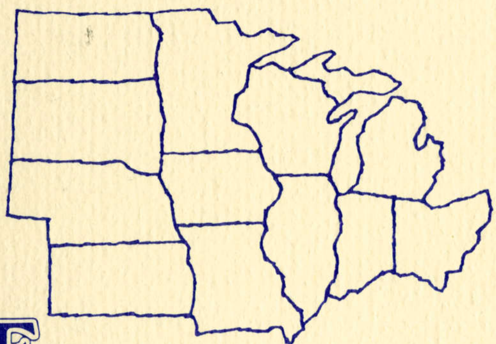

THE MIDWESTERN ARCHIVIST

VOLUME I, NUMBER 2, 1976

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL POLICY

The Midwestern Archivist, a semi-annual journal published by the Midwest Archives Conference, is concerned with the issues and problems confronting the contemporary archivist. Articles relating to archival theory and current practice are solicited. Diversity among topics and points of view is encouraged, and material in a wide range of formats--including articles and essays, proceedings of seminars and workshops, review essays, and progress reports on special archival projects--will be considered for publication. News items, accession lists, descriptions of repository holdings, and similar material are published in the *MAC Newsletter*, which meets more immediate information needs than the journal. Ideas and opinions expressed by contributors are not necessarily those of the Editorial Board of the Midwest Archives Conference. Manuscripts should be sent to Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, Box 8198, Chicago, IL 60680. Offers to review books or suggested books to review should be sent to Nicholas C. Burckel, Book Review Editor, University Archives, University of Wisconsin-Parkside, Kenosha, WI 53140. The journal is free to MAC members and single copies are available at $2.50. Send inquiries regarding membership or purchases to Joanne Hohler, Secretary-Treasurer, 5742 Elder Pl., Madison, WI 53705.

Cover Design by Paul Hass

A PRIMER ON MANUSCRIPT FIELD WORK

Virginia R. Stewart

The process of acquiring manuscripts for institutional collections has received little systematic attention in the professional literature, most of which has focused on manuscript administration, definition of collecting policy, and competition between repositories.[1] Discussions of collecting manuscripts tend to be anecdotal, rich in illustrative example and lacking in analysis.[2] When the acquisition function is treated as an adventure story, two features are common to most accounts: a focus on the collector's personality, particularly traits such as curiosity, empathy, and perseverance; and an emphasis on the role of chance in the discovery of major collections. Neither of these elements is readily translated into guidelines for developing an institutional manuscript program, and the beginning collector may be thrown back on his own judgment and experience. If he has had an opportunity to work with a more experienced field archivist, his judgment may be sufficient for good acquisition decision-making. However, not every archivist or curator with acquisition responsibilities has had an apprenticeship in field work; and a field work program can rapidly become too complex for common-sense approaches. Clear descriptions in the literature of the activities and controlling concepts of field work would obviously be of benefit to the beginner. They might also enable seasoned field archivists to compare their modes of work and develop generalizations about procedures, productivity, and costs of manuscript acquisition. Perhaps certain working assumptions could be formulated about the factors which make a negotiation relatively easy or difficult, or about the survival rate of certain kinds of manuscript materials. In any event, it is certain that archivists do not need to hear another disclaimer that collecting is, after all, more art than science. Even an art form demands rigor, attention to detail, and some rationale for the technique.

Although attempts have been made to standardize terminology for archival and manuscript functions,[3] acquisition work lacks a professional vocabulary. The following definitions are supplied to clarify subsequent usage. Manuscript repositories acquire material from many sources, by gift or purchase, according to some concept of desirable subject areas, time periods, and formats. These parameters make up the _collecting policy_ of the repository. The collecting policy is also influenced by institutional factors such as the amount of space, staff, and budget allocated to the manuscript program. A repository may acquire individual manuscripts, but more commonly it seeks _collections_, bodies of unpublished materials which originate from a common source or have a common theme or format. In dealing with modern manuscripts, these collections usually are personal or family papers, literary remains, organizational records, or collections organized around a past event such as the suffrage movement.

Field work refers to the activities involved in identifying, locating, and negotiating for and securing manuscripts for an institutional collection. These tasks are carried out by a _field agent_ or _representative_ employed by the repository to develop its collection. Depending on the size, institutional history, and staffing patterns of the repository, the field work role may be performed in various ways. In a small institution, the manuscript curator may conduct field work as one of many responsibilities. A larger repository may support one or more fulltime field personnel. Some directors consider field work their exclusive province. Whatever the administrative hierarchy, however, the field agent should have some input into developing the collecting policy for the repository, and some measure of autonomy in negotiating on its behalf. Decisions made during field work operations largely determine the quality and completeness of collections accessioned, and the field agent is generally the person best acquainted with the problems and potential of any contemplated acquisition.

The field agent has the responsibility of translating the repository's acquisitions goals into reality by developing strong holdings in which the individual collections are significant and the total collection shows depth, interrelatedness, and a perceptible relationship to the universe of data. The activities and tasks which make up field work operations can be grouped into six stages: data-gathering, preliminary contact, appraisal, negotiation, transport and receiving, and follow-up. For the purposes of discussion, these stages will be described sequentially, although they do not always occur in sequence.

Data-Gathering

Usually a field agent begins with a lead, a reference to a person or organization whose records might be valuable. Leads come from many sources: newspaper articles, collections being processed in the repository, research requests for material not held, and referral by donors, colleagues, and friends of the collection. The initial step is to flesh out the lead with information which will enable the field agent to determine whether the collection falls within his repository's collecting scope or possibly merits a shift in the policy. If the field agent decides to pursue the lead, he needs considerable data about the collection subject: for individuals, extensive biographical information; for organizations, founding date and personnel, current officers and administrative structure, and organizational affiliations. The data can be assembled from local directories, biographical dictionaries, obituaries and newspaper backfiles, annual reports, and similar sources. The field agent should also exploit related collections in his repository as sources of information about potential acquisitions, and cultivate scholarly and community contacts who can serve as informants in the anthropological sense.

If the collection subject is not a living person or a continuing organization, the field agent will have to bring his information up to date in order to locate a potential donor. If, for example, records are sought of a settlement house founded in 1900 but not currently operating, he will have to discover whether the organization merged at some earlier period with another settlement. If he cannot trace an organizational survivor, he must attempt to locate former staff members or trustees. When researching deceased individuals, the field agent may undertake considerable genealogical inquiry in the attempt to find descendants or collateral family members.

The field agent also needs information about the prospective donor, particularly the relationship between the donor and the manuscripts. This information can ensure a productive approach to a collection or terminate a fruitless negotiation at an early date. The prospective donor may not have the authority to dispose of the manuscripts even though he has custody of them. The field agent should assemble whatever data he can about the provenance of the manuscripts, being particularly alert to changes in custody which may have implications for transfer of legal title to the materials. If an organizational collection is being sought, the field representative needs to determine who has the power to commit the records to a repository under the constitution and bylaws of the organization.

Another important piece of information is whether any portion of the manuscripts in question have been deposited in or committed to another repository. Split collections do not seem nearly so undesirable to the general public as they do to scholars and archivists. Field agents must be alert to donors' practice of sending materials from a single collection to several repositories according to some notion of their subject specialty. Learning just what other repositories have in their holdings can be difficult. Repository guides, catalogues, and announcements are always out of date, and accession lists are selective and irregularly issued. Despite frequent appeals for the compilation and publication of collecting policies of major repositories, little progress has been made in this area.[4] There is no substitute for personal familiarity with the holdings and collecting policies of local institutions and those regional or national institutions which collect in the field agent's locality. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that another repository may already have a portion of the manuscripts being researched--or a commitment to them--the best thing to do is to ask the appropriate staff member of that repository. Depending on the response, the field agent must decide whether to pursue the collection. The risk that the inquiry will stimulate a competing offer to the potential donor is minimal and balanced by the reduction in time spent pursuing leads to unavailable collections. (While one cannot always depend on professional courtesy among archival colleagues, one can at least hope for it.)

Finally, the field agent should review the document types which he expects to encounter in the collection under consideration. If possible, similar collections in his own repository should be examined to determine what items, formats, and records series are characteristic. This prepares the field archivist with a specific answer to the inevitable donor question, "What are you interested in?" A detailed and informed response helps establish the field agent's credibility to the donor, and the familiarity with the records makes the ensuing appraisal considerably easier.

Throughout field work operations, careful record-keeping is essential. The field representative will undoubtedly have many negotiations in progress simultaneously since individual collection negotiations can extend over years. One cannot rely on memory to keep these straight. A lead form is the first of several documents which will eventually comprise the repository's files on a particular collection. The lead form should be standardized and include space for the following information: collection name and significance; source of the lead; name, address, and telephone number of the prospective donor; relationship of the donor to the manuscripts; location and provenance of the manuscripts; date of initial compilation of the form; and the history of the negotiation. This amount of detail is necessary for leads which the field agent wishes to actively pursue; lower priority leads should be briefly noted with the date and source of information and maintained in a back-up lead file.

Preliminary Contact

The data-gathering stage prepares the field agent for productive interaction with the donor. If the repository is soliciting materials, the field agent must convince the prospective donor that a consideration of "old papers" is worth his time. The field agent must establish his credentials and make his institution's program and merits intelligible to the donor. Communication difficulties often occur at this stage if the archivist is not careful to avoid jargon. One cannot assume that the donor has any concept of the organic unity of records, provenance, or the value of preserving historical materials. Without patronizing the donor, the archivist must convey his concerns in terms which are meaningful to a nonprofessional. Drawing on the information previously researched, the field agent should indicate briefly the kinds of material being sought and the reasons for the repository's interest. He should then request an opportunity to meet with the donor and examine the manuscripts.

