

ARCHIVAL THEORY AND ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS

by

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ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to examine in which circumstances archival theory, method and practices may be applied to oral history documents, with regard to appraisal and arrangement and description procedures, and in which circumstances they may not. With the ever increasing quantity of oral history documents being created today, there has been little acknowledgement that oral history collections form a significant portion of archival holdings, and a corresponding lack of archival literature to assist the archivist in dealing with these documents.

Oral history documents have often been isolated from any evidence that they form part of the organic and natural activity of a person, organization or institution. An analysis of how the oral history documents were created will reveal whether an archival approach is in order. Archival fonds provide evidence of the day-to-day activity of their creator (juridical or personal) and may include oral history documents integrated with the other record forms created by an individual, organization, corporation or government department. A collection, on the other hand, does not provide evidence of the day-to-day activity of its creator but is rather a body of historiographical information, focusing on a variety of subjects, created for the sake of posterity. Different standards of appraisal apply to these two cases. Archival practices of appraisal can be applied only to archival documents, and not to collections. If the oral history documents are removed from their

natural office of accumulation and are isolated as sources of information about the past, they are better treated as a collection. The identification of the fundamental difference between an archival fonds and a collection is essential in the archival treatment of oral history documents and must be the first step in their handling. In order to appraise oral history documents within an archival fonds a number of questions need to be answered: who created the oral history documents, for what purpose were the oral history documents created, what relationships do the oral history documents have with other records, do the oral history documents fall within the acquisition policy of the archives, are there any technical considerations which influence appraisal, and considering the answers to all of these questions, what is the cost benefit analysis? The answers to these questions will determine whether the oral history documents are archives. The value of certain documents alone does not make them archival, and the same is true for oral history documents...

The question of whether oral history documents ought to be acquired by archival institutions depends on the *policy* of the institution. When an archives determines what their acquisition policy is with regard to oral history documents -- whether they will acquire collections or restrict themselves to only those oral history documents which form part of an archival fonds -- the application of Rules for Archival Description (RAD) is an important part of the description process. The application of RAD to all forms of records which come within the custody of an archives will distinguish whether they are part of a fonds or not, and if oral history documents form part of an archives holdings they are no exception.

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To my parents

Murdock Angus MacDonald (1895-1970)
and
Mary Willena (nee MacDonald) (1903-1988)

and

my Cape Breton kin

INTRODUCTION

In the world today, there is overwhelming evidence that oral history materials are increasing in volume, rather than diminishing. Many of these materials are found in the custody of archives, libraries, museums and other repositories in Canada. There are situations where oral history created by an individual or an institution *can* be seen as being part of their archival fonds, but in order to determine this one must apply the archival principles of appraisal, selection, arrangement and description in the handling of oral history materials. The question of applying archival principles to oral history documents has rarely, if at all, been the focus of the archival literature, this despite the fact that archival institutions are the primary preservers of oral history documents.

In Canada, a 1994 survey of the National Archives of Canada, the ten Provincial Archives and two Territorial archival repositories (13 public institutions historically referred to as the "DPT archives" but hereafter referred to as NPT)¹ revealed that a total of 46,746 hours of oral history tapes are in their custody (see Table 1). In 1983/84, a similar survey showed these same archival repositories reported a total of 30,012 hours of tapes in their holdings. This represents an increase of 16,734 hours of oral history documents acquired by these 13 public institutions over the last ten years.²

TABLE 1

EXTENT OF ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS

National, Provincial and Territorial Archives

| NPT Institution Surveyed | Hours of Tapes Acquired to 1984 | Hours of Tapes Acquired to 1994 |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| No. 1 | Form not completed | Form not completed |
| No. 2 | 2500 | 6000* |
| No. 3 | 400 | 500 |
| No. 4 | 200 | 700 |
| No. 5 | 42 | 146 |
| No. 6 | 1470 | 2400* |
| No. 7 | 300 | 1500 |
| No. 8 | 7000 | 10,500 |
| No. 9 | 2100 | 2300 |
| No. 10 | 6000 | 9000 |
| No. 11 | 1500 | 3000 |
| No. 12 | 500 | 700 |
| No. 13 | 8000 | 10,000 |
| Totals: | 30,012 hours | 46,746 hours |

* These figures were obtained from the *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada / Guide des fonds d'histoire orale au Canada*. Ottawa: Canadian Oral History Association, 1993.³

These two empirical surveys sought to determine not only the scope of oral history documents handled by NPT archives, but also to note any changes in who were

its creators, the range of acquisition criteria, control procedures, user demand and basic conservation procedures. (A copy of the English language Questionnaire is attached as an Appendix.) This very large amount of material, whether archival or not, reflects the collection policy or mandate of all NPT archives, and it would seem that the provision of adequate archival control procedures is as important for this as for all other forms of record preserved in archival repositories.⁴ The proper handling of oral history documents has a direct bearing on awareness of their existence both now and in the future.

During the 1994 "ten years later" survey, two institutions, due to lack of staff time and resources could not provide information on the size of their collections. In these two cases an approximation of the extent of their holdings was obtained by consulting the *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada / Guide des fonds d'histoire orale au Canada* (1993).⁵ This indexed *Guide* was put together using responses to a questionnaire completed by archives, libraries, museums, associations, corporations and others throughout Canada. It contains descriptions of 1,816 fonds or collections held by 354 repositories in 1992. Many institutions responding to the Canadian Oral History Association's questionnaire listed only their *major* oral history collections and often would estimate their extent; consequently, their total holdings are underestimated.

