

CONCEIVING THE RECORDS CONTINUUM  
IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

by

JASON CHRISTOPHER EAMER-GOULT

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School of Library, Archival, & Information Studies.  
Department of \_\_\_\_\_

The University of British Columbia  
Vancouver, Canada

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis surveys the efforts made by Canadian and American records administrators, both records managers and archivists, to ensure that records are created, received, stored, used, preserved, and disposed of in a manner which is both efficient and effective. Beginning with the French Revolution and continuing to modern times, it investigates how approaches in North American archival thinking, government records programs, and applicable records legislation were often flawed because of fundamental misconceptions of the nature of the records themselves.

The thesis traces how the most widely accepted approach for administering records, which called for the division of responsibilities amongst records professionals according to the records' "life status" -- active, semi-active, or inactive -- was incorrect because it was not compatible with the reality that records exist as a conceptual whole and are best administered in a manner which reflects this realization. The records, which should have been managed as a coherent and complete fonds of an institution, suffered from these divisions which had eventually led to the evolution of separate records occupations: those who looked after active records, called records managers, and those who handled inactive ones, labelled archivists.

What was required was an "integrated" or "unified" approach such as that articulated by the Canadian archivist Jay Atherton. Like others, he called for the management of records in a manner which reflected the singular nature of the records, an approach which did not make arbitrary divisions where none existed, but instead viewed records from a wider and more complete perspective. Support for this approach amongst some records administrators was precipitated by a number of factors, not the least of which were the demands of handling information in modern society.

The thesis concludes by examining what is required for the integrated ideas to be implemented as part of a practical model in today's institutions. It suggests that for the best results to be achieved, records administrators will have to learn to work with others in related information professions, or risk losing the ability to make valid contributions in the modern information age.

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## INTRODUCTION

It has been almost a decade since Jay Atherton wrote his seminal article, "From Life Cycle to Continuum: Some Thoughts on the Records Management -- Archives Relationship."<sup>1</sup> In this paper, he confronts an issue which for decades has been plaguing North American archivists and records managers: "is the management of current records simply the first stage in an archival methodology; or is the archival concern, the requirement to ensure the preservation of permanently valuable records, merely the final step in a comprehensive records management process?"<sup>2</sup> Because the answer to this question will decide who will direct the management of records at all stages of their existence, it affects everything that archivists and records managers do. While some archivists are inclined to manage public records before they are transferred to the archives, others feel that they should restrict themselves to the care of records designated for permanent preservation. The question is therefore one of importance to the archival community.

The debate is not new. It has existed since before the Second World War. More than ever, however, many individuals feel there is now a need to achieve its resolution. They claim that as archivists and records managers confront the effects of information technology on the creation, maintenance, use, and disposition of records, a reassessment of their respective roles is essential. Abundant, transient, and readily disposable electronic records will not wait for the dispute to be resolved; for the benefit of society, archivists and records managers must act immediately to institute a framework suitable for the management of all forms of modern records.

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<sup>1</sup>Jay Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum: Some Thoughts on the Records Management -- Archives Relationship," Archivaria 21 (Winter 1985 -1986): 43-51.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

With that very goal in mind, Atherton proposes a model which accommodates all records functions. He contends that the concept of the "life cycle" of records has not adequately explained the natural sequence which characterizes a record's progress through the stages of creation, use, maintenance, and disposition.<sup>3</sup> The life cycle supposes that the management of records falls into "eight distinct, *separate* stages."<sup>4</sup> Traditionally, records managers have overseen the first four stages, where the emphasis is understood to be on the administration of active records. This encompasses "creation or receipt of information in the form of records, classification of the records or their information in some logical system, maintenance and use of the records, and ... disposition through destruction or transfer to an archives." On the other hand, archivists have dealt with the last four stages, comprised of "selection/acquisition of the records ... description of the records ... preservation of the records or, perhaps, the information in the records, and reference and use of the information by researchers and scholars."<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the records managers' administration of active records, it has been understood that the archivist's main focus is on the acquisition of inactive records to meet the needs of scholarly research.

Atherton argues that it is possible but unwise to manage records in this manner, because the tasks of comprehensive records administration cut across these arbitrary stages. He further argues that the life cycle model no longer works in the current information management environment. "Data base management systems," he states, "completely separate elements in a record, allowing the user to bring them

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<sup>3</sup>An early discussion of the "life history" of records may be found in Philip Coolidge Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation," American Archivist 3.4 (Oct. 1940): 221-234.

<sup>4</sup>Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 44. Emphasis added. There are several variations of the life cycle concept. However, they all distinctly separate the roles of the archivist and the records manager.

<sup>5</sup>Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 44.

together, perhaps altered, in any useful combination."<sup>6</sup> He later elaborated on this point:

The convincing factor [for writing the article] was the increasing importance of the electronic record. In so many ways, the static features of the paper document cannot be found in data created, manipulated, changed, and maintained in a computer environment.<sup>7</sup>

How could the life cycle paradigm apply to such records, which in truth have become too fluid to fit into such a rigid structure?

If the life cycle concept, with its steady progression from one stage to another, does not correspond to current reality, what precisely should take its place, and what is the archivist's role to be? Atherton sees the archivist being "involved prior to the actual creation of the record."<sup>8</sup> As he puts it,

Does the archivist really have no role to play in serving the creator of the records, in determining disposal periods, or developing classification systems? Does the records manager really have no responsibility in identifying permanently valuable records or serving researchers? To ask these questions is to answer them.<sup>9</sup>

His "simpler, more unified model", which he calls the "records continuum", has four *integrated* functions, consisting of creation or receipt, classification, scheduling for disposition, and finally, maintenance and use of records.<sup>10</sup> These functions do not take place in stages, but rather are performed to meet the needs of users of the records. In contrast to the life cycle concept, which is tailored to suit the sequential responsibilities and personal needs of records managers and archivists, the continuum concept capitalizes on the capability of the records to fulfil various societal needs.

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<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>7</sup>Letter from Jay Atherton, Wakefield, Quebec, to the Author, Vancouver, 23 December 1994.

<sup>8</sup>Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 47.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

In the continuum, Atherton feels that these needs are most effectively met by elevating the concept of service. Unlike previous models, this paradigm suggests that archivists and records managers both work within the bounds of this single unifying realm.<sup>11</sup> On a fundamental level, all records professionals, regardless of whether they are records managers or archivists, have to be able to provide service to anyone who has a right of access to the records. This is their first and most important responsibility, for by ensuring the "preservation and availability of records of enduring value," the "memory of the creating agency" is maintained.<sup>12</sup>

Atherton's concept of continual and integrated service is only a conceptualization and does not give specifics on records administration. It leaves many particulars of management unclear, prime among them what the role of the records managers and archivists of old will be in the future and how each will contribute to the building of the new scheme, or whether labour will continue to be divided as it has between the two. What is clear is that Atherton's concept of the continuum comes after a struggle to find a theory and method for managing records effectively. "I cannot really say how the continuum idea came to me," he said. "It just seemed self-evident that we were dealing with a single process, whose steps were interrelated."<sup>13</sup> Thus, this thesis will look at the history of the question, for in it may lie the answers to how and why the matter remains unresolved.

Many of Atherton's ideas are not new, but no one put them together as he has. By examining thinking about the management of public records and its historical context, it is hoped that records managers and archivists will gain a better perspective on the enduring issues involved in conceiving and implementing an integrated system. In fact, studying these past trends will better prepare records professionals to

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<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup>Letter from Atherton to the Author, 23 December 1994.

administer the records of today and tomorrow. The goal of this thesis, therefore, is to demonstrate why records administrators must reject any model based on functional divisions between records managers and archivists, and to show what the elements of a unified approach should be. Note that the phrase "records administrator" is intended to refer to both "records managers" and "archivists", since these terms have in some situations developed narrower connotations within the domain of the life cycle model.

An examination will not be made of all archival thinking, but of only the conceptualizations which have emerged from the sphere of North American public institutions. In order to do this, special attention will be applied to the development of Canada's and the United States' national archives.<sup>14</sup> Primarily, this will involve studying the literature pertinent to records administration, to ascertain how theory and method have evolved to their present state. In the first chapter, the origins of the separation of archives from records management will be analyzed. In the next chapter, there will be an investigation of the post-Second World War dialogue on what the roles of records management and archives should be. The third chapter will explore the more recent developments which eventually provided the environment for Atherton's article, while the conclusion will examine both a practical model for implementing the continuum ideas and the possible future trends for records administration.

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<sup>14</sup>While some scenarios will also apply to private organizations, this thesis will not attempt to address their issues or what they should do.

CHAPTER ONE:  
The Origins of the North American Separation of  
Records Management from Archives

Contemporary archival and records management practice has its origins in times far before the beginning of this century. Luciana Duranti has observed that the roots of modern records management lie in Mesopotamia and other ancient civilizations around the world.<sup>15</sup> Tracing the "Odyssey of Records Managers", she contended that even in South America's Inca civilization there were individuals whose responsibility was "preserving information about actions and transactions for the interests of their creators and the functioning and development of their society."<sup>16</sup> While there is some debate whether these individuals were archivists or records managers, or some combination thereof, it is clear that since ancient times societies of all kind have actively administered archives.<sup>17</sup>

It was not until the beginning of the modern era, however, that archival administration as we know it began to emerge. Ernst Posner, in his influential work about the effects of the French Revolution on archival development, argued that this event had ramifications for today's archival institutions.<sup>18</sup> The facts are well known. The French revolutionary government implemented three principles which still exist today: firstly, national archival institutions were centralized and organized; secondly, the state assumed responsibility for the care of the records of the past; and thirdly, the

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<sup>15</sup>See Luciana Duranti, "The Odyssey of Records Managers -- Part I: From the Dawn of Civilization to the Fall of the Roman Empire," Records Management Quarterly 23.3 (July 1989): 3-11, and "The Odyssey of Records Managers -- Part II: From the Middle Ages to Modern Times," Records Management Quarterly 23.4 (Oct. 1989): 3-11.

<sup>16</sup>Duranti, "The Odyssey of Records Managers -- Part I," 3.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 4-5. See also Ernst Posner, Archives in the Ancient World (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

<sup>18</sup>Ernst Posner, "Some Aspects of Archival Development Since the French Revolution," American Archivist 3 (July 1940): 159-172.

modern principle of public accessibility to government archives was enshrined in law.<sup>19</sup>

In the third principle lies the cause for today's division between archivists and records managers. With the Decree of June 25, 1794, inactive records were transferred from their creating offices, and placed in regional or national repositories.<sup>20</sup> Here, they were declared the historical record of the people, who could freely consult them. The problem was that a distinction developed between "administrative archives", or active and semi-active records, and "historical archives", or inactive records. Eventually, the "historical" archivists turned to classification by function or subject, thus forgetting that "records are given meaning by the circumstances of their creation, by their context, and must be maintained according to it."<sup>21</sup>

It was only later that the principle of *respect des fonds* was re-established, but historians had now usurped the role of the public administrators and assumed responsibility for records in archival institutions.<sup>22</sup> Posner claimed that

When the scholar took over most of the positions in the new general archives establishments, his attitude toward the materials had to be, of necessity, entirely different from that of the former custodians. Archives became preponderantly scientific institutions and lost somewhat their character of government offices.<sup>23</sup>

One result was that the treatment of modern government records was simply ignored, for the natural inclination of historians was to acquire documents which they felt held historical or scholarly value.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 161-162.

<sup>20</sup>Luciana Duranti, "Is There a Records Management Theory?," Proceedings of the ARMA International 35th Annual Conference, November 5-8, 1990, San Francisco, California (Association of Records Managers and Administrators) 818.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 819.

<sup>23</sup>Posner, "Archival Development Since the French Revolution," 166.

<sup>24</sup>*Ibid.*, 167.

When in North America archivists became separated from the records-creating bodies, others who wanted to take on the challenges which active public records provided filled their place. These individuals, who eventually became known as records managers, learned their trade from sources other than archival. Especially in the United States, they advocated the ideas of "scientific management," which, borne of the progressive movement of the first decade of the 20th Century, was not so much a specific practice as a general philosophy based on "scientifically ascertained laws and principles, translated effectively into industrial administration."<sup>25</sup> Those who applied scientific management to records were called "efficiency experts," and in contrast to archivists, they were not interested in retaining records as the permanent memory of the actions, transactions, and functions of the creating body. Instead, their hallmark was the improvement of the economy of the office environment, whether this meant the destruction of archives or not.<sup>26</sup>

The stage had been set in Canada and the United States for the division between modern archives and records management. As shall be seen, records professionals would polarize into two solitudes: records managers would administer active public records, and archivists would concentrate on acquiring the historical material of past years. The following discusses these developments for each country.

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A national public archival institution emerged in Canada long before its counterpart was created in the United States. Established in 1872, Canada's Archives did not result from the internal impetus of a government arguing for its own public

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<sup>25</sup>C. Bertrand Thompson, The Taylor System of Scientific Management (New York: A. W. Shaw Company, 1917) 5.

<sup>26</sup>Artel Ricks, "Records Management as an Archival Function," Records Management Quarterly 11.2 (April 1977): 13.

records office.<sup>27</sup> Instead, the federal government responded to a petition from the Literary and Historical Society of Quebec, which was calling for a national public archival institution to preserve the sources of a common history needed to unify the country's component colonies and disparate peoples.<sup>28</sup> These petitioners wanted a national archives because they felt that compared to other countries, Canadians were at a disadvantage in their research.<sup>29</sup> For this reason, the new Archives gave scant attention to the public records question. Instead, it focussed on the acquisition of historical material. The first significant accession of the new Dominion Archivist, Douglas Brymner, was the 400,000 records of the British Army created in Canada since 1759. It was to be followed by an extensive program to copy historical records relating to Canada in London and Paris.<sup>30</sup>

Meanwhile, the Department of the Secretary of State, which had jurisdiction over public records, perceived Brymner as a threat to its position, and in 1874 appointed another individual to supervise government records pertaining to administrative or legal functions.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, these public records were viewed as entities apart from historical records, to be dealt with by a different administration and under the control of someone other than the Dominion Archivist.<sup>32</sup> Although this was a set-back for Brymner, he conceded that his interests lay in the acquisition of historical material: "the special object of the office is to obtain from all sources, private

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<sup>27</sup>Ian E. Wilson, "'A Noble Dream': The Origins of the Public Archives of Canada," Archivaria 15 (Winter 1982-1983): 16.

<sup>28</sup>Bernard Weilbrenner, "The Public Archives of Canada, 1871-1958," Journal of the Society of Archivists 2 (1960): 101, and Wilson, "'A Noble Dream,'" 17.

<sup>29</sup>Hugh A. Taylor, "Canadian Archives: Patterns from a Federal Perspective," Archivaria 1.2 (1976): 4-5.

<sup>30</sup>Wilfred I. Smith, "'Total Archives': The Canadian Experience," Archives et Bibliothèques de Belgique 57 (1986): 328.

<sup>31</sup>Wilson, "'A Noble Dream,'" 22.

<sup>32</sup>Jay Atherton, "The Origins of the Public Archives Records Centre, 1897 - 1956," Archivaria 8 (Summer 1979): 36.

as well as public, such documents as may throw light on social commercial, municipal, as well as purely political history."<sup>33</sup>

This division between the two records administration bodies was not to last. Following an 1897 Departmental Commission report which argued that "it is not too much to say that the rivalry existing between (the Public Archives and Records Branch) has long been an obstacle to the attainment of that *unity of responsibility and control* essential to the introduction of a perfect system," the two offices were amalgamated by Order in Council in 1903.<sup>34</sup> This, however, did not sway the Archives from its historical objectives. As Atherton sees it, the Order in Council

recognized the records keeping responsibilities of the Dominion Archivist, but still saw him as serving essentially a cultural need .... [It was] based solely on the need to preserve records for their value as historical evidence, with no recognition of the need to retain them for the use of the Government itself, or to protect legal rights. Furthermore, it ignored several key 'records management' recommendations of the 1897 Commission, namely a mechanism for immediate destruction and periodic future disposal of useless documents, a standard retention period for routine financial records, a review of filing systems in departments, and a fixed age for transfer of records to the Archives.<sup>35</sup>

Arthur G. Doughty, who became Dominion Archivist in 1904, continued the orientation of his predecessor. He believed that historical study was imperative for the growth of the Canadian nation, and emphasized the importance of the Public Archives in this process.<sup>36</sup> Like Brymner, Doughty was not greatly concerned by the growing volume of unsorted and disorganized records dispersed in many government offices. Rather, he was mainly interested in preserving and publishing what he considered to

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<sup>33</sup>As quoted in Smith, "Total Archives," 328.

<sup>34</sup>As quoted in Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 40. Emphasis added. See also Weilbrenner, "Public Archives of Canada, 1871-1958," 104.

<sup>35</sup>Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 42.

<sup>36</sup>Ian E. Wilson, "Shortt and Doughty: The Cultural Role of the Public Archives of Canada," Canadian Archivist 2.4 (1973): 12.

be documents of historical value.<sup>37</sup> He never seriously pursued the wider issue of systematic records control and disposition.

The Archives' first legislated mandate did not satisfactorily address the active records issue either. In the Public Archives Act of 1912, the Archivist was granted guardianship of "public records, documents, and other historical material," and now had the power to "acquire for the Public Archives all such original records, documents, and other material as he deem(ed) necessary or desirable to secure ...."<sup>38</sup> However, these terms were not defined, nor was their application to different departments explained satisfactorily. Thus, there were not any effective processes for the transfer of records to the Public Archives, unless the departments chose to forfeit their records voluntarily. While the "potential for a serious public record office operation had been created", the Public Archives lacked the authority to implement systematic records control and disposition.<sup>39</sup> The shortcomings of the 1912 act revealed that both government officials and the Dominion Archivist had yet to realize the full dimensions of the problem. Aside from the crucial fact that Doughty's interests lay in accumulating historical material, the reality was that the Public Archives was still largely viewed as a cultural and historical institution.

In fact, little thought was given to its role in managing public records until a royal commission to investigate the care and control of departmental records was convened in 1912. This Commission found that government records, rarely used more than five years after their creation, were badly organized, poorly treated, and difficult to locate. Its report, released in 1914, blankly stated that "one fact, everywhere observable, is that the preservation and care of the older records is the last thought of

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<sup>37</sup>Weilbrenner, "Public Archives of Canada, 1871-1958," 106-107.

<sup>38</sup>Canada, Public Archives Act, R.S.C. 1912, c. 222, s. 6, and s. 8.

<sup>39</sup>Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 44.

anybody."<sup>40</sup> The Commission therefore recommended that a Public Record Office be established, within which inactive records could be stored under the control of the departments, destroyed when useless, or transferred "to the Archives proper in the Public Record Office." It also suggested that records twenty five years of age or older be sent to the records office, and that authority had to be granted by the Treasury Board for the destruction of useless documents.<sup>41</sup> With the onset of war in 1914, these recommendations were never implemented.

It is questionable anyway whether the Commission's recommendations would have brought the Public Archives closer to the field of active records administration. The Commission did not call for the Archives to advise the departments on the administration of public records, and there is little doubt that the Archivist and at least some of his staff lacked the inclination to take on a larger role for the Archives. As Ian Wilson makes clear, "by temperament as much as by circumstance, [Doughty] emphasized the cultural rather than the record-keeping role of archives."<sup>42</sup>

During the inter-war period, several attempts were made to deal with the problem of orderly disposition of records. Often, the matter was pushed aside by more pressing economic or political problems. One initiative did get off the ground, briefly. In 1933, the Department of Public Works set out to create a cheap storage facility for semi-active government records. Importantly, while the Public Works Department would maintain the building, individual departments would retain control and custody over their public records stored there.<sup>43</sup> By 1938, the building

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<sup>40</sup>Canada, Report of the Royal Commission Appointed to Inquire into the State of the Records of the Public Departments of the Dominion of Canada (Ottawa: F. A. Acland, 1914) 10.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>42</sup>Wilson, "A Noble Dream," 32.

<sup>43</sup>A. M. Willms, "Canada's New Records Centre," American Archivist 19.4 (Oct. 1956): 322.

was completed, and the records transfers began. However, as the building was soon needed for the war effort, the departments were forced to take back their material. In the short period the facility had existed, nonetheless, it had been found that having each department supervise its own records did not work. The single Public Works clerk in the building was unable to provide the necessary services to the departments, and the endeavour failed.<sup>44</sup> At the time of the outbreak of the Second World War, the Public Archives was sixty seven years old, yet no solution for the question of its role in managing the public records of the federal government had been found. As the latest thrust of the Public Works Department revealed, there was always a chance that some other agency would seize the initiative, leaving the Archives to its traditional cultural role, with which for the most part it was content.

This was not the only problem. The demands of war had caused a bureaucratic boom which naturally led to an increase in the amount of public records produced. At the same time, the Public Archives

... suffered severely. Its appropriations were severely reduced, some members of the staff entered the armed forces and activity in general ... was reduced to a minimum. The institution thus emerged from the war in a weakened condition. At the same time, the problem of government records had become more pressing than ever before.<sup>45</sup>

These difficulties did not go unnoticed. About a year before the war ended, the historian George Brown wrote "the situation [of public records] as a whole is deplorable, that in some respects it is scandalous, and that it is contrary to the public interest, since history ... must be allowed to play its part if we have any sound conception of the national development."<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup>C. P. Stacey, "Canadian Archives," in Royal Commission Studies: A Selection of Essays Prepared for the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1951) 234.