The mechanism for making this initial contact varies according to the source of the lead, the nature of the entity which created the records, and the level of personal acquaintance between the field agent and the donor. A formal letter enclosing the repository's descriptive brochures may be an appropriate first approach to a bureaucratic organization such as a welfare agency, while a phone call or visit may accomplish more in dealing with a labor leader, an artist, or a political collective. A social lunch, arranged by a mutual acquaintance, may be the only way of meeting a prominent politican or businessman. The field agent must tailor his approach to the donor based on his assessment of the situation in which the donor will be most comfortable.

The initial overture to a donor may produce no response, and the field agent should be prepared to follow up the inquiry. This follow-up may take the form of a telephone call, a second letter, or a contact made by a mutual acquaintance. Securing the opportunity to meet with the donor is often the single most difficult step in a negotiation. Obviously some discretion must be used in the process to avoid harassment of the donor. This process can be prolonged, and the field representative must be sensitive to nuances of communication, evaluating the reasons for delay and the most effective means of prodding a stalled negotiation. Careful dated notes should be made of any contact with the donor, and telephone memoranda and copies of correspondence should be entered in the repository's collection file.

Once an appointment has been secured with the prospective donor, the field agent has a complex agenda. He is seeking concrete data about the manuscripts in order to determine whether they represent a desirable addition to his repository's holdings. He also wants information about the provenance of the materials and the locus of authority to dispose of them. Finally, he must ascertain under what conditions the donor would be willing to place the materials in a repository. The two tasks, appraisal and negotiation, generally proceed simultaneously.

Appraisal

Appraisal involves assessing the nature, informational content, and completeness of a manuscript collection and its relevance to an institution's collecting policy and goals. The format of the records and their physical condition must be evaluated in terms of costs and prospects for long-term preservation, and the administrative demands in processing and servicing the collection must be estimated. Optimally, the field agent formulates these judgements as a result of a thorough survey of the records on-site. During the preliminary research the field agent will have developed a hypothesis about the document types and subjects which "ought" to exist in any particular group of manuscripts. By comparing this outline to the actual materials, he can begin to determine whether there are gaps in the chronology or missing document types.

Surveying records on-site involves a feedback process. The field agent compares what he sees with what he thinks should be there, and asks questions. The materials which are initially shown to the field agent often represent only a small fraction of the extant manuscripts, since organizations are frequently unaware of the extent of their backfiles. Both organizational and personal donors are usually uncertain just what the field agent wants to see, and frequently think that the published reports or writings are essential and the unpublished material trivial. The field agent should routinely inquire about additional storage areas and examine them if possible, while educating the donor about the types of material he is seeking. For organizational records, or papers of professional people kept in office files, the field representative needs to learn what the actual practice has been in keeping files, as opposed to the formal procedures. Longtime clerical employees are frequently the best source of this information. Once they accept the legitimacy of the field agent's access to the files, they may be able to locate materials in dead storage as well as account for losses by natural disaster or records destroyed by former employees. Eliciting this kind of data requires patience and discretion; the field agent must also avoid being drawn into office politics. The survey is not a substitute for an accession record and the field agent should not become mired in detail. Essential information to be gathered about the records includes: inclusive dates, footage or number of pieces, document types, physical condition, and general arrangement. Unusual items such as rare periodicals, autographs, iconographic items, and artifacts should be noted. Large collections may require a survey of only a sample of the records series rather than examination of the entire collection, but in any event, the survey should not occupy more than a single working day.

The field agent's role in appraisal is not to determine the market value of records or their abstract merit as historic evidence but, rather, their value to his repository. Obviously, factors such as high monetary value and unique informational content will influence the assessment of desirability, but the field agent must also consider the relationship of the proposed acquisition to the repository's collecting policy and the costs and problems of housing, processing, and servicing the materials. Seeking to acquire any and every collection which is potentially available is not routinely the best decision; the field agent may recommend another repository as more suitable or may suggest that the donor consider establishing an in-house archive.

Frequently it is thought that a subject background in a particular area is the single most helpful tool in appraisal; but that emphasis leads to problems for the field agent who cannot be a specialist in all areas in which he collects. If the field agent relies exclusively on subject specialists for leads to collections, his collecting strategy may be skewed by the research interests of the advisors or current research fads. Furthermore, researchers who are not archivists are of little or no help in appraising potential acquisitions, since they are ill-equipped by training or experience to deal with voluminous collections of modern manuscripts. Most field representatives can tell horror stories about the prolonged negotiations required to correct problems with truncated collections which were solicited for repositories by subject specialists who were not archivists. The essential element in appraisal is the ability to perceive a collection as a whole, based on a brief examination of its component parts which are frequently disorganized and scattered.

Once that perception is gained, the archivist can proceed to evaluate the utility of the collection for research purposes and its suitability to the repository's program. The archivist should acquaint himself with research subjects and techniques in a number of fields so as to be able to gauge the informational content of records. He should also study formats and techniques of record-keeping characteristic of the historic periods in which he collects, and the changes in such practices up to the present. Ultimately the archivist will have to make the determination of which materials are of enduring value and should be housed in his repository.

Negotiation

The field agent's objective is to obtain both physical custody and legal title to the manuscripts being sought. Why a donor chooses to place materials in one repository rather than another is conjectural. Factors quite separate from a dispassionate evaluation of the merits of a repository may intrude upon the negotiation. Yet the field agent needs to keep in mind certain modes of decision-making behavior which frequently occur when dealing with donors.

For example, solicitation of organizational records usually involves preparation of a formal proposal submitted to the chief executive officer of the organization. The proposal summarizes the nature of the records sought, their historic significance, and the suitability of the soliciting repository for their deposit. Usually a draft copy of the proposed deed of gift is included, incorporating whatever restrictions or special provisions have been discussed in the preliminary stages. In a covering letter the archivist reviews the negotiation, outlines a sequence for implementation of the proposal, and requests an early decision.

The field agent must be aware of the effect of the donor's personal or institutional calendar on his willingness to make a decision about the records. Some administrators regard records disposition as a pre-retirement decision. Others will take action only when imminent disaster threatens the storage area or when the volume of non-current records being maintained in the office files becomes unmanageable. Even when the executive is convinced of the worth of an archival disposition, his ability to give priority to historic records will be influenced by such seasonal demands in the organization as budget preparation, reviews by a licensing or accrediting agency, or an annual meeting or fund-raising event. Unless the field agent gets a point-blank refusal to proceed with discussions, he should interpret delays as caused by internal factors. Sometimes a discrete inquiry about a more appropriate future date will produce the information that clarifies the source of the delay. In any event, the strategy with stalled negotiations is to maintain amicable personal contact with the executive. Forcing the issue will almost certainly be counterproductive--at all costs one wants to avoid a formal decision to refuse the repository's offer or to destroy the records.

Usually the final decision-making authority will be vested in a governing board with which the field agent may have to interact. The board may invite the archivist to address a monthly meeting or attend some social event. The field agent must adapt himself to the board schedule and have enough flexibility in his own working hours to meet over lunch, during the evening, or on weekends. Social invitations, particularly benefits, must be handled delicately. The field agent cannot be put in the position of financially supporting the organization in order to obtain the records, but he must realize that board members' responsiveness to a proposal may be conditioned by their personal acquaintanceship with the field agent.

Occasionally the field agent will pursue a collection to the final negotiating stage only to find that educating the board about the value of the records has precipitated their choice of another repository for their deposit. Although frustration at this kind of eventuality is natural, the archivist should take a long range view of the situation and conclude that the records are better housed in a repository--even though it is a competitor--than lost.

When dealing with donors of personal or family papers or collections assembled by a collector, the field agent has some different problems. Transactions between such donors and the field representative are likely to be considerably more personalized. The field agent will probably not be allowed unsupervised access to the manuscripts, and may have to proceed under the direct scrutiny of the donor and his lawyer. The donor may have an intense emotional reaction to the memorabilia of a spouse or parent and the field agent will need to exercise tact in meeting these feelings while getting his job done. The negotiations are very frequently conducted during quasi-social occasions, where discussion of business must be muted.

Personal privacy as an issue can often surface as donors attempt to avoid future embarrassment from disclosure of the papers. Donors may attempt to withold certain materials they consider damaging to their reputation or that of their family. They may also attempt to draw the field agent into long-standing family disagreements, particularly if questions of the monetary value of the papers become involved. The field agent must be adept at diplomacy and prepared to suggest appropriate restrictions which will preserve the integrity of the collection without exposing the donors to casual scrutiny.

The timing of the decision to place papers in a repository can be quite different between institutional and personal donors. While dealing with a board may involve months of negotiation, a personal donor may offer papers on the spot--most frequently when a home or office is being vacated following a death. The field agent must be prepared to make a quick decision about the collection and to implement that decision. While a formal proposal is rarely employed in soliciting personal papers, the drawing of a deed of gift is frequently accomplished only after prolonged negotiation with family members and their attorneys.

Personal donors or collectors may also be interested either in selling the manuscripts or in having them appraised for purposes of obtaining a tax deduction. This situation is fraught with difficulties for both novice and experienced field agents. Purchasing manuscripts involves making an estimate of their fair market value--or having them professionally appraised. The field agent who does not regularly purchase manuscripts from dealers may be totally unprepared to make an offer to a donor without considerable research into auction catalogues and other price sources. Under the new tax law, donors of self-created materials will still be prevented from claiming tax deductions of the market value of their works.[5] Furthermore, donors of assembled collections have had the valuation of their gifts increasingly challenged by the Internal Revenue Service. The field agent should familiarize himself with the extensive literature on these issues and the names of qualified appraisers in his locality.[6] No one should attempt to offer tax advice to donors without a legal opinion.