It is in the context of the above situation that this study was undertaken to examine the literature extant on archives and oral history to try to find basic references for archivists who are handling oral history documents. Its purpose is to pose some essential questions and to examine in which circumstances archival theory, method and

practices apply to oral history documents and circumstances in which they do not, with regard to appraisal and arrangement and description procedures. The thesis to be argued is that there are differences between oral history documents created as part of an archival fonds and those oral history documents generated for information gathering *per se*. Research into the available literature on oral history and archives has found that in the majority of cases the oral history materials themselves do not illuminate an institution's administration, for unlike the administrative records of an institution, whose records have "primary" value to the creating body, the value of oral history is a "secondary" one, constituting materials having informational value only. On the other hand, interviews conducted and recorded as part of an administrative initiative, shedding light on the functions of its creator, *are* created within the context of its other records and therefore form part of the creator's archival fonds.

Chapter One compares the nature of oral history documents with archival records, providing definitions of both and explaining how both are created. In the context of this thesis, the phrase "oral history documents" will refer to the taped interviews (the physical cassette tapes) and the transcripts, summaries or outlines which have been derived from describing their contents. The phrase "oral history materials" will mean the aforementioned physical tapes and information contained thereon as well as all other documentation which will provide the archival staff with a fuller understanding of the context within which the oral history documents were created. Such supplementary documentation would include correspondence, notes and/or outlines indicating the "purpose" for which the interviews were carried out; biographical information on the

informant (interviewee); administrative information on the informant's affiliated institution, if applicable; a list of sample questions used by the interviewer; the location and date of the interview; signed release forms (assigning copyright to the interviewer or sponsoring body) and signed and witnessed access restriction forms, especially if the interviews contain sensitive information which may be wise to restrict for a period of time.

The appraisal for acquisition and selection of oral history documents will be explored in Chapter Two. The more comprehensive the accompanying documentation from the creator or donor, the more assistance the materials will be to the archivist during the appraisal period. Oral history materials forming part of their creator's fonds must be distinguished from oral history documents *per se*. If a document does not have the qualities or characteristics of an archival document or record, it may not necessarily be amenable to management by archival principles. Knowledge of how materials come into existence is a very important factor for an archivist to determine before documents may be adequately appraised, the first and very important archival procedure. The legal issues of copyright and access may also impinge on the appraisal of oral history documents. This chapter looks at the different cast of appraisal depending on whether the documents are part of a fonds or not.

It must be said that while a substantial quantity of material identified as oral history is found in the NPT archives, an absolutely accurate count of oral history tapes is difficult to make because other sound recordings, such as "oral traditions" and "folklore," are lumped together with these records as they are currently described in

many repositories, along with legitimate sound archives, such as conference proceedings, lectures and speeches and radio broadcasts. This is not intended to point to inaccuracies in filling in questionnaires, but rather to shed some light on the problems in the archival treatment of oral history documents and the need for better intellectual control. It is recognized that there is an increasing use of the video camera in the creation of oral history documents, and that this format may bring additional information to the documents through visual appearance and body language, but a full discussion of the factors which come into play in appraising, selecting, arranging and describing videotaped documents will not be focussed on in this paper. Also, the whole question of conservation of oral history documents is the subject of published works generally on sound archival materials, not specifically oral history documents, and will not be addressed in this thesis.

Five broad categories of records creators were suggested in the surveys of 1983/84 and 1994: journalists, university based researchers, historical societies or other community groups, independent private researchers, and the archival staff. NPT archivists added a sixth category of creators called "government funded research and government ministries." An analysis of the results shows a small increase in direct archival involvement in the creation of oral history overall during the past ten years, whereas some of the larger public archives have reduced their pro-active involvement in creating oral history. In 1994, an average of 4.5% of the oral history tapes held in NPT archives were created by journalists, compared to 15.5% in 1983/84, a substantial drop. In 1994, NPT archives reported that 13.4% of their oral history tapes were created by

university based researchers, compared to 18% in 1983/84, a 5% drop. In 1994, 20.5% of oral history tapes held in NPT archives were created by historical societies or other community groups, compared to 24.3% in 1984/84, a 4.3% drop. In the 1994 survey, 36.6% of the NPT oral history tapes were created by independent private researchers, compared 23.2% in 1983/84, a 13.4% increase. In 1994, 9.5% of their oral history tapes were created by government ministries and government funded research, compared with 5.5% in 1983/84, another increase, this time 4%. And, finally, in 1994, 15.5% of the NPT's oral history tapes were created by the archival staff, compared with 13.5% in 1983/84, a slight increase of 2%.⁶ Thus, in the 1990s, journalists, university based researchers and historical societies appear to be responsible for creating *fewer* oral history documents deposited in public archives, whereas independent private researchers, government funded researchers and ministries and archivists appear to be responsible for creating *more* such documents preserved in public archives. In any event, over half of the oral history documents preserved in Canada's NPT repositories were created by independent private researchers, historical societies and other community groups (see Table 2 below).

TABLE 2

CREATORS OF ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS

in National, Provincial and Territorial Archives in Canada

| Years | Journalists | University-based Researchers | Historical Societies or other community groups | Private independent researchers | Government Ministries; government funded researchers | Archival staff |
|-----------|-------------|------------------------------|--|---------------------------------|--|----------------|
| 1983-1984 | 15.5 % | 18.0% | 24.3% | 23.2% | 5.5 % | 13.5 % |
| 1994 | 4.5 % | 13.4% | 20.5% | 36.6% | 9.5 % | 15.5 % |
| D or I | D = 11 % | D = 4.6 % | D = 3.8 % | I = 13.4 % | I = 4.0 % | I = 2 % |

D = decrease; I = increase

A review of *Archivaria*, the Journal of the Association of Canadian Archivists, has found few articles dealing with problems of treating sound recordings in general and oral history documents in particular. While from time to time archivists have responded to requests by book review editors to write reviews of works researched in part using oral history methodology, there has been little acknowledgement that oral history collections form a significant portion of archival holdings, and that their particular characteristics need special consideration. This could suggest two things: either that archivists are dealing with oral history documents in the same way as they deal with all

other records they acquire, or that they are not. If the latter is the case, an examination of archival procedures regarding oral history is timely.