<sup>46</sup>George W. Brown, "The Problem of Public and Historical Records in Canada," Canadian Historical Review 25.1 (March 1949): 1. Like other contemporary

Brown recognized that the purpose of records in an archival institution should not be misinterpreted as serving only the needs of historians. On the contrary, he thought that the archival institution's participation in the wider sphere of all public records should be encouraged. "An archives", he claimed, "should first of all be a public records department for the preservation of the non-active records of government."<sup>47</sup> The main purpose of records, therefore, was to protect the rights of both the government and its citizens, though he bemoaned the fact that ideas of this type were "conspicuous in Canada by [their] absence."<sup>48</sup> Predicting that the number of government records was sure to grow, he urged those responsible to give the matter the attention which it was due.<sup>49</sup>

Coincidentally, the government had already taken steps to address the problem. About a year before Brown's article, Cabinet authorized W. E. D. Halliday, a government servant who was neither an archivist nor a librarian, to investigate the means required to preserve the government's war records. Finding that there was no real distinction between them and others generated in the usual course of government activity, Halliday recommended that a permanent public records committee be convened to oversee all public records, that the departments and agencies of

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historians, Brown still linked a strong community of archival institutions, with the historical resources that such places provided, to the healthy development of a national identity.

<sup>47</sup>*Ibid.*, 1-2.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>49</sup>Brown's comments did not go unnoticed. In response to his article, the Canadian Historical Association Archives Committee conducted a survey of archival institutions, province by province. Although the Committee seemed to concur with Brown's general conclusions, no real remedies were suggested. "It was the view of this meeting", said the Archives Committee, that "while there were some signs of improvement, the situation in general was a deplorable one, and that the Association should take whatever steps it could to draw this to the attention of public authorities and others who might assist in bringing about an improvement." See the Canadian Historical Association Archives Committee, "The Discussion of the Problem of Public and Historical Records in Canada," Report of the Annual Meeting Held at Montreal, June 1-2, 1944 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1944) 45.

government recognize their primary responsibility for the care of their records, that senior departmental officers be assigned responsibility for those records, and that the feasibility of creating a public record office as recommended by the 1912 Royal Commission be considered.<sup>50</sup>

In the autumn of 1945, Cabinet responded by passing the Order in Council P.C. 6175, establishing the Public Records Committee. Amongst others, its membership included the Secretary of State, the Dominion Archivist, members from the Canadian Historical Association, and various representatives from assorted departments.<sup>51</sup> The Committee's main concern was "to keep under constant review the state of the public records and to consider, advise, and concert with departments and agencies of government on the organization, care, housing, and destruction of public records."<sup>52</sup>

This Committee would address records management concerns with an organized plan for the disposition of records. Two principles were instituted: firstly, responsibility was given to departments for their own records' supervision; secondly, the departments had to appoint individuals whose role was oversight of the records.<sup>53</sup> Reporting directly to the Treasury Board, (which was the arm of the Canadian government which regulated federal management procedures,) and responding to the policy it set, the Committee persuaded the Secretary of State that "the first function of a national archives should be to preserve the non-active records of the government."<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>W. E. D. Halliday, "The Public Records of Canada: Recent Developments in Control and Management," American Archivist 13.2 (April 1950): 104-105. The last recommendation was not carried out. (See Stacey, "Canadian Archives," 241.)

<sup>51</sup>Halliday, "Recent Developments in Control and Management," 105.

<sup>52</sup>P.C. 6175, s. 3, 20 September 1945, as quoted in Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 50.

<sup>53</sup>Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 51.

<sup>54</sup>*Ibid.*, 52. Emphasis in the original text was removed.

The Public Archives would have a role only in giving advice to the departments in support of Treasury Board policy; it had no desire to become physically involved with the records.

With this Order, the Canadian government came closer to the era of modern records administration. But such an advance was not as progressive as first appearances indicate. Since the Committee reported to the Treasury Board, the Public Archives only had an advisory role in the administration of public records. As has been the case ever since, the Treasury Board issued records policies and directives to departments and agencies. The Archives only advised what those should be, and how they should be implemented. The Archivist's powers therefore were not augmented; instead, a committee of oversight was established. As shall be seen, only with the 1966 Public Records Order would new powers devolve, through regulation, to the Dominion Archivist. Thus, while the Order in Council P.C. 6175 may have showed some progression of Canadian records administration policies, in practice it was not entirely successful, even to its contemporaries. "I must confess ...", said Halliday, that "... we have been unable to carry out ... the establishment of a Public Records Office."<sup>55</sup>

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While Canada's Public Archives pondered the records administration issue, its counterpart to the south was also having to come to grips with the same problem. The American National Archives had some catching up to do, however. In contrast to Canada's national archival institution, the American National Archives had relatively late beginnings, and was conceived in response to different needs. While Canada's national archival institution was established to act as a cultural adhesive between the

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<sup>55</sup>Halliday, "Recent Developments in Control and Management," 107.

various regions of the country, the United States' National Archives was created because of the acute need to rectify the sorry state of government records. As in Canada, pressure from archival, patriotic, and historical groups motivated the President and Congress to take action to preserve the historically valuable records of the federal government. Consequently, the cornerstone of the National Archives was laid in 1933.<sup>56</sup>

The United States' National Archives formally came into existence on June 19, 1934. The Act to Establish a National Archives of the United States Government, which was the enabling legislation of this new institution, allowed the new Archivist to

... inspect ... the records of any agency of the United States Government whatsoever and wheresoever located, ... and to requisition for transfer to the National Archives Establishment such archives, or records as the National Archives Council ... shall approve for such transfer, and he shall have authority to make regulations for the arrangement, custody, use and withdrawal of material deposited in the National Archives Building ....<sup>57</sup>

Compared with the Canadian archives act, this legislation seemed to grant the National Archivist, together with National Archives Council (consisting of himself, the Executive Heads of Department, and others), a much broader authority manage federal records.<sup>58</sup> Problems, however, were soon apparent. There were as yet no federal procedures to assist the Archivist in carrying out his responsibilities, and especially no means to identify which records should be transferred to the Archives. Additionally, for "limited periods", any head of an agency or department could "exempt from examination and consultation" those records which were deemed to be

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<sup>56</sup>Donald R. McCoy, The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934 - 1968 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978) 5-6.

<sup>57</sup>United States, An Act to Establish a National Archives of the United States Government, and for Other Purposes, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 48 (1933-1934) s. 3.

<sup>58</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 6.

of a confidential nature.<sup>59</sup> If the Archivist did not know what records the departments possessed, and if he could not view them, there was no avenue to stop the loss of valuable material. Thus, attempts to acquire public records often involved long and tedious negotiations with agencies which were not always cooperative.<sup>60</sup> As a result, from the outset, something of an adversarial situation existed between the interests of the agencies and those of the Archives. In hindsight, these problems are not surprising. As in Canada, there was a traditional belief that archivists were cultural caretakers, historians who should passively wait for records to be delivered to them.

Not everyone shared this view. If the National Archives was unable to take a more participatory role in the administration of current public records, it was not because all archivists thought they should be historians interested only in the past. One product of the Progressive Era, for example, was Margaret Cross Norton, who wanted archivists to be committed to the active and efficient administration of government records. "The archivist", Norton wrote, "should be a public official whose first interest is business efficiency, and only secondarily should he be interested in history."<sup>61</sup> Luke Gilliland-Swetland gives a summary of her views:

Historical libraries managed by historians were not archives ... The confusion to the contrary was not merely unfortunate, for it threatened the very preservation of the nation's legally important documents. Historians had a research agenda that was fundamentally at odds with the mission of archives. The latter ... was primarily to serve the administrative needs and public accountability demands of its institution and the needs of scholars only secondarily.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 3.

<sup>60</sup>McCoy, National Archives, 10.

<sup>61</sup>Thornton W. Mitchell, ed., Norton / on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival and Records Management (Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975) 5.

<sup>62</sup>Luke J. Gilliland-Swetland, "The Provenance of a Profession: The Permanence of the Public Archives and Historical Manuscripts Traditions in American Archival History," American Archivist 54.2 (Summer 1991): 165.

Norton therefore contended that records in archival institutions were important for tracing the administrative functions of which they are by-products, and any historical importance the documents possessed was "so much 'velvet.'"<sup>63</sup> An "archives department", she claimed, "is the governmental agency charged with the duty of planning and supervising the preservation of all those records of the business transactions of its government required by law or other legal implication to be preserved indefinitely."<sup>64</sup> One reason for this preservation was that it maintained the authenticity of the records necessary to convey the legal privileges and prerogatives of the government and its citizens.<sup>65</sup>

In ideas such as these were the beginnings of the concern to articulate a role for archivists and archival institutions within government circles. Norton felt that archivists had responsibilities other than to the historical community; they had to become more than passive individuals waiting for the departments at the whim of officials to pass public records to them. Archivists would have to move beyond their traditional bounds of historical acquisition into a more active place in the supervision of government records; they would have to become administrators as well as scholars.

While individuals such as Norton argued that archivists were custodians of peoples' rights and privileges, many others felt that they had to partake in the administration of records for an utterly practical reason: to handle the rapid increase of records created and used by the bureaucracy. Between 1889 and 1930, no fewer than ten executive and legislative efforts were launched to deal with the disposition of excess records, and the problem was only getting worse.<sup>66</sup> With the New Deal policies of

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<sup>63</sup>Mitchell, ed., Norton / on Archives, 251.

<sup>64</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>65</sup>*Ibid.*, 25-26. See also pp. 250-251.

<sup>66</sup>Emmett J. Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," American Archivist 3.1 (Jan. 1940): 28-29. This was originally a report of a committee of the Society of American Archivists chaired by Leahy.

Franklin D. Roosevelt and the expansion of government during the Second World War, a crisis seemed to be approaching. As Robert H. Bahmer commented,

Whoever was acquainted with the rate of records accumulation prior to the war was rightfully concerned lest the flood of records overwhelm everything and everybody in its path. Today this apprehension has become outright fear.<sup>67</sup>

The solution was not, however, easy to find:

Few greater dangers threaten the comparatively small quantity of valuable records that accumulate in government offices than the intermingling with them of huge quantities of routine and valueless material; if the important records are not actually lost in the confusion, they stand a good chance of being buried so deeply that the task of the archivist who must appraise and administer them is made doubly difficult if not impossible.<sup>68</sup>

For purely practical reasons, the archivist was therefore being compelled to administer active public records. But what was the nature of this new role for the National Archives?

Some indication of its future direction had been provided in 1939, with An Act to Provide for the Disposition of Certain Records of the United States Government.<sup>69</sup> This included a mandatory reporting mechanism by which the heads of the departments would report their non-active public records to the National Archivist, and it provided for the establishment of a joint committee of Congress to determine which records would be retained. The act was important, Emmett J. Leahy said, because it was "easily the most significant attempt by legislation to insure and safeguard the reduction of federal records."<sup>70</sup>

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<sup>67</sup>Robert H. Bahmer, "Current Aspects of Records Administration: Scheduling the Disposition of Records," American Archivist 6.3 (July 1943): 169.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>69</sup>United States, An Act to Provide for the Disposition of Certain Records of the United States Government, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 53 (1939).

<sup>70</sup>Emmett J. Leahy, "Reduction of Public Records," 29.

It was also symbolic of the more active participation of some archivists in the acquisition of active government records. This group was perhaps best represented by Philip Brooks. "The selection of records for preservation and the consequent choice of those to be disposed of are", he said, "the obverse and converse of the same problem and cannot properly be separated."<sup>71</sup> His opinion was that because there were now so many records, selection for disposition had to continue at all times. As a proponent of the life cycle concept, he argued that ideally the archivist should first become involved in the supervision of records when they ceased to be of use to the government officials.<sup>72</sup> Nonetheless, within the bounds of what an archivist could do according to this conflict, he recognized that archivists had a "valid interest" in records before they came into their custody, because the "archivist looks upon current records as future archives, and it is a legitimate part of his function to make available counsel on how they can best be handled."<sup>73</sup>

Brooks's approach therefore reflected the growing concern with active records acquisition. He decided that since it was the administrators who created and used the records, it was also they who were best equipped to decide what was "susceptible of becoming archival material" (in the traditional life cycle sense of what was to be transferred to archival institutions).<sup>74</sup> He also realized, however, that participation by the archivist as early as possible in the life of the record was most beneficial to their proper care. He felt that

... the earlier in the life history of the documents the selection process begins, the better for all concerned. And the earlier in that life history that co-operation between the agency of origin and the archivist can be established, the easier will be the work of all.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>71</sup>Philip Coolidge Brooks, "The Selection of Records for Preservation," American Archivist 3.4 (Oct. 1940): 221.

<sup>72</sup>*Ibid.*, 222.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 223.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 224.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 226.

In matters pertaining to active public records, Brooks appeared to envision a responsive advisory role for the archivist. In keeping with the life cycle concept, he did not indicate that the archivist should become involved in the supervision of active records so much as guide bureaucrats in the right directions of records administration.

The difficulty with having the archivist as only an adviser on records matters was that this disregarded the issue of who had wider authority to impose government-wide standards for records classification, control, and disposition. Merely to give advice is not to exercise authority or control, and Brooks, being an advocate of the life cycle, was limited by the constraints of a conceptualization which did not endorse archival jurisdiction over how records were to be created, processed, filed, and the like. Archivists, as opposed to those who were intended to administer active records, were restricted to matters in the active records sphere which directly bore on acquisition. There was no recognition of the exact responsibilities and roles the archivist should assume. At this time, the records management profession still had to emerge as an identifiable group. Thus, the real issue of how to exercise authority over the management of records was still being submerged in the discussion over what advisory role, if any, that the archivist should have in the acquisition of active records, and opinions on this varied. Some were unwilling to accept any participation at all by archival institutions in the early stages of the life cycle.<sup>76</sup> Some, in contrast, were resentful of any disposition decisions made by office managers without archival

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<sup>76</sup>Albert Ray Newsome, fore example, wanted to leave this sphere of work to the "education, legislation, and supervision" of bureaucrats, who would learn "to preserve such public records as are in the offices of origin." Though he concluded that "archival production, collection, preservation, and use are interrelated parts of an integral process which can not and should not be too rigidly compartmentalized", Newsome did not see archivists participating in the administration of current records. See his "The Archivist in American Scholarship," American Archivist 2.4 (Oct. 1939): 221, 223-224.

input.<sup>77</sup> Others believed that the archivist had at least some part in the administration of active records, if for reasons of acquisition only.<sup>78</sup>

The question of the archivist's participation in the active stages of the life cycle was at least partly resolved by the realities of the times. "The advent of World War II", Robert Krauskopf claimed,

redoubled the need for effective record management programs, as emergency agencies again began to proliferate and to create voluminous records, with no organized plan of disposition and no restraint upon quantity. In this difficult situation the National Archives abandoned the traditionally conservative and passive attitude of [public] archival institutions and plunged into the field of current administration. As the central agency with major responsibility for the welfare of Government records, it took the initiative in encouraging and collaborating with other agencies in the establishment of records administration programs.<sup>79</sup>

Even still, no one was exactly certain of how such endeavours should be worked within the structure of government. Archival participation in the field of active public records came about as a pragmatic response to a desperate situation. It was primarily in this context that the National Archives chose to act, and not because of a

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<sup>77</sup>Robert C. Binkley, for example, viewed the "office manager" as "a professional enemy" of the archivist (and archives) because he freely destroyed inactive records with no concern for their secondary values. In the interests of preserving archival documents, Binkley felt that archival institutions had to work with office managers by giving them advice on the "careful distinction between the destroyable and preservable records." See his "Strategic Objectives in Archival Policy," American Archivist 2.3 (July 1939): 164-165.

<sup>78</sup>Ernst Posner claimed that it was only proper that the archival institutions which would one day receive the records should have "the right to give their advice as to how the files of government offices should be organized and kept from the beginning so as to insure a satisfactory original arrangement that will also be suitable for retention by archives agencies." Posner, therefore, saw the archivist as part records administrator, and part records trustee: "We may assume that gradually the archivists will become the nations' experts who must be consulted in all questions of public record making and record keeping and likewise become the trustees who will safeguard the written monuments of the past, of the present day, and of the future." See his "Archival Development Since the French Revolution," 172.

<sup>79</sup>Robert W. Krauskopf, "The Hoover Commissions and Federal Recordkeeping," American Archivist 21.4 (Oct. 1958): 372-373.

fundamental shift from long-held conceptualizations. Struggling to discover their proper role, archivists were responding to situational stimuli, not theoretical tenets.

The most significant example of this trend can be seen in one of the programs which emerged during this period. In 1941, an acute need for space in the Department of the Navy led to the creation of the United States' first records centre by Leahy and Robert Bahmer.<sup>80</sup> These "depositories", said the American Archivist, "will serve as intermediate steps in the process of transfer [to the National Archives], offering facilities for the segregation of useless and ephemeral material from records collections." Importantly, both current and noncurrent records would be managed according to "accepted archival principles."<sup>81</sup> These records centres' impact on future American archival practices cannot be underestimated. "It is fair to say", said the archivist Herbert Angel in 1968,

that a large proportion of the Federal, State, municipal, corporate, and commercial records centers in this country evolved from the Army and Navy records centers of World War II and that many of those responsible for the present-day records centers either had experience in the early centers or were trained by others who did have such experience.<sup>82</sup>

The importance of these records centres was at the time noted. In various articles, emphasis was placed on the proper administration of public records, whether they were in archival institutions or still active. For example, the records administrator Willard F. McCormick emphasized the necessity for controlling public records during the process of their creation, partly by "eliminating nonessential paper work once it

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<sup>80</sup>Herbert E. Angel, "Archival Janus: The Records Center," A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice, ed. Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch (Washington, D.C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1984), and reprinted from the American Archivist 31 [Jan. 1968]: 5-12) 47.

<sup>81</sup>Karl L. Trever, ed., "News Notes: Naval Records Depositories," American Archivist 5.3 (July 1942): 200-201.

<sup>82</sup>Angel, "Archival Janus," 48.

gets into the work flow." In comparison, Leahy voiced his concerns about the "majority of paperwork and records [which] are by-products of inefficient performance of essential functions or unessential duplication or overlapping of functions."<sup>83</sup> Both of these individuals saw that public records were often the product of inefficient processes, unnecessary duplication, or other poor records practices which were having obvious consequences for management, both in the short and long term.

Distinctions, however, were maintained between those should administer active public records and those who should care for them in the archival institution. Brooks, for example, realized that the functions of records manager and archivist were deeply interrelated, but as before maintained that archivists had responsibilities separate from those who dealt with the administration of active public records. He felt that archivists were mutual participants with records managers only at the point in the life cycle where active records were acquired for the archives.<sup>84</sup> Thus, current records could best be served by a records officer with "adequate authority and staff", and not by the archivist.<sup>85</sup>

Amongst the writers of his era, Brooks was one who comprehended the complexity the relationships between the various stages of the life of a record.

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<sup>83</sup>See Willard F. McCormick, "Current Aspects of Records Administration: The Control of Records," American Archivist 6.3 (July 1943): 166, and Emmett J. Leahy, "The Navy's 'Record' in the Second World War," American Archivist 8.4 (Oct. 1945): 237. This new concern with active public records was noted by Philip Brooks: "In the ... back issues of The American Archivist, I have found no less than eight articles in which some responsibility of the archivist for records before they reach his custody is recognized .... There is a consistent note throughout these documents -- a desire to develop in public officials a knowledge of good record-keeping methods and an appreciation of the value of records." See Philip C. Brooks, "Current Aspects of Records Administration: The Archivist's Concern in Records Administration," American Archivist 6.3 (July 1943): 158-159.

<sup>84</sup>Brooks, "The Archivist's Concern in Records Administration," 162.

<sup>85</sup>*ibid.*

Surprisingly, he even stated that "the whole life history of records is an integrated continuous entity", and that the functions of those responsible for various stages of the existence of the records could not be viewed or conceptualized in isolation.<sup>86</sup> Though he may have conceived of the essence of what would later become Atherton's concept, he never made the intellectual connection which placed archivists and those other individuals who watched over those records within the appropriate theoretical perspective. It seems that Brooks could see the importance of such ideas, but was either unwilling or unable to set out a practical scheme on that basis.

It was therefore only in the acquisition aspect that archivists were drawn into earlier phases in the management of records, which was left mainly to "efficiency experts" such as Leahy. With such large amounts of records, material suitable for permanent retention had to be selected while still active. To leave records to be picked over after the government departments had finished with them was impractical. Nonetheless, because there was no overarching concept of service, such as that envisioned by Atherton, the two emerging groups of records managers and archivists were unable to escape from a mind-set which saw them serving different needs, one of office efficiency, the other of posterity. The outcome was the gradual separation of records managers from archivists. By 1941, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) had already officially recognized records management as a "professional activity of government archivists" when it renamed its Committee on the Reduction of Archival Material, chaired by Leahy, the Committee of Record Administration.<sup>87</sup> During the war, the formulation by the American National Archives of a records administration program, including records centres, created the impetus necessary for the eventual

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<sup>86</sup>*Ibid.*, 164.