Once the decision has been made to place material in his repository, the field agent's objective is securing transfer of title and literary property rights to the collection. The need for the repository to control access to and copying and publication of manuscripts in its holdings has been extensively discussed in the literature, and samples of deeds of gifts incorporating the basic provisions are available. A repository should have its own set of standard forms, approved by legal counsel, which can be modified to suit particular collections. Since most donors will refer this document to their lawyer, the deed of gift should be drawn in conformance with the relevant statutes governing contracts in a given locality.

If the early negotiations have been well thought out, this concluding transaction should present few problems. The deed of gift will have been prepared to reflect the negotiated terms between the donor and the repository. The final document should be prepared in at least two copies and signed by the donor and the representative of the repository. The field agent may have the authority to execute such deeds, but a higher-level signature may be more appropriate for major gifts, especially if the initial deposit signals a continuing relationship between the donor and the repository. The deed of gift becomes part of the repository's permanent files on the collection; the donor also retains a copy.

Transport and Receiving

The field agent's goal is to deliver all the manuscripts designated for deposit from the donor to the repository with a minimum of disturbance of the original order and no physical damage. The field agent should arrange transport with the lowest expenditure of repository resources consonant with these objectives. Depending on the size and condition of the collection, and access to and distance of the storage areas from the repository, the field agent may become involved in packing, hauling, and supervising transport.

When collections are shipped to a repository from some distance, the reliability of the carrier and the storage conditions in transit are of paramount importance. If the donor is assuming responsibility for packing and shipping, the archivist should recommend packing techniques and the preferred carrier: air freight, bus, United Parcel Service, registered mail, etc. The packer must supply a detailed description of the number of items and containers, shipping date and point of departure, and shipping numbers and expected date of arrival. All of this information will be essential in tracing a shipment which fails to arrive, and a packing list will speed the inventory of the collection when received. In recommending a carrier, the field agent needs to be familiar with the experience of local repositories and weigh the relative importance of speed, reliability, and costs in transporting any particular collection.

If the field agent is to arrange transportation on-site, he has considerably more control over protection of the materials and maintenance of the original order. The field agent will decide whether part or all of the manuscripts must be repacked--in containers which he supplies. Delivery to the repository depends on the size of the collection, the distance, and the transportation available. If one is collecting out of the immediate vicinity of the repository, the material will probably have to be placed with a commercial carrier. Local collecting depends largely on the volume of the materials. Small collections (one to six records center boxes) can be carried in a taxi, and two persons can transport ten to fifteen such boxes in a station wagon. Anything larger may require a van or truck. Some institutions have their own truck and crews, others will have to hire them or rely on volunteer assistance. In dealing with unionized labor, the field agent must be aware of the conditions which govern working hours, breaks, and performance of specific tasks. A working acquaintance with the foreman or supervisor of whatever trucking crew is being employed will prove immensely beneficial.

Mechanics of packing are not complicated, although they can be exhausting. Some system of identifying the sequence of containers as they are packed must be established, the containers marked in at least two places, and a packing list prepared. Execptionally fragile items will require special care.[7] If file cabinets are to be transported intact, drawers must be secured, and the filing labels noted. All repacking should be done by the archival staff or under the direct supervision of the field agent. There are many possibilities for misunderstandings during these activities, and the field agent must be available to answer questions, enforce the packing specifications, and generally mediate between the donor and the laborers. One cannot rely on the donor to supervise pickups on-site without risking missing containers and misdirected shipments. In the repository receiving room the field agent must leave instructions about the unloading order and the storage arrangements. The delivery must be verified against the packing list. Time spent at these tasks will not only gurantee the integrity of the collection as received, but will also immensely simplify the accessioning.

Optimally, every repository should have a receiving area isolated from the rest of the manuscript quarters. In practice this is not always the case, and the field agent has the responsibility of preventing contamination by incoming collections. If the materials have been stored in a basement, attic, or other location where presence of mold and insects is a reasonable assumption, the collection should be fumigated before it is brought into the repository. Commercial fumigators are often inexperienced in treating paper, and the field agent should seek advice from a conservator before proceeding. Once the collection has been accessioned, the materials are no longer the direct concern of the field agent.

Follow-Up

Maintaining good donor/repository relations requires follow-up activities. Donors should be recognized for their contributions to manuscript collections. This recognition can take many forms: thank-you letters, listing of donors in the repository newsletter or annual report, social events, exhibits, and the like. In many cases a donor will have additional materials to give; either supplementary additions to the original collection, different collections, or leads to other potential donors. In some instances, donors may even support the establishment of a collection with a financial gift. They should be cultivated. If the institution has an organized group of friends and benefactors, much of the public relations work can be performed by them. Otherwise, the field agent will probably have the major role in continuing relations with donors. He may give advice on records management and microfilm projects, consult on exhibits and anniversary celebrations, and assist with special projects. The possibilities are endless and time-consuming, but a necessary part of the field operation.

In practice, of course, field work operations do not fit neatly into the sequence described; various stages are telescoped or elongated. The field agent is not always in the position of soliciting materials; sometimes collections are offered which he cannot appraise and must accept or reject on the significance of the subject or the reputation of the donor. Sometimes a supplementary accession proves more significant than the original, due to the discovery of missing materials or a more receptive attitude by the donor. Negotiations for transfer of title may continue long after materials are accessioned. In cases of defunct organizations, it may be difficult to determine who has the authority to transfer title. In some cases a personal donor may wish to place materials on indefinite deposit, perhaps awaiting a more favorable tax situation. Occasionally a donor may be willing to part with his entire collection at one time, but more often the field agent is involved in repeated dealings with the same donor as material is parcelled out to the repository over a period of years. It may not always be possible for the field agent to conclude a collection negotiation with all questions of ownership resolved. He must, however, make an effort to determine the ownership of materials in his repository's custody, even if he cannot secure transfer of these rights to the repository.

Conclusion

This discussion of the technical operations of field work would be incomplete without some consideration of the overall approach which characterizes a successful operation. In a sense, the field agent tries to create within his repository a microcosm of a past world, the boundaries of which are defined by the collecting policy. Collections accessioned are perceived as a part of a universe of data which once existed, only portions of which survive. The field agent strengthens his collection by acquiring materials which fill in gaps in that universe or make clearer the significance of previously acquired manuscripts. Thus, one of the most important characteristics of a field representative is the ability to perceive linkages between the present and the past, and among elements of that past.

The field agent must develop a sensitivity to various types of connectors, persons and geographic location in particular. It is a commonplace observation that individuals in modern society perform in many roles and that interest groups form around issues. The field agent tries to discover the connecting links among persons, organizations, issues, and events in the past in order to determine what materials to seek out for his collection. As one becomes more familiar with a historic period, certain individuals take on pivotal significance; all their associations, personal and professional, become potential acquisition targets. When such individuals cluster in an organization, it becomes a high priority collection subject. As the field agent researches a potential acquisition, he will undoubtedly turn up considerable data on these related entities which he should exploit as sources for additional manuscripts.

Like the historian, the field agent tries to develop an empathy for the past, a sense of the relationships which once existed. One of the most useful tools is a grasp of locality. In a metropolitan area, for example, one can identify residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and similar types of organizations which tend to cluster in certain areas, often in the same office building. This contiguity not only provides leads to current organizations, but it also suggests the value of familiarity with the geography and man-made landscape of the area in which the field agent collects. Urban geography undergoes many changes, but scattered buildings, street names, and familiar colloquialisms may identify a former ethnic settlement or occupational district. The ability to pinpoint the physical location of a collection subject may enable the field agent to find long-forgotten manuscripts by walking the streets, looking at the buildings, and talking with local people. This technique may well be at the root of the discovery stories so dear to the hearts of raconteurs and journalists.

Planning and systematic allocation of resources are essential to the development of a repository's holdings. The field agent must have a concept of the specific areas in which he wants to build collections and strategy for their acquisition. Components of this strategy are both conceptual and pragmatic, since the field agent has limits on both time and money. If the field agent has funds with which to purchase manuscripts, the costs of acquisition are obvious, but gifts also involve costs in salary, mail or phone solicitation and entertainment of donors, and travel and transport of material. The field agent must attempt to rationally allocate his own time, devoting the major portion to tasks which he alone can perform (negotiation and appraisal in particular) and delegating others to trained staff. To achieve efficiency in acquisitions, the field agent must ensure that all tasks are performed in accordance with accepted professional standards, while resisting the temptation to do them all himself.

Finally, a successful field operation is characterized by meticulous attention to detail supported by careful record-keeping. Thorough research on a collection subject may turn up the essential fact which enables the field agent to make a productive approach to the donor. Assimilation of the details of the field survey may make the difference between accessioning a complete collection or a truncated one. Record-keeping is essential because acquisitions often run a tortuous course. Frequently, negotiations have to be deferred and resumed after months, even years, elapse. In the course of negotiotions, manuscripts may be moved from their original location, suffer damage, or be lost. Challenges to already completed negotiations may arise subsequently due to changes in personnel in the donating organization or claims to ownership by a previously unknown person. The field agent must prepare for the unexpected by documenting the nature of the collection and the course of negotiations with carefully dated notes and copies of all relevant communications between repository and donor.

Completion of the tedious details of negotiating collections is a hallmark of a well-run program. One further quality deserves mention--the effort to make accessible to the repository the information about acquisitions which the field agent carries in his head. It is obvious that no two field representatives will have the same personal style or contacts, and thus no field agent is ever truly replaceable. However, it is unlikely that a field agent will devote his entire professional career to building the collection of a single repository, and therefore naive to assume that he will always be available to clarify the terms of the negotiation, the peculiarities of the donor, or the schedule for future accessions of supplementary material. It is his obligation to keep records of such facts so that his successor can carry on the program without reinventing it. The ability to take a disinterested view of one's successes and failures in field work and to convey that experience to others is the _sine qua non_ of a professional field agent.

