



Western Washington University  
Western CEDAR

---

History Faculty and Staff Publications

History

---

2001

# Margaret C. Norton Reconsidered

Randall C. Jimerson Western Washington University  
*Western Washington University*, [randall.jimerson@wwu.edu](mailto:randall.jimerson@wwu.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: [https://cedar.wwu.edu/history\\_facpubs](https://cedar.wwu.edu/history_facpubs)



Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Jimerson, Randall C. Western Washington University, "Margaret C. Norton Reconsidered" (2001). *History Faculty and Staff Publications*. 68.

[https://cedar.wwu.edu/history\\_facpubs/68](https://cedar.wwu.edu/history_facpubs/68)

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the History at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Faculty and Staff Publications by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact [westerncedar@wwu.edu](mailto:westerncedar@wwu.edu).

# MARGARET C. NORTON RECONSIDERED

BY RANDALL C. JIMERSON

**ABSTRACT:** Margaret C. Norton (1891–1984) served as the first state archivist of Illinois (1922–1957). As a founding member of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), she served as its first vice president, as a council member, as president, and as editor of *American Archivist*. The common perception has been that Norton aligned her views with Hilary Jenkinson and European theorists in opposing the American historical manuscripts tradition and the dominant role of historians. A closer examination of her career and her unpublished writings, however, challenges this interpretation. An appreciation for Margaret Norton as a pragmatic archivist dedicated to the needs of public officials enables us to see her as a bold and consistent advocate for the significance of records in administration of state government. Norton adopted European archival principles such as provenance and the moral defense of archives, but she adapted them to the requirements of modern American records. She pleaded for recognition of archives as legal records, but she also recognized their secondary importance for historical research. Rather than pulling the profession apart into separate camps of historian-archivists and archivist-administrators or of practitioners and theorists, Norton's legacy should remind archivists of their twin responsibilities for archives: to maintain both their legal and administrative integrity and their usefulness for historical research.

Margaret C. Norton never shied away from controversy, but only a woman of strong convictions could have challenged the prevailing orthodoxy of the emerging archival profession in 1929. Her paper, "The Archives Department as an Administrative Unit in Government," which she presented to the American Historical Association's Conference of Archivists, called for nothing less than a reconsideration of the intimate relationship between archives and history. Despite modest progress in archival legislation in Alabama, Mississippi, and a few other states, she pointed out, "in reality only about a dozen states in the whole country [are] providing sustained and systematic care to their official records." Norton charged that the popular misconception of archives as nothing more than historical documents blocked progress for the profession, and that "the greatest handicap . . . to getting adequate support for archives work is the belief that archives work is just another function of the state historical society." From these premises, Norton concluded that, "The archivist should be a public official whose first interest is business efficiency, and only secondarily should be interested in history." Archivists should make their records accessible, Norton declared, primarily for the "practical ends of administration."<sup>1</sup>

The historians at the December 1929 Conference of Archivists received Norton's message, as she later recalled, "in stony silence." Only historian Milo M. Quaife of the Burton Historical Collection, who served as editor of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, privately congratulated her. "Margaret, 'you done noble,'" Quaife told her. "You are way ahead of them and they don't know what you are talking about."<sup>2</sup> Norton continued to press her point. Six months after her AHA presentation, she gave essentially the same paper at the National Association of State Libraries meeting in Los Angeles, where it "was enthusiastically received."<sup>3</sup> Librarians "weren't so hidebound in the belief that archives existed simply for the benefit of historical researchers," Norton later speculated, and they welcomed her arguments.<sup>4</sup> Norton sought to redefine the nascent archival profession in the United States. "To most persons, including some archivists, the term archives still connotes merely musty, dirty files of loose papers and decayed leather folios of little apparent use, but vaguely believed to be of value because historians keep saying they are valuable," Norton declared. "The real function of an archivist, however, is that of custodian of legal records of the state, the destruction of which might seriously inconvenience the administration of state business."<sup>5</sup>

Even though Norton's views on the administrative importance of archives seemed to historians like heresy in 1929—still several years before the founding of the National Archives—they soon became, as Ernst Posner stated in 1964, "a generally accepted tenet of archivists in the United States." Norton's ideas "struck a new and significant note," according to Posner. "Although giving due credit to the work of the Public Archives Commission, Miss Norton felt that the emphasis it had given to the historians' stake in archival preservation was one-sided and that the time had come to stress 'proper care of archives as an administrative problem of state government instead of as a mere adjunct to the historical library field.'"<sup>6</sup> In an obituary tribute to Norton, Maynard Brichford, archivist of the University of Illinois, declared these presentations "landmarks in the archival campaign for professional recognition."<sup>7</sup> Norton had clearly articulated a new vision of archival identity, one that would link the profession more closely to centers of political influence and power and less to the scholarly world of the academic historian. It is a struggle for identity with which archivists still grapple. This article explores the origins and development of Norton's thinking on archival matters in order to examine, from a new vantage point, current professional debates over archival theory, the role of archivists in modern society, and the relationship between manuscripts and archives.

## Reputation

Through her influential writings, Margaret Norton continues to play a role in current archival professional debates. More than any other archivist of her generation, Norton exemplified the shift in professional focus from historical manuscripts to public archives. Philosophically linked with English archivist Sir Hilary Jenkinson, Norton has been at the center of many recent North American debates.

The Canadian debate over history and archives began in 1983 with George Bolotenko's castigation of Margaret Norton's "ringing tocsin" that archivists should, in his words, "beware the enemy, beware the historian-archivist working with documents." Bolotenko

characterized Norton, in her efforts to separate archivists from their traditional historical orientation, as “shrill,” “strident,” “vociferous,” and using “a language bordering on the venomous.” According to Bolotenko, Norton sought to replace the archivist-historian with “the archivist as administrator or bureaucrat.”<sup>8</sup> What was at stake, in his view, was the identity of the archival profession. In the debate that ensued during the next several years in the pages of *Archivaria*, archivists struggled to define the roles and identity of the archival profession. Bolotenko’s critics charged that his views would doom archivists to being relics of the past in the technological revolution that required new approaches and perspectives. The danger was that archivists would become obsolete, doomed to irrelevance as antiquarians in modern society.<sup>9</sup> In supporting Bolotenko, however, Patrick Dunae stated that the “real villains” are “Miss Norton and her disciples.” Dunae warned of the danger of technologically oriented administrators replacing historical scholars in the archival profession’s leadership. “Nortonians, now allied with a new generation of public administrators and technocrats, have more than anyone else endeavored to push archivy off its humanistic, historical, scholarly base,” he charged.<sup>10</sup> Thus, even after her death Margaret Norton’s views on the archival profession still stirred passionate debates about the nature of archives and the future of the profession.