<sup>87</sup>Frank B. Evans, "Archivists and Records Managers: Variations on a Theme," American Archivist 30.1 (Jan. 1967): 45.

emergence of the records management profession.<sup>88</sup> But this would not occur immediately. At this time, records staff could still be seen as clerks who, led by individuals such as Leahy, were struggling to tame the "paper tiger." Since few of these individuals had training in records administration, they were hardly able to excel beyond attempting to remedy the ineffectiveness and inefficiency which Leahy had so adeptly targeted.<sup>89</sup>

Nonetheless, each group became entrenched in their functions, as dictated by the life cycle concept. "Records managers" came to specialize in a distinct sphere of work with the records -- the active / current phase -- and left the "historical" sphere for the archivist. Moreover, since the Archives was "rarely able to serve beyond being the consultant at large and the promoter par excellence", it was unable to control how records management would develop; in other words, it was powerless to "direct what

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<sup>88</sup>As a result of its new responsibilities, the National Archives created a records administration program in 1943 "to assist in developing throughout the Government principles and practices in the filing, selection, and segregation of records that will facilitate the disposal of or the transfer to the National Archives of records as they become noncurrent." See Brooks, "The Archivist's Concern in Records Administration," 169. Herbert Angel, an archivist, foresaw a time when the naval records depositories could eventually perform "correspondence management, current records management, noncurrent records management, administrative reference service and the controlled issuance of directives, and microphotographic service." See Herbert E. Angel, "Highlights of the Field Records Program of the Navy Department," American Archivist 7.3 (July 1944): 180.

<sup>89</sup>In 1957, Ernst Posner claimed that although "we may be proud of our progress and of our achievements ... in the matter of standards and training, much thinking and work remain to be done." Likewise, in the early 1970's, Frank B. Evans and Robert M. Warner conducted a survey of American archivists, and found that their "record of professional education and training leaves much to be desired." In fact, Evans and Warner found that although the Federal Government and others did provide training programs, the general standard of education was such that "it should be obvious that much remains to be done in the matter of education and training and the solution is not simply a proliferation of introductory courses." See Ernst Posner, "What, Then, Is the American Archivist, This New Man?" American Archivist 20.1 (January 1957): 10, and Frank B. Evans and Robert M. Warner, "American Archivists and Their Society: A Composite View," American Archivist 34.2 (April 1971): 169, 172.

it had set in motion."<sup>90</sup> Soon, records management would drift beyond the National Archives' paternal supervision. Any opportunities for a unified approach to the administration of records would soon disappear.

In fact, a new emphasis on defining a relationship between the two groups soon emerged. With official recognition of records management in 1941, it became necessary to iterate the archivist's responsibilities in the administration of active public records. Solon J. Buck was one person who brought the issue to the fore. Buck, who was National Archivist, was a well known supporter of initiatives to improve federal government management, and often endeavoured to forward his cause.<sup>91</sup> He dismissed those who equated "archives" with "historical manuscripts", or who thought that "archives are preserved solely for use by historians as source materials." In his view, "archival documents may be old or very recent, current or noncurrent from the point of view of administration, active or inactive from the point of view of use ...." Thus, he contended that it was only logical that the National Archives participate not only in developing procedures for the disposal of records but also by starting to look at "birth control in record making."<sup>92</sup>

Buck was not the only one to articulate this view. Brooks noted in 1942 that records management and archives "cannot help affecting each other, and they can work together to mutual advantage." Because of this, he argued that it was important to "emphasize the closeness of the two functions and the need for cooperation."<sup>93</sup> In this comment, Brooks may have inadvertently discovered the root of the matter. The

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<sup>90</sup>McCoy, National Archives, 162.

<sup>91</sup>*Ibid.*, 195.

<sup>92</sup>Solon J. Buck, "Let's Look at the Record," American Archivist 8.2 (April 1945): 110-112, 114. See also Ernst Posner, "Solon Justus Buck and the National Archives," Archives and the Public Interest: Selected Essays by Ernst Posner, ed. Ken Munden (Washington, D. C.: Public Affairs Press, 1967).

<sup>93</sup>Brooks, "The Archivist's Concern in Records Administration," 161 and 163.

continuum's one sphere of functional activity, managing the records, is divided into phases. Here, Brooks simply perceived the two phases to be working in isolation, with the people in each phase seeing themselves as operating in completely different ways, and for different purposes.

Brooks would take the idea of archival participation in public records creation through giving advice to the departments, and make it one of his central themes. He had grasped that the

... management of records in agencies would most often be carried out according to their definition of a good program instead of that of the National Archives. The important thing ... was to get records administration programs going, "hammer the main principles," give more "concrete advice" on what constituted a good overall program, and "try to reconcile the differences" in approaches.<sup>94</sup>

As the years progressed, Brooks's opinions would become more developed. "Because of their special interests and qualifications," he later said, archivists could give "guidance" to administrators "with respect to methods of creation and current handling of records." In fact, he candidly stated that the National Archives was already assuming tasks which would not "meet the more strict definition of archival work", and that the National Archives (records administration) program constituted "an integral part of our broader [professional] field."<sup>95</sup>

Attitudes about the archivist's role in the administration of records were therefore still evolving. The war was in many ways both good and bad for these

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<sup>94</sup>McCoy, National Archives, 159-160.

<sup>95</sup>Philip Coolidge Brooks, "Archivists and Their Colleagues: Common Denominators," American Archivist 14.1 (Jan. 1951): 37-38. Other individuals were having similar sentiments. Ernst Posner, for example, praised the courage of the archivists who in 1941 established records centres, thereby moving beyond their traditional roles. He said of the changes that the "magnitude of the job are bound to amaze the old line archivist." See Ernst Posner, "The National Archives and the Archival Theorist," American Archivist 18.3 (July 1955): 209-210.

records administration programs. On the one hand, it illuminated the need for the regulated control, classification, and disposition of all government records. On the other hand, it accelerated and magnified the professional differences of those who administered active records and those who managed inactive ones. Most of all, it left questions which had not been satisfactorily answered: could archivists be happy with participating in the management of active records only insofar as it affected their institutions' acquisition strategy? Should archivists be giving advice beyond the bounds of this limited realm? Most importantly, as Brooks had hinted at, what was the nature of the records program that everyone was attempting to administer? In other words, how could archivists only restrict their activities to the inactive stages of the life cycle concept when there were indications that what was needed was a more comprehensive approach to the administration of records?

It is clear that the national archival institutions of both Canada and the United States had therefore undergone significant changes. The future development of both institutions would, to a large degree, depend on how they had been affected by the demands and disruptions of World War II. The National Archives of the United States, which would emerge from the war with new responsibilities, had fostered the growth of what would be in future years an identifiable, strong, and autonomous profession of records managers. Though strained by the war, its prospects were encouraging. On the other hand, the demands of war had left Canada's Public Archives in a relatively weaker position, and thus at first it would approach its problems from what seemed to be a weaker vantage point.

The next chapter will examine how the situations of both institutions would affect how each one would identify their roles they renewed their efforts to tame the "paper tiger." As shall be seen, a combination of committees, task forces, legislative initiatives, executive orders, and institutional restructuring would all have an effect on

the approaches Canada's and the United States' records professions would take in the administration of public records.

CHAPTER TWO:  
The Post War Relationship Between North American  
Records Managers and Archivists

The previous chapter explored how unprecedented records proliferation had led to the development of a practical relationship between those who oversaw active records and those who were responsible for inactive ones. This relationship was neither a comfortable one, nor was it completely understood or accepted. In fact, after the Second World War, it became clear that the endeavours of various public archival institutions to cope with the monumental amounts of records would not be easy, and would be characterized by debate over what the respective roles of those who dealt with the records at different stages of the records' existence should be.

The issue now to be determined was who should perform which functions at different life cycle phases of the records' existence. Some archivists were convinced that their institutions had no business dealing with active records, and some records managers perceived archivists' attempts to invade the active records sphere as a threat. In contrast, others were inclined to argue (to varying degrees) that it was only natural for archivists to become involved with government records while they were not only still active, and sometimes even before they were created. It was this issue, and the attempts to resolve it, which would be a major facet of developments in records administration for many decades to come.

In Canada, the matter came to the fore largely because of the semi-active records issue. After the war, the Public Archives was in dire need of government support in this area. Without semi-active records storage facilities, the Archives was unable to make any further advances in government records administration.<sup>96</sup> This was one

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<sup>96</sup>See Halliday, "Recent Developments in Control and Management," 105; Stacey, "Canadian Archives," 242; and Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 52.

concern of the new Dominion Archivist, W. Kaye Lamb, who shortly after assuming his appointment in 1949, was consulted by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences (the Massey Commission). Though at first Kaye Lamb was opposed to records centres as had already been proposed by the Public Archives staff, he came to believe that the main obstacle for the Archives was the shortage of adequate semi-active records storage space.<sup>97</sup> He therefore proposed to the Commission "the construction of a large half-way house for departmental files, *controlled and staffed by the Public Archives ....*"<sup>98</sup>

In its investigation of public records, the Massey Commission contended that the work of the 1912 Royal Commission had been "almost if not altogether in vain." Though it acknowledged that the Order in Council of 1945 had been a move in the right direction for dealing with the backlog of active records, it charged that

thirty-six years after the blunt comments of the Royal Commission on the Public Records, fifty-two years after it was decided to maintain our public records in one central place under the custody of the Dominion Archivist, and seventy-eight years after Parliament first noted "the unsatisfactory state of the Archives", the truth about Canada's public records system must still be a cause of embarrassment to all Canadians.<sup>99</sup>

Critical of the indefinite retention of records by government departments and of the inadequate funding for the Public Archives, the report contended that public records difficulties could not be addressed until the Archives had the space and staff it required to handle the volume of records.<sup>100</sup>

The historian C. P. Stacey advocated a different approach. In a study for the Royal Commission, he argued that the "crux of the problem" was that there was no

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<sup>97</sup>Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 53.

<sup>98</sup>As quoted in Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 54. Also quoted in Stacey, "Canadian Archives," 244. Emphasis added.

<sup>99</sup>Canada, Report of the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences: 1949 - 1951 (Ottawa: Edmond Cloutier, 1951) 113.

<sup>100</sup>*Ibid.*, 113-114.

mechanism for the systematic transfer of records to the Public Archives.<sup>101</sup> Rather than create a public records office separate from the Archives to achieve this, however, he felt it was only necessary to strengthen the existing capabilities of the Public Archives. Citing the 1912 Royal Commission, he stated that a sound public records policy

... must do two difficult things: it must ensure that records of no permanent value are not preserved after their temporary usefulness is past; and (even more important) it must ensure that records which do possess permanent value are preserved and are kept available for governmental purposes and for the use of historians.<sup>102</sup>

As a historian, Stacey naturally seized on the question of acquisition to ensure the accessibility of records for secondary, scholarly purposes. He denounced records centres because they were costly and their holdings inaccessible to historians. What was needed, he said, was "a plan which will provide for and enforce the constant and systematic screening of the obsolete records of government."<sup>103</sup> Unfortunately, he did not give details of the plan, only of its objectives.

In the end, the Massey Commission recommended that the Public Records Committee be strengthened to support traditional archival functions, and that it have overall control of government records, their transfer to the archives, and their destruction. It also suggested that the departments review their semi-active records and keep abreast of current ones, and that provisions be made for more space and staff for these records at the Public Archives.<sup>104</sup> As to who was to make disposition decisions regarding the records, Atherton claimed that the Commission saw only a minor role for archivists, since it was suggested that

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<sup>101</sup>Stacey, "Canadian Archives," 234.

<sup>102</sup>*Ibid.*, 239.

<sup>103</sup>*Ibid.*, 248.

<sup>104</sup>Canada, Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 337-340.

... decisions on the retention or disposal of public records should be made while the records were still in the departments [by a qualified records officer], with records of historical value [as according to the parameters set by the Public Records Committee] being transferred to the archives. This was very similar to British practice; initiative for transfer lay with the departments, not the Archives.<sup>105</sup>

The Massey Commission therefore did not advocate the American practice of archivists directly making decisions regarding records disposition while the records were in records centres, but rather supported a system where such decisions would be left to the departments.<sup>106</sup>

In contrast, Kaye Lamb supported the American model. He claimed that archivists were better administrators of records centres than departmental bureaucrats, who in the 1930's had failed to run a records centre which was cost-effective and reliable. By 1950, he managed to convince the Treasury Board of this, and in 1956, a records centre, under the control of the Dominion Archivist, was opened at Tunney's Pasture in Ottawa. This would be the first of many records centres which would later be established across the country.<sup>107</sup>

For Canadian public records administration, this was a banner event. The departments would use the records centres, controlled by the Public Archives, for semi-active storage, reference, and disposition. Kaye Lamb's insistence that the Public Archives take an active part in the running of the records centres created the impetus necessary to assume this function from the departments. What was still required was some clearer definition of the role of the archivist in both scheduling and records

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<sup>105</sup>Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 55.

<sup>106</sup>Recommendation "E" was "That every department appoint a properly qualified records officer to supervise, within the scope of such regulations as may be issued by the Public Records Committee, the care of its departmental records, and the screening of inactive files and the transfer to the Archives of those of permanent value." See Canada, Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, 337.

<sup>107</sup>Atherton, "Public Archives Records Centre," 55-57.

creation. This was soon to come. In 1959, the Royal Commission on Government Organization (the Glassco Commission) acknowledged the importance of participation of both archivists and records managers, but perceived their roles to be separate as according to the phases in the life cycle:

The disposal and custody of public records should be securely founded on clearly formulated programs for records scheduling and records disposal. Records scheduling, which provides for the flow of records from origin to final disposition, is a proper function of departmental management; appraisal of records is a task for the archivist. Between these separate but closely related functions, there is the intermediate task of records storage.<sup>108</sup>

Though records management and archives were to remain as two solitudes, Glassco recognized that the Public Archives had to be able to give advice on public records policies, as set by the Treasury Board. The "process of final disposal", the report said, was "essentially an archival and not a managerial responsibility, and has to be effectual at all points in the process." This included the right of the Archives to scrutinize departmental schedules, with the right of final decisions regarding records disposition.<sup>109</sup>

Following the Glassco Commission, Cabinet passed the Public Records Order of 1966, which provided the Public Archives with new responsibilities and enhanced authority. Government departments and agencies (in theory, if not always successfully in practice,) had to set and implement records retention and disposition schedules approved by the Dominion Archivist, and they had to have permission of the Archivist to destroy records.<sup>110</sup> Every department also had to appoint a "records coordinator" with a thorough knowledge of records management.<sup>111</sup> As well, the

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<sup>108</sup>Canada, 1959 Royal Commission on Government Organization: Management of the Public Service, vol. 1, (Ottawa: Roger Duhamel, 1962) 562.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 571.

<sup>110</sup>Canada, Public Records Order P.C. 1966 - 1749, s. 8(1)(b) and (c).

<sup>111</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 8(1)(a).

Public Records Committee was replaced with an Advisory Council on Public Records, which, as its name implies, had the ability to "consider and make recommendations to the Dominion Archivist concerning all matters respecting public records referred to it by any member of the Council or the Treasury Board."<sup>112</sup>

But this did not mean there was a revolutionary shift in attitudes in the administration of records. The main thrust of the Order was to improve the economy and efficiency of government records-keeping practices in order to safeguard important public records from accidental destruction, for future reference, and from deterioration or destructive agents. Microfilming in particular was thought to be a method by which this concept might be advanced.<sup>113</sup> Additionally, the Treasury Board categorically retained its right to set records management policies and procedures for the public service.<sup>114</sup> This meant that although the Dominion Archivist had received some authority over records disposition, it was granted only at the pleasure of the Treasury Board, and could at any time be removed by it.

Nonetheless, although the Dominion Archivist did not have the wider authority which would eventually be granted by the National Archives Act of 1987, the Order did grant some control over disposition to the Public Archives. The Dominion Archivist now assumed an administrative role which, for the first time, had been enshrined in the administrative law of the Canadian government. Now, the Public Archives had a hand not only in acquiring records for preservation, but also in determining the disposition of the active records of government. The overall control of public records administration had been placed in the hands of the Archivist; his scope of responsibilities and activities had expanded to the field of active records.

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<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 9(5).

<sup>113</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 4(c)(i),(ii),(iii), and (iv).

<sup>114</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 3.

Almost one century after the Archives had been established, some recognition of a need for a unified approach amongst all records administrators had come to Canada.

The United States also experienced change after World War II. As in Canada, the end of this conflict resulted in renewed initiatives to handle the public records plethora.<sup>115</sup> Buck, who as the National Archivist was a well-known advocate of records management, soon became alarmed at the government's rapid records generation practices. This was of special concern to him because he realized that the National Archives would soon be unable to accommodate the government's needs. Though initially he attempted to solve the problem by fighting for additional records centres, eventually he had to accept the political compromise of less storage space in order to retain centralized control over his expanding institution.<sup>116</sup>

Despite this problem, the Truman Administration had been impressed by the necessity for the effective administration of active public records, and in 1946 the President signed Executive Order 9784. This order aimed at the "more efficient internal management of the Government" by ensuring that public records were "utilized to maximum advantage and disposed of expeditiously when no longer needed."<sup>117</sup> While it would only be a stop-gap measure for a serious problem, "it was the most effective thing done to encourage federal records management until

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<sup>115</sup>This was occurring at state as well as federal levels. For example, Margaret Cross Norton, who worked for the Illinois State Archives, stated in 1945 that "Somehow departments must get control over the records of state government which cannot function effectively without them." (See Mitchell, ed., Norton / on Archives, 132.)

<sup>116</sup>McCoy, National Archives, 194-195.

<sup>117</sup>United States, Truman Executive Order No. 9784: Providing for the More Efficient Use and for the Transfer and Other Disposition of Government Records, United States Code Congressional Service, 79th Congress, 2nd Session (1946).

additional steps were taken during the 1950's."<sup>118</sup> Most significantly, records administration problems were being recognized at the highest levels of government.

In a manner similar to Canada's Order in Council P.C. 6175, Executive Order 9784 assigned responsibility for the management and disposition of active records to the heads of the departments. Unlike P.C. 6175, it placed the most important decisions for the supervision and disposition of public records not with a National Archives Council or the National Archivist, but with someone who by nature of his appointment had little interest in the cultural, historical, or administrative needs of the records: the Director of Bureau of Budget. This was the beginning of a trend in the United States where the proper administration of active records was equated with economic efficiency, where the main objective was to limit records production and promote the expeditious destruction of valueless records. The American tradition of the strong division between those who were to economize the administration of active records and those who were intended to be responsible for the historical and cultural aspects of inactive records was entrenched.<sup>119</sup> While the National Archives Council influenced the laws and regulations governing the management of active records, it had no authority to manage the process and be accountable for it.

Subsequent events would reinforce these deepening divisions. Shortly after Truman issued his executive order, a commission was established to examine government operations as a whole. The so-called Hoover Commission, whose mandate was to explore avenues for limiting government expansion while maintaining proficient service, created a task force led by Leahy to examine the government's public records administration strategies. Leahy's job was to find out who was responsible for public records management, and what obligations were to be placed with the staff of

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<sup>118</sup>McCoy, National Archives, 196.

<sup>119</sup>Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 373.

the departments and agencies. In April, 1948, he therefore set out to explore the records administration issue.<sup>120</sup>

Leahy was preoccupied with what he perceived as the hazards of the "mass production of records." He therefore stressed that management specialists were required to achieve economic efficiency:

The traditional solution of records depositories, whether public archives, business and institutional records centers, or historical societies, no longer in themselves suffice. The financial means and physical capacity of such depositories are hopelessly inadequate as a single device to cope with the volume of modern records. The solution of modern problems in records management must therefore be in and by the operating agencies of management.<sup>121</sup>

This is not to say that Leahy did not see a place for archivists in the administration of active records, for he did.<sup>122</sup> However, while Atherton would advocate the competent supervision of government records as a service to users, Leahy emphasized the "economical management of modern records."<sup>123</sup> It was this orientation which is seen in his report for the Hoover Commission.

On a superficial level, the Leahy Report contained recommendations similar to those of the Canadian Royal Commission of 1912. Both called for the better administration and care of records, as well as for improved mechanisms for the records' proper disposition. There was, however, one outstanding difference. Halliday observed that the Canadian

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<sup>120</sup>Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 374-377, gives an excellent summary of the events leading up to the First Hoover Commission.

<sup>121</sup>Emmett J. Leahy, "Modern Records Management," American Archivist 12.3 (July 1949): 232.

<sup>122</sup>For example, he claimed that "... if the counsel of the professional archivist and historian are not injected into (records centers') management there is no insurance that the essential core of records will be preserved . . ." See Leahy, "Modern Records Management," 235.

<sup>123</sup>*Ibid.*, 234.