1. The most useful references on manuscript acquisition are Kenneth W. Duckett, _Modern Manuscripts_ (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1975): Chapter 3; and Ruth B. Bordin and Robert M. Warner, _The Modern Manuscript Library_ (New York and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1966): Chapters 1 and 2. A scenario on collection development is portrayed in Mary Lynn McCree's article, "Good Sense and Good Judgment: Defining Collections and Collecting," _Drexel Library Quarterly_ 11 (January, 1975): 21-33. For a review of the literature, see _Modern Archives and Manuscripts: A Select Bibliography_, comp. ([Washington, D.C.] Society of American Archivists, 1975): Section 23.1 - 23.6.

2. Robert M. Warner, "History in Your Attic," _Journal of Mississippi History_ 26 (1964): 283-98; and Lucile M. Kane, "Manuscript Collecting," _In Support of Clio: Essays in Memory

of Herbert A. Kellar, William B. Hesseltine and Donald R. McNeil, eds. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1958): 29-48, both place their examples in the larger context of developing a program, but the acquisitions processes receive comparatively little attention in their discussion.

3. Frank B. Evans et al., "A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers," American Archivist 37 (July, 1974): 415-33. This article, available as a reprint, does not include any definition of terms such as field work, lead, donor, acquisition, negotiation, etc.

4. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission's project to update and revise the 1961 Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States has requested information on the collecting policies of reporting institutions ("current subject areas of solicitation" and "other materials accepted"). The NHPRC plans to include this data in their forthcoming publication.

5. Tax Reform Act of 1976, P.L. 94-455, approved October 4, 1976.

6. The Society of American Archivists' Committee on Collecting Personal Papers and Manuscripts has compiled a list of appraisers which is available in mimeograph form from the committee.

7. Caroline K. Keck's volume, Safeguarding Your Collection in Travel (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1970) although addressed principally to curators of museum objects, contains useful suggestions on packing and shipping.

A PROGRESS REPORT ON THE RECORDS GRANT PROGRAM: THE FUTURE DEPENDS ON YOU!

Larry J. Hackman

The new records grant program of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission has authority to recommend grants to state and local governments and to nonprofit institutions for a wide variety of activities relating to the preservation and use of historical materials. Though the records program is still in its early stages, the Commission has already awarded a number of grants for projects throughout the country and will recommend a much larger number in fiscal year 1977. Governors in forty states and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands have appointed State Historical Records Coordinators and, with the approval of the Commission, State Historical Records Advisory Boards.[1] Except for national and regional projects, the State Coordinator and Board serve as a planning and evaluation mechanism for proposals submitted under the records program.

Since this is a new program, its policies are not yet embedded in layers of precedent and its procedures are not considered sacred. This is, after all, your program, a program which should be developed to serve needs identified by archivists and historians and others involved in the administration and use of historical records. It is the Commission's intention to seek your advice, especially through the State Advisory Board mechanism -- but in other ways, too -- on how the most important problems may be addressed. The records program should be a cooperative program in which a good deal of influence -- and initiative and responsibility -- resides outside of Washington.

The Commission hopes to develop an adaptive program aimed at meeting the major problems identified by those most involved in the care of historical records. Thus, our request is that archivists throughout the country begin with us to think about how together we can build and shape this program to serve real needs. Some might feel that spending a great deal of time thinking about the future of a program that is still so very modest is idle dreaming.[2] But dreaming is not what is needed from you or from the Commission and its staff. We all need to be realistic but we need not -- and in our common interest we should not -- unnecessarily restrict our vision.

While we cannot know at this point whether the records program will grow like Jack's beanstalk or at a much slower pace, we can agree that very little magic will be involved. This program will be useful in meeting needs which you define to the degree that you take an interest in it, influence it in directions you feel are most productive, criticize it when necessary, and support it when it deserves support. Let us then briefly consider the future of the historical records program and what might be accomplished.

First is the simple fact that an undetermined amount of money will be available in the form of federal grants to assist in a wide range of activities including the identification of historical records, their preservation, restoration, arrangement, description, and use; and to support projects which may improve the techniques and processes employed in the administration of these records. It is fair to say that the distribution of these funds will be determined, for the most part, by those of you involved in the administration of historical records.

By and large, those of you involved with historical records problems on a day-to-day basis will write the grant proposals, administer the projects, or assist, encourage, or direct others to do so. As members of State Historical Records Advisory Boards, as reviewers of regional or national proposals, as consultants, and as concerned professionals, it is your initiative and your advice through your individual and cooperative efforts which will chiefly influence the development of and support for records grant projects.

Beyond the simple fact of availability of new grant funds, there are potentially beneficial effects from the records program -- what economists might refer to as "spill-overs"-- which are worth considering from the outset.

For example, in many states the Historical Records Advisory Board marks the first time that a formal, or even an informal, vehicle has existed for discussion and action by a diverse, but hopefully reasonably representative, group of persons involved in the preservation and use of historical records within the state. This is not necessarily significant -- but it can be. And in several states it is already becoming so in several ways.

The Board can play an important role in identifying needs and indicating, as best it can, its own views of priorities. This may be helpful, not only to the Board itself in deciding which grant proposals to recommend to the NHPRC, and to the Commission in deciding among competing requests, but also to other funding and granting agencies, whether at the federal, state, or local level or in the private sector. As time goes by the Commission hopes that the priority lists which it has requested Advisory Boards to begin to establish will become more and more refined as a device for planning, decision making, and identifying progress -- or the lack of it.

Advisory Boards can also play a useful role in identifying areas in which cooperative proposals should be developed to deal with problems which cannot effectively be undertaken by one institution. Some such projects may even involve cooperation across state lines. And we can hope that Boards will play a catalytic role in bringing together appropriate institutions and organizations to carry out feasibility studies and develop administrative bases to implement such cooperative projects.

A third role that an Advisory Board might effectively play is to bring information regarding historical records needs to the attention of a variety of audiences so that the public becomes more aware of the importance of what the institutions you represent are trying to accomplish. This audience includes first of all the governor, members of the state administration, the bureaucracy, and the legislature. It includes officials of local governments who may not always be aware of the vaule of the materials for which they are responsible. It also includes higher level administrators in some of the institutions which employ you, such as universities, church groups, hospitals, and libraries. Finally, this audience includes the press, and through it, specific individuals and groups as well as the general public.

It is not only to others that the Boards can, from time to time, provide useful information, but also to professional archivists, especially in cooperation with the Commission's staff. The following possibilities come to mind.

Archivists and manuscript curators, as professionals in other areas, all too frequently find themselves starting from scratch, reinventing the wheel over and over again, as they undertake a survey, guide, or special project. The Commission and the state Advisory Boards can, over time, become something of a clearinghouse for information regarding who is doing what, especially regarding new and large projects since they will often involve outside funding. In this way, we may be able to avoid some duplication of effort and share resources and techniques better than we have in the past.

The Advisory Boards, in cooperation with the Commission staff, may be able to build and share information about and develop relationships with sources of non-government support for historical records projects. How long the list will be and how effectively it can be used remains to be seen, but in nearly every state and major city there are sources of support which have not yet been identified or tapped. The Commission has already begun a survey to identify private foundations that will support records projects.

Finally, there may be times when news on the national scene needs to be communicated quickly to state governments and others within the states. The Advisory Board mechanism presents one vehicle for doing so. The Commission is able to quickly reach Advisory Board members who, in turn, may be in contact with others in the state on matters of general concern.

The Commission does not wish to appear naive or overly optimistic or to overstate the appropriate role of the Advisory Board. The Boards will develop differently from state to state, in part to suit the local situation and sometimes due to lack of foresight and effort. Not all Coordinators and Boards will be equally effective. Not all will be as representative of your interests as you and we would like, though the fact that one third of the Board turns over each year is a safety valve in terms of representativeness. There is no reason you should not -- there may be good reason you should -- attempt to influence appointments to these Boards.

There is also one direct benefit from grant funds, a benefit which is not a spill-over from the State Advisory Board mechanism. The generation of outside funds, whether a grant, gift, or otherwise, has a way of strengthening the influence of those who acquire such funds. The reputation of the archivist whose efforts are primarily responsible for securing a grant grows; he or she may discover increased influence within the institution. The materials which are in his or her charge, especially those to be processed under grant funds, suddenly become more visible, more important. The announcement of a grant in the community at large strengthens the impression that the materials and those who administer them are worthy of attention and perhaps more attention than the community, government, or parent institution have given in the past. Again, we don't wish to overstate the case. Obtaining a grant won't stop the strong man at the beach from kicking sand in your face or improve your love life -- unless perhaps you do some things with the grant money not authorized in the grant letter. But archivists should not ignore the possibilities, should not be shy in making it known that others agree that what you are doing is worthy of support and in using that fact to build support for your program.

The Commission also hopes you will look especially closely at the possibility of using a NHPRC matching grant proposal as a lever in obtaining funds from other sources. If the records program fails to generate substantial new funds from the non-federal level, it will be weaker because of it, and therefore of less value to you in the long run. Matching funds make increased Congressional appropriations much easier to obtain. Matching money from sources in your own area fosters interest in and support for your own programs.

We might also think about some dangers, some practices to be avoided, some bad habits which can lead to a mediocre program. First, we need to avoid assuming that only the Coordinator and Board have responsibility for the success or failure of the records program. By and large, the Coordinator and Board will be as good as you expect them to be. They need your ideas, your support, your interest. They also need your criticism. They need to know you expect them to be responsible and responsive.

They need to hear from their professional colleagues.

