P E R S P E C T I V E

The Origins of Documentation Strategies in Context: Recollections and Reflections

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A b s t r a c t

The author re-examines, after twenty-five years, the influences on his ideas in the initial development of documentation strategies, reviewing in detail his preparation for the 1984 SAA program session at which documentation strategies were first presented. He explores the links between these ideas and several of his roles during that period, particularly as first director of the Historical Records Program at NHPRC from 1975 to 1981, as chair of the 1982 SAA Program Committee, and in the creation of the first Task Force, and then the Committee, on Goals and Priorities for the Archival Profession. He identifies four core approaches to assessment, planning, and advocacy for the profession that he drew from his experience, and he argues that his conceptual model and related proposals for documentation strategies flowed logically from these core approaches, which have much broader application. The author speculates that re-examining the origins of documentation strategies, and the period in which these ideas were developed, may suggest to the archives profession that it should refocus more directly and vigorously on the larger issue of archival conditions in the United States and on how to advocate directly with particular parties essential to addressing them.

Introduction

Recently I began to recall the experiences, interests, and motives that influenced my role in the development of documentation strategies. I revisited many of my files from the late 1970s and early 1980s,[1] including those relating to the introduction of this concept at the 1984 SAA program session in Washington.[2] I also began to reflect on the relationship between the origin of documentation strategy concepts and broader efforts underway in those years to promote archival assessment and planning. These include, for example, the planning track in the 1982 SAA Annual Meeting program, the statewide assessment projects funded by NHPRC, and the work of the Task Force on Goals and Priorities. But there were many other, more particular examinations of conditions in those days linked to framing strategies suitable to improve them—which is why Bruce Dearstyne calls this period "the age of archival analysis."[3] While I regarded creation-selection-appraisal as the most neglected archival function then, my main interest was in how archivists could define, assess, plan for, and act upon the full range of archival conditions nationwide.

My conceptual model for documentation strategies, introduced in 1984 and then refined for publication,[4] reflected my general belief in four core approaches to addressing the issues facing the archival profession. These approaches grew from my experience and observations, especially during the years discussed in this article, 1975 through 1984, and I have not found a reason to discard them. They are

First, assessing conditions based on data and on expertise;

Second, adopting priorities and strategies for an action agenda;

Third, cooperating and collaborating within the archival community; and

Fourth, advocating desired actions with other parties who can make a difference.

My own conceptualization of documentation strategies during those years was part of a larger effort to promote archival change beyond individual

[1] My reflections are prompted by an invitation from Terry Cook to submit an essay for a publication he is assembling in honor of Helen Samuels. I was honored to be asked to contribute but ultimately decided that the *American Archivist* was more suitable. I thank Helen and Terry for prompting me to return to the issues explored here.

[2] The session was "Speculations on Documentation Strategies," presented 3 September 1984. Patricia Aronsson was the chair and commentator. Helen Slotkin (after 1985, Helen Samuels) presented "Ring Around Route 128: A Conjectural Documentation Strategy." My title was "Defining Documentation Strategies: In Search of an Archival Chimera?"

[3] Bruce W. Dearstyne, *The Archival Enterprise: Modern Archival Principles, Practices, and Management Techniques* (Chicago: American Library Association, 1993), chapter 3, "The Age of Archival Analysis: Historical Records Conditions and Needs," 44–59.

[4] See Larry J. Hackman and Joan Warnow Blewett, "The Documentation Strategy Process: A Model and a Case Study," *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 12–47.

archivists and individual archives acting individually. I believed then, and believe now, that the archival enterprise nationwide benefits from a reliable, ongoing, and systematic assessment and reporting of conditions linked to a process to recommend priorities and strategies. This framework should address the entire archives community in the United States—and help it speak to other parties who can act on the findings and recommendations.

To be effective, such assessment and planning ought to involve experts and representatives from beyond the archival profession, and the findings and recommendations must effectively be brought to the attention of influential parties in key sectors. Reports and recommendations (including on documentation) must not end with discussion within the profession or with the actions of individual archivists and their programs. The attitudes and the infrastructure of the profession need to support wider action, including sophisticated, tailored, continuing advocacy beyond the archival community. Talking to ourselves and to the "general" public, as we so often do, seldom leads to substantial change. These same assumptions underlay my thinking about documentation strategies.

It long has been apparent that archival infrastructure, including archival traditions and attitudes, in the United States was—and I believe is still—insufficient to support broad application of my model for documentation strategy or to widely replicate or adapt the case study example offered by the American Institute for Physics. I was overly optimistic in the 1980s in hoping that other viable bases for documentation strategy development would be located or created—though I always had expected this to take much more time and testing than critics assumed. My writings and presentations then often referred to the documentation strategies approach as speculative or experimental—and always described the approach as a process, not a one-time project or report.

Why is revisiting the birth of documentation strategies of even mild interest at this late date? Perhaps for two reasons. First, in re-engaging with the profession after nearly fifteen years, I find that the ideas of documentation strategies still appear to resonate as a catalyst for discussion, debate, and publication about documentation and about appraisal theory and practice. And, second, some perceive that the introduction of these ideas indicates a transition in archival attitudes.[5] Revisiting the origins of documentation strategies may also suggest that the archives profession should refocus more directly and vigorously on the larger issue of archival conditions in the United States—not merely on archivists, but

[5] Some years ago, Terry Cook called documentation strategy, "the single most important North American contribution to the growing debate on appraisal theory, strategy, and methodology," in "Documentation Strategy," *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992): 181. See also Doris J. Malkmus, "Documentation Strategy: Mastodon or Retro-Success?," *American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 384–409. For the relationship of documentation strategy concepts to overall professional sensibilities, see, for example, Jennifer A. Marshall, "Documentation Strategies in the Twenty-First Century?," *Archival Issues* 23, no. 1 (1998): 59–74, and Elizabeth Snowden Johnson, "Our Archives, Our Selves: Documentation Strategy and the Re-Appraisal of Professional Identify," *American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 190–202.

also on the status of archives as organizations and of documentation of enduring value. We might also then consider how characteristics of the archival community have affected (or not) these conditions. As I revisit my early notes and reread my comments on "Present Conditions and Practices" and "Implications for Archival Principles and Practices" in the Hackman-Warnow article of 1987, I believe they offer still a useful reference for professional self-examination by the archival community.[6]

Background and Context: Assessment and Planning

Examining my files on the 1984 SAA Annual Meeting session, where we introduced core concepts and offered a first definition of documentation strategies, led me also to reflect on my experience at NHPRC and to review some documentation of my role as chair of the 1982 SAA Program Committee and in the formation and work of the Task Force (later Committee) on Goals and Priorities for the Archival Profession.[7] In these activities, I sought to encourage the archival community toward broader analysis, more vigorous discussion, and a search for strategic approaches to the major issues I thought we faced. My own conceptualization of documentation strategies drew on these personal experiences and interests. I certainly was not driven mainly by theoretical issues, concerned whether documentation strategies were Jenkinsonian or Shellenbergian in essence, or even focused on appraisal in a traditional sense—though appraisal theory seems to be the main heading assigned to subsequent discussions of documentation strategy. Influencing the creation and selection of records and the development of the archives function in records-creating organizations seemed to me to require a more forthright, ambitious, and activist stance from archivists and their profession, one that looked outward rather than inward.[8] Documentation strategies reflected this stance.