... Royal Commission contemplated enlargement of the Archives to include public records administration, whilst the (Leahy) Task Force recommended the formation of a records administration program of which the Archives would be a part.<sup>124</sup>

In fact, the Task Force's most significant suggestion was that a Federal Records Administration, which included the National Archives, should be created to provide a centralized and streamlined structure for the administration of records.<sup>125</sup> This decision was not made for theoretical reasons. Instead, it was thought that better efficiency could be achieved by a management body which dealt with the general administrative concerns of the bulk of public records. The National Archives, which was *supposedly* only concerned with particular historical functions, was therefore not suited for this function.<sup>126</sup> Archivists were seen as an entity apart from active public records, existing in a solitude only suitable for non-active, historical material.

The Leahy Report, which had repercussions for both federal records management and public archival institutions, was not without its detractors. Because

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<sup>124</sup>Halliday, "Recent Developments in Control and Management," 104.

<sup>125</sup>Task Force of the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of Government, Records Management in the United States Government: A Report with Recommendations (Washington, D.C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1948) 7. In the report, the three main suggestions were summarized, and then addressed in detail. The Task Force's two other recommendations dealt with records management. One of these was that Congress should pass a "Federal Records Management Act of 1949", which would deal with the creation, use, administration, and disposition of records. The Task Force felt that along with the creation of a Federal Records Council, this was necessary to strengthen the ability of the the Federal Records Administration to carry out the management of records (see pp. 27-28). To help with this, the last recommendation was that in compliance with E. O. 9784, each department should be obligated by law to carry out a minimum requirement of records management responsibilities. Specifically, each department should have to appoint a qualified records officer to oversee the records management program. The Task Force argued that a qualified records officer with the competence to carry out an administrative mandate was essential to creating the proper environment for a well-coordinated and successful records program (see pp. 31-32).

<sup>126</sup>Task Force of the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of Government, Records Management in the United States Government, 24.

it concentrated on money-saving contingencies rather than on specific issues related to the control of records creation, content, classification, and quality, it received heavy criticism.<sup>127</sup> Its emphasis on the managerial rather than archival point of view caused concern with the staff of the National Archives, many of whom wanted their institution to assume a wider variety of records management functions.<sup>128</sup> Nonetheless, following the lead provided for it by the Leahy Report, the Hoover Commission stressed the formidable costs of records administration.<sup>129</sup> There was neither meaningful discussion of the value of the information in the records, nor of the historical or legal implications of their management. Instead, the Hoover Commission Report based its discussions on the "housekeeping" aspect of managing records, recommending that both archives and records management functions be placed in a single new agency responsible for internal management services.<sup>130</sup>

Following the passage of the Federal Property and Administrative Act of 1949, the National Archives ceased to exist as an independent agency. Instead, it became the National Archives and Records Service (NARS), a branch of the General Services Administration (GSA). NARS's responsibilities were defined in the Federal Records Act of 1950, which, superseding the National Archives Act of 1934, was the first federal statute to define records management comprehensively. Setting out records

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<sup>127</sup>Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 380. See, for example, Martin P. Claussen, who maligned the report's heavy money-saving emphasis, and claimed that the more serious problems needing attention were "the quality of modern records, the quality of records personnel, and the need for what might be called better 'quality controls' for the improvement of record making and record-keeping." Martin P. Claussen, "Review of Records Management in the United States Government, A Report with Recommendations," American Archivist 12.3 (July 1949): 287.

<sup>128</sup>Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 382.

<sup>129</sup>Herbert Hoover, *et al.*, Hoover Commission Report on the Organization of the Executive Branch of Government (Toronto: McGraw-Hill, n.d.) 78-80.

<sup>130</sup>*Ibid.*, 80.

management responsibilities for both the General Services Administrator and department or agency heads,<sup>131</sup> the new act

charged the Administrator with responsibility for improving standards, procedures, and techniques with respect to the creation of records; the organization, maintenance, and use of current records; and the disposition of records when no longer needed for current operations. He was also specifically authorized to establish and operate records centers.<sup>132</sup>

It is indeed ironic that the act which effectively ended the National Archives' ability to function autonomously was also the one which *appeared* to be most progressive in terms of records administration. For the first time, records management was officially recognized in government legislation. Both records managerial and archival responsibilities were officially placed under one individual, who could provide for the effective access and control of information.

The problem was that these responsibilities were not lodged with the National Archivist. Instead, they were given to the Administrator of the GSA, whose concerns for economy and efficiency would mean that the objective of managing records to ensure their use as tools of public accountability and cultural continuity would take a back seat. In the event, the link between current and semi-active management and archival or historical management was severely weakened. Indeed, no one seems to have articulated an overarching theory to draw them together. Thereafter, it became a challenge to have the two solitudes cooperate.

Although archival responsibilities would be designated by the Administrator to the National Archivist, there was always the chance that the Administrator, by the nature of his mandate, could have very different views from the Archivist about how

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<sup>131</sup>United States, Federal Records Act of 1950, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 64 (1950-1951) s. 505 and s. 506.

<sup>132</sup>Herbert E. Angel, "Federal Records Management Since the Hoover Commission Report," American Archivist 16.1 (Jan. 1953): 14.

public records should be managed.<sup>133</sup> This was the very concern which was expressed by Oliver Holmes. He acknowledged that at some level, every professional does become junior to a non-professional superior. What was important, he argued, was that archivists had to be granted the authority necessary to carry out their duties.<sup>134</sup> Thus, he advocated allocating records management responsibilities to the National Archivist, for he felt that this individual was best equipped to make decisions regarding records. This was because the National Archivist was the one with "closer contacts with both programs" and thus "more likely to see them in perspective."<sup>135</sup> Speaking of the relationship between records management and archives, Holmes wrote:

There can be no half and half business about this. Records management must be included in this unified program. It has made progress only as it was led by a professional group and dominated by the professional spirit. Records management in the agencies and in the intermediate records centers must be coordinated and harmonized with the work in the National Archives -- must be a professionally controlled activity throughout the life history of the records.<sup>136</sup>

Holmes understood that the loss of an independent approach to administering records would be detrimental, for it could lead to decisions being made by those who had little comprehension of the nature and values of records.

Other people were more supportive of the changes. Wayne Grover, the United States' new National Archivist, believed that the close relationship which had evolved between archives and active records administration during the war ran contrary to the traditional definitions of the archival role as portrayed in the life cycle model.<sup>137</sup> At an

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<sup>133</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>134</sup>Oliver W. Holmes, "The National Archives at the Turn of the Road," American Archivist 12.4 (Oct. 1949): 350-351.

<sup>135</sup>*Ibid.*, 351.

<sup>136</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>137</sup>See also Irving P. Schiller, who had earlier suggested that gaining effective control of records creating activities was too "heavy a price paid for an immediate tangible advantage." The "cost", he believed, would be "the

annual meeting of the SAA, he claimed that the approach which had developed during the wartime period was no more than a stop-gap measure which, with the establishment of NARS and the Federal Records Act of 1950, should be discontinued:

During the war ... our best talents within the National Archives were diverted to carrying the gospel of good records management to other agencies of the Government. The establishment of within the National Archives and Records Service of a Records Management Divisions, together with the passage of the Federal Records Act of 1950 ... will relieve archivists in the National Archives itself of much of this burden.<sup>138</sup>

For Grover, the issue had to do with control and specialization (according to the life cycle model). Although he saw that the two groups were linked in that together they had an "interest in improving the quality and decreasing the quantity of an organization's records," he nonetheless felt that each was sufficiently specialized as to concentrate on different aspects of records administration.<sup>139</sup> He said it was a "problem, in the Federal Government, of organization and emphasis in a large part, although in some part also a matter of function."<sup>140</sup> Grover believed that the archivist had to have an academic background, especially in history and the social sciences. On the other hand, the active records administrator was essentially supposed to be part of

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abandonment of the tradition of scholarship and research, desertion of historiography, and renunciation of a broad intellectual comprehension of the records, particularly an understanding of how they relate to the world of reality beyond the walls of the repository ...." Schiller suggested that unless archival institutions were willing to strike a balance between records administration and traditional archival work, there would come a time when archivists would be unceremoniously replaced by office clerks. See Irving P. Schiller, "The Archival Profession in Eclipse," American Archivist 11.3 (July 1948): 229-233.

<sup>138</sup>Wayne C. Grover, "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," American Archivist 14.1 (Jan. 1951): 11.

<sup>139</sup>See Wayne C. Grover, "Archives: Society and Profession," American Archivist 18.1 (Jan. 1955): 5, and Grover, "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," 8.

<sup>140</sup>Grover, "Recent Developments in Federal Archival Activities," 7.

the "management team," and thus a management outlook and management skills were essential for the "records management specialist."<sup>141</sup>

While this debate was being conducted, the multiplication of records continued. With the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, bureaucracy, and records along with it, was burgeoning once again.<sup>142</sup> In 1953, Congress therefore formed a Second Hoover Commission, which had the power of asking not only "*how well* a governmental function was being performed, but *whether it should* be performed."<sup>143</sup> Regarding public records, the Commission was to "measure the costs and dimensions of paperwork activity in general, to identify the areas of potential savings, and to suggest organizational changes as may be necessary to improve paperwork management and remove red tape."<sup>144</sup> Significantly, the area of study would be *paperwork* and not records management, because the term "paperwork" was considered to embrace a broader spectrum than the records storage and disposal themes of "records management."<sup>145</sup>

The subsequent Task Force on Paperwork Management was chaired once again by Leahy.<sup>146</sup> As in the past, Leahy's concern with the vast costs of public records creation was evident. "Paperwork in the Government", Leahy's report said, "is big

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<sup>141</sup>*Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>142</sup>Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 386-388.

<sup>143</sup>*Ibid.*, 388. Emphasis was in the text.

<sup>144</sup>Neil MacNeil and Harold W. Metz, The Hoover Report of 1953-1955: What it Means to You as Citizen and Taxpayer (New York: MacMillan Company, 1956) 82-83.

<sup>145</sup>See Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 389, and the Task Force on Paperwork Management for the Commission on the Organization of the Executive Branch of Government, Report on Paperwork Management -- Part I: In the United States Government (Washington, D.C., 1955) 11-12.

<sup>146</sup>The Task Force studied two main areas. The first one, of which is concern here, dealt with how the government managed its paperwork; the second dealt with the paperwork incurred by business and government as a result of government regulations and requirements. The second area shall not be discussed in any detail.

business .... Now for the first time taxpayers have a measure of the billions spent on paperwork and obtainable savings."<sup>147</sup> Thus, it was recommended that a Paperwork Management Service, with a complementing Paperwork Management Program, be established in the GSA, because this present NARS responsibility was hampered by the bureaucratically perceived "narrow connotation" of that body.<sup>148</sup>

The Second Hoover Commission did not accept all of the Task Force's recommendations. It suggested that the President write an executive order establishing a paperwork management program, with the GSA having responsibility over all areas of paperwork management. Subsequently, the Bureau of Budget decided that an executive order was not necessary, although the GSA did get additional funds for paperwork management and records centres.<sup>149</sup> The Second Hoover Commission also advised that paperwork as it existed in NARS should be consolidated in a new organization; as a result, the Office of Records Management was formed as part of NARS in 1956.<sup>150</sup>

Thus, the Second Hoover Commission expanded on and continued the work begun by the first one.<sup>151</sup> Both commissions were essentially concerned with economic efficiency, and ignored the Archives' larger role as a cultural agency. Leahy's emphasis on economic management rather than on the needs of competent records control led him to suggest using untrained people in areas previously staffed by archivists. At a later time, the prudence of this decision was questioned. For example, with records centres, many thought the use of untrained staff was unwise because

records management and archival functions are integral and inseparable. The great national system of Federal Records Centers

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<sup>147</sup>Task Force on Paperwork Management, Report -- Part I, 49.

<sup>148</sup>*Ibid.*, 49-51.

<sup>149</sup>Krauskopf, "Hoover Commissions," 392-393.

<sup>150</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>151</sup>*Ibid.*, 399.

developed since 1949 have become intermediate archival repositories as well as economical storage centers. The archival function of appraisal of records for disposal or permanent preservation is inseparable from them and can only be performed by professional archivists.<sup>152</sup>

Fortunately for NARS, successive GSA Administrators recognized the importance of a joint program of records management and archives and did not tie them to NARS objectives of managerial efficiency.<sup>153</sup>

In fact, NARS became "concerned with every aspect of the management of records from their creation, size, and design through their use and traffic patterns to their storage and their destruction or preservation."<sup>154</sup> While the two Hoover Commissions may have reinforced the rigidity of the "two solitudes" relationship between records managers and archivists in the United States, individuals involved with public records now became aware that they could not work in isolation from each other.

Others were not so sure, because they saw a more definitive division between records management and archives within an organization. Robert Bahmer implied that as records management expanded its role to include not only public records disposition, but also records creation and records maintenance, the archivist was no longer needed to do these things. To Bahmer, the archivist was primarily concerned with inactive public records, and so the more the records manager supervised current records, the "less the professional archivist, as an archivist, can contribute." Though Bahmer did not entirely dismiss the valuable contributions that archivists could make to records management, he did add, rather petulantly, that "I am speaking only of what

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<sup>152</sup>"1966 Report of the Joint Committee on the Status of the National Archives," 280, in the Appendix of H. G. Jones, Records of a Nation: Their Management, Preservation, and Use (New York: Athencum, 1969) 273-295.

<sup>153</sup>*Ibid.*, 281.

<sup>154</sup>McCoy, National Archives, 281.

should be expected of the professional archivist who is administering the non-current files of the Government."<sup>155</sup>

Such exclusive sentiments, occasionally demonstrated by both sides, were perceived by some to be origin of the problem. In his presidential address to the the SAA in 1955, Morris Radoff attempted to reassure those who had misgivings about allowing these new records managers to join the association. In fact, since the Association of Records Executives and Administrators and the American Records Management Association (ARMA) were both being organized that same year, Radoff was in all likelihood responding to these events by attempting to obtain a point of consensus between archivists and records managers.<sup>156</sup> "When we worked together", he said, "we did a fair job by respecting each other; when we worked separately we did badly. Even working together, however, is a makeshift arrangement."<sup>157</sup> What archives and records management needed, therefore, was a point of contact between them. Agreeing with Grover that it was "folly" for archivists and records managers to part company, Radoff gave the most succinct interpretation of the matter when he said "We are seeking ... the elusive something which does, or ought to, bind us together."<sup>158</sup>

Appropriately, he found that the solution lay with what was being administered: the records themselves. Because both archival institutions and records management were dealing with essentially the same material, it was counterproductive to distinguish their respective responsibilities:

Are we ... creating specialists where specialties do not exist; are we thinking too much of the record as a living organism requiring special

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<sup>155</sup>Robert H. Bahmer, "The National Archives After 20 Years," American Archivist 18.3 (July 1955): 202.

<sup>156</sup>Evans, "Archivists and Records Managers: Variations on a Theme," 54.

<sup>157</sup>Radoff, "What Should Bind Us Together," 7.

<sup>158</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

care at various stages of its life history, when in fact it is inanimate and of the same texture and form from beginning to end?"<sup>159</sup>

Radoff contended that since no distinction should be made between an organization's "current" records and its "archival" ones, the same could be argued for records management and archives. He asked, rhetorically, "Why could not the same (person) be both archivist and records manager?"<sup>160</sup> The conclusion was unmistakable:

Let us recognize as truth that a record being made is the same record which a few years later may find its way into our *sanctum sanctorum*, that in its course from here to there it needs physical care and guidance, and that it is the archivist's field, whole and indivisible, to give it this care and guidance.

In the end, it was not the individual who determined how the records were to be administered, but rather the other way around: the records would shape the role that the professional would play. "We do not share *common interests*," but " ... have only *one interest*; namely the guardianship of records."<sup>161</sup>

Fate would not support Radoff's vision of the existence of a unified records profession. This is because Theodore Schellenberg, arguably the most influential of North American archival scholars, presented a very different conceptualization. Like most of his colleagues, Schellenberg had agreed that it was necessary for archives to become involved in the life cycle earlier than previously allowed. Schellenberg's reason for this was simple. In his Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques, he claimed that

Public records are the grist of the archivist's mill. The quality of this grist is determined by the way records are produced and maintained

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<sup>159</sup>*Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>160</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>161</sup>Radoff, "What Should Bind Us Together," 4. Emphasis was in the original text. Robert A. Shiff also agreed that archival and records managerial responsibilities were becoming increasingly "interchangeable." See his "The Archivist's Role in Records Management," American Archivist 19.2 (April 1956): 111-120.

while in current use, and by the way records are disposed of. The adequacy of documentation on any matter ... depends on how the records are made and kept for current use; and the disposition that is made of them after that use has been exhausted.<sup>162</sup>

In other words, he contended that the archival institutions should become involved with active public records because the quality of their care while in the departments would determine their merit as archival material.<sup>163</sup> The goal of such endeavours was to determine the public records' "ultimate usefulness to the people and the government."<sup>164</sup>

Schellenberg injected into North American archival thought a sense of the necessity to provide service to users, whomever they were. "It should," he said,

... be the archivist's purpose to promote management practices that will effectively serve both the immediate needs of the government official and the ultimate needs of the private citizen. He may become involved, as a consequence, in the development of methods or practices of records management.<sup>165</sup>

Like Brooks before, and like Atherton three decades later, Schellenberg claimed that this was the reason why the archivist should partake in records management activities: it was the best method to ensure that the requirements of those who were to use the

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<sup>162</sup>T. R. Schellenberg, Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956) 26.

<sup>163</sup>Schellenberg's thinking ran contrary to that of one of his greatest contemporary rivals, the British archivist Sir Hilary Jenkinson. Discussing the exclusion of British archivists from the processes of selection, Jenkinson claimed that the "The business of the Keepers of the Archives is still, as Sir Thomas Hardy once put it, to keep them." (See Hilary Jenkinson, "Roots," Journal of the Society of Archivists 2.4 (Oct. 1961): 137.) Such a viewpoint came about because of Jenkinson's strong views about the archivist's objectivity: he felt that allowing them to become involved in disposition decisions would lessen their ability to handle the records in an uncompromised manner. His famous statement that "the Archivist is not and ought not to be an Historian" summarizes this idea.

<sup>164</sup>Schellenberg, Modern Archives, 34.

<sup>165</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

records could be fulfilled by guaranteeing the records, and the information in them, would be readily accessible when requested.

While Schellenberg may have believed in the importance of service within an organization, he did not recognize that it unified records managerial goals with archival objectives. Instead, Schellenberg perceived records management to exist apart from archives, with its aim being "to make records serve the needs of government officials and to dispose of them after those needs have been served, in the most effective and economical manner possible."<sup>166</sup> He felt that because records managers had close affiliations with records creating bodies, they were the ones best able to judge the primary value of records, which was the value of the records to the originating or creating agency. On the other hand, while he may have had a vision of participation by the archivist in the administration of active public records, he believed this was only to ensure that the material which, in his view, would become archival (in the life cycle sense) would be of better quality than would have existed had the archivist merely waited passively for the records to be passed to him. The reason for this was because the archivist was best able to judge the secondary values of the records, those being the values to those other than in the creating agency.<sup>167</sup>

Schellenberg's division of records by active versus inactive, primary versus secondary, appeared to be the best solution for what had become this troublesome issue. However, it only served to widen the gulf between archives and records management. Jane Parkinson observed that

By distinguishing records and archives, and primary and secondary values, Schellenberg was able to establish a boundary between records managers and archivists, which had become a wall by the 1960's. Records managers were driven by the imperative of efficiency, archivists turned their attention to serving scholarship. Although both

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<sup>166</sup>*Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>167</sup>*Ibid.*, 133.

professions dealt with the same material, their different perspectives seemed to renew the categorical distinction between an agency's records and 'historical' archives, which archival theory of the previous 100 years had been attempting to bridge.<sup>168</sup>

Ultimately, the records manager's sphere of influence was seen to be the administration which created the records, while the archivist's domain was preserving historical material for posterity.

Schellenberg's division of responsibilities had reinforced the separate administration of records, as according to their status in the life cycle. The integration of "archives" and "records management," which Radoff had acknowledged to be revolutionary, became more unlikely as the years passed. Additionally, the two Hoover Commissions, with their emphasis on records management's independence, only strengthened the position of those who supported the conceptualizations which Schellenberg had advocated.

Consequently, many records administrators would accept the divisions which had developed. Instead of exploring avenues which would unify the activities of records management with archival institutions, they concentrated on reconciling the two groups which sometimes coexisted, and at other times were at serious odds.<sup>169</sup> While some people were forceful in their renunciations of the other group, others were not: despite records managers' and archivists' separate entrenchment, many people argued that this did not mean that they could not cooperate. By the mid to late 1950's, there was a growing assumption that, as Schellenberg had implied, archival institutions did have a justified role in most decisions which could affect the existence

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<sup>168</sup>Jane Parkinson, "Accountability in Archival Science" (Master of Archival Studies Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1993) 58-59.

<sup>169</sup>Gordon Dodds, "Back to Square One: Records Management Revisited," Archivaria 1.2 (Summer 1976): 88-89.

of the records, from creation and use, to maintenance and disposition.<sup>170</sup> However, unlike Radoff, who ideally wanted records managers and archivists to recognize their common characteristics, these individuals accepted their divisions and endeavoured to find ways to work together to achieve optimum results.