Furthermore, we need to avoid the appearance or the reality of a closed system, of any sort of establishment. The records program is inclusive, not exclusive. Coordinators and Boards need to reach out with information, and assistance, to county and town clerks, to small historical societies, to people who do not ordinarily participate in professional organizations. Good will and cooperation and initiative are needed from these quarters if some of the most pressing needs are to be identified and dealt with, and if a broad base of support for this program is to develop.

Third, in evaluating proposals Board members need to avoid "passing the buck" to the state Coordinator, and the Board and Coordinator together need to avoid passing the buck to the Commission by failing to judge proposals rigorously. Weak proposals should, as often as possible, be identified at the state level and improved as much as possible before they are recommended for Commission review. It is hoped that Advisory Boards and others in the state will often assist, or identify others who might assist, in the development of proposals from institutions lacking personnel qualified to do so on their own. In the end, passing along potentially valuable but poorly thought-out proposals serves no one's interest. While the Commission staff will assist in this regard as much as possible, we are, and wish to remain, a very small staff relying heavily upon the advice of those of you closer to the scene.

Finally, we need to avoid the sort of institutional parochialism which says that a grant exclusively to our own institution is always to be preferred to sharing a grant with one or more other institutions, or preferable to a grant to an institution better situated than our own to carry out a project in which we have a deep interest. Almost all of us have scarce resources to apply to problems overwhelming in size and, often, in complexity. We need to build on the move toward cooperation and sharing which has begun to develop in recent years in many states and regions. The historical records program represents an opportunity to do so.

1. Missouri, Nebraska, and Wisconsin are the three states in the Midwest Archives Conference area from which nominations for the State Historical Records Advisory Board had not been received by NHPRC as of October 1, 1976. The Governor of Nebraska has informed the Commission that his state does not wish to participate in the records grant program. The Commission has approved appointments in Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Minnesota, Iowa, Michigan, and North Dakota, and contingently, South Dakota. Nominations from Kansas are under consideration.

2. The NHPRC has recently received an increase in its appropriation allowing $1 million for records grants during FY 1977 which begins on October 1, 1976. Previously only a total of $225,000 taken from the appropriation level which had existed in FY 74 and 75 for the publications program was made available for initial development of the records program. The Commission has made, through the September 1976 Commission meeting, seventeen records grants for a total of $217,505. Five of these are "state" grants to institutions in the Midwest Archives Conference area. This does not include a "national" grant to the Society of American Archivists in Chicago. As of October 1, the Commission has already received over 100 new grant applications for review during FY 1977. Additional proposals are welcome.

Note: A pamphlet describing the records grant program and containing information about grant applications and procedures may be obtained by writing: Records Program, NHPRC, National Archives Building, Washington, D.C. 20408 (phone 202-724-1616). A grant application cover sheet and information regarding State Coordinators and Advisory Boards is available from the same address.

CREATING AND MANAGING AN EXHIBIT PROGRAM

Judith Cushman

Many libraries offer exhibitions on an irregular basis, presenting a few each year. The Joseph Regenstein Library of the University of Chicago, however, has an exhibition program. In any academic year this program commits us to presenting about ten exhibits; displaying more than one thousand rare books, manuscripts, graphics, and memorabilia; occupying more than 585 square feet of exhibit space, or twenty-eight cases and thirty-six bookshelves; publishing three catalogues and several brochures; writing fifty pages of exhibit captions; circulating hundreds of posters and news announcements; and entertaining thousands of people.

Before discussing the scope and administration of an exhibition program, I will examine the values and goals that underlie all exhibitions. Why should a library have an exhibits program at all? What are its purposes and functions?

Goals and Values of Library Exhibits

Exhibitions are, first, a means of introducing the university community and its visitors to the rich resources of the library. It is surprising how many students--and occasionally faculty members--are ignorant of these resources. Acquainting an audience with a library's holdings can take the form of simply exposing the academic or broader community to a department of special collections or of informing a particular scholar about the acquisition of a certain item. More commonly, an exhibit will make known particular strengths of a library by displaying works or papers either drawn from a special collection or focusing on a given field.

An exhibit announces not only the acquisitions and holdings of a library, but also the work-in-progress of the library staff. It is important that the larger academic community be apprised of the library's activity in researching and processing its collections. Our recent exhibition of the papers of James Franck, for example, announced the availability to researchers of the Franck papers and the completion of the Guide to the papers--a project of some two years' work on the part of our manuscript research specialist, Mary Janzen.

In producing exhibits, archivists will inevitably be interpreting and evaluating the material they are displaying. The archivist's role is obvious in such exhibits as the University of Chicago's One in Spirit, a retrospective view of the University based on the archives. But even for less ambitious exhibits--ones without explicit and overriding theses and usually consisting of fewer than seventy-five documents--the archivist must still assess his collection thoroughly and analyze its content. For example, in our minor archival exhibits on the Norman Wait Harris Memorial Foundation in International Relations and on the Chicago School of Sociology, the archivist was required, by the mere process of choosing the documents to display, to assess not only the completeness of the relevant collections, but also the contributions--academic and political--made by these groups. Similarly, in preparing our exhibit on Hitchcock Hall, a University dormitory built in 1900, the archivist was required to piece together the correspondence between Mrs. Hitchcock and the University in order to unravel the facts behind the design of the building.

Exhibitions are a medium of expression for those working with a library collection, whether they be librarians, archivists, students, or faculty. In a larger sense, exhibits serve a natural means of introducing scholarship at the University. An exhibit itself can be the end result of the research, or it can call attention to other by-products--such as books, articles, and lectures--of that scholarship. For example, when in 1975, Barry Karl, Professor of History at the University, published his study of Charles E. Merriam, we planned an exhibit on the Merriam Papers which had formed the basis of his study. For the exhibit, Professor Karl wrote an essay discussing the University's archives and the Merriam papers.

The ways in which an exhibit program aids a library in developing its collections are numerous. Our own program is closely tied to that of the University of Chicago Library Society--a recently formed group which acts much the way an alumni group does for a university. The Library Society supports and participates in the activities related to exhibitions. In turn, exhibits find among Library Society members a more specific audience at which to direct future appeals. Other groups which are members of an exhibit's audience also become potential friends of the library. Exhibits that acknowledge gifts and display items from private collections also serve to cultivate donors.

Exhibitions commonly function to celebrate larger events. Plans for University symposia, lecture series, and conferences often include proposals for exhibiting selections from the library's related holdings. Several of the exhibits in our program have complemented various University activities, drawing particularly heavily on our archival collections. For example, our exhibit of the papers of the Norman Wait Harris Memorial Foundation in International Relations and of Quincy Wright contributed to the University's celebration of the Foundation's fiftieth anniversary. When Hitchcock Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places, we exhibited original documents and photographs from the archives on the creation of the building. Larger events--those of the nation's history, for example--can easily be honored with exhibitions. The celebratory function of exhibits is so popular that it alone can sustain a successful, rich, and varied exhibit program.

Finally, an exhibition provides delight and instruction. They may be appreciated by people at every level of sophistication--from those who know nothing of an exhibit's subject to the most learned researchers of the material; from the college freshman to the scholar; and from the casual patron to the book collector and librarian. Exhibitions are learning experiences not just because of their didactic content, but also because, explicitly or implictly, they suggest an aesthetic and historic appreciation for the tools of scholarship.

The Scope of an Exhibit Program

Any exhibit is ephemeral. In our exhibit program, a single exhibit can run from five weeks to five months, and maximum advantage must be taken of the tremendous effort that goes into it. Dismounting an exhibit within a few weeks after its installation can be a painful experience. Therefore, building a program of activities around a series of exhibits is crucial to advancing the goals of any single exhibit. Too often, many people on campus can miss exhibits altogether--or not finish viewing them--and often the potential interest in the exhibit and its subject is not tapped. Planning some related special events, publishing exhibit brochures and catalogues, distributing publicity, and perhaps circulating the exhibit itself are some of the ways to broaden the impact of the exhibit and strengthen its contribution to the life of the university.

While certain celebrations give rise to exhibits, exhibits can give rise to celebrations too. Each of our own exhibits opens with a reception that becomes an occasion to gather together faculty, students, library staff, and friends of the library. The exhibit author, University faculty member, or a guest speaker also gives a lecture. Other academic events, such as symposia, are sometimes based on an exhibit. Our exhibit on the Franck Papers led to a day-long symposium entitled "The Socially Responsible Scientist," with panelists and guest speakers invited from various institutions across the country. Other display facilities on campus--such as art galleries and museums--can be asked to prepare exhibitions on the same or related topics, thus offering a different viewpoint and approach to the same subject based on other types of material. Other academic departments and individual professors can hold seminars in the library concerning the exhibit material, and the special collections staff can offer guided tours of the exhibit. Informal talks in the library and even readings or performances can become part of the exhibition series. Any number of events can be planned for a single exhibit, and ideally these should be scheduled to span the duration of the exhibition.

Exhibit publications add an essential dimension to an exhibit program. Extending the life of the exhibition, they become in some ways more important than the exhibit itself. Brochures distributed at the exhibit become keepsakes of the event, affording a more leisurely and concentrated reading of the exhibit's content. Exhibit catalogues can easily be distributed on a formal as well as informal basis. Mailing catalogues to other institutions, organizations, professional colleagues, and journals will considerably widen the audience of any exhibit.

An exhibit publication holds practical as well as developmental value. It is a record of the exhibit should it be resurrected, and more importantly, it is a helpful reference tool for the researcher consulting the library collections on which the exhibit is based. A full-scale catalogue also offers the opportunity for a more thorough treatment and deeper analysis of the material than the medium of the exhibit alone provides. Besides being an outlet of expression for the library staff and researcher, the exhibit catalogue itself is a contribution to scholarship. Again, on a more extensive scale than the exhibit, the catalogue suggests the richness of the library's holdings and the scholarly uses to which such holdings can be put.