The oral history methodology is widely used. The 1983/84 survey showed that the following subject areas were covered: community and social history, culture and languages, pioneering experiences, genealogy, business history, history of ordinary individuals and leaders, working class and labour history, women's history, native peoples, linguistics, social support agencies, politics, economics, immigration, multiculturalism and ethnic history, folklore, education and radio broadcasts. To those subjects, the 1994 survey added life histories, occupations, medical history, legal history, native languages, stories and songs, traditional knowledge, and recollections of elders, public servants, artists, and historians.

Chapter Three will look at the control of oral history documents, that is arranging, describing and indexing procedures once they find their way to an archives. A hypothetical example of an oral history project will be used to demonstrate the application of the Rules for Archival Description (RAD) to both archival fonds and collections. The final version of RAD for Sound Recordings, Chapter 8, originally to be published by the Bureau of Canadian Archivists in March 1995, is anticipated soon. The embrace of these Rules by NPT archivists and others will ensure the very important task of description of archival records and collections, including oral history documents, will receive uniform treatment. The task of describing oral history documents, however, will be increasingly difficult if archivists accession only audiotapes and videotapes unsupported by other materials. The aim of this study is to demonstrate that the

problems associated with the acquisition of oral history documents are often offset by the richness they add to the complete record of society held in Canadian archives.

One might ask the question "Why bother to write a thesis for an archival studies programme on the topic of oral history documents when this media type lies outside of what constitutes legitimate archival records?" The answer lies in the fact that despite the non-archival nature (in the majority of cases) of oral history documents, overwhelming evidence points to the fact that more and more oral history documents are being created each year and more and more of these taped interviews are finding their way to archival repositories for long-term custody and preservation. This fact alone makes it a worthwhile pursuit to analyze the nature of oral history documents and, in so doing, to try to apply archival principles in dealing with them.

In addition to the results of an empirical survey of the thirteen Canadian public archives, this study is based on a variety of English language secondary sources, including journal articles, books, papers delivered at conferences dealing with the subject of oral history and archives, as well as research into control procedures at the National Archives of Canada and discussions with sound archivists. The author regrets that an analysis of the rich oral history heritage preserved in French Canadian archival repositories is beyond her capability. The theoretical practices used by archivists in handling oral history documents ought to apply universally, regardless of language.

Notes to Introduction

1. A new National Archives of Canada Act in 1987 changed the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) to the NAC, and the name of the Dominion Archivist to the National Archivist. The old acronym DPT referred to Dominion, Provincial and Territorial archives.
2. The 1983-84 and 1994 "DPT Archives and Oral History" statistics referred to here were compiled by Wilma MacDonald from an *Oral History Questionnaire* devised with the assistance of Terry Eastwood and Hugh A. Taylor in 1983. The completed survey forms and reports are part of the archives of the author in Ottawa.
3. Normand Fortier, comp., *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada / Guide des fonds d'histoire orale au Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Oral History Association, 1993), pages 171-173 and 176-178.
4. Québec has nine government archival repositories distributed throughout the Province, each of which was sent a French language questionnaire in 1983-84 and in 1994. One repository only completed the survey form - the same one both times - which explains why the number of responses is not higher than 13.
5. Normand Fortier, comp., *Guide to Oral History Collections*, 1993. Since the entries in the *Guide* are the major collections only, and not listings of their entire holdings, it is likely that these figures are underestimated.
6. Wilma MacDonald's surveys of oral history in Canada's NPT archives, conducted in 1983-84 and 1994, provided the statistics for this ten-year comparison. The reports compiled are in the possession of the author.

CHAPTER ONE

THE NATURE OF ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS

While examples of oral history projects abound in the international oral history literature, and the evidence is very convincing that "archives" are the institutions, more often than not, accepting responsibility for preserving these records, relatively little has been written from the standpoint of the archivist in dealing with oral history documents. Oral history documents have not been regarded as forming part of an organization's or a person's fonds, even though there may be cases where the results of interviews using the methodology may be so regarded. Oral history documents are neither "history" nor "archives" -- they fall somewhere in between the two. This chapter will compare the "natural" character of the creation of archival documents with the "retrospective" nature of the creation of oral history documents, and suggest that oral history documents *may* be considered to be part of an archival fonds in certain circumstances. It will describe the circumstances that lead to the creation of both archives and oral history, and will show that oral history documents are at odds with the nature of archival records, based on traditional archival theory. Determining the precise nature of oral history materials will facilitate comparison of their management with that of archival materials.

The first task is to determine the essential qualities of archives. Jenkinson defined

an archival document as one which was drawn up or used in administrative or executive transactions (public or private), which were preserved for official reference by their creators. Such records were held in unbroken custody as official records generated in the day-to-day conduct of practical affairs. Because they were not drawn up in the interest of posterity, according to Jenkinson, they therefore qualified as authentic and impartial evidence of the conduct of affairs.¹ In 1944, Jenkinson reflected on the role of a good archivist, whom he saw as a very dedicated individual, either professional or volunteer, entrusted with the custody, conservation and making available of the written archival documents which had survived from the distant and not so distant past. Jenkinson also recognized the value of archives to historians to reveal the "activities [of persons other than those] highly placed people engaged in great affairs."² While acknowledging their potential use for purposes other than those of their creator, Jenkinson urged archivists not to forget that archives are created by a natural process and are authentic and impartial, even though users may interpret them in different ways.³ He cautioned archivists not to add or take away, physically or morally, anything from the documents which are entrusted to them, in other words "to preserve unviolated...every element in them, every quality they possessed when they came to him [or her], while at the same time permitting and facilitating handling and use."⁴

Building on Jenkinson's definition of archives by adopting some of the concepts of diplomatics⁵, Eastwood has defined the nature of archives as follows:

"An archives is the whole of the interrelated, unique documents of any kind made and received in the natural course of transactions carried out in the performance of the functions and activities of juridical and physical persons, whether public or private, and preserved as evidence of those functions and activities.... An

archives consists of a complex whole[,] the parts of which are interdependent.... The uniqueness of archives derives from the place each document has in the structure of the whole, from the fact of its position in relation to other documents."⁶

Eastwood goes on to say that an archival document is either part of a transaction and evidence of it, evidence of its observance, or related to actions taken in support of transactions.⁷ In other words, the actions are taken on behalf of or representing a legally constituted body, such as a corporation, organization or government department (a juridical person), or by natural or physical persons in their own right. Archives may be either public or private. In order for a document to fall into the class of archives, it must be set aside consciously as memorial of the action or actions giving it existence. Eastwood states that "people 'remember' what happened through the document, however limited a picture of the world it may reveal."⁸ Document in this sense means any recorded information created in the course of practical activity, a record.