The NHPRC Records Program Experience

My formative experience with archives issues came between 1975 and 1981 while I was the first director of the new National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) Historical Records Program. The "R" had been

[6] Hackman and Warnow, "Documentation Strategy Process," 13–18 and 44–47.

[7] My thanks to Michael Doylen and Ellen Engseth at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, for finding and copying for me several documents from these two SAA activities. Some of my profession-related files are at the University of Wisconsin in Madison, though most are still in my possession.

[8] I suspect my years as an oral historian influenced my view that archivists ought to embrace an active role in promoting the creation of good documentation, rather than avoiding it. A digital environment seems finally to have helped the profession understand the need for archivists to be actively and influentially involved in institutional information policy and practices.

added to the NHPC by Congress in 1974. Initial advocates, especially a group of state archivists coordinated by Charles Lee, then director of the South Carolina Department of Archives and History, worked for several years for an independent program that would provide funds to the states. Congress ultimately decided not to create a new program but to add a "historical records" program to the authority of the existing National Historical Publications Commission. The NHPC had mainly supported scholarly documentary editing and microfilm publication projects. Neither the National Archives leadership nor the members of the NHPC were eager to have responsibility for a new grants program. It was largely Lee and other state archivists who made the key congressional contacts to obtain the legislation, though the SAA, the American Association for State and Local History, the American Historical Association, the Organization of American Historians, and others also joined the cause. After passage, Congress left the establishment of most policies, procedures, and priorities for the new program to the commission and its staff. The National Archives consulted the SAA and other professional associations as it set up the basic structure of the program.

Ann Campbell, the new executive director of the SAA, encouraged me to apply for the position of records program director, and I was hired in 1975. The records grant program began with miniscule funds reallocated from the publications program. Its very first grant was for $20,000 to the SAA for the first-ever basic manual series; this reflected the records program's intent from the start to assist the development of the profession nationwide while also supporting worthy projects in individual states and archives.

At NHPRC, I had the opportunity to confer with many archivists in many institutional settings and to work with members of the new State Historical Records Advisory Boards required by NHPRC, which, in most cases, the state archivists chaired. I also reviewed and commented on draft grant applications. After the review process, I recommended full or partial funding, revision, or rejection, and I monitored funded projects. I also proposed NHPRC policies and priorities to address archival needs.[9] During these activities, I observed that many archives lacked not only financial resources, but also sound policies and procedures based on current professional best practice. Many also lacked leadership, energy, expectations, and confidence. Thus, many had limited influence with and respect from the resource allocators on whom they depended for support.[10] I also concluded that appraisal/selection was the basic archives function

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[9] Frank Burke has written about these foundation years, especially 1975 through 1980, for the records grant program. For better or worse, he labels these the "Hackman years." As noted by Burke, I had always felt that "The Commission is first of all a body to provide coordination, planning, evaluation, and recommendations, and only secondarily a mechanism for the dispersal of funds." Frank G. Burke, "The Beginning of the NHPRC Records Program," *American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): 21–26.

[10] This condition was later confirmed by the SAA's contracted study of the views of resource allocators toward archivists and archives. See Social Research Inc., *The Image of Archivists: Resource Allocators Perceptions* (1985)—also known as "the Levy report."

of highest long-term consequence, and, at the same time, the one least well developed and least openly and vigorously discussed.

Ideally, the NHPRC would have taken the lead in a broad national assessment of archival conditions and needs, including selection. But the NHPRC did not have the credibility for such an undertaking, and, it seemed to me, the archival community was not ready to support such a project or respect or value its findings—regardless of who coordinated it. We went as far as the commission was prepared to go in a 1977 "Statement of National Needs and Preferred Approaches," which listed seven major national needs from the perspective of the Historical Records Program. This list of seven national needs reflects the terminology and conditions of a largely predigital world and one in which the archival community was only at the threshold of a period of rapid professional development. The seven needs were

1. Programs to ensure the preservation of historical records.
2. Surveys of records not in archival repositories.
3. Guides to historical records in repositories in the United States.
4. The education and training of archivists, records custodians, and historical agency administrators in the administration of historical records programs.
5. Arrangement, description, and archival processing of historical records.
6. The development or improvement of systemwide records programs for state and local governments and for private records-creating organizations.
7. Improved techniques in all major areas of need.

From today's perspective, these seem rather simplistic and uninformative. It was only in the "preferred approaches" to each need that the Records Program's philosophy came through. For example, under need number 4 on education and training, a preferred approach recommended "Programs which will increase the concern and understanding of organizations which create records of long range value." Another suggested "Programs to increase the skills of professional archivists, especially in developing expanded records programs."[11] But the commission's list of needs and preferred approaches was not a comprehensive planning document, or one that reflected extensive involvement by the profession. I wrote in 1980 that this "represented the first such statement in the United States" and also noted that the commission had been disappointed at the few reactions from archivists generally and from the state advisory boards in particular.[12]

[11] The seven priorities and the preferred approaches may be found in *A Report to the President by the National Publications and Records Commission* (NHPRC: Washington, 1978), 53–55.

[12] Larry J. Hackman, "The Historical Records Program: The States and the Nation," *American Archivist* 43 (Winter 1980): 18. At about this same time, Jerry Ham examined the initial priority statements from thirty-four state advisory boards, finding that they reflected a lack of knowledge and experience in planning and a lack of appreciation of the opportunity for it presented by the creation of the state advisory boards. F. Gerald Ham, "NHPRC's Records Program and the Development of Statewide Archival Planning," *American Archivist* 43 (Winter 1980): 33–42

The United States had no recent experience in examining and describing overall archival conditions, proposing nationwide priorities, and adopting strategic approaches to address priority needs. The archives community was not calling for a national historical records plan or policy or for the kind of nationwide assessment that I so admired in the 1980 report, *Canadian Archives.*[13] The Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, chaired by Ian Wilson, then provincial archivist of Saskatchewan, compiled this report, which was funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. It reviewed the Canadian archival tradition, reported on archival conditions in Canada and described the concerns of Canadian archives. It then discussed the existing and potential components of an "Archival System in Canada" and, based on the project's survey and analysis, made nineteen recommendations to improve conditions nationwide. It emphasized national leadership and support, coupled with greater cooperation toward common benefits within the regions. From my vantage point at NHPRC, Canada seemed more ready, willing, and able than we were, not only to examine conditions nationwide but also to address them collectively as well as individually. I wanted my country to consider something similar.[14]

During my NHPRC years, I advocated greater emphasis on the setting of statewide priorities by the State Historical Records Advisory Boards and for the commission itself to establish priorities of its own. By 1980, enthusiasm was increasing among the state coordinators for "archival planning as a strategy and the development of a structure to accomplish this both within the states and between the states and the commission."[15] At the same time, however, the Reagan administration threatened NHPRC and proposed to abolish the commission's grant programs in the fiscal year 1982 budget. Faced with the potential demise of the records grant program, we decided that the commission should invest mainly in statewide assessment and planning projects coordinated by the state boards.[16] That seemed to me a good way for archivists and others to

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[13] The Information Division of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, *Canadian Archives* (1980).