We try to publish a catalogue or brochure for most of our exhibits. When we don't--usually due to lack of funds--we regret the absence of one. Not every exhibit warrants the same kind of publication; some very small exhibits, mounted in one case, wouldn't justify any. Different formats should be developed for exhibitions of various size and scope.

For our major exhibits--longer running, larger-scale presentations--we always try to produce a detailed and informative catalogue with introductory essays, listings of all the items, and bibliographical and historical notes. When the budget allows, illustrations are also used. Our <u>One in Spirit</u> catalogue suggested a different treatment. Albert Tannler, our archivist, wrote a narrative history of the University based on the archival documents. Full citations to the documents appear at the back of the catalogue and a large number of the photographs are reproduced throughout.

Publishing a simple checklist of the material seems to work better for book and graphic exhibits than for strictly archival and manuscript ones. The type of publication most successful for our smaller archival exhibits is one containing an essay--usually of a few thousand words--accompanied by illustrations, bibliographies, chronologies, or other such apparatus. Our brochures accompanying our exhibits of the James Franck Papers, the Harris Foundation Papers, and the Charles E. Merriam Papers followed this format. Collections such as these usually contain photographs which can be reproduced for the cover of the brochure or to give interest to the inside text.

Another kind of publication appropriate for a manuscript or archival exhibit in particular is a facsimile of a document, preferably one central to the collection or exhibit. An offprint of an article on the collection shown or on the exhibit could also be distributed. An elaborate invitation to the opening is yet another possibility. Such an invitation could include in addition to the invitation text, a few words about the exhibit, its themes and sources, and the coordinated events. Illustrations or design motifs could again be taken from the exhibit documents.

In addition to scheduling special events and printing catalogues and brochures, a library will also most likely be distributing pre-opening publicity to reach the desired audiences and to provide maximum exposure for each exhibit. A calendar of the year's programs, newsletters, news releases, announcements in local and campus newspapers, and listings in relevant academic and trade journals are some of the forms pre-publicity can take. Occasionally the media will also review library shows.

Another way of extending the life of a library exhibit is to have it travel. This is rarely thought of with library exhibits, yet the advantages are numerous for both borrower and lender. (Although museums are facing rising costs in circulating their exhibits, this experience should not deter libraries from pursuing the possibilities of travelling exhibits. Shipping, handling, insuring, and mounting costs are far more expensive for works of art than for books and manuscripts.)

Key Elements in the Effective Planning and Coordination of an Exhibit Program

I would like to be more specific now about some of the ways in which an exhibit program similar to the one I have been outlining can be planned and administered effectively and efficiently. Anyone who has worked on exhibits knows that at any point a lot can go wrong. There is a myriad of detail to attend to; there are so many actual pieces to be handled; there are so many people who might not come through; and finally, there are so many deadlines to meet. What can be done to counter the flux and the potential chaos? Good planning and effective coordination of an exhibition program depend on having a sensible calendar to begin with, on establishing standardized procedures and schedules, and on utilizing the available resources to their utmost capacity.

A sensible calendar means a number of things, some more obvious than others. It's wise not to be scheduling two openings or publications within the same month. A minimum of a week should be left between the closing and opening dates of two exhibitions. Opening dates should not be set after a holiday season when the staff is likely to be short. The schedule for producing an exhibit and a catalogue rarely coincide, and the working timetables for each activity should be kept in mind when plotting the year's calendar. One should avoid having to check proof for a catalogue while also installing another exhibit.

A judicious balance of smaller and larger exhibits is necessary if the program is to proceed at a sane pace. The same is true for publications; they should vary from modest to full-scale enterprises. Certain time slots and facilities should always be kept free so that the program has enough flexibility to respond to the spontaneous needs of the institution--a library will repeatedly be called upon to honor university figures or events in the news. Whenever possible, filler exhibits should be used; these could be past exhibits resurrected in part or full, travelling exhibits, or permanent displays arranged for easy installation and dismantling.

It is tempting to overschedule--to have too many exhibits in a year. This is frustrating to everybody, not only to the preparers but also to the viewers. No matter how sensible the the calendar is, the workload still involves peak and slow periods. The fall, at the beginning of the academic year, is always a busy time; and summer, a slow season. During the hectic opening months of a season, it is sometimes helpful to keep this rhythm in mind.

A sensible calendar, however, will be finally worthless unless adequate lead time has been built into the working schedule. Lead time is, I think, the magic phrase in planning exhibits. Presently we have about fifteen to twenty-four months to prepare each of our major exhibits. We try to shape a program for the forthcoming academic season eighteen months before it begins. With just a basic knowledge of the exhibit's theme or the materials on which it will be based, it is possible to outline a catalogue, determine the basic categories of the exhibit, and guide the researchers in their work. The amount of time the researcher/author needs, of course, depends on prior knowledge of the area, but six months will certainly be needed for writing the catalogue text and exhibit script, for the editing, and for the revising. Another six months should be left for the production of the publication.

This timetable might sound more than ideal to some; it may seem positively luxurious. However, if the same staff is working on the catalogue and on the installation, the two preparations should be staggered rather than concurrent. Furthermore, although exhibit catalogues can, if need be, produced in a matter of days, one usually pays for this--if not with severe headaches or poor quality then with the actual costs charged for the rush services. Many institutions have a central publications office handling all details of the production, thus removing some of this burden from the library staff. There is much to be said for the economy and efficiency of such an arrangement.

Along with scheduling generous lead time, establishing standardized procedures, forms, and work schedules is crucial. Forms should work for you, not you for them. Experimentation with and revision or disposal of various forms will be necessary from time to time. I will mention a few of the more helpful forms that could be devised. A docket, or fact sheet, filed as soon as an exhibit is slated, could list such matters as amount and source of exhibit material, anticipated staff workload and assignments, long-range work schedule, budget, working title and running dates, and publication plans. A set of guidelines, helpful for preparers of exhibits and catalogues, could conceivably cover such topics as expected audience, scope of annotations, house style for bibliographic data, and physical presentation of the manuscript. Creating an exhibit is a new experience for most people--even if they are trained researchers--and distributing guidelines such as these could anticipate many questions. For the exhibit author, editor, and compositor of the catalogue, a lined and ruled caption sheet could be a convenient and time-saving form demarcating spaces for each item's heading and numbering lines for each description. Printed maps of exhibit facilities could be used in planning exhibits and later laying them out.

Checklists of what has to be done, sample timetables for exhibits of varying scope, and work schedules--all in varying detail--could assist the many people involved in producing any one exhibit. Forms such as these also offer a fringe benefit. One of the difficulties in coordinating an exhibits program is tactfully pressuring everyone to complete work on time so the whole edifice doesn't collapse. It is easier, and more graceful somehow, to make these demands through a formal schedule than through repeated verbal requests.

Given the constraints that prevail everywhere on library budgets and staffs, utilizing available resources to their utmost capacity is necessary for an efficient exhibit program. The first "resource" available is the experience of the former staff. For this reason, careful records must be maintained which document at the least the amount of time and money various projects cost. A report following each exhibit could record such figures, evaluate outside services bought, and point out installation and conservation problems.

Some of the services contracted outside might be supplied by other departments within the institution. For example, a university's physical plant department can offer expertise and, sometimes, even assistance with installation problems. Galleries and fine art studios on campus will have tips on supplies and mounting techniques which are aesthetically pleasing and meet conservation standards. Purchasing departments can get bids on services and order supplies, such as paper for the catalogue, at cost. The office of public information will distribute publicity, provide mailing lists, and perhaps take photographs.

Another type of resource available in the university community is volunteer help, although this has to be approached with personnel regulations in mind. Students in a number of academic departments--history, literature, and art in particular--are usually eager for exhibit experience and would volunteer their time in exchange for the learning possibilities.

In another league entirely--but again a neglected resource--is outside funding and grants. Many local and some national agencies (the National Endowment for the Humanities, for example) provide full or partial support of exhibits and related activities if the basic project is sound.

As much advantage as possible should be derived from the design and production work that goes into the exhibit catalogue. For example, the cover of the catalogue can also be used as the exhibit poster or, if a slight change of text is required, an overlay can be prepared. The cover could also be reduced and run off separately as an invitation to the opening reception. Multiple use of one design in this way gives the public a single image with which to identify the exhibit, and thus increases the publicity value of each of the pieces produced. If the exhibit and the catalogue are closely related, the catalogue pages can be cut up and the captions used in the exhibit. (The type size, of course, has to be large enough to be read in this format.) Display type, decorative motifs, and illustrations from the catalogue can also be enlarged for use in the exhibit's installation.

Costs can be reduced in producing graphics for an exhibition simply by using one designer for the whole package--invitations and envelopes, catalogues and envelopes, posters, and perhaps exhibit signs. A designer can also be employed to create one or two standard designs for each of the predominant types of publications produced for the exhibit program. These designs may then be used repeatedly with only minor variations. This approach to exhibit publications would not only save considerably on design fees and production and editorial time, but would also create a natural publication series, enhancing the appearance and value of each publication forming a part of it.

This discussion covers only a portion of what goes into a library exhibit program. For example, I have not dealt with conservation problems, loan procedures, or mounting and installation methods. More importantly, I have discussed only briefly the personal side of exhibits and the immense satisfaction of working with those who have an intimate relationship with the material itself. The librarian, the collector, the historian, the friend of the library, the student--they are at the heart of the program as much as the exhibit material. All the details of the exhibit program have their meaning, finally, in the extent to which they contribute--be it through the exhibit, lecture, or catalogue--to making the material alive to its audiences. The vast amount of organizational work and administrative detail required to create a successful exhibit program should not lose sight of this end.