In contrast to the naturalness and organic quality of archival documents as the products of practical activity, when oral history documents come into being as a conscious decision to record someone's memory of events for the benefit of posterity, usually long after the fact and usually with some purpose in mind not directly connected with the conduct of practical affairs, they do not normally qualify as archival records. Normally, an oral history document on its own does not provide evidence of the conduct of the practical affairs of the person initiating the action creating the document (the interviewer); rather it records information about the past experiences of some informant (the interviewee), usually for purposes which might broadly be described as historical or historiographical. In these circumstances, the oral history document is not produced by

and as part of a transaction of practical affairs. Though it provides testimony of past events, it does not have either of the qualities of authenticity or impartiality which Jenkinson ascribes to archival documents. It is not the product of its creator's actions faithfully preserved (authenticity) or evidence of those actions untainted by considerations other than those called forth by the needs of the business at hand (impartiality). As Morrissey puts it, "oral history entails a recorded dialogue in which an historically knowledgeable informant expresses historically significant memories in response to an interviewer-historian who retains archivally [sic] for future use the recollections thus retrieved."⁹ It need only be noted the mere preservation of recorded information in this way does not constitute oral history documents as archival materials.

Oral history documents examined in the context of their creator's activities, in contrast, may be archival. A case arises from the research conducted by a Master's of Archival Studies student for her thesis on faculty papers, in which Fournier interviewed eight professors and tape recorded and transcribed the results.¹⁰ She created these sound recordings as part of the records accumulated in the course of her research. They form part of her fonds, the whole of the records she generates in the course of her various activities as a natural person. In this case, the records of her research have a connection with the records of the University, but they are properly private archival materials in this light. However, how these recordings are treated is vital, and how they are treated very much depends on how they are preserved. On the one hand, the tapes alone might be preserved for the information they bear on professors' record keeping practices; or they may be preserved as part of the records in Fournier's fonds. Of course, it may be that

archivists can influence the manner of preservation the one way or the other.

Interview methodology has been used extensively around the world for purposes other than strictly historiographical ones. A very significant use of the methodology -- an area not focussed on in this thesis, but merely mentioned for its importance to the history of Canada -- is in the reclamation of peoples' cultural heritage today through the recording and preservation of the narration of "oral traditions."¹¹ There are many such programs throughout Canada, especially in the Northwest Territories, Yukon, and Manitoba Archives, and archival staff involvement in their creation will be referred to later in this Chapter. The permanent fixing of these stories onto magnetic tape transforms the dynamic nature of the oral tradition to a static format, the implications of which are beyond this thesis. For instance, in some cases the stories are preserved to keep memory of fast-disappearing languages, customs, and beliefs. The recording of these orally-transmitted stories provides a means to preserve personal, family, community, and national beliefs and practices deemed important to pass along to the next generation. These stories so recorded may assist us in innumerable ways to understand the past, and even help us to resolve politically past injustices which may have been committed, but they do not substitute for records of actions taken in the past or the testimony of those directly involved as judged in legal proceedings.

This study will confine itself to looking at oral history documents which capture a person's memories, experiences, reflections and feelings about their working lives, their knowledge of certain subjects or themes, and their perceptions of events or how they influenced them. In some cases oral history provides the only opportunity to

reconstruct events which cannot be documented in any other way. Dick has reported that the controversial CBC television mini-series, "The Valour and the Horror," relied more heavily upon oral history interviews "than any other type of archival [sic] records."¹² A collection of interviews initiated in the early 1970s by the Manitoba Museum of Man with the Winnipeg Grenadiers provided the backbone for one of the episodes, and about 100 subsequent interviews were conducted by researchers for other episodes. Dick noted that all interviews were transcribed and indexed and that the producer fully intended to deposit these interviews in an archival institution.¹³ The strength of oral history as primary documents, the raw material from which published works may emanate sometime in the future, attests to the importance of preserving it in the custody of an archives or museum, as was done by the Manitoba Museum of Man in the 1970s. But, once again, it must be emphasized that preservation alone does not endow these documents with archival quality as Dick asserts.

Oral history interviews may obtain from leaders in politics very candid, anecdotal information to supplement official records. Most political biographies are based partly on interviews, some acknowledged, others not. Sharpe's recent work on women in the world of Canadian politics cites a large number of interviews.¹⁴ Here again the question arises as to whether these interviews will be preserved with the creator's fonds, interrelated with her other records and at some future date deposited in an archives, or whether they will meet the fate of many taped interviews and gather dust in their creator's basement.

The average person is much more frank and forthcoming when speaking, even in

the presence of a micropophone and recording machine, than when writing.¹⁵ This statement is probably very true of the political leaders who consent to be interviewed through the Joint Library of Parliament/National Archives of Canada Oral History Interviews Programme, with which Stursberg had been involved for many years.¹⁶ Stursberg's interviews led to his published works on former prime ministers John G. Diefenbaker and Lester B. Pearson as well as former Governor General Roland Michener.¹⁷ This national oral history project aims to achieve an historical balance and perspective. It selects interviewees who have a long political involvement (federally or provincially) for whom there is a lack of published material, and who can demonstrate knowledge of historical events.¹⁸ Interviewers are selected on the basis of their research abilities. They must be sufficiently well-versed in the context of Canadian politics and government and knowledgeable enough in its details to formulate perceptive questions.¹⁹ It is important to note that while interviewees are given an opportunity to review typed transcripts of their interviews, and correct errors or even amend them, the archives preserves the original sound recordings unchanged. Access restrictions may apply if their memories are quite candid. A copy of the edited transcript is provided to the interviewee.

