidelines
3. Meetings
  - a. Agendas
  - b. Minutes
4. Reports
  - a. Annual Reports
  - b. Periodic Reports (at Board and Chapter Meetings)
5. Research Grants & Projects
  - a. Proposals/Applications
  - b. Awards
  - c. Budgets
  - d. Final Reports
  - e. Final Products
6. Chapter Research Awards & Grants
  - a. (Sub-)Committee & Reviewers Rosters
  - b. Applications
  - c. Reviews & Notifications
  - d. Evaluations
  - e. Final Products
7. Other Projects

### **II. PUBLICATIONS**

- A. Chapter Newsletters
- B. Articles by Members
- C. Educational Materials Developed by Chapter
- D. Public Relations Materials

### **III. PROJECTS**

- A. Special Projects
  1. Applications
  2. Final Reports
  3. Final Products
- B. Other projects

### **IV. HISTORICAL MATERIALS**

- A. Chapter History
- B. Scrapbook
- C. Chapter Awards
- D. News Clippings
- E. Photographs
- F. Realia