As an American proponent of Sir Hilary Jenkinson’s views, Norton figured prominently in more recent debates over archival theory and methodology. Luciana Duranti cited Norton as the American proponent of Jenkinson’s “moral defense of archives,” in her critique of T. R. Schellenberg’s views on appraisal. In contrast to Jenkinson, Duranti stated, “Schellenberg’s definition of archives was theoretically flawed, not because he built into it the elements of value and use for research purposes, but because he arrived at it on purely pragmatic grounds.” Duranti faulted American archivists for such pragmatism and challenged them to develop “a methodology driven by archival theory rather than vice versa.”<sup>11</sup> In a rejoinder to Duranti, Frank Boles and Mark Greene defended American pragmatism and the inductive process for establishing archival principles based on experience and utility.<sup>12</sup> Although not formally charged as a Jenkinsonian theorist, Margaret Norton was closely associated with the English-European camp in opposition to Schellenberg. The common perception has been that Norton aligned her views with Jenkinson and European theorists in opposing the American historical manuscripts tradition and the dominant role of historians. A closer examination of her career and her unpublished writings, however, challenges this interpretation.

Although recognized as one of the most influential archival theorists and practitioners of her generation, Norton was at heart a pragmatist. She adopted European principles but adapted them to modern American circumstances. Almost single-handedly she nudged the American archival profession away from the domination of scholars and into an independent identity that included service to records as both historical documents and, more importantly in her view, as legal records vital within the domain of government administrators. She became one of America’s greatest archival theorists, though she would have shunned the title. For her approach to archival problems was fundamentally pragmatic, based on experience and experiment rather than on abstract theory. Even her central professional vision, that archives are in their truest es-

sence legal records of business transactions, derived from her personal experience on an essentially pragmatic basis.

## Career

Margaret Cross Norton (1891–1984) served as the first state archivist of Illinois, from 1922 to 1957. Her career was remarkable, particularly for a woman in fields still dominated by male leadership. In her 35 years at the Illinois State Archives she developed an archival program that became a model for many other states; supervised planning and construction for an archives building that was only the third facility in the United States planned specifically for archival needs; and established the Illinois Archives as an integral part of state government. Generous with her time and advice, she worked closely with a broad group of historians, librarians, and scholars to define the emerging archival profession. As a founding member of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), she served as its first vice president (1936–1937), as a council member (1937–1942), as president (1943–1945), and as the second editor of *American Archivist* (1946–1949). In most of these positions she was the first woman to serve in such capacities.<sup>13</sup>

Norton's professional work, however, was not confined to the field of archives. She also held important leadership positions within the American Historical Association (AHA), the American Library Association (ALA), the Illinois State Historical Society, the Illinois Library Association, the Historical Records Survey, and the National Association of State Libraries. She served as secretary-treasurer of the National Association of State Libraries for five years and as a longstanding member of the ALA Archives and Libraries Committee. She chaired the AHA Public Archives Committee for several years and was a member of its Committee of Ten, which recommended the formation of SAA, the first professional organization for archivists. Norton thus served, informally, as one of the links between the archives profession and both the library and history professions.<sup>14</sup>

Many archivists have become acquainted with Norton through her prolific writings, edited by Thornton Mitchell in 1975 under the title, *Norton on Archives*. As Richard Berner observed, Norton was "an influential writer on every aspect of archival administration."<sup>15</sup> But her influence on the profession during the 1930s and 1940s went well beyond her writings on archives and records management. Under her leadership the Illinois State Archives became a model consulted by archivists in many other states regarding archival legislation, new buildings, and organization of new archival agencies.<sup>16</sup> Archivists from other countries also wrote to or visited Norton seeking advice and guidance, which she freely provided. Reading her monthly reports to the State Library provides a true sense of her whirlwind schedule of consultations, professional activities, and scholarship, all of which came in addition to the daily responsibilities of managing an active state archives program.

The breadth and depth of Norton's professional activities and interests are remarkable. She attended professional conferences several times a year, often driving hundreds of miles out of her way to visit other archives and libraries, and her monthly reports detail specific practices, techniques, and new technologies being developed and tested in these institutions. She read voraciously in the archival literature of her time,

including translations of foreign reports and articles whenever they were available. As she recalled long after her retirement, "While I was archivist I kept a file of everything I could lay my hands upon which would illustrate the history of American archival thinking." When she first decided to become an archivist, one of her mentors, Professor Lucy Salmon of the Vassar College History Department had advised, "Read everything you can find on the subject, and if the opportunity comes you will be ready."<sup>17</sup> Norton took this advice to heart and continued to study the professional literature throughout her career. When Clarence Walton, who was teaching a course on archives at Harvard in 1939, sent her a copy of his lecture notes, she commented, "His point of view is so different from mine that I found them quite disappointing. They do not indicate much knowledge of modern archival literature or theory."<sup>18</sup> For Norton such knowledge formed the essential foundation for archival practice.

Norton began her career as archivist after earning degrees in both history and library science, a combination that reflected the twin sources of the profession. After obtaining her bachelor's and master's degrees in history from the University of Chicago, she earned the BLS from the New York Library School in Albany in 1915. During her first professional position as cataloger at Vassar College, she later recalled, "I was a complete misfit and decided library work was not for me, unless I could get into the historical library field."<sup>19</sup> As a cataloger she found "the work monotonous with little opportunity for originality."<sup>20</sup> The turning point in her career came when she attended her first American Historical Association meeting in Washington, D.C., in 1915, and heard an "illustrated lecture" by Waldo G. Leland of the Carnegie Institution of Washington's Department of Historical Research. Leland spoke eloquently on European archives, the dismal condition of American federal archives, and the need for a national archives building. On the drive back to Poughkeepsie with Professor Lucy Salmon, Norton exclaimed, "Now that is what I want to do—I want to be an archivist!"<sup>21</sup> She would later call Leland "my archival godfather," stating that he had "first directed my attention to the possibilities of an archival career."<sup>22</sup>

With this goal in mind, she continued to study history at Chicago, although she never completed a Ph.D. degree. She also gained experience, briefly, as a manuscripts assistant at the Indiana State Library and as a cataloger at the Missouri State Historical Society in Columbia. In January 1922, Norton interviewed for what she thought would be an archival staff position at the Illinois State Library, but instead was hired as the first archivist of the Illinois State Archives. Overwhelmed by her new responsibilities, she asked for three months to prepare.<sup>23</sup>

During this three-month period Norton traveled extensively, visiting most of the existing archives programs in the Mid-Atlantic states and New England. "I picked up an idea here and another there, but I think I got more about what not to do as what to do," she later recalled. In Albany, for example, she found that "like all archives of the period they were treated as static objects, meant for historical research—no modern records." In Massachusetts a fire started in the State House during her visit, but during her tour of the archives she witnessed an alarming indifference to the dangers posed to irreplaceable records. "To my horror, the archivist seemed not the least perturbed and instituted no procedure for evacuating the records in case the fire broke through," she recalled. Furthermore, the head of the Vital Statistics Department "told me scornfully that no-

body used the archives but 'old fellows with tobacco on their beards . . . who were hunting up ancestors.'" At the Virginia State Library, she discovered, "the archives . . . were organized as merely historical manuscripts." This tour of archival horrors reached Connecticut, where "I was shown the archives clerks sorting the colonial laws by subjects! I had read the horror stories from the French National Archives which had also been arranged by subject and were then being resorted by provenance."<sup>24</sup>

In the nation's capital she visited Director Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, Waldo Leland's supervisor at the Carnegie Institution's Department of Historical Research. Jameson had been the first managing editor of the *American Historical Review* and a founder of the Public Archives Commission, and was currently leading the campaign to establish a national archives. Jameson impressed her greatly. "I think he was the one person in the country who understood the relation between archives and government," she recalled years later. "He said he did not think he could give me much practical help, but that he did want to show me some 'horrible examples.'" Jameson asked one of his staff members to spend four days escorting the aspiring young archivist to visit scenes of archival neglect in the nation's capital, including the deplorable condition of U.S. census records, some of which "were destroyed by fire here a few months later."<sup>25</sup> Thus, even before assuming her first archives position, Norton had clearly imbibed the European principle of provenance, as well as a concern for modern records and preservation needs.