[14] I continued to feel that way—and that to start with we lacked strong leadership from, and a suitable and settled nationwide archival support role for, our national archival agency. In 1988, I proposed that "The United States Needs a National Historical Records Policy" and advocated particular changes in structure and participatory processes from the national level. See *History News* (March/April 1988): 32–37.

[15] Lisa B. Weber, ed., *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of the States* (Atlanta: National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators, in cooperation with the NHPRC, 1984), vii.

[16] I kept detailed notes during this period of conversations with many archival leaders as well as individuals who were creating an advocacy coalition that has continued over the years to work for NHPRC funding. This same "Coalition for Our Documentary Heritage" played a critical role during the successful drive to secure independence for the National Archives, achieved in 1985. My notes from 1981 report on many conversations with members of Congress and their staffs. I found my notes in a folder marked "Journal of a plague year." The SAA's internal conflicts over its role vis a vis NHPRC, the National Archives, and this developing advocacy coalition are especially intriguing.

learn more about how to examine conditions and to bring people together within a state to set priorities and frame solutions, building on the earlier state priority statements required by NHPRC. The state boards offered at least a nascent infrastructure for assessment, planning, and action; we thought that deeper experience with setting an agenda and developing strategies might serve as a catalyst for a continuing role for the boards—even if grant funding ended.

I helped draft the guidelines for the statewide assessment and planning projects, and the commission supported twenty-seven such projects in a first round of grants in the spring of 1981. Later that year, as state archivist of New York, I found myself leading perhaps the most ambitious state assessment and planning project. Over the next several years, nearly all of the states received modest grant funding for assessment and planning projects. Members of the archival community involved in these NHPRC-supported state assessment projects gained experience in assessing conditions, developing an agenda, setting priorities, and thinking strategically. My experience in New York from 1982 to 1984 deepened my own belief in the general applicability of assessment and agenda setting—if then used to activate the archival community and to reach out beyond it for support.[17] Results from many of the state projects were later evaluated and summarized in *Documenting America*, which also offered suggestions for the states that had not yet completed an assessment and planning project.[18]

The 1982 Boston SAA Program Committee Initiatives

Based largely on my experience at NHPRC, and with the new Canadian report in mind, I hoped that the 1982 SAA Annual Meeting program could be used as a vehicle to spur examination and analysis of archival conditions, to recognize and report on the findings, and to begin to identify strategic directions to address priority issues. We were only partially successful.

As chair of the Boston program committee, I proposed to its members in a memo on 10 September 1980, even before our first meeting, that we create a special program "track" devoted to planning. I also proposed that this track might be divided into two subcategories, "Planning for the Profession" and "Planning

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[17] I wrote about the New York assessment project in several places, explaining its high value for the advances we made on state and local government records, nongovernment archives, and cross-cutting issues. Of course, its application depended on sound strategies and vigorous advocacy over a period of years. The core approaches we used to advance on a broad agenda in New York are consistent with the four core approaches described at the beginning of this article. On how these were applied in New York, see Larry J. Hackman, "State Government and Statewide Archival Affairs: New York as a Case Study," *American Archivist* 55(Fall 1992): 578–99; "With a Little Help from My Friends: External Advisory and Oversight Bodies in the Development of Archives," *Archivaria* 39 (Spring 1995): 184–95; and "From Assessment to Action: Toward a Usable Past in the Empire State," *The Public Historian* 7 (Summer 1985): 23–34.

[18] Weber, ed., *Documenting America: Assessing the Condition of the States.*

in Particular." The latter would be educational, seeking to introduce archivists to planning methods suitable for particular archival settings or levels within archival organizations. I described the first, "Planning for the Profession," as "more ambitious, complex, and riskier but has great potential for the profession and the cause of historical records and archives generally." I suggested that we propose that the 1981 Berkeley program committee join us in sponsoring a major two-year participatory planning exercise, with the aim of having a draft document sent out widely before and then refined during the Boston meeting.[19]

The members of that Boston program committee were mostly rising leaders in the profession.[20] When the committee met for the first time at the 1980 Annual Meeting in Cincinnati, we quickly concluded that it was "impractical for us to prepare a plan for the profession or to directly oversee the preparation of such a plan during the Boston meeting." We decided instead that we "would propose that SAA Council appoint a task force on planning for the archival profession based on suggestions that we will submit to them." We hoped such a task force would prepare a "report or a plan" that would be subject to considerable discussion that we would facilitate in several ways during the Boston meeting in 1982. We were clear that planning for the profession was not the same as planning for the SAA. We also "liked the idea of obtaining the services of a professional planner."[21]

On behalf of the program committee, I sent a memo on 29 December 1980 to the SAA Council proposing "Appointment of a Planning Task Force for the Archival Profession." Reflecting earlier conversations with several council members, the memo conservatively suggested that "the primary goal of the task force should be to investigate ways in which planning concepts and techniques might be used to benefit archival affairs in the United States," and "not to produce a specific plan for the profession." We had concluded that SAA leadership was not ready to support a formal planning process. The memo explained that the Boston program committee planned to sponsor sessions on planning at both the 1981 and 1982 Annual Meetings, and it expressed our willingness to accommodate appropriate planning task force activities at the Boston meeting.

On 25 January 1981, Linda Henry, Vicki Walch, and I, representing the Program Committee, appeared before Council to advocate creation of a planning task force. Council agreed to set aside $3,000 for "pre-planning" and appointed a working group, including Helen Slotkin, to develop a more

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[19] Memo, Larry J. Hackman to 1982 SAA program committee members, "Cincinnati and beyond" (10 September 1980), University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, MSS 172, Group 8-1, Box 10, Folder 21, "Program Mailings to Committee, 1982."

[20] Members included Fran Blouin, Bruce Dearstyne, Max Evans, David Gracy, Linda Henry, Jim O'Toole, Helen Slotkin, and Vicki Walch, among others.