Oral history may provide background information on how business is done or decisions carried out in the corporate world as well and it is this desire to capture information on a variety of themes that motivates the oral history exercise. Proponents of its use all agree that it is a valuable tool of investigation of the past, and that its products can then be used to describe and evaluate past events. Thompson has said:

"Oral history is not necessarily an instrument for change; it depends upon the spirit in which it is used. Nevertheless, oral history certainly can be a means for transforming both the content and the purpose of history. It can be used to change the focus of history itself, and open up new areas of inquiry; it can break down barriers between teachers and students, between generations, between educational institutions and the world outside; and in the writing of history--whether in books, or museums, or radio and film--it can give back to the people who made and experienced history, through their own words, a central place."²⁰

It is in these two senses, as a tool of investigation, and as a source of historiographical information that we must look at oral history.

The question arises as to whether in certain contexts oral history documents may be regarded as being archival. Suppose a corporate president requests that interviews be conducted with the participants in a particularly successful company project so that they can see what made it successful and strive to repeat the success in other company ventures. Does that kind of context and purpose make the resulting documents archival? In an obvious sense, they are created for a practical purpose, to determine future actions of the company. Nowadays, corporate actors (juridical persons) create all kinds of evaluative reports and other documents to support activities. These supporting documents are among the documents that constitute the archives of the business concern. In this sense, they can be considered archival, as being among the many related documents made and received in the course of the conduct of affairs, but it is only in conjunction with other records that they can truly be considered archival. For instance, the records (assuming they were made and preserved) requesting the conduct of the interviews and others that were created relying on the results of the interviews and connected with business decisions can clearly be regarded as being archival. But what about the

documentation of the interviews themselves, are they archival in this context?

The best way to answer this question is to find a comparison with more familiar documents. In all kinds of practical affairs, the actors must draw on sources of information about matters both internal and external to the context of their practical activities. The corporate president might have asked that other companies' successes be investigated, and a report on the relevance to his company be made. All kinds of documentation might have been assembled to support the creation of the report, and subsequently have been preserved in files kept of the conduct of the project report. This source documentation for the report will forever remain more remote from action and transaction than the report itself or any documents associated with its transmission and use in decision making. Nonetheless, there is a case for these source documents for the report being considered archival, but not if they are removed from any possibility of relationship with all of the documents of the complex processes of the company's activities. If that happens, the interview documents lose an essential feature of their archival nature. They can no longer be related to the affairs of the company, and therefore can have no meaning in relation to those affairs.

Thus, from an archival perspective, the large question for all oral history documents which are created in the context of some juridical or natural person's practical affairs is whether or not they are, and need continually to be, preserved in the context of records to which they are archivally related.

The oral history document is the end product of a dialogue between two people, the interviewer who asks the questions and guides the direction of the interview and the

informant who responds to the questions asked.²¹ Usually this dialogue is mechanically recorded on a cassette tape recorder or a videotape recorder. Since the invention of the tape recorder, oral history documents have been mechanically created. The taped interview is regarded as being the "primary" document in Canada, because it contains the most complete record of what transpired during the interview, in particular as regards personality traits, speech patterns and inflection, dialects, and humour.

In fact, most oral history documents do not arise in the course of affairs in the way just explored. Rather they are the product of a decision to record information about past events or experiences, usually as a tool or source of the writing of history. It is probably a misnomer to call the kind of documents which arise in the course of affairs and just happen to be tape recorded interviews oral history documents. The purpose of them was not historiographical, that is to provide sources for the writing of history, but to facilitate some practical affairs. For the sake of convenience, the term oral history documents herein will refer to both those documents with a historiographical purpose in mind, directly or indirectly, and those with an archival purpose in mind, unless otherwise explained. The information so recorded is selective and subjective. It will reflect the purpose for which the interview or dialogue is held. In this sense, Treleven observes that "the [oral history] document is totally dependent upon the intervention of the oral historian, tape recorder in hand, and his or her ideas, interests, values, and ambitions...."²² It also relies on the informant's memory to recall events and experiences in his or her life. The circumstances of the interview, including the presence of a tape recorder or a third person making a videotape of the proceedings, affect the kind and

quality of the information which will be recorded. The informant must be willing to be interviewed, so in a very real sense the resulting document is a collaborative effort, which, provided its circumstances are understood, can be used as a source of information about the events or experiences broached in the interview by other than the original collaborators and for any conceivable purpose. That is, like archival documents, oral history documents may have primary value or utility in direct association with the purposes of the interviewer, as for instance to aid in the writing of a book of history, and secondary value for others and other purposes (such as a radio program).

For instance, Marcuse, a creator of oral history documents himself as well as a user of documents created by others, benefitted from the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's (CBC) extensive archives of original interviews to produce twenty hours of network programs on CBC Stereo's "Mostly Music" featuring Canadian music and people in the arts during the fiftieth anniversary of the CBC in 1986. Marcuse also used interviews of Ottawa mandarins created by Donald Brittain for the National Film Board (NFB) film entitled *On Guard For Thee* in preparing his "Cold War in Canada" documentary on the CBC Radio series "Ideas" in 1984.²³ Marcuse's experience reveals the multiple use of oral history documents, and shows how they are mainly valuable as sources of information about past events, rather than direct evidence of it.

A question arises as to whether oral history documents created by a historian would be part of his or her archives. The same question arises in the case of an organization like a historical society conducting oral history projects as part of its mandate. In both cases, the oral history documents are created in the course of practical

activity. Research is the business or practical activity of the historian; preserving all manner of materials bearing on the history of the community is the business or practical activity of the historical society. In both cases, other related documents (a list of informants, interviewers' notes of preparation, and so on) may have been created and preserved. All these documents, including the recorded interviews, could in these terms (naturalness and interrelatedness) be considered to be part of the archives of the historian and the historical society, and therefore to deserve archival treatment.