Although inspired by the American archival pioneers Leland and Jameson, Norton stated that the greatest influence on her thinking was English archivist Sir Hilary Jenkinson. She stated that: "Hilary Jenkinson's *Manual of Archives* was my Bible."<sup>26</sup> The first edition was published the same year she started her new position as state archivist of Illinois. "I purchased a copy immediately," Norton later recalled. "With its emphasis on the reasons for and explanation of provenance, it coagulated the impression I already had, that archives are fundamentally business records."<sup>27</sup> This would be the major theme of her professional career and of her own influential writings: that archives serve an essential role as legal records necessary for public administration.

### Archivist-Administrator

The archival profession that Norton entered in 1922 had been shaped largely by historians who saw archives as essential sources for scientific history.<sup>28</sup> Private antiquarians and collectors had shaped the historical manuscripts tradition, as Richard C. Berner termed it, focusing on archival records as sources for historical scholarship. By the early twentieth century, however, a competing public archives tradition had developed in the United States, based largely on the introduction of French and Prussian concepts such as provenance and original order. This latter tradition, which Norton soon embraced, focused on archives as official records that supported government functions and gave only secondary consideration to private research interests. As Luke Gilliland-Swetland has argued, these two traditions led to competing views of the archivist's role, as custodian or as interpreter of records. The conflict between these two paradigms dramatically shaped the subsequent development of American archival theory and practice.<sup>29</sup> Since Margaret Norton became an influential advocate for the public archives position, the source of her archival ideas deserves further exploration.

Margaret Norton was among the first American archivists to challenge historians' domination of the field. As she later wrote, "I was the first American archivist to insist that the archivist's first duty was to aid his fellow officials to give more efficient service on their records, rather than to devote all one's energies to the research scholar."<sup>30</sup> This shift of focus would lead to a reorientation of the archivist's role, from an academic to an administrative perspective. In commenting on papers given at the 1946 SAA annual meeting, for example, Norton concluded, "I would say that it is high time we archivists stopped trying to make other officials fall in with our own program, and to find out what they want and need from us."<sup>31</sup> Norton thus argued for an examination of archives users, which archivists would later call "user studies," but for her the primary clientele of archivists would be government officials rather than academic historians or private researchers.

Norton argued that archives were vital to government administration and that the archivist must become engaged in the daily work of governmental management. In 1938, for example, she harshly criticized the report of the SAA Committee on Archival Training:

One might conclude from the report that the ideal archivist is a scholar sitting in a remote ivory tower safeguarding records of interest only to the historian. In reality the archivist is at the very heart of his government and the archival establishment is a vital cog in its governmental machinery. Archives are legal records the loss of which might cause serious loss to citizens or the government.<sup>32</sup>

Although insisting that archives must be distinguished from historical manuscripts, which originate from private sources, Norton recognized that archives also have historical importance. In her 1931 annual report for the State Archives, she explained that "archives, as papers having historical value, are historical manuscripts, but many historical manuscripts are not archives."<sup>33</sup> Thus, the State Archives served primarily a legal and administrative purpose, but it maintained records that also had a historical significance.

Despite her position as a division head of the State Library Norton gained practical experience by immersing herself in all aspects of archival work. A state archivist, Norton wrote, must understand "mechanical details" and be able to perform a broad range of functions, because he "frequently is the whole establishment so far as professional work is concerned. He must train his subordinates in the mechanical details even if he does not perform all the work himself." The state archivist's functions "are largely administrative rather than scholarly." Although he "also needs the technique of scholarship," she declared that "Overemphasis upon pure scholarship and contempt for administration is unfortunate for the archivist because his whole career is tied up with other officials who have either an inferiority complex towards or a contempt for, (or both) the academic outlook on life."<sup>34</sup>

Thus, Norton called for a separation between the historian-scholar and the archivist-administrator partly because this would lead to greater financial support for archives. The distinction may have been necessary on theoretical grounds, but practical reasons



also existed for reducing archivists' academic outlook. In a 1940 paper on "Training of Archivists" she elaborated on this theme:

Too many archivists in the past have looked upon an appointment as state archivist as an appointment to a lifelong subsidy for private historical research. . . . Archives work is administrative work. The archivist must reconcile himself to the fact that it is most important to the government that he serves that he be able to document an important lawsuit for the State or some citizen; and that the unexploited source materials in his collection must probably be laid before some other scholar who will have the time to write the book that haunts him. . . . Archivists today must subordinate their scholarly inclinations to administrative work.<sup>35</sup>

It was this dedication to the administrative purposes of archives that compelled Norton throughout her career to seek cooperation with government officials, to recognize the legitimate concerns of such officials for their own records, and to urge the archival profession to recognize the necessity for such cooperation. Archival records were not created for the benefit of scholars, but to meet the needs of current administration and future legal requirements.

Archives could meet these requirements, Norton insisted, only if their integrity and authenticity were preserved. The archivist, therefore, must understand the legal requirements for evidence and authenticity. Besides Jenkinson's manual on archives, the second major influence on Norton's thinking was John Henry Wigmore's *A Treatise on the Anglo-American System of Evidence in Trials at Common Law*, commonly cited as "Wigmore on Evidence." In particular, Wigmore's discussion of "Authentication of Documents" emphasized that, as Norton summarized, "the custodian must handle the records in a manner that will not impair their value as evidence should they ever have to be produced in court."<sup>36</sup> Thus, protecting the integrity of archives was essential in maintaining their authenticity and legal value.

For Norton, the crucial element in defining a separate identity for the archival profession was drawing a clear distinction between the archivist's responsibility for protecting the legal and administrative nature of records and the concern of both historians and librarians for information retrieval and research. "The needs of the historian in front of the desk and the archivist behind the desk are different," she declared. "It is amazing how long it took both historians and archivists to realize that distinction."<sup>37</sup> Although some archivists concluded from this distinction that their interests should be more closely aligned with librarians, Norton likewise dismissed that view. After teaching the second archival course ever given in a library school at Columbia University in 1940, she wrote that, "while both librarians and archivists are engaged in preparing our materials for 'information retrieval,' the philosophy and techniques of the two professions are quite different."<sup>38</sup>

In Norton's opinion these differences presented a fundamental problem in basing archival education on either history or library science. In looking back on her career in the profession, she wrote, "The question as to who should train the American archivist became the subject of acrimonious dispute between the history and library professions and all because both historians and librarians approached the subject from the stand-

point of the man in front of the desk, both interested in the use of archives rather than the methods to be used by the man behind the desk in order to service the records."<sup>39</sup> Therefore, Norton concluded, the archival profession needed to establish a separate identity, one focused on the legal aspects of records and their usefulness for administration.