[21] All quotes in this paragraph are from my 9 October 1980 memo to Boston program committee members, UWM MSS255, Series 3, "SAA Meeting, Fall 1982."

detailed plan of work for such a task force and to consider preparing a pro-
posal for outside funding. The working group would also conduct a working
session with a long-range planning consultant. I reported these events to the
program committee on 18 March and said that it seemed possible that activi-
ties relating to a task force could still be "a partial focus of the 1982 annual
meeting" and also that I was to attend the Washington meeting of the working
group in April.[22]

The Boston program committee decided to sponsor a series of sessions at
the 1981 and 1982 Annual Meetings on planning processes. Later we decided
to directly develop and sponsor several "core sessions" at the Boston meeting
to provoke analysis and discussion of some of the major challenges facing the
profession. By September 1981, I sent initial suggestions for topics, partici-
pants, and criteria for such core sessions to Helen Slotkin, who had agreed to
coordinate them working closely with Larry Dowler and Max Evans. My files
indicate follow-up phone conversations with Slotkin. On 26 October 1981, she,
Dowler, and Evans sent a memo to me and to the 1982 program committee
describing the goals and topics for four core sessions and listing potential
speakers. Ultimately we sponsored five core sessions, the final session being
charged to summarize and critique the ideas and agendas advanced in the first
four. The proposal for a core session on "documentation/appraisal" stated that

> In the post-custodial era, as we face current and future records, archivists must
> appraise aggressively and courageously and shape the documentation of the
> 20th and 21st centuries. Strategies must be developed to assess documentation
> on a national scale so that collection strategies for each repository can be
> developed in light of this larger coordinated picture.[23]

We adopted "Boston—and Beyond!" as the theme for the 1982 program to
convey our interest in thinking and planning for the future. The Boston program
was well received and applauded as innovative and ambitious; the meeting was
the best attended to that time.[24] It raised the consciousness of archivists about
assessment and planning for all types of archival institutions and organizations.
It also helped develop a cadre of archivists to advocate for and participate in the

[22] We made our proposal in a 29 December 1980 memo to the SAA Council, and I made my report to
the program committee in an 18 March 1981 memo, both in UWM MSS 255, Series 3, "SAA, Meeting,
Fall 1982."

[23] Helen Slotkin, Max Evans, and Larry Dowler to Larry Hackman and 1982 program committee,
26 October 1981, UWM MSS 255, Series 3, "SAA Meeting 1982, Core Sessions, Overall Description and
Goals, 1981." They suggested sessions on "Cooperation/Coordination," "Documentation/Appraisal,"
"Technology," and "Uses/Outreach." Four of the core session papers were published in the *American
Archivist* in 1984.

[24] In her published report on the meeting, SAA executive director Ann Campbell wrote that "the theme
of the meeting suggests a commitment on the part of the Society and the profession to rethink what
we are all about and to avoid either complacency or a resignation to the status quo." Reports on the
Boston meeting are in *American Archivist* 46 (Winter 1983): 107–9.

more formal and extensive planning process that I hoped would help move the archival community forward.[25]

The Committee for Goals and Priorities for the Archives Profession

The 1982 program committee provided the "direct parentage" for creation of the SAA's Task Force (later Committee) on Goals and Priorities for the Archival Profession. Although the initial SAA "pre-planning" group did not proceed as vigorously as we had hoped, persistence led to a more significant effort.[26] At my first meeting as a new SAA Council member, on 17 October 1982 (at the end of the annual meeting in Boston), I made two formal proposals, both of which were approved. The first was to create a task force on goals and priorities, for which I offered a mission statement. The second was that SAA support a meeting of the task force. Ed Weldon, the outgoing SAA president, agreed to serve as initial chair of the task force. Jerry Ham, Helen Slotkin, Anne Kenney, and I were to be the members.[27]

In the fall of 1983, Ann Campbell and I persuaded Jerry Ham to succeed Ed Weldon, feeling that Ham's widely respected writings and prior SAA leadership would give him much more credibility than I would have, and that I could work closely with Ham, a good friend, to ensure that the process would move ahead as I hoped. He chaired an expanded planning effort, which included a working group for each of the three major goals we had adopted: identification and retention, administration of archival programs, and availability and use. I served as deputy chair, and Helen Slotkin led the working group on identification and retention. An NHPRC records program grant supported the meetings of the three working groups.

In a 1984 background memo for Ham, I reflected on earlier constraints on broad-scale archival assessment and planning. I told him that the 1982 SAA Program Committee "wanted to undertake a participatory process somewhat like CGAP (Committee on Goals and Priorities), but members realized early on (in 1980) that this would be too ambitious, too risky, and that the membership wasn't

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[25] I notice that we included a program session entitled "A Canadian Archival System? A United States Archival System?" that aimed to "highlight and discuss the 1980 report, *Canadian Archives*, and to consider whether the U.S. might work toward an archival system such as that recommended in the Canadian report." One presentation was on the Canadian report, the other on the NHPRC state planning projects. See the printed SAA 1982 Annual Meeting program, 43. Another session on the Canadian report was included in the 1984 Annual Meeting program in Washington.

[26] The working group "met in November 1981, decided that planning for the profession was not synonymous with planning for the Society, but agreed on little else." See the section on earlier planning efforts in *Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the Goals and Priorities Task Force* (Society of American Archivists, 1986), 2–4.

[27] A summary of the Council meeting actions is in *American Archivist* 46 (Spring 1983): 227 and 229.

ready for it. Our core sessions and our focus on planning generally were a kind of compromise. In the meantime, several of us did directly pursue various other structures for planning and GAP finally emerged after several false starts." I also connected this to NHPRC. I wrote to Ham that "In my own mind, the real impetus for all of this comes from NHPRC. I wanted to be able to foster such a planning/agenda setting process as early as 1977. However, it became increasingly clear to me that NHPRC did not have the credibility at that time to undertake directly or to 'engineer' such comprehensive planning." I added to Ham that

> In part this was because our relationship with the SAA office, once we turned down a grant proposal [from SAA], was so poor that I felt we would be immediately lambasted from Chicago if we tried to draft or take the lead in such planning. Also, it was difficult to get either NARS [National Archives and Records Service] or the [NHPRC] Commission Members to be willing to take a vigorous lead in that period. Finally, I felt that NHPRC's efforts regarding a national database program were rather damaging to our overall credibility in setting directions for the profession. Frankly, that was out of my control.[28]

