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PAKS AND ARCHIVAL EDUCATION:

PART II: INDIVIDUAL PAKS*

Nicholas C. Burckel

Problems in Archives Kits (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1980-): PAK I: Appraisal (1980), \$17 members, \$20 others; PAK II: Security (1980), \$17 members, \$20 others; PAK III: Starting an Archives (1980), \$11 members, \$14 others; PAK IV: Archival Processing Costs (1981), \$12 members, \$15 others; PAK V: Can You Afford Records Management? (1981), \$17 members, \$20 others; PAK VI: Developing A Brochure (1981), \$8 members, \$11 others.

Appraisal, the topic of PAK I, includes copies of papers prepared for a seminar chaired by Maynard Brichford and two cassette tapes of discussion. Brichford's six points of view that should provide the context for appraisal help place the papers in perspective. His short list of current trends affecting appraisal decisions also helps archivists understand that appraisal cannot be performed in a vacuum. Unfortunately, little of the discussion centers on his remarks.

Meyer Fishbein's paper on federal appraisal focuses on the appraisal techniques recommended in 1934 by Polish archivist Gustaw Kalenski. Although interesting, the paper will have little relevance for most archivists who do not perform appraisal in large governmental bureaucracies; they will be better served by consulting Fishbein's other published

*Part I, an overview of PAKs, appeared in the fall 1981 issue of Georgia Archive.

works.

By far, the most disconcerting paper is Thornton Mitchell's "Records Appraisal--A State View." His comments during the discussion period also raise some basic questions. If his attitude is typical of archivists at state archives, then there appears to be little consensus among archivists on appraisal criteria. If his point of view is atypical, then it perhaps should not be offered so casually and without editorial comment to archivists who are in need of some basic direction on appraisal techniques and standards.

In an effort to sweep aside the standard list of appraisal criteria--functional, evidential, and informational value--Mitchell declares flat-footedly, "There are not degrees of value; archives are material that have value or they are not archives." Such an all-or-nothing approach oversimplifies the complex task of appraisal and risks reducing it to an intuitive judgment. By emphasizing that the decision to keep or discard must rest on the individual archivist's best judgment of the value of the records, Mitchell tends to dismiss the intermediate steps the archivist uses in reaching a final appraisal decision. At least initially, inexperienced appraisers can certainly benefit from conscious application of the traditional steps. This should not obscure some of Mitchell's other points, based on his years of experience in the North Carolina Division of Archives and History.

Edie Hedlin's experience with business cards at the Ohio Historical Society and Wells Fargo Bank, plus her Business Archives: An Introduction well qualify her to provide an appraisal of business records. Her practical advice generally reflects the standard orthodoxy. She warns, for example, that appraisal "on an item level through mimicry of manuscript curators" is inappropriate to large institutional records of a dynamic firm. Hedlin strays from orthodoxy only once and makes a strong case for her point of view. Important records whose permanent preservation elsewhere is assured, she stresses, should not be aggressively sought by the archivist. Even in this circumstance, however, the archivist should be aware of just what records of

archival value are retained outside the archives and in what condition they are maintained.

August Suelflow is similarly qualified to discuss appraisal of religious records. The longtime chairman of the religious archives committee and author of Religious Archives: An Introduction anticipated some of what he was to publish in his own manual. His manual, and Brichford's, largely elaborate his brief paper prepared for the appraisal seminar. This is not the case with Kenneth Duckett's "Appraisal of Manuscripts," which does not overlap substantially with the relevant sections of his Modern Manuscripts.

Because Duckett foresaw that other seminar papers would deal largely with voluminous twentieth century institutional or governmental records, he chose to concentrate on "manuscript repositories, especially those in the humanities which acquire their holdings through gift and purchase...." In doing so, he stresses the importance of a written collecting policy to guide the archivist in appraising manuscript acquisitions, the need for a thorough knowledge of the subject area in which the archives collects, and the use of professional appraisers to determine the fair market value of those manuscripts considered for purchase. In subsequent discussions among seminar participants he defends the policy of purchase of private manuscripts, particularly of literary figures, and makes the point that purchase may be the only way a new or less well known institution can break into collecting.

Overall, the level of discussion is not equal to the level of the formal papers, and the tape does not contribute substantially to a further understanding of appraisal. Although several interesting questions are raised, few are fully aired or answered. The desultory discussions, coupled with uneven sound on the tapes, contribute to a fragmented picture of the topic.

PAK II is devoted to security. Papers deal with physical aspects, staff development, state laws, patron relations, and replevin. Two accompanying tapes of discus-

sions by seminar participants are lightly edited, and a brief table of contents helps listeners locate certain information on the tapes. The papers are generally good, but most do not add substantially to information provided in Timothy Walch's Archives and Manuscripts: Security and in his selective, annotated bibliography.

Christopher LePlante reports on a major theft at the Texas State Archives and concludes, after several pages of helpful instructions for improving security, that "having experienced a major theft, security now occupies the top position in our list of priorities." For all the proper warnings, perhaps it takes such an experience for us to learn sufficient regard for the need for security.