### Experimenter

In her published writings, Norton clearly enunciated her views on the need to recognize the legal and administrative significance of records. Her archival theory was based on fundamental principles, following in large part the concepts expressed by Jenkinson, and she remained steadfast in urging her colleagues to recognize the distinction between historical manuscripts and archives. Through her unpublished writings, however, we see more clearly that she based her theory on pragmatic grounds and personal experience. In fact, one of the most compelling aspects of her approach to archival issues, particularly during the 1930s and 1940s, is her insistence on experimentation as the basis for developing archival theory. Rather than construct abstract theory based on some sort of cosmic view of the universe, she insisted that archivists not constrict their thinking and practice until sufficient experience, through trial and error, could disclose the best means of managing archives. Her emphasis on the administrative aspects of archives likewise derived from an essentially pragmatic basis.

Norton never lost sight of the need to balance theory with the practical realities of the political situation. "The point is that we are dealing with facts as well as with theories," she wrote to law professor Francis Philbrick, who had pointed out a discrepancy between what Norton said about keeping county records in the counties and the possibility of collecting such records in the state archives. "In theory, the records should remain in the county. In practice, it is better for the State Archives to take what they can get," Norton argued. "What I am driving at primarily is propaganda to make people see that county archives relate to them and to their business interests: Whether or not they are interested in history."<sup>40</sup> While never losing sight of archival theory and fundamental principles, Norton recognized that at times one must adjust to political realities and the necessity of working effectively with public officials.

Throughout her early career, Norton urged archivists not to "put the universe into a straight jacket" by insisting on premature standardization of practice. In 1940, Norton complained that Ernst Posner wanted "uniformity of procedure" in archival training courses. "That's the Prussian in him," she declared. "I don't believe we are ready yet for uniformity—we need to do a lot of experimenting before we crystallize."<sup>41</sup> Two years later she declared that efforts to seek uniformity would "stultify progress in archives," and that, "I think we should all be experimenting and exchanging the results of our experiments until enough experimentation has been made so that on the basis of wider experience than any of us at present have, we could begin to pick out the better points of all our experiments and then to combine them into a permanent scheme."<sup>42</sup>

Norton recognized that experiments sometimes could fail, but one could learn valuable lessons from such mistakes. Under her leadership the Illinois Archives in 1936 prepared detailed cataloging rules and distributed them to other archivists. Only two years later she decided that this "hastily prepared little booklet" was an experiment that

must be abandoned. She told an SAA round table on classification and cataloging, which she chaired, that this cataloging manual "is absolutely obsolete, and I hope all of you who possess copies will promptly throw them in the waste basket. Please do not follow that, because it is all wrong."<sup>43</sup> Thus, she was willing to admit that her ideas had changed and to encourage others to experiment and report on the results.

In reminiscing about professional conferences during these early years, Norton recalled the excitement of "bull sessions" lasting until "2 or 3 o'clock in the morning."<sup>44</sup> "I, as a neophyte archivist, found them extremely helpful and inspiring," she declared. "We would discuss together what we had been doing, then go home and mull over these ideas, experiment with them, then go to the next conference eager to exchange more ideas. The American archivist had not yet developed a mature philosophy of archives. Had a manual . . . [on archival techniques] been published, American archival economy might have been saddled with impractical procedures hard to eradicate when experience disproved their efficacy later."<sup>45</sup>

Thus, theory would follow from practical experimentation rather than the other way around. For Norton the true test of archival methods was how well they worked and whether they served the needs of a practicing archivist facing numerous daily challenges in managing voluminous modern records. As her close friend Helen Chatfield, archivist of the U.S. treasury department, wrote to Norton in 1945:

These custodians have, in most instances, acquired whatever knowledge they have of record administration and discipline through their own experience, and there is not yet a body of systematized knowledge of the field. . . . In fact, it is safe to say that the development of this field of endeavor as a profession is merely in its infancy—with only slight glimmerings of a philosophy, and some rudimentary beginnings of a discipline becoming discernible."<sup>46</sup>

This sense of flux led many archivists of Norton's generation to a belief that trial and error would be necessary for a time to determine the best methods for the newly emerging profession.

Far from being an "ivory tower" theorist, Norton threw herself into the daily regimen of archival practice. In her monthly report for October 1946, she declared, "Archivists have got to get their hands dirty, but the young ones don't want to do so."<sup>47</sup> Often lacking trained staff assistants, Norton found that she routinely had to get her own hands dirty. With a clear sense of pride she stated, "Ernst Posner commented after an inspection trip many years later that I seemed to have done most of the work myself in the early days."<sup>48</sup> Posner later recalled that "by processing records and getting her hands dirty" Norton had acquired "an amount of practical experience unmatched at that time in most other state archival agencies."<sup>49</sup> In 1939, she had to take over processing the governor's correspondence from an inefficient staff member. As she reported: "Although this work was somewhat time consuming and part of it perhaps too mechanical for executive time, it gave me a somewhat different outlook on the laminating process."<sup>50</sup> A few months later she reported, "Most of my time this month has been given over to the petty interruptions of an executive, and to discussions with state officials regarding the transfer of records. My major piece of work was to index the 1939 session laws to bring

down to date my index to State departments."<sup>51</sup> When some of her staff members left in 1946, Norton reported that she spent half her time on reference service, and had to run "attic to cellar" all day.<sup>52</sup> Despite occasional complaints about routine or technical work, Norton throughout her career remained close to the daily activities of records transfers, reference requests, processing and indexing records, and other archival procedures.<sup>53</sup> Her experience thus provided insights into archival principles. Theory emerged from experimentation.