The Task Force on Goals and Priorities circulated its draft report just before the 1984 Annual Meeting in Washington—the same meeting at which Helen Slotkin and I presented documentation strategies for the first time—and it was discussed during that meeting in several working sessions, including one chaired by Slotkin. After broad circulation to professional archival associations and many others, and further discussions by the task force, SAA published and widely distributed a revised report in early 1986. A final section contained the task force's views on "planning as an ongoing process" and its recommendation to create a continuing Committee on Goals and Priorities to "seek to address the needs of the entire archival community"—though we recommended that it should operate "under the auspices" of the SAA.[29] Jerry Ham's remarks in a plenary session at the 1984 Annual Meeting were published in the *American Archivist* under the title "Planning for the Archival Profession." In them he stressed that the report represented a crucial first stage for the profession and that the process needed to be extended and sustained by the archival community; that, indeed, the process was a large part of the product.[30]

I hoped that the SAA would not revert to planning only for itself but would coordinate or sponsor a process on behalf of the whole archival community and other interested groups. In fact, the SAA did create a Committee on Goals and Priorities. With support from an NHPRC grant, CGAP, chaired by Charles Palm,

[28] Larry Hackman to Jerry Ham, 30 May 1984, 200/8/1 Box 25 f27 "CGAP, Initiatives, 1984" in SAA records, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee.

[29] *Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities.*

[30] F. Gerald Ham, "Planning for the Archival Profession," *American Archivist* 48 (Winter 1985): 26–30.

issued an ambitious, detailed report to the SAA Council.[31] This represented a serious effort by talented archivists. However, CGAP was not sustained. No one emerged as a continuing host/sponsor for a participatory process to monitor and assess archival conditions and refine an agenda and strategies to address priority issues. Perhaps this is not surprising; the Committee on Goals and Priorities was, after all, an SAA body and reported to the SAA Council.[32]

Others might have taken the lead, especially the state coordinators as a body, working in conjunction with NHPRC. Ideally NHPRC would have supported, while not directing or "owning," a continuing, settled, and participatory process for nationwide assessment, for adopting priorities and strategies, and for reporting to and encouraging the profession and the American people. Such a process might have been linked, but not confined, to statewide planning and action, and also to a settled, reliable approach to gathering data about archives, archivists, and documentation nationwide. This could have become NHPRC's most valuable role. Clearly, NHPRC recognized the need because in 1988, the same year as the Committee on Goals and Priorities issued its *Action Agenda,* NHPRC adopted the "National Historical Records Program" with twelve program elements. Based largely on recommendations by a group of state coordinators meeting in Annapolis, it is a very impressive document, especially in its first four elements. These were

1. A process that accurately describes current condition of historical records in the nation,
2. A consultative mechanism that regularly specifies principal historical records' needs and priorities and suggests how to address them most effectively,
3. An active program to communicate these needs, and the reasons for addressing them, to the general public and the wide variety of publics that must be informed about and involved in these issues, and
4. Work to influence key parties (Congress, governors, legislators, national programs and associations, major interest groups, etc.) to act on these principal needs.

It is not clear that the commission, or anyone else, remembers now this statement or these elements, which Dick Cameron described as the logical product of a dialogue that had been going on since the creation of the NHPRC's records program. Probably these elements were simply too difficult for a grant-making

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[31] See *An Action Agenda for the Archival Profession: Institutionalizing the Planning Process,* report to the SAA Council by the Committee on Goals and Priorities, 31 August 1988.

[32] It is useful to recall as well that the archival community fragmented during the 1970s as many of the state archivists concluded that SAA did not respect their roles or effectively represent their interests. The SAA Chicago office in particular deeply resented the NASARA (National Association of State Archives and Records Administrators)/state coordinators nexus and NHPRC's support for it. It is unfortunate that this could not have been overcome. It is encouraging to see that regular consultation and coordination between SAA and the Council of State Archivists (COSA) appears to be growing.

agency to coordinate, or even focus on, on a sustained basis, and too removed from the day-to-day issues the state coordinators and others faced. [33]

Present at the Creation: Documentation Strategies in the Rough

From my perspective, as the 1984 documentation strategy session approached, the archival community gradually was becoming more receptive to and experienced in assessment and planning—as individual archives, in networks and other cooperative arrangements, and profession-wide. Whether assessment and planning would lead to significant positive change, it was too soon to tell. In the meantime, perhaps a similar approach, one embodying the four core approaches I noted at the beginning of this article, could be applied to archival documentation.

My early experiences in New York only reinforced the conclusions I drew about archival conditions and needs from my NHPRC experience and my SAA program committee and planning work. All contributed to the proposals on documentation strategies I began to discuss and draft in 1983 and early 1984.[34]

As indicated above, I had worked together closely with Helen Slotkin, head of the MIT Archives, for several years prior to our 1984 presentations. We shared concerns about overall archival conditions, even as we explored new ways to address issues of documentation, selection, and appraisal. Our ideas on documentation issues were largely compatible as we were developing them. Slotkin wrote a few years later that "My ideas about documentation strategies were formed while working with Larry Hackman on the 1982 SAA Program Committee and the Goals and Priorities Task Force."[35] We may have first met when Helen was a member of the Joint Committee on the Archives of Science and Technology (JCAST), a formative experience for her as the new MIT Institute Archivist. In 1978, I helped an informal coordinating group, the start of what became JCAST, put together a feasible course of action. JCAST project activities began in March 1979 with the award of an NHPRC study grant. Slotkin also became very familiar with the American Institute of Physics (AIP) Center for History of Physics and with the views of our mutual friend, Joan Warnow, its associate director. Warnow and I had became acquainted earlier at Oral History

[33] Cameron has written insightfully about the NHPRC Historical Records Program's continuing challenges in finding a clear mission and appropriate methods given unsettled relationships within the commission and with the National Archives and the archival community. Richard A. Cameron, "The Concept of a National Records Program and Its Continued Relevance for a New Century," *American Archivist* 63 (Spring/Summer 2000): especially 43–52.

[34] This is not to slight the deep impact of other archivists on my views during these years. The ideas of David Bearman and Jerry Ham were especially stimulating.

[35] Helen Samuels, "Who Controls the Past?," *American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 114.

Association meetings when I worked for the John F. Kennedy Oral History Project. After I moved to NHPRC in 1975, the AIP's role as an adviser, catalyst, and honest broker on physics documentation greatly interested me as an example that might be applied in other areas.

The 1984 SAA Session

My files for the 3 September 1984 SAA session indicate that Helen Slotkin and I were using the term *documentation strategies* in our exchanges in early fall of 1983.[36] And we must have used the term in our session proposal to the 1984 program committee.