Thus, there were many calls for a "team-work," rather than a unified, approach. For example, Norton was convinced that while archives needed records managers to manage public records efficiently, archivists had a role in advising them how to do this.<sup>171</sup> LeRoy DePuy felt that archivists should put aside their emphasis on history to work in an "integrated" partnership which would "contribute to increased efficiency and economy in terms of the management of records."<sup>172</sup> Robert W. Garrison said that "maximum records management" could only be achieved if a "greater camaraderie" was promoted "among archival, library, and records management fraternities."<sup>173</sup> Mary Givens Bryan approved of these "Changing Times" which had led to the growing affiliation between the records professions.<sup>174</sup> Finally, J. J. Hammitt called for "the vision of the archivist" to facilitate "a closer relationship" between the two groups.<sup>175</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>This was seen in not only public archival institutions, but also private ones. See, for example, Thornton W. Mitchell, "Records Management," University Archives: Papers Presented at an Institute Conducted by the University of Illinois Graduate School of Library Science, ed. Rolland E. Stevens (Champaign, Illinois: Illini Union Bookstore, 1965) 22-23, and 32-33; and F. L. Sward, "Business Records Management," American Archivist 29.1 (Jan. 1966): 69-74.

<sup>171</sup>Margaret C. Norton, "The Archivist Looks at Records Management," Illinois Libraries 38.8 (September 1956): 222-233.

<sup>172</sup>LeRoy DePuy, "Archivists and Records Managers -- A Partnership," American Archivist 23.1 (Jan. 1960): 49-55.

<sup>173</sup>Robert W. Garrison, "Maximum Records Management," American Archivist 23.4 (Oct. 1960): 415-417.

<sup>174</sup>Mary Givens Bryan, "Changing Times," American Archivist 24.1 (Jan. 1961): 3-10.

<sup>175</sup>J. J. Hammitt, "Government Archives and Records Management," American Archivist 28.2 (April 1965): 219.

With the possible exception of Norton, most of these writers probably assumed that records management and archives should be separated in the manner envisioned in the life cycle model and Schellenberg's arguments. Nonetheless, attempting to get one group to accept the other's advice could be interpreted (not always incorrectly) as an arrogant move taken by those who appeared to believe they were superior -- and it often was. When this occurred, it did nothing to lessen the tensions between the two groups; instead, it may have made them worse. Despite this, what was needed was a new outlook from each side which would encourage more coordination between them. It was not so much the theory of the life cycle which they wanted changed as the way in which it was implemented. Now that it was accepted that records management and archives had separate functions depending on the life of the record, the two groups often called for synchronization, and only rarely for unification.

If the Americans were attempting to find consensus to ease this contentious issue, their Canadian neighbours demonstrated little of the passion which sparked such controversy south of the border. Why, at this time, was there a relative paucity of interest in Canada regarding the relationship between archival institutions and records management? Aside from the essential reason that until the mid-1960's, Canadians did not have an archival journal of their own in which to voice their opinions, the answer lies in the context in which Canadian public archives developed. Wilfred Smith was accurate in his assessment of the Canadian public archival situation when he said that "the relatively slow development of records management in Canada" had led to a vacuum of responsibilities which had been assumed under the "broad scope and extent of the responsibilities of the Dominion Archivist."<sup>176</sup>

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<sup>176</sup>Wilfred I. Smith, "Archival Selection: A Canadian View," Journal of the Society of Archivists 3.6 (1967): 280.

In contrast to the Americans, who had a strong and autonomous records management tradition, Canada's Public Archives had always had the most forcible claim on records management. A weak tradition of records management in Canada, Smith said,

... provided a need and an opportunity, and the Public Archives has taken the initiative in the development of records management, since it is apparent that it is inseparable from archival functions.<sup>177</sup>

This did not mean, however, that the Public Archives desired to unify the functions of archival institutions and records management. Instead the Public Records Order of 1966 merely established the responsibilities which would be assigned to the Archives, and the ones which would be left to the departments. In fact, these departments maintained control over active records and therefore many appointed records officers. This created a cadre of records managers in the departments where none had existed before.

In the Public Archives itself, responsibility for "historical" records and records management were also placed in separate branches. In accordance with Schellenberg's ideas, records managerial and archival activities in Canada were understood to respond to primary and secondary needs. This outlook can be detected in both Kaye Lamb's and Smith's writings. In three different articles, Kaye Lamb supported the archivist's active participation in the management of public records.<sup>178</sup> He did not want to see the destruction of records which, because of uses not perceived by the departmental administrator or records manager, could have been retained as useful source material:

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<sup>177</sup>*Ibid.*, 276

<sup>178</sup>W. Kaye Lamb, "The Fine Art of Destruction," Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, ed. Albert E. J. Hollaender (Chichester, Sussex: Moore & Tillyer, 1962) 50-56; W. Kaye Lamb, "Keeping the Past Up to Date," Journal of the Society of Archivists 2.7 (April 1963): 285-288; and W. Kaye Lamb, "The Changing Role of the Archivist," American Archivist 29.1 (Jan. 1966): 3-10.

Every archivist knows that documents may prove useful and valuable for a wide variety of purposes that may have little or no relationship to the purpose for which they were brought into existence. And for this very reason the officials of the department that created them may be very poor judges of their long-term value.<sup>179</sup>

Kaye Lamb, like Schellenberg, wanted to prevent the departments or their records managers from inadvertently making incorrect disposition decisions. "It is (the archivist's) business", Kaye Lamb said, "to take the long term view."<sup>180</sup> Thus, the archivist, and not the records manager, had to have the last say over what was to be done with government records. "The basic change," he said, "... is that the archivist has ceased to be primarily a custodian -- a caretaker -- and has become a gatherer of records and manuscripts. His role has ceased to be largely passive and has become dynamic and active."<sup>181</sup>

Smith, who was Kaye Lamb's successor, believed that the person best qualified to determine the usefulness of the records to the agency were records officers, who, with "their knowledge ... of the purpose for which the records are likely to be used in performing the functions of the agency," were most likely to make the best decisions regarding scheduling. However, only the archivist could make choices of final selection for retention, for it was only he who could be the "best guarantee that the right choice will be made" regarding "... the purposes for which they will or may be useful."<sup>182</sup> In other words, Smith perceived the records officer to have the best idea of the primary values of the records, while he saw the archivist as most capable of judging secondary values. Noting that he spoke outside any theoretical context, he said that

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<sup>179</sup>Kaye Lamb, "Fine Art of Destruction," 52.

<sup>180</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>181</sup>Kaye Lamb, "The Changing Role of the Archivist," 4.

<sup>182</sup>Smith, "Archival Selection: A Canadian View," 276.

"the system of archival selection which has been approved by the government of Canada has evolved in a pragmatic way in response to particular needs."<sup>183</sup>

Not all archivists agreed that their main purpose was to appraise secondary values. In the new archival journal, the Canadian Archivist, the British trained archivist Alan Ridge (who was working in Canada) suggested that since records were "created during a transaction of any description and preserved as evidence of such transaction", they should be acquired by the archives because they were important management tools for the creating agency. The "distinctive characteristic of an archive", he said, was "that it should have been raised for a specific purpose, and not for acquiring antiquity." For this reason, archives were a "tool of management", and "it automatically follows that an archivist should be on hand to advise in the matter of managing current records."<sup>184</sup> Of all the individuals who came into contact with the records, it was the archivist who, from his wide experience in a number of creating agencies, could best comprehend the what had to be done to the records and when. Thus, it was necessary for archivists to be educated about current records administration, records management, the administration of records centres, and the like, for it was they who could best ensure that the records were handled properly throughout their "life cycle"; who could best carry out the "role of an efficiency expert."<sup>185</sup>

Ridge ignored what had become traditional North American assumptions about archival participation in the administration of active records. Instead of supposing that archival input at this stage was for preventing the loss of material which could have secondary values, he contended that the archivist had a valid say in

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<sup>183</sup>*Ibid.*, 280.

<sup>184</sup>Alan D. Ridge, "What Training Do Archivists Need?" Canadian Archivist 1.3 (1965): 5.

<sup>185</sup>*Ibid.*, 5-7.

how the records were to be supervised because the archival institution was a mechanism of efficient management. Ridge's representations paralleled those of Norton, who saw that archival institutions were critical to society because they contained the very material which documented the relationships of rights and privileges between individuals and bodies; the same relationships which sprung from the actions and transactions which led to the creation of the records. Interestingly, in using the term "efficiency expert", Ridge added a disclaimer that he did not mean it in a "pejorative sense." One can ascertain from this comment that archivists who were interested in the efficient administration of records so that they "could be preserved for the benefit of others" did not want to be confused with those who felt that "efficiency" had something to do with throwing out no longer needed yet valuable records merely to save money.<sup>186</sup>

Despite Ridge's innovative ideas, the major preoccupation of both Canadians and Americans of the late 1960's was the improvement of communication between the separate groups. Frank Evans, for example, strove to contribute toward "that closer relationship we all seek" by conducting a survey of what had been written on the theme in America since World War II.<sup>187</sup> One of his observations was that very few individuals were completely uncomfortable with archival participation in the administration of active records. "In the pages of the American Archivist", he said, he could only find one "dissenting voice ...."<sup>188</sup> Though Evans was quick to assert that "mutual misunderstandings" persisted, he contended that archivists and records managers had too much to learn from each other to waste their time in squabbling over their differences.<sup>189</sup> Restating his views three years later, he said that

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<sup>186</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>187</sup>Evans, "Archivists and Records Managers: Variations on a Theme," 45.

<sup>188</sup>*Ibid.*, 48. This was the voice of Irving P. Schiller. See footnote 137.

<sup>189</sup>*Ibid.*, 57.

Since the modern archivist must appraise records and select those of enduring value, he must have more than a passing interest in records management. He must recognize that everything that records managers do or leave undone will directly or indirectly affect the archives of the future. Indeed, records managers will increasingly determine the quality of our archives, quality in the sense of the completeness or adequacy of the documentation, its integrity ... , and its accessibility or serviceability for reference and research purposes .... The interest of the modern archivist in records management is therefore not only legitimate -- it is essential.<sup>190</sup>

Evans thus acknowledged Schellenberg's views by stating that archival institutions had valid interest in records management because it was only in this way that a collection of records could be provided for the benefit of all users. Claiming that archivists and records managers were "ultimately responsible to society and large and thus to posterity", Evans said that it was important to work together toward this common goal.<sup>191</sup> Nonetheless, like others, he did not challenge the life cycle concept which arbitrarily divided records management and archives according to the age of the records.

Despite calls for a closer relationship, the reality was that by the 1970's records management, originally intended by individuals such as Radoff to be a function of archivists, was drifting from the archival fold. Three decades before, it had not been imagined that the administration of active records would lead to the birth of an occupational group completely separate from the archival profession, but this is exactly what was occurring.<sup>192</sup> Government now believed that archival institutions

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<sup>190</sup>Frank B. Evans, "Modern Concepts of Archives Administration and Records Management," UNESCO Bulletin for Libraries 24.5 (Sept.-Oct. 1970): 247.

<sup>191</sup>Evans, "Archivists and Records Managers: Variations on a Theme," 57-58.

<sup>192</sup>Such a split was partly due to the National Records Management Council, which Leahy had helped to create in 1947. It supported attempts by private business to economically and efficiently reduce the number of their records through the use of records managers; the result was that records managers were perceived to be different than archivists. See Christopher L. Hives, "Records, Information, and Archives Management in Business," Records Management Quarterly 20.1 (Jan. 1986): 4, and Charles M. Dollar, "Archivists

were instruments of historians, while records management was seen as a function of efficient and economic public records control. The result was inevitable. "During the 1960s and 1970s," Charles Dollar wrote,

the Records Management Office of the National Archives issued numerous reports listing savings of millions of dollars, largely through cost avoidance. This same office, however, failed to pay sufficient attention to ensuring that records management programmes also adequately documented the organization, functions, policies, decisions, procedures, and essential transactions of federal agencies. Thus, the gap between archives and records management once again widened.<sup>193</sup>

Perhaps the best example of this worsening trend can be witnessed in the perspective given by Gerald Brown in 1971. In a rather non-conciliatory article, he wrote that while the archivist served "the needs of the scholar, the historian, and posterity," the records manager was "a devoted executioner of the obsolete document" whose only interest was economic efficiency.<sup>194</sup> "The Archivist," Brown claimed, "must realize that the Records Manager considers himself to be 'going beyond the call of duty' when he concerns himself with historical records, or at least records that might become historical."<sup>195</sup>

Nonetheless, while such statements may have seemed discouraging to those who had argued for a unified approach, there were indications of changing trends. At the municipal level, for example, Stanley B. Gordon was discovering that many people were requesting access to semi-active records so that they could be used for purposes

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and Records Managers in the Information Age," *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 41.

<sup>193</sup>Dollar, "Archivists and Records Managers in the Information Age," 41.

<sup>194</sup>Gerald F. Brown, "The Archivist and the Records Manager: A Records Manager's Viewpoint," *Records Management Quarterly* 5.1 (Jan. 1971): 21.

Brown was speaking of business records. He based his argument on the accepted tenet: "the Records Manager is basically a business administrator and the Archivist is basically a historian." (See p. 21.) Because of this, many of the conclusions he drew could be considered applicable to the government situation.

<sup>195</sup>*Ibid.*, 22.

other than that for which they were created. In other words, he found that these semi-active records had secondary values before they had been accessioned to the archives, and this had forced the

municipal records manager to plan his records retention programs as a dichotomy; one division being those records of negligible legal fiscal or research value which may be legally destroyed, records which, though of little research or historical value must be maintained; and the other division, those records that *do* have historic and research value, *whether or not required to be maintained by statute*.<sup>196</sup>

What had evolved was a "new breed of Records Manager-cum-Archivist" who had to fulfil both the traditional duties of records managerial efficiency and provide access to individual researchers.<sup>197</sup> Even though some persons, such as Brown, thought that records managers should have little care for archival needs, the realities of public requests for access to semi-current municipal records had forced the "archivist to meet the records manager."

In this environment Ridge proposed a kind of entente between the two groups. "In the current [records] phase", he maintained,

the voice of the records manager should be supreme, though the archivist should be familiar with operations. In the semi-current phase the voices of the two should be equal. In the non-current phase the voice of the archivist should be supreme, though he will if he is wise listen to the records manager in the final process of evaluation.<sup>198</sup>

Ridge came to a compromise. He accepted the division of labour, ignored the question of overall authority, and advocated institutionalized cooperation between the two groups. He therefore did not condemn records managers for ignoring the needs of archivists. Instead, he reversed the argument by asserting that since the

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<sup>196</sup>Stanley B. Gordon, "The Municipal Archives -- Where the Archivist Meets the Records Manager," Records Management Quarterly 5.4 (Oct. 1971): 23. Emphasis in the original text.

<sup>197</sup>*Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>198</sup>Alan D. Ridge, "Records Management: The Archival Perspective," Records Management Quarterly 9.1 (Jan. 1975): 12.

quality of archival institution's holdings depends on "how records are made, kept, assessed and evaluated," archivists should have informed records managers of the secondary values which they had "deliberately withheld ... so as to reserve unto themselves a monopoly in the mystique of academic usage." Not unpredictably, Ridge found that fault for the schism between the archivists and records managers lay with both, for they ignored each others' concerns.<sup>199</sup>

Ridge considered archives and records management to be closely interrelated, "though on different planes." He contended that what made the two common to each other was the concept of service. Similar to Schellenberg, he distinguished what this meant for each. For records management, "improved administrative efficiency and reduced administrative costs are the touchstone for the whole operation", and therefore, "service to the organization is the thing that counts." On the other hand, archivists also had to be concerned with service to the public, and thus, "archives serve not only the parent organization but also all manner of people and institutions in society: they serve the public at large and are answerable to them for the preservation of their documentary heritage."<sup>200</sup>

In spite of this differentiation, Ridge knew that both were "concerned with *total* systems affecting the whole organization, for only through that approach can they estimate the significance of interrelated records which react upon each other."<sup>201</sup> This is a statement worth noting, because the unified approach not only involves unified service, but is more importantly unified by the nature of the archival fonds as a body of interrelated records. Service to all records for both primary and secondary purposes just confirms this theoretical fact -- a fact of the nature of the records. Thus, although Ridge felt that the archivist provided service to "make useful yesterday's records for

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<sup>199</sup>*Ibid.*, 12-13.

<sup>200</sup>*Ibid.*, 13.

<sup>201</sup>*Ibid.*, 14. Emphasis in the original text.

tomorrow", and that the records manager did so to provide a "practical approach to today's problems with today's records", he understood that all records administrators were essentially kindred bound together by the records themselves.<sup>202</sup> Calling for more understanding, he exclaimed:

Let us archivists devote more time to studying the form and nature of our archives -- and leave the subject content to historians and other academic exploiters! Let us spend more time concentrating on the numerous similarities between our functions rather than harping on the differences: let us acknowledge our mutual interdependence and work in harmony in the field of service and information retrieval.<sup>203</sup>

Ridge's call, while correct, was somewhat without success. As the British archivist Gordon Dodds subsequently pointed out in the pages of Archivaria, archivists had isolated themselves to such an extent that records managers no longer needed them to carry out their responsibilities, whereas archivists were lost without the cooperation of records managers. "Records management", Dodds claimed, "has become a virtual fortress of skills and devices, immensely adaptive, productive and confident."<sup>204</sup>

Dodds discovered that in the years following the Second World War, archival institutions had lost track of their true responsibilities. He felt that they were putting too much emphasis on their attempts to check the rise of records management, while ignoring their role in the administration of active records. He agreed with Posner, who in 1940 had written that archivists should be "trustees" answerable not only for public record making and keeping, but also for the material which was, or would become, the documentation of our society. He claimed that "I cannot see that the archivist, especially the keeper of the *public* record whatever its medium, can be

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<sup>202</sup>*Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>203</sup>*Ibid.*, 25.

<sup>204</sup>Dodds, "Back to Square One: Records Management Revisited," 90.

anything less than a thoroughgoing records administrator with all that this implies in care and use of records, operational and beyond."<sup>205</sup> His conclusion was inevitable:

I am therefore at odds with arguments that draw lines between archivists and records managers, whether in terms of *fait accompli* or preference or pragmatism, for in truth they are one. I have to support the present *rapport* because archivists need records managers but I do not surrender to the fact of our weakness.<sup>206</sup>

In essence, Dodds returned to what Posner and Radoff had said three decades before. By acknowledging that the separation of responsibilities in the administration of records into records management and archival work were not reflective of the nature of the records themselves, he fully embraced the archivist's responsibility to become more involved with active records. He contended that this was purely an archival responsibility; in fact, those who worked in records management and archival institutions were of the *same* profession. Thus, he asserted that archival education should be comprehensive, for it was only in this manner that these new archivist / records managers would "really 'come of age'" by assuming their overriding concern, Posner's "trusteeship" of the records.<sup>207</sup>

By no means were Dodds's and Ridge's views shared by everyone. However, they were symptomatic of the renaissance of traditional archival thought which had been submerged by the practicalities of curbing records proliferation. Especially in Canada, the next decades would evidence a return to these fundamentals; the symbolic culmination of which would be Atherton's article which would take these long-standing ideas, and reconcile the differences between the two ends of the life cycle. While such progression was not a uniform occurrence, and certainly contentious,

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<sup>205</sup>*Ibid.*, 91.

<sup>206</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>207</sup>*Ibid.*

their writing was indicative of a new awareness of integrated archival participation and advice in all stages of the life of the record.

In the United States, where the records management tradition was stronger, there was much less evidence that records management and archives were coming to grips with an integrated approach. Though archivists and records managers arguably had achieved a more amicable relationship, there was scant acceptance of the unified approach as iterated by Dodds and Ridge.<sup>208</sup>

The post-war era heralded a period of great debate in the North American records arena. By 1956 for the United States, and 1966 for Canada, responsibility for the administration of records had officially come under the domains of the national archivists of each country. However, though both of these individuals had control over current, semi-active, and inactive records, they were both constantly under the threat of having their authority usurped by other parts of their bureaucracies. In Canada, the Dominion Archivist was limited in his powers by the will of the Treasury Board, while in the United States, the National Archivist could be overruled by the Administrator of the GSA.

At this time, the "two solitudes" relationship between archives and records management was mainly predominant. A fully articulated conception, explaining why these functions had to be joined, remained to be composed. Working in an environment where problems were solved in a reactive manner, these individuals were often forced into the position of having to provide quick remedies, rather than cures. Trapped by practical problems, they were rarely able to work from a theoretical standpoint which put aside institutional demands and stop-gap solutions. In both Canada

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<sup>208</sup>See, for example, Ricks, "Records Management as an Archival Function," 12-20, who accepted archivists' participation in records management but definitely saw each as a unique profession.

and the United States, this was best manifested in the concern for economy. The mass proliferation of records led to the creation of records management, while the archival institutions were seen only to serve scholarly needs. Their joint obligation of preserving the records for the information they contained for users of multifarious interests was sacrificed to the narrower demands of economy and history.