This concern for practical approaches to archives, rather than scholarly treatises on historical uses of records, led to one of the major confrontations of her career. As president of SAA in 1944, Norton privately complained to SAA Secretary Lester Cappon that the *American Archivist*, under editorial leadership of Theodore Calvin Pease, published too many scholarly articles, and that "the archivist of a small struggling archival agency . . . finds little practical help" in the journal. "However, I have yet to visit an archival institution in person where I did not come away with some really practical suggestion for a better means of doing some piece of work." She complained that, "we archivists are all trying to impress each other with our scholarship. If this society is to be a vital organism, we must decide what kind of a society it is to be and what its functions shall be." She told Cappon that she planned to address this issue in a president's message: "Possibly I shall stir up a hornet's nest. Personally, I rather hope that I do. I think the society is strong enough now for us to be able to take off our coats, roll up our sleeves and do a little slugging. I am afraid we are going to settle down into a very stodgy institution unless we are very careful."<sup>54</sup>

Working behind the scenes, Norton gained enough support for changing the orientation of the journal that Pease stepped down as editor of the *American Archivist*. Having completed her term as president of SAA, Norton reluctantly agreed to accept the position of editor in 1946. As she wrote to the new SAA president, Solon J. Buck, "It never seems to be my fate . . . to be the clinging vine for which I believe nature intended me, or to be able to dodge responsibilities."<sup>55</sup> As editor, Norton quickly set about to make the *American Archivist* a "lively professional journal" with a new technical section on practical issues. Her goal was to have "one scholarly article to three of the popular type for each issue."<sup>56</sup> Under her leadership the professional journal emphasized practical techniques over scholarship. This represents a further shift from the historical manuscripts tradition, with its emphasis on historical interpretation and scholarship, to the public archives approach to archival administration.

### Pragmatist

Margaret Norton's emphasis on the administrative and legal values of records likewise derived from pragmatic concerns. In Hilary Jenkinson's writings she found theoretical justification for these views, but they emerged from her own experience rather than from an abstract conceptualization of archives. In examining her correspondence and reports, as well as a 1973 interview in which she reflected on her career, four practical reasons for her emphasis on archives as legal and administrative records can be discerned.

First was the need to develop an identity for the Illinois State Archives separate from other state agencies. This led Norton to emphasize the legal and administrative significance of the archives rather than its historical value. As she explained to Grace Lee Nute, curator of manuscripts for the Minnesota Historical Society:

The chief difficulty I have found in getting funds for an archives establishment here in Illinois is that we have, as you know, a strong Historical Library. Therefore, we have to stress the fact that this is not an historical institution. Otherwise, the question immediately comes up as to why we need another building for historical purposes. Consequently, in all our publicity we stressed the importance of the building from the business angle.<sup>57</sup>

As Norton recalled in a 1973 interview when she was beginning her career in Illinois, the "soundest advice" she received came from Mrs. Jessie Palmer Weber, head of the State Historical Library, who suggested that she emphasize the benefits of the archives for state officials:

She said, "When your appropriation comes up before the Legislature you are going to be asked, 'Illinois already has one historical agency; what's the use of another?'" She pointed out that my big job was to sell the State officials the idea that an archives department could be useful to them.<sup>58</sup>

Thus, one of Norton's reasons for emphasizing the business aspects of archives was the practical necessity of creating a distinctive identity and purpose for the archives, separate from the state's historical library.

A second practical reason for emphasizing the administrative and legal value of archives was that Norton believed that state officials would not provide funding for the archives unless they could see the benefit to the state. This could be achieved more clearly, she reasoned, by emphasizing the legal necessity of creating and maintaining accurate records, rather than the more abstract concept of preserving state history. In writing to Charles Gates of the University of Washington Department of History in 1938, Norton agreed with Gates's opinion that archival training should be based more on political science than on history:

Unless state officials are personally interested in history, they are apt to be rather condescending to the care of archives as historical records. Our experience in emphasizing here the fact that records must be preserved because of their legal value certainly proves that that is the tack to take in order to get appropriations.<sup>59</sup>

This recognition that state funding required justifications based on practical grounds surely reinforced Norton's focus on the legal and business aspects of archives. One must be careful, however, to avoid the easy assumption that pragmatism alone influenced her thinking on these issues. It is much more likely that these practical arguments provided further justification for her archival theory rather than that her theories derived wholly from practical considerations.

Theory and pragmatism melded together in Norton's efforts to secure broader support and recognition for the value of archives in modern society. Thus, the third reason for her emphasis on archives as legal and business records rather than as historical documents was her concern for public recognition of archives. In a 1939 letter to Francis Philbrick, a University of Pennsylvania Law School professor who served with her on the AHA subcommittee on archives, Norton wrote of her interest in gaining support of the Illinois Bar Association not only for the Illinois Archives, but for all archival establishments:

I feel quite strongly that archivists in the past have gone at the preservation of archives from the wrong angle. They have over stressed the value as historical documents, and under stressed the value as legal documents. In the seventeen years I have been here, I have seen a marked change in attitude towards the necessity for accurate documentation. This I think will become increasingly manifest. Archives after all were originally preserved primarily because of their legal value. I feel that we should do everything in our power to enlist the support of the members of the Bar as the persons most vitally interested in the preservation of archives. It is important to everyone that the records upon which he may wish to base his claim of citizenship, his parentage, his rights to old age pensions and his real estate—but to name a few items—should be preserved, so that when the need for them arises the records may be found in a usable condition. After all comparatively few people care very much for history, except perhaps from an antiquarian point of view. Everyone does or should care for archives as legal records.<sup>60</sup>

This might be construed as special pleading, to persuade the Bar Association to support archives on the grounds of the legal value of records. But Norton did not adjust her arguments to fit the interests of her audience. She remained consistent.

Norton's concern for securing broader public recognition and acceptance of archives also can be seen in her 1940 report, "Program for Preservation of Local Archives," which she circulated to members of the AHA committee on archives. In this remarkable statement she articulated a concern for archival outreach and publicity, based on the legal value of local records for each citizen:

Ninety-five percent of all that we have written on behalf of the preservation of local archives has stressed the value of records as historical source material. . . . We must broaden the base of appeal if we are to preserve the local records for the historian of the future. . . .

Why are such records preserved at all? Fundamentally they are saved because the court says the deed to your property is invalid until it is recorded; your marriage is invalid and your children illegitimate if that marriage is not licensed and recorded by the county clerk; your rights as a citizen may be imperiled if you cannot produce acceptable birth records; your estate may not be distributed among your heirs except on court orders duly authenticated by its records. Present day candidates

for social security benefits who were born in Illinois cannot produce official birth records because the birth records of that state go back only to 1878. . . .

Are archivists not missing an important source of support by a failure to capitalize on the value of local records to every American citizen? If we follow through along this line we shall shift the emphasis from the preservation of noncurrent and historical records to the preservation of those records which touch the present day lives of citizens, making the preservation of the historical records secondary in importance but not relenting in efforts to protect them too.<sup>61</sup>

Clearly, the legal implications of archives could be used as a strong argument for funding and support of archives at all governmental levels. But it was the citizen's direct and personal interest in the legal protections afforded by records that provided the basis for these arguments, rather than an abstract appeal to government accountability or documentation of society.