ON ARCHIVISTS AND THEIR VIRTUES

David D. Hartung

Preface

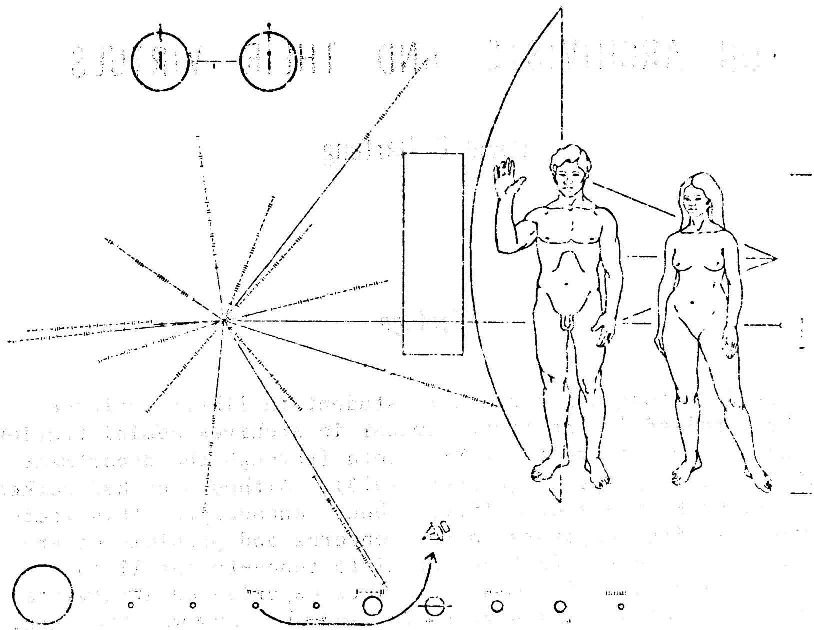
David Hartung was a graduate student in library science when he enrolled in the first seminar in archives administration offered at the University of Minnesota (through the department of history during spring quarter, 1976). Although he had worked with rare books and knew a little about manuscripts, this seminar was his first exposure to the concerns and problems of archivists. He had the fortune--or misfortune--to enroll in a class in which many of the members were experienced archivists eager to discuss what archivists do, and why, and who they are. Hartung became involved personally in that complex question of what Herman Kahn called the divided heart*, archivists' own ambiguity about the nature and value of their work. This essay is his response to the questioning and perplexity he observed; it is a gift to us from one who has understood our contradictory impulses and our identity crisis.

Students of sociology of the professions have observed that groups that are becoming professions tend to be serious, if not grim, about their work. Thus while we should applaud the increasing professionalization of modern archives and manuscripts work, we should not forget to provide time and occasions to consider ultimates. David Hartung's essay does not discuss standards for conservation or sources for documenting ethnicity. Rather, it provides an occasion to analyze, in prose risen to poetry, the nature of our mission and our condition.

As poetry, it deserves to be read in a tranquil moment.

-- Andrea Hinding

*Herman Kahn, "Some Comments on the Archival Vocation," American Archivist 34 (January 1971):4.



The plaque aboard the *Pioneer 10* spacecraft.

Prologue: The Starry Messenger of the Twentieth Century

Hundreds of thousands of miles across space from us, an American space vehicle called Pioneer 10 is engaged in an ambitious journey of infinite duration. Unlike most space vehicles it is not just an information gatherer, it is an information carrier; it bears the first message ever written by man for examination by possible nonterrestrial intelligent beings.

The message is etched on a six-inch by nine-inch gold anodized aluminum plate and is attached to the antenna support structure of Pioneer 10. The expected erosion rate in interstellar space is sufficiently small that this message should remain intact for hundreds of millions of years, and probably for a much longer period of time. It is, consequently, the artifact of mankind with the longest expected lifetime. It is an archive with some leverage on permanence.

Written in the language of science, the message intends to communicate the locale, epoch, and nature of the builders of the spacecraft. Since several millenia may intervene between now and the time the message is intercepted, I should like to examine it briefly and use it as an index to the work of the archivist--and more importantly, to the identity of the archivist. Here are its essential elements: a nude man, a nude woman, the position of the earth in relation to fourteen pulsating stars, the position of the earth in our solar system with the spacecraft trajectory indicated, and the difference in energy between the two basic states of the hydrogen atom. With the exception of the man and the woman, the elements of the message are represented schematically. The message has been reproduced at the beginning of this essay, so that both my objectivity and subjectivity may be called into question.

Two elements of the message deserve explication. Pulsating stars, called pulsars, are Las Vegas writ large; in the dark and deserted regions of space they glow frenetically and make a lot of noise. In more scientific terms, they are rapidly rotating neutron stars produced in catastrophic stellar explosions; they are natural and regular sources of cosmic radio emission. Pulsars function as cosmic clocks, running down at largely known rates. They are represented on the message because a scientifically sophisticated civilization should be able to determine the position of the earth ("Where was it ever possible to see these fourteen pulsars arrayed in such a relative position?") and the time the message was sent ("When was it possible to see these pulsars in this position?"). Hydrogen is shown in its two states because it is the most abundant atom in our galaxy.

These markings, like those on the cave walls of Altamira and Lascaux, signify an identity. We are male and female. We live on the third planet from the star that is the center of our solar system. We have some idea of our position in space and time in the galaxy that contains our solar system. We recognize that we have an atomic structure. Despite the countless things the message did not say, I should like to extend its enterprising archival spirit to my concern about the identity of the archivist, about those characteristics that unite and persist in a person so that he or she asserts, "I am an archivist."

As the prologue implies, an identity is a curious thing; t presumably denotes something about us, but it is often incomplete or misleading. Thus the archivist contends with many forces--subtle ones, at that--in attempting to communicate his or her identity. One of these is definition.

In answer to the question "What is an archivist?" we may engage in 1) tautology - "An archivist is an archivist"; 2) simile - "An archivist is like a fisherman, casting his net over an ocean of knowledge"; 3) metaphor - "The archivist is the curator of the transcript of human experience"; 4) hyperbole - "The archivist is the star of stars in the galaxy of historiography"; 5) downright perverseness - "An archivist is a history student with moderate brain damage."

We live in a time when the latter category--perverseness--is universally indulged. Self-deprecation is rampant, and so the mythology of the archivist as the failed something-or-other proliferates. Even the late Herman Kahn*, a person loved and respected by archivists, has given credence to this mythology by pointing at "the divided heart of the archivist."

Divided heart. Think of the connotations. A devastating silence at a convention of historians when the question is asked "Is anyone here an archivist?" Fudging about one's vocation in a conversation with a college chum "Welll, I'm at the Historical Society now, working on a project...". Skulking out of the back door of the local archives at quitting time, hoping desperately for an unobserved exit. These divided heart scenarios can amuse us, but they portray a flinching which does a disservice to the men and women who are archivists.

I do not wish to indict anyone here, because librarians (uh, yes, I'm a librarian) are more or less in the throes of an identity struggle themselves, with the same sense of the perverse holding the field. There is a one-liner which goes something like "My father used to be a librarian, but then he got a job." I almost always laugh at this, but each time I do, I hate myself. And each time the archivist hears the one about the brain-damaged historian, isn't there a touch of resentment in the laughter it provokes? Let us dispel this mythology of the failed profession and its symbol, the divided heart, by giving them the silent treatment. Some ideas deserve to be starved.

Although simile, metaphor, and hyperbole all reside in the province of analogy, they deserve consideration in building definitions because of their immense power to persuade. The task is to construct an analogy that is both sensible and creditable. Who isn't overwhelmed by the title "Curator of the Transcript of Human Experience"? It contains an element of truth, but it tilts towards the pretentious. Simplicity; that's the key.

Let us predicate something about the archivist. An archivist works with the records of men, women, and organizations that tell us something about the progress and development of human history. We're getting close, I believe. It's a least common denominator, to be sure, but it's a manageable one. Our definition then reads "An archivist is a person who works with the records of men, women, and organizations that tell us something about the progress and development of human history."

I should like now to say something about the characteristics that unite and persist in the archivist, that support the definition we have spelled out above. The only archivists I've ever known are the persons I've met as fellow students, professors, and guest speakers in our seminar, so what I record here is drawn from the ten weeks we have spent together; it is not a desideratum. On the gold anodized aluminum plate of my spacecraft I would etch the following: capability, common sense, courage, foresight, good humor, imagination, and skepticism (benign). As you can see, the librarian in me has portrayed the virtues in an alphabetical, not a hierarchical, scheme. I have done this because each archivist harbors these virtues in different proportions, and to rank them can only reflect my world view. But I should say something about "benign skepticism."

Benign skepticism permits the archivist to deal with uncertainty without somehow being overwhelmed by it. In each decision the archivist makes, uncertainty is inevitably present; the spectre of truth looms large, "Is this right?" Benign skepticism allows the archivist to say "Given what I know, this seems to be the right thing to do." What more can be asked? The only court of inquiry with jurisdiction over the work of the archivist is in the brain of the archivist. We do not have to accomodate eternal things, but ourselves.

With the identity and virtues of the archivist asserted, I should like to invoke the spirit of *Pioneer 10*, the starry messenger of our century, which like each of us is a frail vessel of history: enterprising, resolute, outward bound.

BOOK REVIEWS

Manuscripts Guide to Collections at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, by Maynard J. Brichford, Robert M. Sutton and Dennis F. Walle, Urbana, University of Illinois Press, 1976. 384 pp. Index.

The introduction to this impressive new guide describes its function: "A guide to the manuscript collections at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign fills a basic need of research scholars for a descriptive work on the University's manuscript resources. It brings together in one document a comprehensive inventory of all of the University's manuscript collections."