By the end of the 1960's, however, the situation was changing. Though there were some who felt that archives should not soil their hands with active public records, others were not so sure. The essential point was this: people agreed that there was a need to articulate a system for managing active records, but there was little agreement on what shape such a system should take. By the late 1970's, most of the "ingredients" which Atherton would mention in his article were becoming acknowledged. For example, many now understood that service to users on both primary and secondary grounds was a concern, and that archives and records management within an organization needed each other to execute their individual tasks. Additionally, there was an evolving agreement that records, though current one day and inactive the next, were the same material, which had to be handled with the same respect, by professionals who throughout the life of the records may have had different titles, but many of the same goals. The days of working as "two solitudes," where records management and archives ignored the other, were being challenged. As shall be seen, there would soon be a wider acceptance of the ideas of an integrated approach.

CHAPTER THREE:  
Contemporary Records Administration in North  
America

The years which marked the transition from the post-war life of the 1950's to today's world were an important period for public archival institutions. Social and economic changes which transformed almost every aspect of global development did not leave the field of records administration untouched. The emerging demands of new information technologies made it virtually impossible for public institutions to manage records in the manner which had been thought to be appropriate before the Second World War. The combination of advances in records-creating technologies, an increasingly instant global economy, and a growing suspicion of government all tested many of the assumptions which had governed archivists and records managers in their work. It was this environment of change which not only was the catalyst for Atherton's continuum, but also for many of the changes which to this day continue to mould the administration of records in ways unanticipated even a few decades ago.

A major cause of these changes was the ever-widening use of computers and the subsequent mass production of machine readable records. This trend, which had its origins in Hollerith's census counting in the 1890's, continued with the advent of the UNIVAC computer in the 1950's, and now flourishes with the pervasive use of optical media in the 1990's, initially caught records administrators off guard. While computers as management tools were introduced to the large archival institutions in the mid-1960's, little thought had been devoted to the unanticipated ramifications of the vast information revolution which was still in its infancy stages by the beginning of the 1970's.<sup>209</sup> Up to this decade, only a few passing references had been made to automation, and it would only be at this time that records administrators began to

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<sup>209</sup>Anne J. Gilliland, "The Development of Automated Archival Systems: Planning and Managing Change," Library Trends 36.3 (Winter 1988): 520-521.

consider seriously the impact of these new machines.<sup>210</sup> With the ability to store records in a machine-readable form and to manipulate them with the touch of a button, new challenges were soon to rise in controlling the records' creation, configuration, storage, use, and proliferation. In 1968, Atherton prophesied that "the day will come for all of us when we find that our volume of holdings and rate of accessions makes imperative the substitution of new methods for old, in order to simply keep our heads above water."<sup>211</sup> The era of automation had arrived for records.

Over the next decade, it became clear that these machines would change how archivists administered records. Hugh Taylor observed that the archivist's "principle battle, and perhaps his survival as a member of a distinct profession ..., will depend on his control of ... the mass of data and the chaos of subject content."<sup>212</sup> In this environment, such control would only be possible if the archivist was willing to turn full attention not only to the complexities of information retrieval, but also to the quality of the information which was being preserved. This would necessitate a new emphasis on records creation, for "it cannot be too strongly emphasized that this aspect of the archivist's work has an immediate bearing on the quality of records worthy of permanent preservation, and is, therefore, complementary to his classic role."<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>210</sup>See, for example, Task Force on Paperwork Management, Report -- Part I, 38, and MacNeil and Metz's commentary on it, which cite the savings computers were thought to generate because of their high speeds and comparatively low costs. See MacNeil and Metz, Hoover Report of 1953-1955: What it Means to You, 85. Others, such as J.J. Hammitt, foresaw that the prolific records-creating abilities of computers would bring new problems in records control. See Hammitt, "Government Archives and Records Management," 220.

<sup>211</sup>Jay Atherton, "Automation and the Dignity of the Archivist," Canadian Archivist 2.1 (1970): 58.

<sup>212</sup>Hugh A. Taylor, "Information Retrieval and the Training of the Archivist," Canadian Archivist 2.3 (1972): 30-31.

<sup>213</sup>Taylor, "Information Retrieval and the Training of the Archivist," 32.

These technological adjustments did not occur apart from other developments in records administration. In Canada, the influx of a young generation into the profession and the evolution of awareness about the cultural importance of archival institutions created a "watershed" environment which allowed for the examination of pressing, heretofore untouched, questions on national planning for archives.<sup>214</sup> The formation of professional Canadian organizations, such as the Association of Canadian Archivists (A.C.A.) and *l'Association des Archivistes du Québec*, was symbolic of the "ferment of a profession beginning to recognize and realize itself."<sup>215</sup>

This "ferment" extended beyond endeavours for creating a coordinated national scheme for Canada's archives. Rapid changes in all aspects of records administration, combined with bureaucratic inaction, quickly showed that the system which had been implemented with the Public Records Order of 1966 was not entirely successful. In late 1979, Bryan Corbett and Eldon Frost released a paper entitled Public Records Division [of the Public Archives of Canada]: Acquisition Methods.<sup>216</sup> Commonly called the "Corbett-Frost Report," it examined the archives - records

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<sup>214</sup>Terry Eastwood, "Attempts at National Planning for Archives in Canada, 1975-1985," Public Historian 8.3 (Summer 1986): 74-76.

<sup>215</sup>*Ibid.*, 76. As a result, two reports were written to address the issue of archival co-ordination at the national level. The first, called the "Symons Report," was criticized because it emphasized the growth of archival institutional networks utilizing underdeveloped university archival institutions, while ignoring those archival institutions based in the organizations where the records were created. The second, called the "Wilson Report," was more widely accepted because it made general recommendations for a system of archival institutions based on the strength of Canada's established provincial and federal archival institutions, and called for the government to adjust the Public Archives Act to reflect the suggestions it contained. See Eastwood, "Attempts at National Planning, 76-79, and "The Symons Report" and "The Wilson Report" in "Canadian Archives: Reports and Responses," Archivaria 11 (1980-'81): 3-35.

<sup>216</sup>See Bryan Corbett and Eldon Frost, "The Acquisition of Federal Government Records: A Report on Records Management and Archival Practices," Archivaria 17 (Winter 1983-1984): 201-232. This is an abridged version of the original.

management relationship, and gave a detailed account of the problems encountered at the Public Archives, as well as recommendations.

Corbett and Frost asserted that the expectations created by the Public Records Order had not been fulfilled. Despite mandatory scheduling, there had been neither a steady, regular increase in the amount of records transferred to the Public Archives from the departments, nor had many departments implemented records scheduling.<sup>217</sup> In spite of successes in some areas, inconsistencies were chronic. Some major departments and offices of ministers and deputy ministers had not relinquished their operational records, while, because of the limitations of the Public Records Order, government agencies such as crown corporations were under not obliged to schedule their records.<sup>218</sup>

Corbett and Frost believed that records management in general, and records scheduling in particular, were essential for the proper care of government records. The "true function of a records office in a government department," they said,

is to service the organization efficiently, economically, and satisfactorily by systematically providing for the retrieval and preservation of essential information for the agency's use.<sup>219</sup>

In this manner, they believed that the records schedule was one of the best tools for managing public records. In their view, schedules were created by the records manager, who set active dispositions period based on administrative values, and augmented by the Archivist, who determined final disposition based on the value of the records to all users.<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>217</sup>Corbett and Frost, "A Report on Records Management and Archival Practices," 202-203.

<sup>218</sup>*Ibid.*, 203-207.

<sup>219</sup>*Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>220</sup>*Ibid.*, 208.

They found that the reasons scheduling failed were numerous, but had their basis in the fact that records scheduling and disposition processes in different parts of the government were not being applied in an extensive, systematic, and uniform manner.<sup>221</sup> For a remedy, the report recommended that a more comprehensive, controlled, and standardized approach be applied to records scheduling for archival acquisition and disposition.<sup>222</sup> Critically, Corbett and Frost recognized that this could only occur if records managers and archivists took a more participatory and coordinated interest in each others' activities.<sup>223</sup>

This report was significant for Canadian archives because it recognized the value of the records office in the larger scheme of ensuring that the responsible administration of records led to their proper and timely disposition. Though a study of government records acquisition and disposition, the report criticized the "two solitudes" mentality which placed too much emphasis on the split between records managerial efficiency and archival acquisition. Through the double vehicles of disposition and acquisition, there was room for a much broader role for archivists and records managers, and for much less emphasis on the differences which kept them apart.

Corbett and Frost acknowledged that a records officer's aim was not to get rid of material in order to keep costs down, but to oversee records in a manner which would facilitate the efficient management of records throughout their existence.

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<sup>221</sup>See "3.2.4 Failings of Scheduling -- An Account of the Reasons," in Corbett and Frost's "Report on Records Management and Archival Practices," 213-217.

<sup>222</sup>See Corbett and Frost's seventeen recommendations in their "Report on Records Management and Archival Practices," 222-227.

<sup>223</sup>Recommendation 7 called for the Records Management and Archives Branches to "develop mechanisms to better coordinate their activities," while Recommendation 10 asserted the importance of "more formal training" for government archivists, including "consideration [being] given to broadening archival training to include such topics as selection criteria and administrative history . . ." See Corbett and Frost, "A Report on Records Management and Archival Practices," 224-225.

However, while envisioning scheduling as a method which would allow records-creating organizations to control and access records competently and effectively, they approached the issue from the traditional perspective of records management as a tool of archival acquisition. While they supported greater cooperation (as did many other archivists who were acquisition-oriented), and therefore greater involvement for archivists at earlier stages of the life cycle, they were nonetheless traditional: records management, mistakenly, was seen only as a vehicle for acquisition, with its role left unexploited for the more inclusive realm of service to the users of the records.

This problem would eventually be evidenced in the new policy for public records which was implemented by the Treasury Board in March, 1983. The purpose of the new policy, contained in Chapter 460 of the federal government's Administrative Policy Manual, was to facilitate the management and the effective (but controlled) disposition of *active* public records. For this reason, it was intended to apply to records under the control of government institutions.<sup>224</sup> While the Treasury Board, through its Administrative Policy Branch, was to retain control over records management policy, it delegated responsibility for assessment of records management to the Dominion Archivist.<sup>225</sup>

The most important factor in this was that government institutions were accountable for compliance with the policy. Each department, through the expertise of its records manager, would have to form a close liaison with the Archives in order to ensure that records were efficiently made accessible and their dispositions readily carried out at the appointed times.<sup>226</sup> The Archivist would take a role which was largely supervisory: the work which departmental records managers did in terms of

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<sup>224</sup>Canada, Treasury Board, Administrative Policy Manual (March, 1983)

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<sup>225</sup>*Ibid.*, .1.4.1.: 3.

<sup>226</sup>*Ibid.*, .3: 6-8.

scheduling would be their own, but it would be controlled and approved by the Archivist.

The thrust of Chapter 460 indicates that Corbett and Frost had succeeded in raising the profile of records management *vis à vis* archival objectives. However, because both the Report and Chapter 460 concentrated on only records scheduling and disposition, it did not satisfactorily resolve how records management would fit into the overall scheme of records administration. Although records management and archives were now seen to be joined by the scheduling function, there was still an incompatibility between traditional records managerial and archival objectives: over a decade after the release of the Report, Frost still referred to records scheduling as "A Weak Link in the Chain." "By the late 1980s," he said, "it was evident that the corrective measures taken in response to [the Corbett-Frost] study had not appreciably improved matters in respect to textual records."<sup>227</sup> He also cited the case of electronic records which, because they were manipulatable, transient, and "fragile," had to be protected from the the destructive zeal of the records' creators, many of whom pushed for "efficient disposal and maximum latitude."<sup>228</sup> The problem, he had discovered, was that there was disagreement over the purpose of scheduling. As he said,

Is it to serve in the first instance as a means of records retention, and secondly as a means of records destruction? Or vice versa? ... What objective shall [records scheduling] seek to accomplish first?<sup>229</sup>

Thus, the issue of whether the purpose of scheduling was to fulfil the immediate needs of economy and efficiency, or the long-term goals of archival preservation, had yet to be worked out.<sup>230</sup>

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<sup>227</sup>Eldon Frost, "A Weak Link in the Chain: Records Scheduling as a Source of Archival Acquisition," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-1992): 80.

<sup>228</sup>*Ibid.*, 80-81.

<sup>229</sup>*Ibid.*, 82.

<sup>230</sup>*Ibid.*, 82-83.

What seemed strange about Frost's comments was that he did not attempt to explore how adopting a service approach could essentially resolve this issue. Although Frost mentioned scheduling as a "link in this chain of the record continuum," he hardly touched upon how his ideas would affect the needs of the users.<sup>231</sup> Instead, he expounded on a new approach which would help fulfil the agenda of the National Archives, without adequately explaining how users would benefit from these new ideas. Perhaps such benefits were implied by the fact that improved disposition would inherently improve service to users by both expeditiously destroying useless documents while retaining significant ones, but this was not adequately addressed by Frost.

Similar to the Canadian government with the Corbett-Frost Report, the American government was also concerned with how records were being administered. In 1975, the Americans launched yet another Commission on Federal Paperwork, because, as before, abundant records were perceived to be stifling government efficiency, private business, and individual American citizens.<sup>232</sup> As a result, Congress directed this Paperwork Commission

to study and investigate statutes, policies, rules, regulations, procedures, and practices of the federal Government relating to gathering processing, and disseminating information, and managing and controlling information activities.<sup>233</sup>

Subsequently, the Commission found that the problem was that Government looked on the information in records as a "free good" to be used in any way it chose, and that

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<sup>231</sup>*ibid.*, 79.

<sup>232</sup>United States, An Act to Establish a Commission on Federal Paperwork, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 88 (1974) s. 1(a).

<sup>233</sup>Forest W. Horton, and Donald A. Marchand, eds., Introduction, Information Management in Public Administration: An Introduction and Resource Guide to Government in the Information Age (Arlington, Virginia: Information Resources Press, 1982) 4. See also the United States, An Act to Establish a Commission on Federal Paperwork.

this, combined with the bureaucratic tendency to perpetuate "bad" paperwork," was becoming unmanageable:<sup>234</sup>

The tendency of Government officials to look upon information as a "free good" is an important cause of excessive paperwork. Further, the mismanagement of information resources requires that a distinction be drawn between "good" and "bad" paperwork. In the past, almost all Government paperwork and information was considered "good," or at least "harmless." This is not the case. There is, indeed, much paperwork which is simple, effective and valuable as a source of information. But there is also another class of paperwork which stifles communication between Government and the people, misleads the decisionmaker, clogs information channels and suffocates officials.<sup>235</sup>

The Commission asserted that the paperwork problem was the consequence of a combination of factors, including a growth in government, an overlap in government programs, a proliferation of knowledge, a lack of solid objectives, new information technology which processed large amounts of information, and the rising costs of data or information processing.<sup>236</sup> It lamented that

the paperwork programs of the past are [now] unable to control the data explosion engendered by the computer. A simple bureaucratic reorganization of traditional records and paperwork management disciplines to meet the challenges of the information revolution would simply be overwhelmed in attempting to control the mass of complexity presented by modern computer/telecommunications technologies.<sup>237</sup>

Simply put, the Paperwork Commission found that the "real culprit of the paperwork burden is the mismanagement of information resources," where the government failed to realize that information was not a "relatively free and limitless commodity, like air

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<sup>234</sup>The Commission released several preliminary reports before its final report. This one was addressed in the Commission on Federal Paperwork, Information Resources Management (Washington, D.C., U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977) 1-18, reprinted in Horton and Marchand, eds., "The Paperwork Problem," Information Management in Public Administration, 28-44.

<sup>235</sup>*Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>236</sup>*Ibid.*, 30.

<sup>237</sup>*Ibid.*, 37.

and sunshine," but a "resource in limited supply, often costly to locate, extract and refine."<sup>238</sup>

The Commission was critical of records management's role in government, because records management programs had been "directed at dealing with physical manifestations of the information proliferation problem and not the content of paperwork or records." Thus, the Commission wanted to put aside records management and instead concentrate on the control of the information itself. By doing so, this Paperwork Commission marked a change in how both Canadian and American records administrators looked at records administration. Records management programs, the Commission said, "have sought to simplify and consolidate forms and records and to reduce the total amount of paper and files" without addressing the real issue: "why information is collected and used the way it is, what value it has in the success of an organization's programs and missions."<sup>239</sup> It was the recognition of this important element which changed records administration forever.

The Commission proposed a more suitable term for describing what those who handled information should be attempting accomplish: the management of the information itself, or simply, *information resources management*. This, they said, was a better phrase than "paperwork" or "records" management, because it more accurately revealed what the focus should be on: the control and administration of the information itself, rather than on the control of the media that carried such information.<sup>240</sup> Such control could be far reaching, touching on every aspect of

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<sup>238</sup>*Ibid.*, 40.

<sup>239</sup>*Ibid.*, 39.

<sup>240</sup>*Ibid.*, 39-40. T. M. Campbell, "Archives and Information Management," *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989): 146, defines information resource management as "the totality of planned and directed activities within an organization which result in usable, accessible, timely, secure, integral, economical, and accurate information for that organization."

information administration, from paperwork management programs, to records programs and depositories, to computers and automated information systems, to printing, micrographics, statistical activities, and other information-related fields.<sup>241</sup>

Information resources management was a major aspect of the Commission's emphasis on a new concept, called "service management." (This was actually a "new concept" for an old problem, that being the fixation with reducing the paperwork cost, thereby increasing efficiency.) With service management, said the Commission, the government would concentrate on combining the aims of economy and efficiency with the provision of information and aid to those both within and without the government:

Fundamentally, Service Management requires attitudes and actions by people at all levels in and out of government to work in a partnership toward more effective programs free of unnecessary paperwork. A willingness to discuss and resolve problems in the operation of Federal programs can and must be based on a mutual sense of trust and respect. Most people wish to obey the law and help achieve our national goals; they are frustrated by the waste and ineffectiveness caused by unnecessary paperwork.<sup>242</sup>

Changes in attitude and behaviour were needed: both the bureaucracy and the legislature had to assume the responsibility both to control the costs of paperwork and to accept input from all parties involved, while carefully administering the valuable information resource in a manner which would not create excessive paperwork.<sup>243</sup>

This point is important, because it indicates that a larger issue than that of records administration was now being considered. Not all information which is simply stored on a medium can be called a "record." One must keep in mind that a

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<sup>241</sup>Horton and Marchand, "The Paperwork Problem," Information Management in Public Administration, 41-42.

<sup>242</sup>Commission on Federal Paperwork, Final Summary Report (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1977) 3.

<sup>243</sup>*Ibid.*, 21-22.

"record" is a result (some say residue) of the practical actions, transactions, processes, and functions of an individual or body, and thus "raw data" or information which exists on a medium without this qualification merely forms part of a data bank. Nonetheless, despite the fact that this careful differentiation should be made between information (or data) and records, the problem of how government produced, used, stored and destroyed information was now directly linked to how it administered records.

As a result of the Commission's emphasis on the importance of a coordinated approach to the government's management of the information resource, Congress passed the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980.<sup>244</sup> This act created an Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs within the Office of Management and Budget.<sup>245</sup> The Director of this new body was charged with

developing and implementing uniform and consistent information resources management policies and overseeing the development of information management principles, standards, and guidelines promoting their use.<sup>246</sup>

By creating an Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs within the Office of Management and Budget, American legislators were endeavouring to combine the economy and efficiency emphasized in Leahy's control of records with the broader objective of effectively administering information itself. As the Paperwork Commission implied, it was time for government officials to realize that their responsibilities now extended beyond the internal machinery of the bureaucracy, and into the "changed and changing nature of government involvement in the day-to-day lives of citizens, organizations, and institutions."<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>244</sup>United States, Paperwork Reduction Act of 1980, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 94 (1980).

<sup>245</sup>*Ibid.* See § 3503.

<sup>246</sup>*Ibid.* See § 3504 (b)(1).

<sup>247</sup>Commission on Federal Paperwork, Final Summary Report, 2.

Meanwhile, it appears that the officials at NARS and GSA did not embrace this emphasis on a global strategy in the management of information. This was not a result, however, of their rejection of information theory, but because these two bodies were still struggling to solidify their individual control over different stages of the life of the records. In other words, rather than attempting to attain the coordinated control of records through a unified approach to their management, the leadership of NARS and the GSA were still trying to split the functions of records administration into the individual stages of the life cycle. By 1982, when it was evident that NARS and the GSA were to be separated, the GSA attempted to retain many records management functions by moving them from the Archives to the GSA's Automated Data and Telecommunication Service.<sup>248</sup>

In 1983, a task force was established to determine what actions could be taken to improve the success of the NARS as a cultural agency. The task force contended although records management had been taken on as a legitimate function of the Archives, inadvertently it had overshadowed the agency's traditional archival responsibilities and had become its core *raison d'être*. "Records management was not intended as an end in itself," said the task force's report, "although there are obvious cost savings benefits which accrue from these activities."<sup>249</sup> What the task force suggested, therefore, was that the agency head be given the functional independence and "authority to run the agency's programs and be held responsible for the level of success achieved."<sup>250</sup> This would be accomplished with the implementation on legislation which would not only provide the Archivist with responsibility for

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<sup>248</sup>Linda Vee Pruitt, "Archives and Records Management in the Federal Government: the Post - GSA Context," Provenance 3.2 (Fall 1985): 88-89.