The fourth pragmatic reason for Norton's emphasis on archives as legal records derived from her early personal experience. In seeking the source of Margaret Norton's emphasis on the legal aspects of archives, it is tempting to point to Hilary Jenkinson or other European archivists. Certainly Jenkinson influenced her thinking, but more by way of providing justification and credibility to ideas that Norton herself claimed to have developed on her own. She freely admitted that "in my day I have done plenty of brain-picking," but she bridled when an interviewer repeatedly asked her to explain the source of her archival theories. As she wrote to historian William Birdsall in 1973, "Your constant quizzing about who 'influenced my thinking' on this and that subject reveals, I fear me, Male Chauvinism." Norton had spent her career being the first woman to hold numerous professional positions—from president of SAA to editor of *American Archivist*—and she remained adamant about the independence of her thinking and about her role as a pioneering woman in what had been a male-dominated profession. Her theories of archives derived, not from Jenkinson or other archivists, but from her own personal experience, as she told Birdsall:

[T]he major influence on my archival philosophy was absorbed unconsciously, but most emphatically, from my family background. At the time of their marriage, my mother was Deputy County Treasurer and my father Deputy County Clerk. . . . Occasionally my mother would park me in my father's office while she attended her club. To keep me out from under foot, I was encouraged to play in the vault. . . . In those days the public, chiefly of course, attorneys, had free access to the vault. In other words, I saw how and why records were being created, and how they were used. And I was subject to that atmosphere not only in the office but at home, for unlike most men, my father talked shop at home. He often issued marriage licenses there. . . . We had a copy of the latest Illinois Revised Statutes over which father pored by the hour. Is it strange,

therefore, that to me archives have always been primarily records of official business?<sup>62</sup>

This personal experience with governmental records, from a very young age, gave Margaret Norton an appreciation for the value and importance of archives that transcended an intellectual understanding. The archival theories of Jenkinson, Leland, and other influential archival writers of her era reinforced assumptions and predilections that she claimed to have assimilated from her parents. She thus gained at an early age a powerful appreciation for the daily significance of archival records and for the legal basis they provided for the rights of ordinary people.

### American Adaptations

By emphasizing her childhood experiences as the basis for her independent orientation toward archives, Norton also helped to establish an indigenous basis for the development of American archives. She did adopt European principles, more fully than most of her contemporaries, but she continually sought to define a peculiarly American approach to archives. A crucial distinction, Norton believed, was the lack of ancient records in the United States in contrast with Europe. Illinois and many other states had few truly historical records, she wrote, but "one hundred years hence, possibly in fifty years, the materials now in our archives, will partake of the nature of true archives."<sup>63</sup> The techniques for managing modern records must differ from those for ancient records. "European archivists have been dealing with quite a different type of material from that which American archivists have to deal with," Norton stated at the 1938 annual meeting of SAA. "The European archivists hardly know anything has happened since 1800. Most of the archives most of us are handling date certainly past 1865, and largely past 1900."<sup>64</sup>

Archives in a democracy likewise differed from those in a highly centralized or monarchical country. Shortly after Ernst Posner immigrated to the United States from Europe, Norton wondered whether his knowledge of European archival theory could be transplanted easily. "Whether any foreigner, especially one accustomed to ideology of highly centralized states fully grasps the significance of the democratic implication with respect to American Archives, I do not know," Norton wrote to Charles Williamson, dean of the Columbia University School of Library Service, who was considering hiring Posner to teach archives courses:

In talking with foreign archivists, whom I have met, they have a way of saying, "of course, we get those records—that is the law." This I think is a result of the European monarchical idea that archives are the personal property of the sovereign, who may make any disposition of them by law which the central government sees fit; as opposed to the democratic idea that all records are public records and belong to the community which created them, not to the central government.<sup>65</sup>



Thus, the political and juridical systems of Europe and America would require different approaches to archival administration. Norton accepted fundamental principles such as provenance, but did not believe that all European ideas could be adopted without modification.

Another critical distinction between European and American archives was the problem of voluminous records. "The Muller, Feith and Fruin Manual on Arrangement and Description of Archives, which has just appeared in translation, has proved disappointing to many because it is highly technical and does not describe methods," Norton wrote in 1940. "Americans are asking whether the principles for the classification of the rather simple archives described in the Manual still hold."<sup>66</sup> In reviewing the Dutch manual for the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, Norton elaborated, stating "the records described seem so simple as to have little analogy with our own bulky and complex filing systems." Although the soundness of the principles enumerated in the manual "have been proved correct by forty years of European and American tests," Norton concluded, "The next need is for a companion volume to demonstrate practical procedures for applying the principles to the complicated American record keeping systems of today."<sup>67</sup> Even when proposing to use Jenkinson's manual as the basis for her summer course at Columbia, Norton recognized that its emphasis on English archives would require some adaptations. "However, I like his approach to the various subjects which he takes up," she told Solon J. Buck, director of publications at the National Archives, "and I think when these are Americanized the outline will prove workable."<sup>68</sup>

In rejecting the American Library Association proposal for a manual on "the care and cataloging of archives," Norton also stated similar concerns to SAA Secretary Philip C. Brooks of the National Archives staff. "I find that most of the available literature in English is based upon English conditions and I have to stop and translate what is said into American conditions," she complained. "What we need is writings based upon practical experience—not some librarian's rehashing of what has already been said many times."<sup>69</sup> Thus, Norton not only called for a new and specifically American approach to archives, she also stated that European archivists did not pay sufficient attention to methodology and practical solutions to archival problems, and that American librarians did not properly understand archival methods. Once again, Norton the pragmatist overshadowed Norton the theorist.

In summarizing these issues in 1973, Norton elaborated on the distinctions necessary between European and American archival approaches:

It was only natural to suppose that American archivists would copy the techniques of the European archival agencies which had been in existence so long. The few Americans who were familiar with European archival institutions were historians who had used them in research. So we find such men as [Samuel Flagg] Bemis enthusiastically urging American archivists to study paleography and medieval foreign languages. They failed to realize that the contents of European archives were entirely different from those of America. European archivists [were] concerned with old records—none dated later than 1800; whereas few states, except those of the 13 colonies, had any records at all earlier than 1800.

The Europeans knew nothing concerning the problems of dealing with the ever growing complexity of the records of rapidly growing governmental agencies.<sup>70</sup>

Far from being a Europeanist Margaret Norton remained a quintessentially American archivist in her practical approach to solving the distinctive problems of modern records. Her approach focused primarily on governmental archives rather than on private manuscripts, however, and in this respect she did emphasize the European custodial role rather than the American manuscripts interpretive role for archives and archivists.<sup>71</sup>

### Restoring Balance

In attempting to replace the archival profession's emphasis on service to historical scholars with a focus on administrative and legal needs, Norton may have taken a position as devil's advocate. Maynard Brichford claimed that she "sought to restore a balance that is lost when only scholarly research needs are considered." Brichford went on to state, "The view that administrative use should take precedence can be as misleading as the view that archives serve only scholarly researchers."<sup>72</sup> However, as Luke Gilliland-Swetland concluded, "the entire tenor of Norton's writings and activities" demonstrates a perspective different from "her contemporaries in the historical camp."<sup>73</sup> Were Norton's opinions deliberately confrontational or exaggerated?