Apparently, in late summer of 1983, I shared with Slotkin my outline for a potential statewide documentation analysis project, which I suggested might be undertaken in the state of Washington. In a note back to me on 7 September 1983, she wrote, "You have outlined just what I would like to do. I am very happy with the emphasis on documentation issues. The whole question will be how do we fashion documentation strategies." Slotkin wondered why the project I outlined should not be carried out in New York.[37]

"Documentation strategies" was also used in the report of the Task Force on Goals and Priorities, which was circulated just before the 1984 SAA Annual Meeting. It stated under its first recommended initiative that "Coordinated appraisal and documentation strategies rely on knowledge of holdings and appraisal decisions made by other repositories." The report recommended a clearinghouse to report such decisions.[38]

I first shared a detailed outline/working draft of my SAA presentation with Helen Slotkin and Patti Aronsson on 15 June 1984.[39] In that first mid-1984 outline, I began by listing my goals for archival documentation and gave a brief working definition of *documentation strategy*—which we extended considerably by the time of the SAA meeting. The first goal I listed was "adequate documentation *created*"; then, "careful analysis of this documentation based on maximum

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[36] Also, the New York statewide assessment project report, published in January 1984 but drafted months before that, included among its major recommendations that "Coordinated documentation strategies should be developed to ensure that adequate records are preserved . . . in all important subjects and geographic regions." *See Toward a Usable Past: Historical Records in the Empire State* (Albany: The New York State Historical Records Advisory Board, 1984), 55.

[37] Letter from Helen Slotkin to Larry J. Hackman, 7 September 1983, UWM MSS255, Series 4, "Hackman, Larry, 1980–1988."

[38] See "Initial Discussion Draft: Planning for the Archival Profession: A Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities" (Society of American Archivists, 1984). Helen Slotkin was a member of the task force.

[39] I refer in the following paragraphs mainly to this first outline because it gives me the best view of what was in my mind as I drew together the ideas that I later refined as a Mellon Fellow at the Bentley Historical Library in 1985 for the conceptual model article for the *American Archivist*.

expertise and information"; then, "retention of the maximum archival documentation (all, but *only* all) indicated by this analysis."[40]

My first brief working definition of *documentation strategy* was "a broad, carefully considered, cooperative framework which includes both analysis *and action* to address the three goals above."[41]

In the next section, I described my view of "some characteristics" of the "predominate existing model." The characteristics I noted were:

1. "Highly decentralized," with "Most judgments made independently by individual repositories. . . ."
2. Emphasis "on the appraisal of records at the point of disposition rather than on either creation of adequate documentation or on appraisal of overall documentation."
3. Lack of readily available information about "what records have been accessioned by other repositories" and "about the analysis that led to these accessioning decisions."
4. "Lack of systematic involvement by documentation creators or users."
5. "Lack of analytical frameworks beyond the . . . institutional criteria from the perspective of an individual repository."
6. "A passive or bottom up approach to the development of new archival programs. . . ."

I also listed several recent activities that I regarded as positive, including increased attention to developing and sharing collecting policies, for example, through the entry requirements for the NHPRC *Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the United States;*[42] increased cooperation through

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[40] The documents quoted or drawn on in this section are entirely from a series of folders containing my notes and drafts on documentation strategies, especially the folders containing drafts and exchanges leading up to the 1984 SAA session. I expect to transfer these records to the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, where Helen Samuels's files are also deposited. My papers also relate to oral history, NHPRC, SAA politics and governance, National Archives policies and the campaign for Archives independence, congressional oversight of the National Archives during the first Bush administration, the Bush to Clinton transition, appointment of an Archivist of the United States by President Clinton, the New York State Archives, the Truman Library, my critiques of presidential libraries and related public policy, and other matters in which I was involved from the early 1970s to the present.

[41] It appears that we continued to exchange views on a definition. At the session, we offered three definitions, hoping that *documentation strategy* would be clearer if presented in context of the other two, which were *acquisition policy* and *collecting project.* Slotkin may have hit on this approach while spending time at the Bentley Library. On 20 July, she sent to Aronsson and me a revised draft definition of *documentation strategy* and reported the "breakthrough" of including a definition of *collecting project* to add context. The definition we presented at SAA for *documentation strategy* was the same one we used in presentations afterward and that was then advanced in Helen [Slotkin] Samuels's "Who Controls the Past?" and in the Hackman-Warnow article.

[42] National Historical Publications and Records Commission, *Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories* (Washington, D.C.: NHPRC, 1978). In gathering information for the directory, we intended that "the statements of acquisition policy submitted by repositories and printed in the directory will serve as one step, long desired by many archivists . . . toward more orderly and effective direction of labor in the collecting of historical records throughout the country." See Larry J. Hackman, Nancy Sahli, and Dennis Burton, "The NHPRC and a Guide to Manuscript and Archival Materials in the Unites States," *American Archivist* 40 (April 1977): 203.

archival networks and other arrangements; the roles of the discipline centers as bases for research on documentation and as advocates and honest brokers; several projects to more systematically examine documentation/appraisal issues, for example for architectural records, science and technology records, and congressional papers; and the creation of the NARS "adequacy of documentation office" (where Patti Aronsson worked). However, I concluded that we did not find in these "working models either for analysis or for action" and that we needed both "better tools for analysis and better mechanisms for action."

I then speculated on some potential next steps "Toward More Effective Documentation." I argued that the

> first tool (lever) we need as a profession is to once and for all state clearly (code of ethics, awards, institutional evaluation guidelines, etc.) that the obligation of the professional archivist is toward maximum available documentation broadly speaking, toward working with others to accomplish this through improved analysis and cooperative programming, and that a narrow custodial approach is unacceptable within the archival community.

I doubt that most archivists agreed then, or agree now, with this perspective. The SAA's *Code of Ethics* suggests that archivists should cooperate and collaborate and respect the mission of other repositories, but it speaks not at all to obligations beyond records already in the custody of one's own program. Perhaps a statement is needed about the collective responsibilities of the profession.

Second, I claimed in the June 1984 outline that more informed analysis required "several types of data bases that we can use cooperatively *to influence the creation of documentation* and make better appraisal and collection and retention decisions." These could start modestly, I wrote, within networks for example, to include information about the collection and retention policies of repositories; their current holdings, including new acquisitions, appraisal reports, and case studies, so that analysis could be shared with others; data on use and users; and "profiles of the kinds of records created by major types of institutions (similar to the AIP study of government labs and the study of the types of records created by congressional offices)." This last point reflects some of the same instinct that later led Helen [Slotkin] Samuels and others to pursue the functional analysis approach to important types of institutions, such as colleges and universities, the health system, and high-technology companies.

A third needed tool, I suggested, was to develop conceptual models for documentation strategies and to test and refine them in practice. I noted that Slotkin would share such a partial model with us in her SAA paper. Fourth and finally, I said that once such models were developed, we would need to build toward continuing relationships and structures for a number of subjects, sectors, record types, and geographical or government levels.