But do the oral history documents thereby acquire the qualities of authenticity and impartiality? They are certainly authentic with respect to their creators. That is, they were generated and faithfully preserved in the course of their practical activities to achieve their proper purposes. They are also impartial with respect to their creators. That is, the oral history documents provide evidence of the activity untainted by any outside concerns. The finished document does provide evidence of the purpose and activities of the historian or historical society, if it is looked at strictly from that point of view.

The matter of impartiality is perhaps clouded by the question of the reliability of the evidence of events and experiences given by the informant. That is another question altogether. Thompson has stated, "in contrast to any other historical document, oral evidence comes from a living source. If it seems misleading, it is possible to ask more. And an informant can also correct a historian who has misunderstood. Documents cannot answer back, but oral history is a two-way process."²⁴ Archival impartiality implies reliability in the sense that archival documents may be trusted because they have

not been created with a concern to speak to posterity. In this sense, it would seem, the oral history documents are impartial and reliable with regard to the processes of which they are a part but not as to their content, which is a conscious reflection on past events for the benefit of posterity. If all we have is the oral history documents preserved for their contents, there is no alternative but to treat them as non-archival, in the same way we would an isolated written reminiscence or autobiographical account of past events and experiences.

Once the matter focusses on the content of the document and its quality as historical evidence, a host of questions and issues which are strictly speaking not the province of the archivist enter into the picture. Every person who is a witness to an event has his or her own perspective, point of view, and way of describing what happened. Furthermore, the events being recalled are frequently filtered through several intervening years of the informant's life. So the reliability of the contents of the oral history document as evidence of events depends on the reliability of the informant's memory, and that is conditioned by factors outside the evaluation or methods of the archivist to determine.²⁵

One cannot write on this topic and deny the fact that archivists have, in the past if not today, influenced the creation of oral history documents by interviewing informants themselves or by setting up workshops to instruct others who, in turn, carry out projects. Such active participation came from a desire to broaden the resources found in their repositories on specific themes, to fill in gaps in the written records, and to ensure that the technical quality of oral histories met proper standards.

In North America, if not in Europe, the archival profession has grown from its roots in the academic discipline of *history* and traditional historians saw nothing wrong with creating oral sources in response to research demands. In fact, had not archivists taken an interest in documenting various facets of society in their unique regions of this continent, the historical sources today would be diminished, informationally speaking, as a result. Early NPT archivists, such as Lewis H. Thomas in Saskatchewan, are good examples of this kind of archivist. One of the first archivists in Canada to use oral history methodology as Provincial Archivist for Saskatchewan, in 1955, Thomas interviewed Gabrielle Leveille, born in White Horse Plains, near the Red River settlement, who resided in Maple Creek around the 1860s. Leveille's father, a speaker of the Sioux language, was a guide who assisted the Northwest Mounted Police in helping to negotiate a truce with Chief Sitting Bull and his Indian band near Fort Walsh. Leveille's personal memories went back to buffalo hunts on the prairies, travel between Fort Walsh and Montana, Metis interaction with the police, and the days of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont. Archivist Thomas, by the interview method, obtained considerable supplementary information to fill in gaps in the written record. In hindsight, it is easy to see that the product of his work provides a valuable source of information about life on the Prairies at a time when few other documentary sources were created.²⁶

As we have seen above, records have archival quality by their origins as the natural product of the conduct or transaction of business, their uniqueness, their functionality, and the fact of their being set aside with their relationships with other records preserved. If the making of oral history documents has taken place during the

course of some corporate or personal business, and those documents continue to be seen in that context and in relation to other records, they may be seen as constituting part of a fonds. Examples would be a Native Indian band recording the memories of its elders as part of its preparation for a land claims case, or an historian interviewing the children or colleagues of his biographical subject as part of his research. These actions may again be regarded as part and parcel of the band's or historian's natural activity and the products form an integral part of their archival fonds. Such activities can be viewed as organic and natural outgrowths of their activities, and the end products must form part of their total body of records, or archival fonds.

In fact, most oral history documents have been generated and preserved as sources of information about the past pure and simple, with no concern for their archival qualities, even assuming they may have ever had any such qualities. Whenever interviews are conducted for oral history's sake, to record information about the past for the benefit of posterity, the products of the exercise lie outside the realm of archival records. As documents, they shed no light on the activities and functioning of their creator. They exist as a special kind of historical information made possible by modern recording technology.

Often times, this kind of doing of oral history as the means to the end of creating source materials for the study of the past leads to a series of edits and manipulations of the original recorded interviews. In some cases, a transcript is made and tapes of the original document erased and reused. The concern in such cases is to present information about the past in a palatable form for the future. For instance, following on

the efforts of H.H. Bancroft to record reminiscences of pioneers, the Bancroft Library at the University of California at Berkeley interviewed early settlers of the American West to augment its holdings of Western Americana and archival material related to the same region. Bancroft claimed his library contained 200 volumes of original narratives from the memories of early Californians, native and pioneer, written by themselves or taken down from their lips. The Bancroft Library quickly converted interviews to transcript form and the transcripts became the format deposited in the library for public reference and subsequent literary publication. These personal accounts provided the basis for a form of journalist-history of the time.²⁷ Hugh A. Taylor has commented that the United States, as the first nation to be built entirely upon literacy and the printed word, takes the survival of the printed for granted as all that needs to survive.²⁸

In these cases, oral history documents are created for posterity! They are *about* an activity in the past, not *part of* the activity of a person or institution.²⁹ Oral history documents come "after the facts" of some event, and are reflective on it and not part of it. In such cases oral history documents are ends in themselves.³⁰ However, oral history documents may occur in circumstances that make them part of an archival fonds. In such cases, they would have to be looked at in the context of how and why they were created to determine whether or not to treat them archivally. So, the context within which oral history documents are created may be either historiographical or administrative. In the former case, the documents are better treated outside the precepts of archival science, and in the latter case inside them, for reasons which Eastwood makes clear:

"Because archives are the natural outgrowth of continuing activity, no archival document stands alone; rather, each is part of a network of documents related

by virtue of the activity and documentary processes and procedures creating them. Archivists' obligation is two-fold: they must not obscure or impair the relationships among interrelated documents, and they must make the relationships evident to the users of archives...."³¹

Archives may be used for secondary or informational purposes to draw inferences about what occurred in the past, and why it occurred, but that is a question of use, not origin.