UCLA archivist James Mink makes a solid contribution by comparing the model law on library theft prepared by SAA legal counsel with state laws now in force or under consideration. Mink sought the opinions of some state legislative counsels and finds the model law wanting in some particulars and incompatible with traditions or recent legislation in certain states. Mink also briefly chronicles the experience of some states in preparing and adopting legislation and surveys regional archival associations to report on their involvement in getting states to adopt new antitheft legislation. From all of this, it appears that the prospects are not good for any kind of uniform law, or any laws providing stricter penalties for thieves, greater protection for archives, or immunity from libel for archivists. The unstated conclusion of Mink's paper is that prevention is still the best protection.

The nearly two hours of taped discussion cover thefts by staff, use of consultants, donor relations, vandalism, disaster, and abandonment. Unlike those of the question-answer format typical of formal sessions at annual meetings, the exchanges of seminar participants are genuine discussions with several contributions, especially Stephen Jamison's guidelines for planning an archival security system based on an analysis of the three factors determining the potential for theft: assets, vulnerability, and threats.

Unlike the first two PAKs, which built on existing manuals and were developed from special SAA seminars on appraisal and security, PAK III represents a new departure. "Starting an Archives" is based on a spring 1980 session at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference and includes a ninety-minute cassette tape of presentations by Linda Henry (Archival Issues), Gregory Hunter (Organizational Relations), and Thomas Wilsted (Archival Outreach) as well as dialog with the audience and among the panelists. Several handouts accompanying the tape are reprints of articles dealing in some fashion with establishing an archives.

Henry stresses the need for adequate support and visibility for the success of any embryonic archives. Hunter's discussion of organizational relations emphasizes the importance of dealing effectively with personnel within the institution, especially management and other professional staff. Like Henry, he stresses the need for visibility and patience. He also suggests ways to use the lure of grant funding to increase institutional commitment to the archives and the usefulness of an advisory committee or policy board to legitimate the archivist and consolidate the archivist's mandate with the institution he or she serves.

Thomas Wilsted's concluding paper reflects his recent experience as first archivist of the Salvation Army. He used the dedication of the new archives to introduce staff to the facility, he initiated a newsletter circulated four times a year to 3,800 readers and developed a brochure designed for use with donors and another for potential researchers. His presentation offers a host of other ideas--in-house and traveling exhibits and exhibit catalogs, services to off-site patrons, a speakers bureau prepared to speak on a variety of historical topics, and cooperative arrangements with other research institutions.

The numerous enclosures in PAK III include reprints dealing with church, business, association, government, and museum archives; a technical leaflet on manuscript collections from the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH); an American Archivist article on planning

an archives; David B. Gracy's 1972 Georgia Archive article "Starting an Archives"; a copy of the report of the Task Force on Institutional Evaluation; and a single-page bibliography of selected readings. Conspicuously absent is anything designed for college and university archivists, the largest single group of new archivists defined by institutional affiliation. That might be understandable if no literature existed, or if the PAKs deliberately excluded material already published by the society. However, several items in College and University Archives: Selected Readings are relevant to starting an archives at an educational institution.

Reflective of the fact that little has been said on the topic of archival processing costs, PAK IV only contains copies of four papers presented on that subject at the 1980 annual meeting of the society together with a twenty-minute tape of the discussion following the formal presentations. And yet, exactly for that reason, this may be one of the best illustrations of how PAKs can serve the immediate needs of the archivist.

In the opening presentation, Lawrence Stark of the Washington State Historical Records and Archives Project offers some admittedly crude formulas for calculating processing costs. One simple method is to divide the operating budget by the total number of patrons served to produce a rough estimate of cost per user. Stark's experience places the normal range for such a figure at between \$35 and \$60 per reference request. He is well aware of the hazards of using so simple a formula, but until more research is devoted to developing such measures, archivists may have to make do with this method of calculation.

Karen Temple Lynch takes a more methodical approach to calculate costs by examining fifty-five processing projects funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. She included seven variables in her calculations: project staff, amount of material to be processed,

time schedule for the project, number of separate collections, level of intellectual control to be achieved, types of records, and dates of records. Her calculations reveal an average processing rate of approximately two linear feet of records per week per full-time processor. Her calculations also validate generally held impressions that processing twentieth century records is cheaper than processing earlier records; that business and government records can be processed more rapidly than institutional records, which can in turn be processed faster than personal papers or records of mixed types; and that large collections take proportionately less time to process than small collections.