I ended my initial outline with proposals for ten actions that could be taken from 1985 to 1990. I will note here only three that may be worth reconsidering:

Proposal 3. "That the SAA's sections, particularly those that emphasize documentation of government, religion, colleges and universities, business, labor, arts and culture, and social welfare, begin immediately to discuss and develop broad conceptual models for these types of records and foster projects to test and refine such models." Again, this suggests an approach similar to functional analysis, and looks to its broad application.

Proposal 6. "That the SAA's Task Force on Archives and Society develop specific recommendations for programs whereby the archival profession can better gain the attention, cooperation and support of key sectors, such as business, labor, and arts and culture, in developing effective continuing documentation strategies for records in these areas." This proposal suggests moving from the analyses and models in number 3 above, to promulgating and advocating the adoption of such models by records-creating organizations.

Proposal 9. "That the SAA Council, working closely with its sections and with user groups, consider promoting other joint committees, similar to JCAST, in other subject areas." Again, the aim here was that the profession through collective sponsorship would directly foster projects to analyze documentation relating to particular functions or sectors and to recommend the actions needed to improve conditions.

I shared a revised outline on 10 July with Slotkin and Aronsson. It tightened and smoothed but did not alter the core points in my first draft. And, on 27 July, I sent them a sketch of my "documentation strategy" model, which I planned to present at the SAA session. As I view that rough diagram now, it includes all the core elements that I refined, elaborated, and extended in a series of charts and lists in the conceptual model article published later in the *American Archivist*. The 1984 drawing stresses that a documentation advisory committee would intervene (consult with and persuade) records creators, repositories, and the "concerned public" and that the concerned public included funding agencies, associations of creators, political and governmental entities, and the media because the opinions of all of these parties could "bear on" creators and repositories.

I regret now that in listing these proposals in 1983 and 1984, and then in my later article with Joan Warnow, I did not emphasize even more strongly the need to influence records creators and I did not explore in greater detail a practical approach to influencing them. I should have argued that this could be approached by trying to educate and secure the endorsement of their peer group organizations, as well as those entities that regulated, recognized, certified, supported, educated, and otherwise influenced the record creators in each major sector of American life. These intermediaries, it still seems to me, offer

the best opportunity for organized advocacy by archivists in pursuit of better documentation practices by the organizations that create records. But this requires archivists to come together to adapt or build infrastructure to support such efforts. It requires archivists to accept some collective responsibility to act to influence records practices beyond their own institutions.

Although I find no written response in my files from Helen Slotkin to my drafts of June and July, I suspect there are some comments from her somewhere. Certainly we talked frequently by phone during that time. Patti Aronsson responded on 7 August to Slotkin and to me with comments on the model I had sent and on the revised draft definitions from Slotkin. Her perceptive comments raised key issues—and perhaps also pointed the way toward functional analysis. Regarding my model, Aronsson believed that it

> makes sense and seems to involve the right people. But, it is not clear to me where it all starts. Does an archivist initiate the effort and convene an advisory committee? If so, this presumes that an archivist has both the clout and the network to pull together a diverse group of actors. I am also not convinced that records creators, the media, or the public are particularly interested in documentation. How can we generate interest and commitment? How can we translate our concerns so that they can see that their self-interests are being met?

Aronsson's questions raise the central issues of infrastructure and of advocacy that not only restricted the application of documentation strategy concepts but also continue to limit the influence of the archival community in the United States.

Regarding the definitions, Patti Aronsson wrote,

> I do not think the definitions should limit themselves to multi-institutional activities. If we specify that a documentation strategy, by definition, is multi-institutional, we are implicitly defining the scope of the strategies as being monumental. For example, couldn't (and shouldn't) a college archivist develop a documentation strategy for documenting the college? It seems to me that the key to a documentation strategy is that it changes the archival focus from the RECORDS which document an activity (what we are calling a collecting project) to an analysis of the activities themselves and, only after such an analysis, looking for the records.[43]

Follow-up efforts

I do not recall particular reactions to our introduction of documentation strategies at that 1984 SAA session. I do recall that the ideas generated interest

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[43] Patti Aronsson to Larry Hackman and Helen Slotkin, 7 August 1994, UWM MSS 255, Series 3, "SAA Meeting, Fall 1984."

and that several professional organizations, including the state archivists/state coordinators, asked me to speak to them about documentation strategies—or perhaps I suggested it. Certainly the state coordinators, an obvious locus for statewide leadership to assess documentation and promote action, regarded my comments as ambitious and demanding. I don't believe I found early reactions surprising or discouraging; perhaps they should have been.

As a 1985 Mellon Fellow at the Bentley Library, I refined my drafts for review and comment by other Bentley Fellows and guests and then for publication. My conceptual model was ultimately published in the Winter 1987 issue of the *American Archivist,* an article delayed to incorporate a case study section on the American Institute for Physics by Joan Warnow-Blewett. I had submitted a separate draft article to the *American Archivist* in October 1985 presenting my conceptual model alone under the title "Towards Adequacy of Archival Documentation." I drafted the introduction to the Hackman-Warnow article, and the section on "present conditions and practices," which provided the broader context for my model and for documentation strategies generally.

Reflections

From my perspective in 2009, our proposal to develop documentation strategies seems mainly to have served as one of several useful stimulants coming out of a period of archival assessment, planning, and strategizing. Documentation strategies concepts helped to energize archivists to reexamine, discuss, and write about their approaches to selection and appraisal and to place them in a broader framework. Nevertheless, direct application of the model, as I presented it, was limited. And the broader context for change that I tried to provide in 1984 and in follow-up presentations, and then in publication, did not provoke the changes in attitude and infrastructure that were also reflected in, for example, recommendations of the Task Force on Goals and Priorities for the Profession. In particular, the new infrastructure and "applied" advocacy that Edie Hedlin later called for more directly and ambitiously in her SAA presidential address were never seriously pursued.[44] By and large, lone arrangers—and lone appraisers—continued to act alone. No discernable, organized cam-

[44] Hedlin spoke of the profession's lack of influential allies, its lack of infrastructure—the "commissions, councils, centers and institutes that promote causes and sustain research." These, she asserted, "are the protectors and promulgators of . . . professional positions; they are the explorers of new methods and approaches; and they are the articulators of values and ideas. They are what we need. They are what we lack." Hedlin listed "A National Commission on Documentation Strategies" as one example and suggested that the various main kinds of archives need separate centers to respond to differing needs with rigor, intelligence, and resources. "Specialized groups," she argued, "speak with authority" and "More infrastructure. . . . means more sources of expertise, more links to the larger society, more non-archivists engaged in our issues, more allies . . . ," Edie Hedlin, "Expanding the Foundation," *American Archivist* 58 (Winter 1995): 12–13.

paign emerged for archivists to widely share their analyses of documentation with other archivists or to bring such analysis into a set of recommendations to help guide records creators and those who could influence them.