<sup>249</sup>General Services Administration, Archival Programs within the GSA: A Report and Recommendations to the Administrator of General Services on the Structure, Authorities, Programs, and Policies of the National Archives and Records Service (Washington, D. C.: June, 1983) 7-8. See also p. 9.

<sup>250</sup>*Ibid.*, 11.

traditional archival functions (including the administration of records centres,) but would also include the duty of "establishing standards and procedures to assure efficient and effective records management."<sup>251</sup>

In listing such goals, the task force appeared to have little interest in the theoretical objectives of an integrated approach. Rather, it was proposing avenues by which NARS could improve its prestige (and thus political ability to garner the support and resources it needed to survive) as an institution of national, cultural, and historical importance. By so doing, it hardly mentioned a link between the active records of government and the inactive ones of the Archives, and in the end this may have worked to NARS's detriment. In the conflict between the GSA Administrator and NARS to determine which organization would receive what records functions in the coming structural reorganization, it is likely that the task force's emphasis on NARS's historical objectives strengthened the GSA claim that records management was a function of economy, and thus belonged to the GSA.

When the reorganization was formalized the following year in the National Archives and Records Administration Act of 1984, the Archivist had once again become independent, but had to share records management responsibilities with the General Services Administrator:<sup>252</sup>

- (a) The Archivist shall provide guidance and assistance to Federal Agencies with respect to ensuring adequate and proper documentation of the policies and transactions of the Federal Government and ensuring proper records disposition.
- (b) The Administrator shall provide guidance and assistance to Federal agencies to ensure economical and effective records management by such agencies.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup>*Ibid.*, 18-20.

<sup>252</sup>*Ibid.*, 89.

<sup>253</sup>United States, National Archives and Records Administration Act of 1984, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 98 (1984) § 2904 (a)(b).

Although the new National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) remained involved in the control of active records, both it and the GSA were organized in a way which could not allow for an entirely coordinated approach to the administration of records (and the information that they contained). To put it another way, by not exploring the ideas which information resources management offered for records administration, and by continuing to follow their different paths, NARA and the GSA failed to see, as Atherton aptly put it, "the many ways in which the records management and archives operations are interrelated, even intertwined."<sup>254</sup>

Despite this, many individuals in both Canada and the United States began to advocate the importance of administering the information in the records (as well as their physical manifestations) and saw the integrated approach as the way to do this. For example, in a particularly effective article, Taylor contended that the advent of automation had meant that archivists would have to become more than caretakers of archives, since providing access to the records both active and dormant would force them to become "information generalists."<sup>255</sup> "I would like to suggest," he said,

that there is in reality no break between the 'current' and 'archival' record and that this is a fiction of the historical method. There is a pressing need by government and public alike for more effective retrieval and for an archival training which recognizes this continuum and which could provide information specialists of appropriate calibre to work both in departments and archives .... This action would take the profession out of the 'historical shunt' and back into the administrative levels of departmental record keeping and among the policy makers where we belong.<sup>256</sup>

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<sup>254</sup>Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 47.

<sup>255</sup>Hugh A. Taylor, "Information Ecology and the Archives of the 1980's." Archivaria 18 (Summer 1984): 30-32.

<sup>256</sup>*Ibid.*, 34. Terry Cook of the Public Archives of Canada disagreed with this interpretation. His main contention was that in de-emphasizing the role of history and historians in archival institutions, Taylor "confuses administrative means with cultural ends." See Terry Cook, "From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archives," Archivaria 19 (Winter 1984-1985): 28-49.

In comparison, Richard Kesner suggested that archivists had "to take a broader view of how information is created and used in contemporary work settings," which included an improvement in their endeavours to "reflect the overall mission and goals of the parent institution."<sup>257</sup> He argued that archival reorientation was necessary because technological innovations had led to the explosion of information. With the advent of machines which allowed abundant amounts of information to exist without ever leaving documentary traces, it was necessary for archivists to "involve themselves in records management and hence in the full life cycle of documents from their creation to their ultimate disposition."<sup>258</sup> Kesner argued that if archives were unwilling to take such steps, then their parent institutions would look elsewhere to have their information needs fulfilled.

It thus became clear to many individuals that being able to provide for the information the records contained was the key objective. This was a tangible and expansive issue: as the Paperwork Commission recognized, the core of the matter was being able to manage, provide, and indeed retain, the information which institutions and people demanded. John Meisel's prediction "a profound gulf may develop between the information rich and information poor" was indicative of this, for he observed that information had become "one of the principal sources of wealth."<sup>259</sup>

This emphasis on the value of information was evidenced in the emergence of access to information legislation throughout North America. Arising from a

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<sup>257</sup>Richard M. Kesner, "Automated Information Management: Is There a Role for the Archivist in the Office of the Future?" *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-1985): 164.

<sup>258</sup>*Ibid.*, 170.

<sup>259</sup>John Meisel, "'Newspeak' and the Information Society," *Archivaria* 19 (Winter 1984-1985): 178. This view was shared by Richard H. Lytle, who also claimed that there was "the growing perception of information as a salable commodity." See his "Information Resource Management: 1981-1986," in Martha E. Williams, ed., *Annual Review of Information Science Technology* (New York: American Society for Information Science, 1986) 310, and 319-321.

breakdown of trust in government and the consequent demands for accountability and accessibility in the modern technological world, such legislation was at least partly the result of the need to control, by law, what people and government could do with the information commodity.<sup>260</sup> In Canada, the federal Access to Information Act's objective continues to be

... to extend the present laws of Canada to provide a right of access to information in [government] records ... in accordance with the principles that government information should be available to the public, that necessary exceptions to the right of access should be limited and specific and that decisions on the disclosure of government information should be reviewed independently of government.<sup>261</sup>

Canada was not alone in promulgating such legislation. Since the 1940's, the Americans, too, had launched various legislative endeavours to facilitate access to information, culminating in the Freedom of Information Act of 1974 and the Freedom of Information Reform Act of 1986.<sup>262</sup> A progressive policy was also seen in the the United States National Archives, where, unlike a few decades before, it was now accepted that equal access should be provided to all users, and that researchers had a right to know what records existed, whether they were restricted or not.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>260</sup>See M. D. Kirby, "Access to Information and Privacy: The Ten Information Commandments," Archivaria 23 (Winter 1986-1987): 4-15.

<sup>261</sup>Canada, Access to Information Act, S.C. 1980-81-82-83, c. 111, Sch. I "1", s. 2(1).

<sup>262</sup>See the United States, An Act to Amend Section 3 of the Administrative Procedure Act, Chapter 324, of the Act of June 11, 1946 (60 Stat. 328), to Clarify and Protect the Right of the Public to Information, and for Other Purposes, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 80 (1966); An Act to Amend Section 552 of Title 5, United States Code, to Codify the Provisions of Public Law 89-487, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 81 (1967); An Act to Amend Section 552 of Title 5, United States Code, Known as the Freedom of Information Act, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 88 (1974); and the Freedom of Information Reform Act, United States Statutes at Large Vol. 100 (1986).

<sup>263</sup>Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "The National Archives and the Archival Theorist Revisited, 1954-1984," American Archivist 49.2 (Spring 1986): 130-131.

One result of these initiatives was that it was evident that service to those requesting the information in the records was a paramount concern. In the past, individuals such as Ridge had discussed service as an ideal which records administrators should attempt to attain, but now, it was a reality because of government legislation and because of the value of information to all institutions. This had led to an expanded role for records administrators. As Anthony Rees observed,

Requirements concerning public access to the documents [the archivist] protects brings [him] into the broadest of the contexts in which he lives: that of public service in the most direct and simple sense of the phrase. By public service, ... I refer ... to a full spectrum of people -- both corporate officials and members of the general public. Their demands for information that is credible and comprehensive pushes the archivist beyond the field of the purely statutory public record ... One must also be able to explain where that document came from, what caused its creation, how it has been amended and what effect it has had or continues to have. In short, one must be able to provide its context.<sup>264</sup>

Rees acknowledged that it was the "wish to know" which was the impetus behind internal records administration programs.<sup>265</sup> As Taylor said, "departments should be prepared to hire persons with archival training to function primarily as communicators of the record and its contents to administrators in need of information, even on a long-term basis."<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>264</sup>Anthony L. Rees, "Masters in our Own House?," *Archivaria* 16 (Summer 1983): 55.

<sup>265</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>266</sup>Taylor, "Information Ecology," 31. Paulette Dozois has noted that access to information and protection of privacy legislation was one of the main motivations for the National Archives to develop their regional records centres program, since it was only in this manner that the Archives could respond promptly to records requests or privacy concerns. See Paulette Dozois, "Beyond Ottawa's Reach: The Federal Acquisition of Regional Government Records," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-1992): 58-59. Various case studies indicated that such trends toward openness were also evident at the municipal level. In Albany, a combination of the closeness of municipal governments to the taxpayers who expected accountability, and small budgets which demanded both clear results and the efficient provision of information, meant that records administrators had to come to realize that "local government records management and archival programs are functions conspicuous only when

By the mid-1980's, the old barriers which divided archives and records management were therefore becoming irrelevant: economic efficiency versus historical preservation, active versus inactive, were overshadowed by a world of raising information demands which did not distinguish between different phases of the records' life. Government officials, who once had been satisfied with the information within their reach, could now access the *entire globe* for the information needed, manipulate it in any way they wished, and quickly discard superfluous data with a touch of a computer key. Researchers, heretofore compelled to be content with accessing selected or censored inactive records, now discovered that new legislation allowed them to view any material they desired, whether in an archival institution or still active.

It was primarily the recognition of the opportunities which the new "information commodity" offered which led to a theoretical reevaluation of the relationship between archives and records management. Records did not simply "begin" in the records management sphere and "end up" in the archival zone, but rather flowed in an integrated pattern throughout their existence. The American records administrator Ira Penn made a convincing argument that archives are merely one part of records management:

Until recently records management was, organisationally, a part of the (United States) Archives. But functionally, archives is a part of records management. Archival preservation is but one of the elements of the disposition phase of the records life-cycle, and yet archives had agency status while records management was but an office within that agency.

The entire arrangement was a textbook case of functional misalignment.  
The tail was wagging the dog.<sup>267</sup>

Penn had an alternative view of the records management concept. Unlike many other "records managers," he was not confined only to active records in his interpretation of the records management function. Instead, his assessment of "the life cycle of records management" was more encompassing, since it dealt with the administration of information, rather than the medium it was on. "The essence of records management," he contended, "is that you can control the quantity and quality of *information* that is created; that you can maintain that *information* in a manner that effectively serves your needs; and, that you can efficiently dispose of the *information* when it is no longer necessary."<sup>268</sup>

Thus, like Atherton, Penn had a global understanding of records administration. The difference was the emphasis. While Penn was providing more of a practical model for those who attempting to understand the intricacies of records administration, Atherton was hoping to establish a theoretical model upon which further discussion could be based. Atherton's comment that Penn's contributions were "useful simply because they do look at things from a different viewpoint and, to that extent at least, suggest that traditional approaches need to be picked up and given

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they do not deliver." See Robert W. Arnold, "The Albany Answer: Pragmatic and Tactical Considerations in Local Records Legislative Efforts," American Archivist 51.4 (Fall 1988): 475-479; Richard J. Cox, "The Need for Comprehensive Records Programs in Local Government: Learning by Mistakes in Baltimore, 1947-1982," Provenance 1.2 (Fall 1983): 14-34; and John Daly, "State Archives and Metropolitan Records: The Case of Chicago," American Archivist 51.4 (Fall 1988): 470-474.

<sup>267</sup>Ira A. Penn, "Federal Records Management in the 1980's -- Is Just Like It Was in the 1780's," Records Management Quarterly 18.3 (July 1984): 10. Attention was drawn to this article by Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 46.

<sup>268</sup>Ira A. Penn, "Understanding the Life Cycle Concept of Records Management," Records Management Quarterly 17.3 (July 1983): 5. Emphasis was in the original text.

a good shaking every now and then" is too dismissive: both he and Penn were essentially arguing for a more coordinated and comprehensive organizational approach which would allow for the better control and access of the information the records contained.<sup>269</sup>

It was essentially this concern which was the impetus behind Atherton's article. In the past, theories on the administration of records had been based on how to administer economically and effectively the media upon which the information was contained, rather than the information itself. Concerns for economy and efficiency on one hand, and historical research and posterity on the other, were by the 1980's still recognized as important, but also secondary to the concerns about the proper creation, control, organization, availability, preservation, and destruction of the information itself.<sup>270</sup> It was this realization of the value of information which was the key to why Atherton, and others like him, were able to construct integrated approaches to records administration.

In Canada, the government was not unaware of the impact of the changing information environment on its operations. As an indication of this, Parliament finally replaced the Public Archives Act of 1912 with the National Archives of Canada Act in 1987.<sup>271</sup> This act broadened the powers and responsibilities of the National Archivist by specifying the Archivist's competence, duties, and responsibilities. In addition to the traditional functions of having to store, conserve, and preserve its records, the National Archives now gained, for the first time, the *legislated* authority to "facilitate the management of records of government institutions and of ministerial records."<sup>272</sup>

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<sup>269</sup>Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 46.

<sup>270</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

<sup>271</sup>Canada, National Archives of Canada Act, R.S.C. 1987, c. 1. This act provided for the replacement of the term "Public Archives" with "National Archives," and of "Dominion Archivist" by "National Archivist." (See s. 3.)

<sup>272</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 4(1).

More specifically, the National Archivist had the power to give advice to the departments on the management of records, provide storage facilities for semi-active records, and control the destruction and disposition of all records of the federal government.<sup>273</sup> Additionally, the Archivist also had to fulfil more recent requirements: facilitating access to public records, and providing "information, consultation, research and other services related to archives."<sup>274</sup> Just as individuals such as Rees and Taylor had predicted, the demands by the public for information were compelling archivists to provide not only the records, but also the contextual background which had led to the creation of the records. The Archivist's role was slowly expanding from one of records caretaker to one of information provider. As a result, the powers delegated to the Archivist by Parliament were both more substantial and expansive than any previous legislation.

However, while the National Archives of Canada Act was useful in defining archival responsibilities, it did not entirely give a clear indication of how records were to be administered. The organizational structure of the National Archives showed that records were still seen to be 'crossing over' from records management to the archives branch. The problem was that this was increasingly unfeasible. With the Access to Information Act and the National Archives of Canada Act, records could be accessed whether they were active, semi-active, or inactive, and therefore, a complete or unified view of what was going on was necessary.

In 1989, the Treasury Board published the Management of Government Information Holdings, to ensure the dual policy objectives of "cost-effective and coordinated management of federal government information holdings."<sup>275</sup> This

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<sup>273</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 4(2)(f), s. 4(2)(i), and s. 5(1).

<sup>274</sup>*Ibid.*, s. 4(2)(c), and s. 4(2)(d).

<sup>275</sup>Canada, Treasury Board, Management of Government Information Holdings (Administrative Policy Branch, 1989) 3.

policy had four main components.<sup>276</sup> Firstly, the Treasury Board took a stance similar to the American Paperwork Commission, viewing information holdings as a valuable "corporate resource" which was needed to "support effective decision-making, meet operational requirements, and protect the legal financial and other interests of the government and public." Secondly, as a result of the new emphasis on access, the Treasury Board declared that it was necessary to "make the widest possible use of information within the government by ensuring that it is organized to facilitate access by those who require it." Thirdly, in the interests of efficiency (and the public's right to privacy,) the government was to eliminate the unnecessary collection and dissemination of irrelevant information. Lastly, it was to "identify and conserve information holdings that serve to reconstruct the evolution of policy and program decisions ... and to ensure that such information is organized in a manner to be readily available ...." The last component would ensure both accountability of the government to the public, and the availability for users of information which the records contained.

To accomplish these goals, the Treasury Board supported a more integrated approach for the overall management of information. As the clearest indication of this, two policy requirements for government institutions were particularly pertinent.<sup>277</sup> The first requirement stipulated that they had to "plan, direct, organize and control their information holdings throughout their life cycle, regardless of the form or medium in which the information is held;" the second one pronounced that they had to "maintain a current, comprehensive and structured identification or classification system or systems which provide an effective means for organizing and locating information ...." The Treasury Board advocated such coordination because it viewed it as "necessary in the application of information legislation and to meet

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<sup>276</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>277</sup>*Ibid.*, 4.

government-wide objectives."<sup>278</sup> In other words, it was only by such an approach that the precise information would be organized and easily available by those who needed it, when they needed it.

Significantly, the Treasury Board did not choose the National Archivist to oversee this program. Instead, Statistics Canada was given the responsibility

... for making arrangements between institutions for the co-ordination of information collection; for maintaining a government-wide register of collected information; for providing advice on the use of existing information and on methods and techniques for the co-ordination of information collection planning, and for providing guidelines, advice and training on the professional and technical aspects of collecting information to meet government information needs.<sup>279</sup>

Such a decision most likely resulted from the interpretation of the competence of the National Archivist, who was responsible for records in particular, but not information as a whole. In this narrower scope, it was ordained that "in order to manage the life cycle of information effectively," the Archivist had to continue to administer the retention and disposition of records. This was to be done in "an integrated manner for all information holdings to which the National Archives of Canada Act applies."<sup>280</sup> It was therefore no coincidence that although the Archivist always had some responsibility for the management of government records, there was now a shift in emphasis in the Government Records Branch from "Records Management and Micrographic Systems" to "Information Management Standards and Practices."<sup>281</sup> The latter term, which evoked a broader interpretation of the Archivist's objectives, was reflective of this new approach.

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<sup>278</sup>*Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>279</sup>*Ibid.*, 12.

<sup>280</sup>*Ibid.*, 18.

<sup>281</sup>For examples of how the Archivist had some responsibility for the management of government records, see the National Archives of Canada's Annual Reports for the mid to late 1980's, which discuss the Archives' now traditional administrative role of "providing advisory and operational services in records management." See, for example, Canada, National Archives of

As recent endeavours indicate, the National Archives of Canada is still adjusting to its more expansive role in the administration of records. In 1991, it launched its Government-Wide Plan for the Disposition of Records, 1991-1996, which was intended to remedy many of the problems still encountered since the Corbett-Frost Report of 1979.<sup>282</sup> As Ralph Westington pointed out, past records disposition practices did not fully include all of the requisites necessary for an accurate "picture" of the Federal Government, and a new program was required to fit the "context of the sound and economic management and protection of government information."<sup>283</sup> The new plan would be more inclusive by covering a greater number of government institutions, more regions, and records of all media.

Equally as important, the National Archivist would take on a role which was coordinative rather than participatory, so that the departments themselves would become involved in appraisal while the Archivist had overall control.<sup>284</sup> The National Archives had moved from the sole issue of records disposition of Corbett and Frost to the more encompassing issues of integrated information management. In effect, the plan indicated that the National Archives wished to move from the "present system of reviewing records submissions from departments on an *ad hoc* and passive basis" to an "active approach for disposition." The Archivist would consider the disposition submission of the Departments, thus allowing him to gain control of the "disposition

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Canada, 1986-1987 Annual Report of the National Archives of Canada (Minister of Supply and Services, 1987): 58. To see the change in emphasis from records management to information standards and practices, compare Canada, National Archives of Canada, 1989-1990 Annual Report (Minister of Supply and Services, 1990) and Canada, National Archives of Canada, 1988-1989 Annual Report of the National Archives of Canada (Minister of Supply and Services, 1989).

<sup>282</sup>National Archives of Canada, Government-Wide Plan for the Disposition of Records, 1991-1996 (Internal Report, November 1990).

<sup>283</sup>Ralph Westington, "Development and Application of Records Retention and Disposition Schedules," Archivum: International Review on Archives XXXIX (1994): 59.

<sup>284</sup>*Ibid.*, 57-58.

agenda and function."<sup>285</sup> By so doing, the Archivist allowed the departments to have direct input into how records were to be handled, but this did not necessarily mean that there was less integration. Instead, what was intended was an orchestrated plan designed to control the overall management of the records through an "active, planned and strategic" administrative approach.<sup>286</sup> As the Plan stated,

Better archival appraisal will be possible by adopting a planned, holistic, and comprehensive approach to all information in an institution and between institutions before the formal scheduling of parts of that information takes place, rather than by the passive, reactive, and piecemeal approaches of the past.<sup>287</sup>

By leaving the specific work to the Departments, it was anticipated that the vast quantities of records now being created by the Federal Government could be administered by the Archives through a more encompassing integrated records scheduling process. It was only in this manner that all the records could be properly be appraised while they retained their contextual links. A sense of the need to take the more encompassing view of records was now evident in Canada.

Such a view is also emerging in the United States, but at a slower pace. NARA continues to struggle with records administration issues, but its progress is less notable than that of Canada's National Archives. In fact, NARA still receives criticism for its lack of a "proactive" stance in the administration of active records. It does approve the disposition schedules which Federal agencies must submit, but this is no longer enough.<sup>288</sup> NARA's role in the affair over the potential destruction of presidential electronic mail tapes in the early 1990's led to heavy criticism of the

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<sup>285</sup>National Archives of Canada, Government-Wide Plan for the Disposition of Records, 1-2.