While admitting that collecting statistics can be time-consuming, William Maher argues in his paper that it can also help the archivist establish processing guidelines, justify budget and staff, make better appraisal decisions, and draft realistic grant proposals. Maher elaborates on his retrospective analysis using information gleaned from annual reports and published earlier in the Midwestern Archivist; in this paper he discusses a direct measurement methodology. The latter approach requires each person involved to keep a log of time spent on his activities-- a difficult task in its own right. Although Maher's calculations are based on the use of graduate students as processors and typists and his actual cost figures may not be readily comparable with those of other institutions, he does include data on time required to process different types of records and on the number of processing product units (the total volume processed and weeded plus one-half unit for each page of finding aid or control card written).

In a concluding paper, Roy H. Tryon analyzes the relationship between the level of collection control and costs. Noting that there is nearly total agreement that item level control and calendaring are no longer realistic or even desirable, Tryon raises the question of just how far archivists are willing to go in reducing the level of control over processed collections in order to provide at least some preliminary control over new accessions. Most of the sixty repositories in his survey reported that they performed some preliminary processing at the time of accessioning the

material and then made the material available to researchers before establishing full control over the records. It is a trend that risks possible loss of material or accidental disclosure of sensitive information, but Tryon clearly sides with those adopting a policy of minimal control over all accessions and permitting early researcher access to those records. The alternative of not accommodating to the new realities of increasing processing costs and growing numbers of large collections is to increase the backlog of unprocessed collections and to decrease patron use. Tryon's observations, as well as those of other session participants, which provide specific suggestions for calculating processing costs, give the PAK user some practical guidance from those experimenting with new ways of coping with the problems of these costs.

The answer to the rhetorical question posed in PAK V, "Can You Afford Records Management?", appears to be "yes" according to the three public university archivists who addressed that question at the 1980 annual meeting of the society. Each spoke from his/her experience: Warner Pflug tracing the development of a records management program at Wayne State University, William Morison explaining how the University of Louisville Archives became involved in records management, and Nancy Kunde describing her work in developing a records management program for the Center for Health Sciences at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. Morison, both in his formal presentation and in the discussion period, points out that even though the positive effects tend to outweigh the negative, not all is sweetness and light, especially when administrators do not correspondingly increase budget, staff, and space when records management responsibilities are assigned to the archives. Kunde echoes his concern in her commentary.

Although the taped discussion following the papers was relatively brief and uninformative, the several enclosures in the PAK should assist archivists embarking on a records management program. Sample forms from several institutions are helpful, but one should not overlook the College and University Archives' Form Manual which has an even

wider selection. Of more direct benefit are sample policy statements from the board of trustees, administrative memoranda from the president or chancellor's office, and guidelines from university archives to other campus units. Completed sample records disposal authorizations and a procedures manual should also prove helpful to those with little experience in inventorying records. An unannotated bibliography, a flowchart on the interrelationship between archives and records management from H. G. Jones's The Records of a Nation, and information about Yale University and Massachusetts Institute of Technology's records survey and program complete the PAK.

PAK VI--"Developing a Brochure"--includes several items designed to help archivists handle their own production of brochures: Pocket Pal: A Graphic Arts Production Handbook (\$3), a chapter reprint from PR for Pennies: Low-Cost Library Public Relations (\$4 for the entire book), "The Liberated Letter" poster (distributed to dealers free from Letraset USA, Inc.), and fifteen sample brochures from archival institutions (free, presumably). Anyone aware of the contents of the PAK could secure the same material for less than the cost of the kit.

That is not the point, however. What this PAK lacks is any attempt to analyze the fifteen archival brochures in terms of the guidelines and suggestions in PR for Pennies. What would make the PAK valuable to potential users--valuable enough to pay the extra charge to get it from SAA--is a tape or paper analyzing the brochures, commenting on each in turn, comparing one with another, and suggesting advantages and disadvantages of each.

The examples are almost evenly divided between state archives and archives at colleges and universities, with only one of a business archives, none of a religious archives, and only one of a special or private historical or archival repository. Because no cost figures accompany the brochures, the user has no idea which type might best fit his/her budget. Most archivists do not suffer from a lack of imagination, merely a lack of money. While PR for Pennies

is helpful, it is aimed at a somewhat different audience. The technical leaflets on publishing, typesetting, marking copy for printers, and historical society newsletters from AASLH, plus William T. Alderson's A Manual on the Printing of Newsletters provide more useful information and cost-cutting suggestions for small shops. Repositories located on university campuses might well be able to use the services of a staff graphic artist, public relations personnel, or students in the education or art departments. Vocational schools and community colleges offering courses in printing and graphic arts might well agree to help design an attractive brochure for nonprofit institutions. A discussion of these possibilities among knowledgeable archivists would certainly have made this PAK more useful without adding unduly to the cost.

Even if these first six PAKs do not reach their potential, the Problems in Archives Kits series is a useful addition to the growing archival literature pioneered by the national office of the Society of American Archivists. Along with the Basic Manual Series, subject-specific annotated bibliographies, and selected readings, PAKs provide readily available information for beginning and intermediate archivists. The recent appointment of Terry Abraham of Washington State University to assist in coordinating the society's publication program is an important step in assuring quality control. With proper oversight PAKs may become a major educational service.