The High Promise of Functional Analysis

Fortunately, in my view, functional analysis, represented first by Helen Samuels's work with Joan Haas and Barbara Simmons on *Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology* and later by Samuels's *Varsity Letters*, soon offered much greater near-term promise than my documentation strategy model as fully conceived.[45] Functional analysis was consistent with documentation strategies in that it insisted on broad analysis proceeding selection. But functional analysis could be more limited and straightforward, less demanding of broad participation and collaboration, and it did not necessarily imply an ongoing process.

However, even with functional analysis, the combination of archival attitudes and the lack of infrastructure severely limited the potentially much broader impact of this approach. In retrospect, most disappointing overall about documentation efforts by archivists in the United States over the past two-plus decades is how little emphasis has been given to seeking "more active use of a range of sources of influence to shape archival selection policies and programs."[46]

Inspired by the work of Helen Samuels and her colleagues on appraisal of documentation of science and technology, others applied closely related methods to the analysis of other kinds of organizations, and Samuels took this further in her own functional analysis of colleges and universities.[47] In my opinion, the pioneers' view of archivists as nearly exclusively their audience lessened the potential impact of functional analysis. Some of the main functional analysis products could have been adapted and brought to the meaningful attention

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[45] Joan Haas, Helen Samuels, and Barbara Simmons, *Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1985); Helen Samuels, *Varsity Letters: Documenting Modern Colleges and Universities* (Metuchen, N.J.: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Press, 1992).

[46] Hackman and Warnow, "Documentation Strategy Process," 12. As I indicated in a letter about the documentation strategy model to the editor of the *American Archivist*, "Better analysis is not its sole—and perhaps not even its primary—purpose. The model also seeks to maximize the use of influence. In that sense it is political as much as analytical. A major reason for involving parties other than archivists is . . . because their awareness, support, leadership and resources are needed to help promote implementation of the recommendations from the strategy process," *American Archivist* 52 (Winter 1989): 8–9.

[47] Samuels, *Varsity Letters*. See also Bruce H. Bruemmer and Sheldon Hocheiser, *The High-Technology Company: A Historical Research and Archival Guide* (Minneapolis: Charles Babbage Institute, University of Minnesota, 1989); and Joan Krizak, ed., *Documentation Planning for the U.S. Health Care System* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

of individuals and organizations in the United States able to influence documentation practices in the kinds of organizations studied.

Gaining such influence would require something more than the analysts, or the archival community, were ready to provide. It first of all would require a mind-set by the archivists-analysts to maximize the potential impact of their research. It would require a desire, and then the development of ways and means, to interpret and package the findings for an audience beyond other archivists. Then, it would require an organized effort to promulgate and advocate the findings and recommendations to organizations in the particular sector that could influence records creators, for example, organizations that set standards and promote best practices, regulate and evaluate, accredit and certify, recognize and reward, fund and assist, provide continuing education, and so on. In my recent exchanges with several of the early developers/appliers of functional analysis, all appear to recognize the considerable potential of their work and the limitations presented by attitude and infrastructure. The absence of infrastructure to promote analysis and to advocate its application as broadly as possible both reflects and compounds this. Perhaps the underlying barrier to seeking greater impact, suggested to me by one commentator, is that "archivists don't think this way."[48]

Functional analysis and its variants have unrealized potential. However, they exemplify our limitations when we act as though our obligations end with analysis directed only at our own organizations and, if beyond that, to writing for and talking to other archivists. A functional analysis does not need to claim that its findings and recommendations fit all sizes and variations on the institutional type—a symphony, a hospital, a college—for the analysis to be useful to those other institutions. We need to find ways to support more good functional analysis and to extend its products outward, to link these analyses to advocacy in a search for influence—still the most scarce archival resource—on the documentation deciders in the same sector.[49]

Past, Present, Future

The documentation strategies model represented a very optimistic, even idealized, approach to the selection of documentation of enduring value. It

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[48] I appreciate the comments on this matter provided to me by phone and/or email from Helen Samuels, Joan Krizak, and Bruce Breummer during the fall of 2007.

[49] As indicated above, Edie Hedlin offered the archival community a sense of what was needed and why. David Bearman's call for the archival community to "employ an understanding of broadly relevant societal mechanisms and levers in order to effect fundamental or systematic change, and of institutional powers and influences that will effect local changes . . . " is especially relevant. His list of potential "drivers" to influence change needs constant reconsideration by archivists individually and collectively. David Bearman, "Archival Strategies," *American Archivist* (Fall 1995): 388–89.

assumed that shared information and analysis would increase the capacity of individual archivists to make good decisions—and persuade others to do so in their own settings. But it assumed as well that archivists in the United States would want to, and gradually would, find ways to positively influence documentation decisions beyond their own institutions. It assumed that this could best be done by joining with other archivists (and other experts and agents), especially those concerned with documentation of similar organizations and functions.

In a sense, documentation strategies assumed that lone appraisers would recognize the severe limitations of acting alone and that they would see strength in sharing and also in acting in concert to wield influence beyond their individual programs—in part as a way to influence key decision makers in their own institutions as well. It assumed that the profession would move toward professional values that gave increased prominence to collective responsibility regarding documentation analysis and action—while not decreasing individual obligation or prerogative. This largely has not been the case.

In an admittedly cursory review of current interests of the profession, I see more and better attention given now to educating and understanding archivists and to research in graduate programs, but perhaps less to macro-issues regarding archives as organizations and to archival documentation from any broad perspective. There appears to be less interest in some of the big issues that concerned some of us a quarter-century ago and that still seem, to me, to be important: standards for institutions; assessment of archival conditions nationwide based on regular rather than episodic data gathering and analysis; nationwide priorities and strategies, and national policies linked to these, so that problems may be attacked by the whole archival community as well as by individual organizations and their archivists; and archival advocacy targeted at the major challenges nationwide, not just at national government programs and funding.[50]

Archivists continue to yearn to be understood and appreciated. But if the profession wishes to assert its collective value and competence, it needs to be able to answer the most basic questions to which Americans have the right to expect an answer:

> Tell us, you professional archivists, just what is the condition of documentation of enduring value in the United States? And what are the priorities you are addressing together and the strategies you are using together to improve these conditions? And what do you want other organizations and individuals to do—because we know you can't do it all yourselves—to address these priorities?

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[50] My projections (and hopes) for these and related developments were described years ago in two articles I wrote for a special issue of *The Public Historian.* See "A Perspective on American Archives" and "Toward the Year 2000," both in *The Public Historian* 8 (Summer 1986). I still have hopes.

Until those of us who call ourselves professional archivists can answer these questions, what assurance can our fellow citizens have that we archivists as a community know what we are doing and why? Our assurance that we are tending well our own gardens will not satisfy. A first step is to show that we take these questions seriously and are thinking hard together about ways to answer them.