<sup>286</sup>*Ibid.*, 3.

<sup>287</sup>*Ibid.*, 2.

<sup>288</sup>On approving schedules, see for example the National Archives and Records Administration, Annual Report for the Year Ended September 30, 1991 (Washington, D. C.) 23.

methods it has used to address electronics records issues.<sup>289</sup> David Bearman suggested that if in the future archivists (and NARA) wished to continue to be viable, they had to lobby to gain the statutory authority necessary not only to administer active electronic records, but also participate in the design and implementation of electronic records creating systems. "The problems confronting archivists in the management of electronic records," he contended, "will not be solved by employing the techniques that were used to control paper records."<sup>290</sup> He added that

Recently the recognition that electronic records management may require new activity on the part of archives has led to a discussion of program strategies for archives, especially for electronic records. One implication of these discussions is the possibility they present for a radical redefinition of the archival profession and a reintegration of records management and archives. These two areas ... must be recombined if electronic archival records are to be imagined.<sup>291</sup>

Bearman's comments are indicative of how the technological changes of the last three or so decades were finally the catalysts which led to an increasingly common acceptance

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<sup>289</sup>The issue is complicated. At the end of President Ronald Reagan's term in January, 1989, a court challenge was launched to stop the Executive Branch of the United States Government from destroying its electronic mail tapes. NARA's lack of attention to this issue and its apparent willingness to allow the Executive to have its way raised the concerns of those who thought that NARA should be at the forefront of advocating the independent administration and preservation of presidential records. See David Bearman, "The Implications of Armstrong v. Executive of the President for the Archival Management of Electronic Records," American Archivist 56.4 (Fall 1993): 688-689.

<sup>290</sup>Bearman, "Implications of Armstrong v. Executive of the President," 688. In 1992, such paper-controlling techniques were still in evidence at NARA. The institution operated along the traditional lines of the life cycle model. While the Office of Records Administration had responsibility for supervising departments in active records administration, including records management, the Office of the National Archives was responsible for inactive records and the preservation of the nation's documentary heritage. A clear break was thus evident between the active records of the Federal Government, and the inactive records of the Archives. Since it is not possible to make these distinctions, this reality seemed to be a contributing factor to Bearman's complaints. See the National Archives and Records Administration, Annual Report for the Year Ended September 30, 1992 (Washington, D. C.) 20 and 50.

<sup>291</sup>Bearman, "Implications of Armstrong v. Executive of the President," 688.

of a common record administration philosophy for all records managers and archivists, as iterated by Atherton. As Bruce Ambacher noted,

The computer has revolutionized the historical record by altering the ways in which personal, corporate, and governmental records are created, used, maintained, and destroyed or preserved .... Archivists and records managers are being required to accept and care for the data bases, techniques, and systems adopted by their sponsoring agencies, archival clients, and other records creators ....

He goes on to argue that

In the past, most archivists were not part of the computer generation .... This, of course, has changed significantly. Now they must become computer literate. They must understand what machine-readable records and automated techniques are, how they are created, and how they are used. They must be able to communicate with the records creators and custodians of machine-readable records, to instruct them in scheduling their data bases, to determine the archival value of their automated creations, and to guide them on the maintenance and use of both machine-readable records and automated techniques.<sup>292</sup>

This scenario resulted in a fundamental reassessment of traditional archival and records managerial roles. This is not to state that an integrated approach was suddenly and completely embraced by the records administration communities in both Canada and the United States, far from it, but there were discussions about this elemental issue.<sup>293</sup>

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<sup>292</sup>Bruce I. Ambacher, "Managing Machine-Readable Archives," Managing Archives and Archival Institutions, ed. James Gregory Bradsher (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989): 121-122.

<sup>293</sup>In the event, some have felt that the result will be the severing of the relationship between archivists and records managers. Robert L. Sanders, for instance, contended that records scheduling, which provides the common link between archivists and records managers, has been undermined by electronic records. This has happened, he contends, because the "interactive reporting and decision-making" which the current information technology allows for does not support the practice of retaining archival material. Instead, records are frequently altered and disposed of with the support of records managerial efficiency, but with little thought to their long term value. See his "Archivists and Records Managers: Another Marriage in Trouble?" Records Management Quarterly 23.2 (April 1989): 16-17.

The evidence suggests that the days of the "two solitudes" will come to an end. Initiatives in both Canada and the United States, while not always successful, indicate that records administrators are endeavouring to implement processes which will allow for the smooth transition of records from the time from before they are created to the moment they are either discarded or permanently stored. As has been shown, records are now considered a commodity -- indeed, as a tool of power -- and attempts to improve their management has led to a more integrated and controlled approach. Atherton's continuum theory, which was the product of the slow evolution towards this viewpoint, is the most succinct commentary on this trend.

## CONCLUSIONS

It is apparent that it is not effective to implement records administration programs based on the life cycle model. In the past, the division of labour amongst different groups based on the status of the records was, while convenient, not reflective of the singular nature of the records. Atherton's article makes it clear that records administrators must continue to eschew any approach based on a Schellenbergian dichotomy which distinguishes between records and archives, and that they must adopt a philosophy of integrated records administration which advocates continual and uninterrupted management. However, while Atherton was specific in showing why the life cycle model did not work, he did not give details of a program based on the continuum model which would replace it. It is now necessary, therefore, to take the ideas of a unified records administration theory and apply them to a model so that they can be practically implemented in organizations throughout North America.

If records administrators wish to achieve the effective management of their institution's records, they must fulfil two main objectives. First, they must understand that when records are generated they are almost invariably intended to accomplish some operational or administrative intention of the organization, and they must work towards these ends. As Atherton said,

Records are not generated to serve the interests of some future archivist or historian, or even to document for posterity some significant decision or operation. They are created and managed to serve immediate operational needs.<sup>294</sup>

This must be the main objective of records administrators. They must work for their organizations by advocating the importance of ensuring that the records do meet immediate operational or administrative needs. Indeed, it is a truism that the only time

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<sup>294</sup>Atherton, "From Life Cycle to Continuum," 49.

organizations notice the real importance of their records is when they need them for some operational, administrative, evidential, or other purpose, and yet cannot find them, or cannot produce them in a form which is acceptable to the circumstances in which they are required. It is the records administrator's job to ensure that this event occurs as rarely as is possible.

This leads to the second objective for records administrators. After records have served the immediate needs of the organization, they must then act as the effective memory of the activities which led to their generation, obviously for any or all purposes for which they may be used. These records must function as the documentation of the organization by indicating its actions and transactions. The records administrator has an important role in ensuring that this occurs. He or she must work to make sure that the records which are retained as the organization's memory continue to serve the primary function of fulfilling the organization's immediate operational and administrative needs. This can only be accomplished satisfactorily if records administrators have a comprehensive knowledge of how the organization operates and what the records are used for.

Thus, all records administrators have these two goals in common. First and foremost, they must serve their organization by ensuring that records meet satisfactorily the organization's needs. Second, they must reduce the records to only those which will continue to be required by the organization and all other users as evidence of its actions and transactions. There is no functional separation between these two goals: both deal with servicing the various needs of the records' numerous users. As Atherton has said, this service function can only be fulfilled if it is understood that

Records are created to serve an administrative purpose, usually to document a transaction or decision. Their value is directly related to their availability to those requiring them. Hence the need for effective

systems of classification, filing, and retrieval -- and the need to ensure that records of permanent value are preserved and made available when required.<sup>295</sup>

Service is what unifies all records administrators, and ensures that their purpose of an integrated records system may be attained.

Having now identified the objectives of records administrators, it is important to articulate the main elements that are required in such a integrated approach. First, an organization must have in place an institution-wide policy which recognizes not only the importance of its records, but also that they must be managed in a coherent, comprehensive, and integrated manner. Such policy must of necessity contain a broad definition of the records administrator's function. Records administrators cannot simply be viewed as file clerks, but must be understood to have broader responsibilities which allow them to participate in every manner in which records are created, used, stored, preserved, and destroyed. They must move beyond the physical aspects of file management, such as controlling file size or paper disposal, into the wider sphere of how their work can (and does) affect their institution's operational and administrative needs.

This cannot be achieved, however, without the second element required in an integrated approach, and that is the successful achievement of the unity of control, or unity of management, of the records administration program. This factor is crucial for the success of an unified approach, for it recognizes the records' global nature by assuming that although several different persons may be performing various "archival" or "records managerial" functions, they are all controlled by one management philosophy. The conflict between the administrative roles which is so prevalent in the life cycle proposition therefore never occurs with this approach: the

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<sup>295</sup>*Ibid.*, 48.

singular nature of the records themselves and the unifying approach of service to the users becomes the overall policy.

This unity of control approach necessitates that the manager of an institution's records administration program be given the ability or competence to get the job done. What is meant by this is that the manager must have the authority to articulate, enforce, and implement an integrated and coherent approach not only amongst the organization's records administrators, but also within the organization as a whole. It is easy for a promising records program to fail if it does not have from the organization the support it needs to work. A policy which looks excellent in theory will never succeed if the manager of the the records administration program is not given the ability to implement it effectively, or to control those in the program who may have agendas of their own. Such unity of control speaks from the very nature of the integrated conceptualization. An approach which advocates the primary objective of service to the users -- through a management policy which advocates the unified administration of records which allows the records to facilitate the purposes for which they were created and then to be reduced in a timely fashion to act as the institution's memory -- cannot have it any other way.

Both the institution-wide policy and the unity of control elements have been comprehensively detailed by Kathleen Carney. She suggested that a successful approach for an "integrated records management program" would need four objectives. It would need to be: 1) applied on an organization-wide basis, 2) controlled by policies and procedures, 3) standardized, and 4) integrated through coordination (that is, the records administration program should work along the same organizational lines as its parent organization, which inherently is an integrated whole in which all of its parts must be coordinated to fulfil the organization's

mandate).<sup>296</sup> Carney's first two objectives could be facilitated under the institutional policy element; the last two could be accomplished through unity of control.

Carney stated that the objectives of an integrated records management program could be successfully achieved with the inclusion of certain main components. These were: 1) the official assignment of responsibility for records within organizations by delegating the office of primary responsibility, including assigning responsibility to individual workers, 2) a classification system based on intellectual access to the records, rather than based on their physical control, and 3) a retention and disposition plan integrated with the classification scheme.<sup>297</sup> This plan would be most successful, she added, if the institution accepted responsibility for the care, storage, and preservation of its records, and if it maintained documentation indicating how the records system worked and was to be administered.<sup>298</sup>

Carney's plan is commendable and should be adopted as a pragmatic and functional model for records administrators and institutions which advocate an integrated approach. One more component is needed, however, which is not so concrete. There is little doubt that as North America approaches the 21st Century and beyond, it will experience even more radical technological changes which now can only be dreamed about. In this environment, continued awareness and vigilance is necessary if records administrators wish to stay abreast of how changing information technologies will affect the management of the records. This is necessary if records administrators wish to continue with the effective control of records. With the so-called convergence of information technologies, in which different office technologies

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<sup>296</sup>Kathleen Carney, "Managing Integrated Records Systems" (Master of Archival Studies Thesis, University of British Columbia, 1995) 127-133. Carney's "records management program" includes the control of "all aspects of recordmaking and the manner of recordkeeping, including the custody and preservation of accumulated records." See p. 122.

<sup>297</sup>*Ibid.*, 135-140.

<sup>298</sup>*Ibid.*, 140-143.

related to telecommunications, office machines, and computers will be further combined and integrated, new uses and demands will be made not only of the records, but the information they contain.<sup>299</sup> It is this factor, more than any other, which will be the concern of future records administrators.

In the last two decades, records administrators have had to adapt to new demands and rising expectations. This will continue. As before, the impetus behind a more unified records administration strategy will be based on the provision of service to the user. However, the type of service which is expected of the records administrator is changing. With the gradual move from the paper to the electronic media, records administration has been in the midst of "a lengthy transitional period."<sup>300</sup> As institutional hierarchies "downsize" or "flatten," the general office employee has had to take up the roles once held by "middle management" by being able to manage the information resource and contribute to its production. In this new scenario, the end objective "is to empower the end user and to put this person in touch with the appropriate data to compete today and plan for tomorrow."<sup>301</sup>

Furnishing access to the paper record has always been the ultimate concern, but that in itself is not enough now. Frank Burke observed that the computer

replaces functions previously performed by other personnel, and also provides communications and access [directly] to information [and records] produced by others. In many ways, the computer is the file, and information can be accessed without informing anyone, including a

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<sup>299</sup>Angelika Menne-Haritz, "The Impact of Convergence on the Life Cycle of Records," Management of Recorded Information: Converging Disciplines (Proceedings of the International Council on Archives Symposium on Current Records, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa May 15-17, 1989), compiled by Cynthia J. Durance (New York: K. G. Saur, 1990) 122.

<sup>300</sup>*Ibid.*, 123.

<sup>301</sup>Richard M. Kesner, "The Changing Face of Office Documentation: Electronic / Optical Information Technologies (IT): An Analytical Framework for the Review of Trends in Office Automation and its Implications for Archives and Records Management," Information Handling in Offices and Archives, ed. Angelika Menne-Haritz (Munich: K. G. Saur, 1993) 117-118.

secretary, what it is that one wishes to look at .... Anyone who has the equipment, or access it, and proper authorization for access to a file, can use it. Therefore, information available to one is available to all.<sup>302</sup>

The new records administrator, therefore, has a different concern: in the past, it was adequate for records administrators to be concerned only with the preservation of the physical item of the record itself, but now they must also ensure that the *information* which the records contain is also available. Records administrators must come to realize that the importance of their jobs lies as much in the development of new methods so that they may capture and administer the information as it is created and used in the course of activity as it does in storing and retrieving the records it is on. It is this concern which must be behind their approach in the administration of records.

This trend is unlikely to stop. Three factors will compel records administrators to continue in their roles as "information facilitators". First, there is a growing acceptance that people have the right to see the information and / or records which public bodies generate. This has been brought about by the ideals of openness and accountability in public bodies. However, such openness is also balanced by the fact that information about an individual person is considered that person's private property, and may only be used or manipulated in ways that respect this fact. This approach has been fostered and strengthened by the advent of access to information and protection of privacy laws. Such laws are compelling public institutions to alter or "tidy up" their processes for handling information, and for this reason they have also placed new emphasis on the importance of the records administrator's role.

Second, people expect expertise on system management and record or information retrieval. In a world where data crosses the globe in a matter of seconds,

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<sup>302</sup>Frank G Burke, "Chaos through Communications: Archivists, Records Managers, and the Communications Phenomenon," The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor, ed. Barbara L. Craig (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992) 165.

and where multi-million dollar cross-border transactions can occur momentarily, retrieval must occur instantly, completely, and effectively. In this new world, records administrators must participate in continuing education programs on new technological innovations, by learning how such changes affect their profession. Their knowledge must be fortified by their working with computer or information systems experts, whose functions are unmistakably becoming more closely aligned with those of records administrators.

Finally, people expect the control, regulation, and protection of information and records. Such control is required because the quality of the content and structure of data has a direct impact on the effectiveness and completeness of the transactions which are recorded. The common computer cliché "garbage in results in garbage out" succinctly illuminates this point. As Burke has contended, "developing techniques for handling millions of bits of data streaming from one location to another by passing through microwave relay satellites presents a considerably different problem [from] determining the flow of documents from outbox to file cabinet or mail room." It is, he said, "time to begin educating a new generation of records managers and archivists in the mysteries of the new age."<sup>303</sup>

This emphasis on information does not mean that adherence to the principles of records administration should fall by the wayside. On the contrary, the opposite is true. Bearman notes that

the fundamental principles of archival practice, [with] its traditional emphasis on *respect des fonds*, provenance and original order, reflect the evidential value of the context of creation and use. In electronic records management these principles are of even greater importance since randomly stored data are otherwise devoid of context and only

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<sup>303</sup>*Ibid.*, 172.

knowledge of the business application, or provenance, of the system provides guidance for retention.<sup>304</sup>

Records administrators must therefore continue to understand that records are evidence of actions and transactions, of practical activity which gives them their intrinsic and sometimes extrinsic values. It is this recognition which has removed records administrators from Taylor's "historical shunt" and placed them within the realm of information providers -- but the cost has worked to the detriment of traditional cultural interests.<sup>305</sup>

Despite the fact that it is more essential than ever that records administrators adhere to archival principles, they must realize that the time may come when they will have to step outside the bounds of the traditional records specialist. They may have to participate with other information professions, such as computer systems specialists, in the broader domain of information management. To date, most records administrators neither have the training nor the inclination to handle knowledgeably the multitude of new records-creating technologies. This attitude must change. It is folly to assume that to do their jobs, archivists do not need to consult these other information professionals. A movement toward an alliance with systems specialists is vital for the proper care of information that these individuals, as much as records administrators, have to manage.

In fact, the ability of records administrators to discuss technical matters with these systems specialists allows for the greater understanding of the needs of both

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<sup>304</sup>David Bearman, "Archival Data Management to Achieve Organizational Accountability for Electronic Records," Archival Documents: Providing Accountability through Recordkeeping, ed. Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward (Melbourne, Australia: Ancora Press, 1993) 225.

<sup>305</sup>The problem of the diminishing commitment of archival institutions to collect private records is debated between Robert A. J. MacDonald and Christopher Hives, in "Acquiring and Preserving Archival Records - A Debate," Archivaria 38 (Fall 1994): 155-163.

groups: cooperation only enhances the quality and effectiveness of the records which are produced on electronic systems. To use an analogy, a race car driver may be the expert at driving automobiles, but knows better than to attempt the maintenance and care of the car's engine, instead leaving this to the mechanic. The mechanic, on the other hand, would never presume to tell the driver how to win a race. Nonetheless, for both the mechanic and the driver to have the fastest car, they must not only have technical knowledge of each others' field of expertise, but they must also *communicate*. The same idea could be applied to records administrators and other information specialists. The most effective service can only be given to the information user if both work together. The records administrator has the better knowledge of the physical and intellectual forms which together with content comprise a record, while the systems specialist knows more about how the information system can be configured to accommodate this. What this means is that both must work as a team to achieve a level of success that neither could achieve individually.

This, then, is the point which has to be made. Records administrators, while implementing and using the integrated model, should realize that they do not perform their functions in isolation from other information professions. J. Michael Pemberton, in discussing the "information solar system" of which records administrators form a part, noted the slow evolution of common denominators between all information professions. He noted that all of them had the following concerns in common:

1. acquiring information in some recorded [and prescribed] form,
2. storing it in a mode optimal for retrieval [and preservation], and
3. recalling it for use as needed [and as people have the right to see it].<sup>306</sup>

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306J. Michael Pemberton, "Records Management: Planet in an Information Solar System," Proceedings of the ARMA International 35th Annual Conference, November 5-8, 1990, San Francisco, California (Association of Records Managers and Administrators) 828.

It is the guardianship of the information which is now, and will continue to be, the records administrators' and other information professionals' concern. That records administrators specialize in the administration of records does not alter this fact: after all, as agents responsible for their institutions' memory, they are acting to preserve information about the actions and transactions in which their institutions partook. Now, however, records professionals must look beyond the bounds of records administration, and into the wider realm of the common information universe.

The danger of course is that records professionals could simply be swallowed up or overwhelmed by the other specialists who have more prestigious or glamorous jobs. It is no secret that royal battles are sometimes fought between records professionals and other groups such as computer systems specialists, who often seem to have more immediate needs or are able to produce more readily apparent benefits which the seemingly more pedestrian functions of proper records management or records preservation cannot hope to match. Additionally, records professionals could become so overwhelmed by their newly acquired information administration skills that the specific needs for the narrower realm of appropriate records administration are forgotten. What is required, therefore, is for records administrators to continue acquiring a broader knowledge of the information universe, while not forgetting that their ultimate task is the management of the records. They must move forward and partake in this new information exploration enterprise. The alternative is to look to their past role as cultural caretakers, and risk, like the clay tablet and maybe one day the paper record, being rendered obsolete. It is handling this double-jeopardy of obsolescence on the one hand, and absorption by other groups on the other, which will be their biggest challenge for many years to come. It is always better for records administrators to move forward and face the risks

than to look back and be overwhelmed by changes in information technology that they could not, or would not, accept.<sup>307</sup>

North American records professionals have accomplished much in the modern era which began with the French Revolution. Through the years, many have come to understand that their tasks were so interrelated as to be inseparable. The catalyst for a reexamination of their roles has been information technology, and their ultimate objective has always been the preservation of the institutional memory and the provision of service to the users of the records. But in this progression, another transition has also been occurring, and that is the inexorable movement towards closer working ties with other information professions.

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<sup>307</sup>Sam Kula recently lamented the apparent coming end of the "traditional archivist", who is "increasingly marginalized by a world that is process-oriented and intolerant of any data / information that is not instantaneously available." He implied that they would soon be stifled by "those who regard information as a resource and expect to manage it just as long as it generates revenue or meets business operational requirements, and not a second longer." See Sam Kula, "Conference Overview: The Regina Conference / The ACA at Twenty," ACA Bulletin 19.6 (July 1995): 12.

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