No single unit at the University of Illinois is charged with responsibility for the collection of manuscripts, and as a result, manuscript collections have come to different offices of the University and remained dispersed. This published guide to the location of these disparate collections will save the researcher valuable time.

The Guide's introduction describes the intent and objectives of the work, the basis for terms used, and the reasons for some differences in the form of entries. Hours that the various repositories are open for research are given with a warning to call or write in advance since the hours are subject to frequent change. Addresses and phone numbers are conveniently listed. There are no general regulations stated about copying; however, there is a policy statement in the introduction to Part II regarding material in the Illinois Historical Survey Library, copied from other libraries.

The Guide is composed of three parts: Part I - University Archives; part II - Illinois Historical Survey Library; and Part III - Business Archives, History Library, Rare Book Room. Each part includes a specific introduction describing collections in its section, and the introductions are required reading for users of the Guide. There is also a sizeable fifty page index at the end of the volume.

Individual entries are set apart by headings in capital letters arranged alphabetically within each part. Entries are a full page in width, rather than in a columnar format. Included in the headings, which are basically standard for manuscript guides, are the inclusive dates, size, and composition of the collection (e.g. diaries, letters, papers, photo albums, etc.). The collection sizes in Parts I and III are given in cubic feet, even for very small groups, which would appear to be more easily represented in linear feet, inches, or number of items as they are stated in Part II. Other information in the entries consists of the Record Series (RS) number (for the University Archives only), the Library of Congress' National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) numbers and the name and number of pages for any supplementary finding aids (SFA).

In the Business Archives section, unprocessed collections, which outnumber processed collections, are also listed. It is not clear if one may use the unprocessed material, but a statement in the introduction to Part III indicates that additional information can be obtained from the University Archives which administers this large collection.

Basically, the authors have attempted to be thorough in indexing. One suspects, however, that various individuals working on indexing the contents of the three parts considered topics differently -- or, being extremely familiar with the collections, did not index under certain topics despite the fact that those topics were mentioned in the descriptions. For example, there is an entry for "corn" in the Index which directs the reader to the papers of a chemistry professor. (One must look through all the entries on a given page to locate the specific reference.) Mentioned in the description of the professor's papers are other subjects including artichoke research, analytical chemistry, and food technology. Of the topics covered in the professor's materials, only "artichokes", as well as "corn", are listed in the Index. There is a heading for "analytical chemistry" in the Index, but one is referred to another page and a different chemistry professor. Correspondents listed in the description of the first chemistry professor's papers are all in the Index, however. There are numerous cross-references which help maintain consistency in the subject headings.

Maynard Brichford, the University Archivist, and his colleagues, have done an excellent job in creating the Guide. Several years' work of numerous individuals produced a well-organized, comprehensive publication. The Guide will be useful to archivists, researchers, librarians and anyone working on the history of Illinois or higher education.

Jennie B. Cross
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Oral History as a Teaching Approach, by John A. Neuenschwander, "Developments in Classroom Instruction." Washington: National Education Association, 1976. 46 pp. References, Annotated bibliography.

The value of oral history has long been recognized. The late Allan Nevins suggested in his Gateway to History in 1938 that a record of important individuals be obtained during their lifetime. Ten years later an oral history program was begun at Columbia University. Since that time a whole series of oral history programs have sprung up across the country, stimulated by technological developments in the electronics field.

Organizations of historians, folklorists, archivists, librarians and the relatively new interdisciplinary Oral History Association have concerned themselves mainly with the research application of oral history. In the 1960s, however, teachers began using oral history as a teaching technique. This is what Professor John Neuenschwander's Oral History as a Teaching Approach is all about.

The book consists of six brief chapters, less than fifty pages in all, and includes an annotated bibliography. The author, Associate Professor of History at Carthage College, Kenosha, Wisconsin, sees oral history as a "means to improve student motivation by injecting the community into the learning process." He also believes that it will stimulate better rapport between the young and old, and between people of different racial, religious, and ethnic backgrounds. Professor Neuenschwander further argues that a learning experience such as this may be more effective than traditional teaching techniques which students often find boring. The handbook offers many practical hints for teachers and prospective interviewers. It includes a sample oral history project complete with subjects that can be covered in interviews. It also contains an actual tape transcript, a sample release form, and a sample tape index. These should prove useful to the prospective user.

Professor Neuenschwander's book makes a strong case for the application of oral history techniques to teaching. Few would question his argument that "in a society that is increasingly technocratic and impersonal, the need for such an intensely human way to learn is obvious." Yet, some readers might feel that this innovative technique sounds like another attempt to escape into the endless round of educational experimentation -- attempts to make learning as attractive and entertaining as possible. Compared to more traditional teaching methodology, however, the oral history approach can be highly effective. According to a recent survey, only a small number of secondary schools and colleges supplement their regular curriculum with oral history. It appears that as with other innovations in education, the success of oral history as an approach to teaching depends to a great extent upon the enthusiasm, inventiveness, and ability of the teachers and students who participate in the activity.

In addition to offering a new approach for teachers, the use of oral history in the classroom might be useful to researchers as well. In the past only the influential, knowledgeable or controversial were considered legitimate subjects for oral history projects. More recently, however, ordinary people have become the focus of such projects. The tapes and transcripts of well-conducted interviews could become an important source for future research. For this reason archivists would be wise to cooperate with teachers who conduct oral history projects and see to it that the results are properly preserved for future use.

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Modern Archives and Manuscripts: A Select Bibliography, comp. by Frank B. Evans, The Society of American Archivists, 1975. 209 pp. Index.

Frank Evans has done it again. This book is the latest contribution of a creative archivist to archival theory and practice and it is difficult to imagine any serious archivist not owning the reference volume. Evans and his colleagues at the National Archives and Record Service to whom he gives credit for assistance, have produced a new version of his earlier bibliography by adding new titles which were published between July, 1969 and 1973.

The arrangement is logical and consistent. There are four parts to the book: Introduction to Archives Administration; Survey of Archival Functions; American Archival Agencies and Archives; and International Archival Developments. Each part contains the pertinent chapter headings by subject and then subheadings, beginning with basic readings. The range of subjects and the number of titles covered actually belie the subtitle, "A Select Bibliography", and the disclaimer in the Introduction that the book "does not purport to be a general guide to writings on archival administration." When even one and two page articles in obscure journals are included, could anything have been left out? Greater selectivity of entries might have made the book even more useful to the working archivist who neither needs nor has access to a plethora of articles on any subject.

There are useful separate indexes for authors and subjects and a necessary list of journal abbreviations. A search for some of the citations showed them to be letter perfect, although less than half of the journals cited were found in a medium-sized university library.

However, even in the welter of titles included in this book, the fact stands out that there are very few basic books on archival practice. Bordin and Warner's 155 page The Modern Manuscript Library published ten years ago is cited under seven subjects, and Lucille Kane's 55 page A Guide to the Care and Administration of Manuscripts, published in 1960, is cited under four subject headings.

All archivists are indebted to the Society of American Archivists for undertaking the publication of this book. Attempts at economy, however, have undoubtedly been responsible for the hard-to-read paragraph format for the citations instead of a separate line for each which would have taken more space, and for the flimsy cover which will have to be replaced if the book is to be consulted even more than a few times. These two features mar an otherwise superb contribution to literature on archives.

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Mundome, by A.G. Mojtabai, New York, Simon and Schuster, 1974. 154 pp.

When the rave reviews for Mundome first appeared, I was overjoyed that someone had written a novel with an archivist as the main character. Eighteen months later, the book appeared in our library and what I anticipated as an enjoyable evening with it quickly proved a disappointment. Mundome is written by a female librarian who knows little about archives and archivists and even less about writing. The book makes as little sense as the title and presents the most derogatory image of an archivist imaginable. The title is taken from the quotation "In hoc mundo me extra me nehil agere posse..." ("In this world I can't do anything outside of myself...") Combining the words mundo and me produces not a word, but gibberish. The text uses the stream-of-consciousness technique to describe the thoughts, dreams, actions and conversations of a man devoted to his mentally ill sister. In the end, the protagonist (and the reviewer) went mad. Mojtabai's style leaves much to be desired. In the opening "Author's Note" she warns: "Mundome is a deliberately ungrammatical construction, a forced juxtaposition of words that cannot fuse without some connective of action or relation." This may explain the awkward and difficult-to-read style, but certainly does not explain how a kitten can change from male to female and back to male in seventeen pages, nor how a male can wear pedal-pushers that end at the knee, to point out only two of many inconsistencies.

Richard Henken, the main character, is "a specialist in ephemera and fugitive material" in what can only be the New York Public Library. His attitude toward users and donors is abominable: "My visitors are few and these few not to be encouraged, so I don't have a full-fledged chair.... Much as I would like to listen...my time is not my own." One donor describes the treatment he receives as the "bum's rush". Henken spends a good deal of time readying his "tools: number 3-H hard pencils, number 2 soft pencil, pen, pad, eraser, Exacto knife, ruler, dust cloth, paper clips...rubber bands..." and even more time "standing at the corporate authority file, checking format for corporate headings...." Henken's immediate predecessor sat at his desk playing solitaire with catalog cards when he wasn't writing biographical accounts of his predecessors, one of whom went mad and the other committed suicide.

Mundome is an insult to the archival profession. Perhaps one of my male colleagues will accept the challenge and retaliate by writing a novel about a female librarian.

Toby Fishbein
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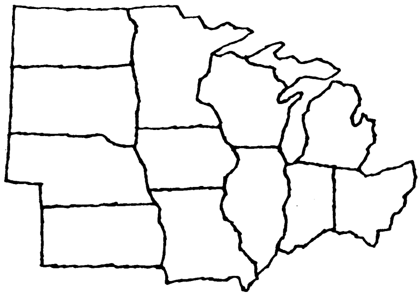

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