Limited evidence from Norton's unpublished writings suggests that she did occasionally feel constrained by her official position in stating her public opinions, and that she at times overemphasized her arguments to provoke discussion. Two comments made to historian William Birdsall in 1973 suggest the self-censorship required to maintain good relations with her supervisors. "As a member of the staff of the Illinois State Library I owed a loyalty to my institution which in substance was to pretend that all was perfect in an imperfect situation—which it wasn't," she told Birdsall.<sup>74</sup> This comment suggests that she could not criticize library management of the archives, including the impositions she faced in using library staff for archival work and in having to allow her own staff to prepare library exhibits and provide library reference service. But she also stated that some of her on-the-job decisions were based on political expedience rather than on archival principles. "You must realize that I had to conform to an official line which did not always correspond to what I might recommend to others," she confided to Birdsall.<sup>75</sup> This statement raises doubts concerning Norton's candor in discussing the archival situation in Illinois in her public writings, most of which were published in the "house organ," *Illinois Libraries*. Even in her professional correspondence with fellow archivists, historians, and librarians, Norton seldom criticized the problems she faced within the Illinois State Library.

It is doubtful, however, whether such constraints affected Norton's views on archival theory. More likely, this self-censorship related principally to putting the best face possible on the daily annoyances and power plays within the library. In one candid comment, however, Norton did admit that her views might sometimes be exaggerated for effect. At the 1940 American Libraries Association annual meeting Norton and Roscoe Hill, chief of the classification division of the National Archives, debated the proper

basis for classification of archives. In her monthly report to the Illinois State Library, Norton conceded, "Both of us probably overemphasized our points of difference deliberately, because we feel that the whole subject should be kept open to discussion until American archivists have had more experience with the subject."<sup>76</sup> It would be a mistake to read too much into this statement. But it does seem likely that part of Norton's unflinching insistence on the legal aspects of archives was at times a deliberate counterpoint to the prevailing view that archives should be regarded principally as historical sources. This lends credence to Brichford's belief that she was attempting to restore a more balanced view of archives than the prevailing notion that they served an essentially historical or scholarly purpose.

If Norton emphasized the legal aspects of archives for pragmatic purposes, it is worth examining the extent to which such arguments succeeded. Although Norton seldom expressed complete satisfaction with her achievements and repeatedly felt that her efforts were constrained by the State Library administration or by a lack of staff, on the whole her efforts must be recognized as successful. "Norton brought the Illinois State Archives to the forefront of public archives," Richard Berner concluded. Norton not only exerted considerable personal influence on the development of the archival profession in the 1930s and 1940s, but she had "established a model public archives."<sup>77</sup> One measure of her achievement was the successful campaign for a new state archives building. From the beginning of her tenure as State Archivist Norton had lobbied for facilities adequate for archival purposes; the building dedicated in 1938 was only the third public archives building constructed in the United States for such purpose. "The Illinois State Archives, which under Margaret C. Norton had become an important center of archival work, moved into its new building in 1938, and its activities contributed significantly to a reorientation of archivists," Ernst Posner wrote in 1964. "The archives and records management program of the state of Illinois is known as one of the outstanding programs in the United States," Posner concluded. "The archives program of Illinois owes some of its characteristics and much of its national and international reputation to the leadership of Margaret C. Norton, who developed it to a high level of perfection."<sup>78</sup> This did not mean that she always received the appropriations or new staff that she requested. But the success of an archival institution can also be measured in its influence as a model for others, and in this respect, at least, Norton's success is beyond doubt.

## Legacy

An examination of Margaret Cross Norton's personal correspondence and reports clearly indicates that the archival theory for which she is so well known did not originate in ivory tower musings on the meaning of life or the origins of records. Rather her "archival philosophy," as she called it, derived from daily experience, from experimentation, and from the realities of a life lived in service to the public. An appreciation for Margaret Norton as a pragmatic archivist dedicated to the needs of public officials enables us to see her as a bold and consistent advocate for the significance of records in administration of state government. Norton adopted European archival principles such as provenance and the moral defense of archives, but she adapted them to the require-

ments of modern American records. She pleaded for recognition of archives as legal records, but she also recognized their secondary importance for historical research.

Margaret Norton's perspective on archives as legal records must be acknowledged as an essential part of archival identity. However, she also understood that some archival records were historical documents and that the historical significance of archives must be preserved. Norton's legacy needs to be reconsidered in light of her private writings and the practical reasons behind her archival philosophy. Although influenced by Jenkinson, she did not remain a strict Jenkinsonian in her views. She believed that archives are more than just historical sources, but she did not deny the historical importance of archives. Margaret Norton presented a more complex and nuanced theory of archives than either her advocates or her detractors have recognized. She deserves to be remembered for promoting European principles, but also for developing distinctively American adaptations. She espoused adherence to theory and principles, but she practiced experimentation and innovation. Above all she represents the ultimate triumph of American pragmatism and the emergence of a distinctive identity for archivists, free from the control of both historians and librarians. With a background in both of these disciplines, Norton proclaimed a separate identity as an archivist.

Although her influence moved archivists away from their reliance on historians and the traditions of the historian-archivist, Norton's views should not lead archivists to abandon their dual heritage. The profession must recognize both the legal and administrative identity of archives and their historical significance. Rather than pulling the profession apart into separate camps of historian-archivists and archivist-administrators or of practitioners and theorists, Norton's legacy should remind archivists of their twin responsibilities. The continuing challenge for archivists is to balance these dual aspects of archives: to maintain both their legal and administrative integrity and their usefulness for historical research.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR:** Randall C. Jimerson is Professor of History and director of the graduate program in Archives and Records Management at Western Washington University, Bellingham, Washington. He is a Fellow and former member of Council of the Society of American Archivists. He is author of *The Private Civil War: Popular Thought During the Sectional Conflict* (LSU, 1988), and editor of *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice* (SAA, 2000). An earlier version of this paper was presented at the SAA annual meeting in August 2000.