The treatment of oral history documents when they have archival quality provides few serious issues for archivists and archival repositories. They must be treated as any other archival document. If they do not have archival quality, how then should they be treated? There is a considerable literature on this subject, which can be examined from an archival perspective.

Notes for Chapter 1

1. Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration*, 2nd ed., (London: P. Lund, Humphries, 1965).
2. Hilary Jenkinson, "Reflections of an Archivist," *A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice*, edited by Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch. (Washington: National Archives and Records Service, 1984), 16. Here Jenkinson was referring to the books of Mr. and Mrs. Sidney Webb on local administration.
3. Ibid, 18.
4. Ibid, 20.
5. In this connection, Terry Eastwood cites on page 72, note 2, the work of Luciana Duranti, "Diplomatics: New Uses for an Old Science," *Archivaria* 28 (Summer 1989): 7-27 *et seq.*
6. Terry Eastwood, "Towards a Social Theory of Appraisal," *The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 72.
7. Ibid, 73.
8. Ibid, 74.
9. Charles T. Morrissey, "Beyond Oral Evidence: Speaking (Con)Strictly About Oral History," *Archival Issues, Journal of the Midwest Archives Conference* 17 (1992): 92.
10. Frances Fournier, "'For they would gladly learn and gladly teach' -- University Faculty and Their Papers: A Challenge for Archivists." *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992): 72, endnote 9.
11. For articles on aboriginal records as legal evidence, see Mary Ann Pylypchuk, "The value of Aboriginal Records as Legal Evidence in Canada: An Examination of Sources." *Archivaria* 32 (Summer 1991): 51-77 and "A Documentary Approach to Aboriginal Archives." *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92): 117-124.

12. Ernest J. Dick, "History on Television: A Critical Archival Examination of '*The Valour and the Horror*.'" *Archivaria* 34 (Summer 1992): 208.
13. Ibid, 208. At the time Dick wrote this article, Brian McKenna had made no arrangements to that effect.
14. Sydney Sharpe, *The Gilded Ghetto: Women and Political Power in Canada*. Toronto: Harper Collins, 1994.
15. Peter Stursberg, "Oral History." *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Volume II, For - Pat. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishers (1985): 1331.
16. The Peter Stursberg manuscript collection at the National Archives of Canada (MG 31, D 78) includes transcripts of his interviews recorded between 1976 and 1981 (Vols. 28-38). See Finding Aid 467.
17. Peter Stursberg is the author of *Diefenbaker: leadership gained, 1956-62*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1975; *Diefenbaker: leadership lost, 1962-67*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976; *Lester Pearson and the American Dilemma*. Toronto and Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Canada and Doubleday & Co., 1980; and *Roland Michener: the last viceroy*. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson, 1989.
18. Joint Library of Parliament/National Archives of Canada Project: Oral History Interviews Programme. "Project Guidelines." 90.05.04 (typescript, 3 pg.).
19. Ibid, 2.
20. Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, 2. Paperback edition reprinted in 1982. Second edition published in 1988.
21. Another technique sometimes used is to interview two or more people at the same time who assist one another in remembering.
22. Dale Treleven, "Oral History and the Archival Community: Common Concerns about Documenting Twentieth-Century Life." *International Journal of Oral History* 10 (1989): 52.
23. Telephone interview with Gary Marcuse, free-lance broadcaster, Vancouver, 1 May 1995. Marcuse's collection No. 1987-0259 in the National Archives of Canada contains interviews with politicians, public servants and others in preparation for radio documentaries. Marcuse's new book, *Cold War in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995) lists the names of all of his informants.
24. Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, 137.

25. For a complete discussion on the reliability of oral history documents as evidence, see Thompson, Chapter 4, "Evidence:" 91-137.
26. Lewis H. Thomas, oral history interview No. R-5986/7 of Gabrielle Leveille. Regina: Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1955.
27. The "history mill" of the California businessman-turned-historian resulted in a 39-volume set of the *Works of Hubert Howe Bancroft* and a 7-volume set of *Chronicles of the Builders*. See Willa K. Baum, "Oral History, A Revived Tradition at the Bancroft Library," *Pacific North West Quarterly* (April 1967): 57-64, and Richard D. Curtiss, Gary L. Shumway and Shirley E. Stephenson, *A Guide for Oral History Programs*. California State University Fullerton, Oral History Program, and Southern California Local History Council, 1973, 7.
28. Hugh A. Taylor, "The Collective Memory: Archives and Libraries as Heritage." *Archives, Libraries and the Canadian Heritage: Essays in Honour of W. Kaye Lamb - Archivaria* 15 (Winter 1982-83): 129.
29. David Bearman, speaking at a seminar on Electronic Records Management, Sydney, 7 June 1993, expressed that "...archives are *of*, not *about* activity." Endnote 13 quoted by Ann Pederson in "Unlocking Hidden Treasures Through Description: Comments on Archival Voyages of Discovery." *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994): 51.
30. Heather MacNeil, "Archival Theory and Practice: Between Two Paradigms." *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994): 9.
31. Terry Eastwood, "Educating Archivists About Information Technology." *The American Archivist* 56 (Summer 1993): 466.