## NOTES

1. William F. Birdsall, "The Two Sides of the Desk: The Archivist and the Historian, 1909-1935," *American Archivist* 38 (April 1975): 166-167; Donnelly Faye Lancaster, "Margaret Cross Norton: Dedication to the Development of the American Archival Profession" (M.A. Thesis, Auburn University, August 2000): 1-2; Thornton W. Mitchell, "Introduction," in *Norton on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival & Records Management*, ed. Thornton W. Mitchell (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1975): xviii.
2. Norton to Birdsall, May 24, 1973, in *The Margaret Cross Norton Working Papers, 1924-1928*, microfilm edition (Springfield: Illinois State Archives, 1993): roll 3, frame 1206 (hereafter cited as: in MCNWP, 3/1206).
3. MCNWP, 3/1206.
4. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1239.
5. Norton, "The Archives Department as an Administrative Unit of Government," in *Norton on Archives*, 4.
6. Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965): 25, 30.
7. Maynard Brichford, "Margaret Cross Norton," *American Archivist* 47:4 (1984): 473-474.
8. George Bolotenko, "Archivists and Historians: Keepers of the Well," *Archivaria* 16 (1983): 5, 10.
9. See, for example, Carl Spadoni, "No Monopoly for 'Archivist-Historians': Bolotenko Assailed," *Archivaria* 17 (1983-1984): 291-295; Anthony L. Rees, "Bolotenko's Siege Mentality," *Archivaria* 17: 301-302; Bob Taylor-Vaisey, "Archivist-Historians Ignore Information Revolution," *Archivaria* 17: 305-308; and other articles in subsequent issues of *Archivaria*.
10. Patrick A. Dunae, "Archives and the Spectre of 1984: Bolotenko Applauded," *Archivaria* 17 (1983-1984): 286-290. Bolotenko and others continued this argument in subsequent issues of *Archivaria*.
11. Luciana Duranti, "The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory," *American Archivist* 57 (spring 1994): 338-339, 344. Duranti does cite Andrew Raymond and James O'Toole, who stated that Norton had established a "middle ground" between Jenkinson and Schellenberg, but she does not elaborate on this distinction (p. 339).
12. Frank Boles and Mark A. Greene, "Et Tu Schellenberg? Thoughts on the Dagger of American Appraisal Theory," *American Archivist* 59 (summer 1996): 298-310.
13. Thornton W. Mitchell, xv-xxi. Donnelly Faye Lancaster, "Margaret Cross Norton: Dedication to the Development of the American Archival Profession," is the best available biography of Norton. For her role as a pioneering woman in the profession, see Michele F. Pacifico, "Founding Mothers: Women in the Society of American Archivists, 1936-1972," *American Archivist* 50 (summer 1987): 370-389.
14. Mitchell, xvi-xvii.
15. Richard C. Berner, *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983): 16.
16. Berner, 31; Norton, "Budget Justification Report," February 27, 1943, in MCNWP, 1/785.
17. Norton to William F. Birdsall, May 24, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1203-1205.
18. Norton, Archives Division Report, August 1939, in MCNWP, 1/248.
19. Norton to Birdsall, May 24, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1204.
20. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1231.
21. Norton to Birdsall, May 24, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1205.
22. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, October 1956, in MCNWP, 3/136; Lancaster, "Margaret Cross Norton," chapter 2.
23. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1231-1233.
24. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1235-1237.
25. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1235-1237.
26. Norton to Birdsall, May 24, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1206.
27. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1239.
28. John Higham, *History: Professional Scholarship in America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1965): 92-116; Mattie U. Russell, "The Influence of Historians on the Archival Profession in the United States," *American Archivist* 46 (summer 1983): 280.
29. Berner, chapters 1-2; Luke J. Gilliland-Swetland, "The Provenance of a Profession: The Permanence of the Public Archives and Historical Manuscripts Traditions in American Archival History," *Ameri-*

- can Archivist* 54 (spring 1991): 165–166. See also William F. Birdsall, "The American Archivist's Search for Professional Identity, 1909–1936," (Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin–Madison, 1973).
30. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1234. Norton, in fact, was not the "first" archivist to adopt this position, which had already been advocated by historians such as Waldo Gifford Leland and by a few archivists, including Arnold J. Van Lear, but she quickly became the most articulate spokesperson for this perspective.
  31. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, October 1946, in MCNWP, 1/1348.
  32. Norton, "Archival Training," December 10, 1938, in MCNWP, 4/398.
  33. Norton in *The Archives Division of the Illinois State Library* (1931) in MCNWP, 1/068.
  34. Norton in *The Archives Division of the Illinois State Library* (1931) in MCNWP, 4/398–399.
  35. Norton, "Training of Archivists," in MCNWP, 5/377–378.
  36. Norton on Archives, 27. "I find that even today few archivists have ever heard of this book," Norton complained in 1973. "Familiarity with the principles laid down there are very helpful to the archivist." Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1240.
  37. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, and October 26, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1242 and 3/1263.
  38. Norton to Birdsall, May 31, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1215. Solon J. Buck, director of publications at the National Archives, had taught the first course at Columbia in 1939. Berner, 105.
  39. Norton to Birdsall, October 26, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1265.
  40. Norton to Francis L. Philbrick, February 2, 1940, in MCNWP, 5/346.
  41. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, November 1940, in MCNWP, 1/433.
  42. Norton to J. B. Speer, February 5, 1942, MCNWP, 5/1368.
  43. Transcript of proceedings, SAA round table on classification and cataloging, October 25, 1938, in MCNWP, 4/151–152.
  44. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1242.
  45. Norton to Birdsall, October 26, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1263–1264.
  46. Helen L. Chatfield to Norton, March 11, 1945, in MCNWP, 6/373–374.
  47. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, October 1946, in MCNWP, 1/1347.
  48. Norton to Birdsall, May 31, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1212.
  49. Ernst Posner, "A Tribute to Margaret C. Norton," in *Norton on Archives*, viii.
  50. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, June 1939, in MCNWP, 1/224.
  51. Norton, Archives Division Report, November 1939, in MCNWP, 1/292.
  52. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, March 1946, in MCNWP, 1/1258; August 1946, in MCNWP, 1/1309.
  53. Mary Givens Bryan of the Georgia Department of Archives and History noted that Norton's focus on details may have led her to neglect "the bigger aspects, which kept her from being a top administrator." Quoted in Lancaster, "Margaret Cross Norton," chapter 4.
  54. Norton to Lester J. Cappon, January 15, 1944, in MCNWP, 6/214–215.
  55. Norton to Solon J. Buck, February 1, 1946, in MCNWP, 6/400.
  56. Norton to Carl L. Lokke, May 4, 1946, in MCNWP, 6/608.
  57. Norton to Grace Lee Nute, November 22, 1940, in MCNWP, 5/158.
  58. Norton to Birdsall, May 24, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1205.
  59. Norton to Charles Gates, February 25, 1938, in MCNWP, 4/869.
  60. Norton to Francis S. Philbrick, November 13, 1939, in MCNWP, 4/1341.
  61. Norton, "Program for Preservation of Local Archives," January 1940, in MCNWP, 5/311–312.
  62. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1234–1235.
  63. Norton quoted in Lancaster, chapter 4.
  64. Transcript of SAA round table on classification and cataloging, October 25, 1938, in MCNWP, 4/151.
  65. Norton to Charles C. Williamson, November 13, 1939, in MCNWP, 4/364.
  66. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, May 1940, in MCNWP, 1/366.
  67. Norton, typescript review of *Manual for the Arrangement and Description of Archives*, May 1940, in MCNWP, 5/070.
  68. Norton to Solon J. Buck, January 13, 1940, in MCNWP, 4/337.
  69. Norton to Philip C. Brooks, February 23, 1940, Society of American Archivists records, file 200/03/01, University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee.
  70. Norton to Birdsall, October 26, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1265.
  71. Gilliland-Swetland, 165–66.

72. Maynard Brichford, "Academic Archives: *Überlieferungsbildung*," *American Archivist* 43 (fall 1980): 457.
73. Gilliland-Swetland, 165.
74. Norton to Birdsall, June 18, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1243.
75. Norton to Birdsall, June 6, 1973, in MCNWP, 3/1222.
76. Norton, Archives Monthly Report, May, 1940, in MCNWP, 1/366.
77. Berner, 16, 31.
78. Posner, 30, 98, 101.