CHAPTER TWO

APPRAISAL FOR ACQUISITION AND SELECTION OF ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS

"In the same way as historians have turned gradually towards *tableaux* rather than stories, archivists try to put societal templates at the centre of appraisal. Of course, the subjective and even artistic nature of appraisal cannot be completely eliminated -- and thank God for it, for the cold nature of absolute theory and science often stifles the human element on which history must also feed."¹

Appraisal is the cornerstone of archival acquisition, the first step in a process designed to acquire records which fall within the collections mandate of an archival repository. This chapter will define appraisal and within an analytical framework examine the questions which are normally posed by the archivist when appraising archival records, but in this case applying them to oral history documents. Whether archival practices of appraisal can be applied to oral history documents, either as part of an archival fonds created in the context of related documents or as a collection of documents and important primarily for their informational content, is a question worthy of raising in view of the quantity of oral history documents being created.

There are many advocates for the preservation of oral history documents in archives. David Lance, Jim Fogerty and Derek Reimer represent slightly different

perspectives on the value of oral history documents. Lance looks at oral history documents in the context of other sources of information for historical research. He believes that oral histories provide information which reveals feelings as well as intellect. He believes that they also provide personal and anecdotal information which complement other sources where they are lacking. Finally, he argues that, "for studying many social and occupational groups which do not leave written records of their lives and work, oral history is a fundamental and sometimes the only tool in terms of historical research."²

Lance is solely concerned with the value of oral history as a tool of historical research and exposition of the past. He believes that its greatest value is exploited in broadcasting, in audio publication, in museums, and in schools and colleges as teaching aids to help bring the past alive again.³ He makes no mention of functional analysis, that is the complete range of archival analysis of the origin, purpose, and interrelationships of the records in question. Lance's views, which are supposedly from an archival, but really from a preservation, perspective are echoed by all the historians who have seriously argued for the value of oral history, like Allan Nevins, Paul Thompson, Ronald Grele, and David Henige, as well as Jean Elaine Mann Kendal and Shirley Elizabeth Stephenson.⁴

Jim Fogerty takes another view of the matter. He is dismayed by the vast range of oral history material, and searches for some way to connect oral history with preservation of organizational records. He comes up with the idea, frequently bruited by the proponents of oral history, that it can be used to reveal the motivation behind corporate decision making. "The actual reasons behind important decisions may bear

startlingly little relation to the apparent facts, as any historian who has interviewed the subject of his research can attest."⁵ If this is the motive, rather than some purpose which the corporation itself determines in the course of its activities, then we have oral history documents not as archives but as a separate species of documentation produced with a completely different purpose in mind than the records which are part of activities of the creator of a fonds.

Corporate use of oral history along the lines of Fogerty's ideas is not unknown. For instance, in 1956 some 82 "personal interviews with senior personnel" of Ontario Hydro were conducted under the aegis of the corporation's archives unit on such topics as energy, labour relations, politics and government.⁶ Presumably, they had ends similar to those put forward by Fogerty, but in any event, they do not seem to have served continuing administrative, executive or other needs of the corporation, and therefore would be unrelated by function to its records. Of course, the oral history documents likely have great value to the corporation, and they are therefore worthy of preservation, even by the archives unit, but they are not archival records, and need not be evaluated as archival records.

Derek Reimer also finds a distinctive purpose for oral history. He sees its value as a corrective to the biases and elitism of official records of the large organizations which dominate our lives. He believes that it is irresponsible for archivists to disregard the history of the mass of ordinary people whose personal experiences were affected by such powerful organizations.⁷ For Reimer, oral history must serve an ideological end by correcting what he sees as misrepresentations in the archival record. The contention

that archival appraisal ought to be used to produce a record representative of everyone has found its way into recent discourse and it is highly controversial. Jean Dryden spoke against archivists' involvement in oral history, for three reasons: archivists are custodians, not creators, of records; archivists could lack the subject expertise required to carry out projects; and the costs would be too high to do the job properly.⁸ In the main, archivists continue to understand that the records of organizations and persons provide evidence of their functioning, and it is up to others to interpret the past through the use of records. Like Fogerty, Reimer finds a completely different original purpose for oral history documents than records serve at their origin.

It would appear, then, that discussion of the value of oral history lies outside the discourse about archival appraisal, even though it echoes some of the debates which have gone on about appraisal.

After years in which oral history documents were subject to considerable skepticism, in 1988, Moss declared that oral history had come to be an accepted addition to the historical evidence which was available for research. He also noted that they were finding their way into the holdings of archival institutions. "Archives are being required to accept and administer increasing volumes of oral history, just as they are also accepting other forms of non-paper documentation that were uncommon in archives of an earlier generation."⁹ Moss and Mazikana have argued that oral history documents should be appraised in the same manner as archival materials. As they put it,

"The archivist must not be uncritical in acceptance of all oral source materials offered. He must appraise the content value of oral sources just as he would that of written sources, and must recommend acceptance into the archives, retention of the materials, or appropriate disposition of the

records based on their legal, administrative, evidential, historical, and informational values."¹⁰

Hidden in this argument are several contentions which need examination. Moss assumes that appraisal is largely a matter of determining the "content value" of the documents in question, and that this will resolve itself into consideration of legal, administrative, evidential, historical, and informational values. This chapter will examine the contention that traditional notions of these values can be applied to oral history documents.

Appraisal is the process of evaluating archival documents for the purpose of continuing preservation. The Society of American Archivists (SAA) defines it more elaborately as "the process of determining the value and thus the disposition of records based upon their current administrative, legal, and fiscal use; their evidential and informational value; their arrangement and condition; their intrinsic value; and their relationship to other records."¹¹ This definition makes it clear that a number of values or considerations are taken into account during appraisal. We need, then, to look at the values which authorities on appraisal of oral history documents have advanced, and whether they accord with the traditional view of archival appraisal. To do that, we must first look at the traditional outlook on archival appraisal.

The Traditional View of Archival Appraisal

Ham has provided a framework within which the archivist may perform appraisal. Of course, it is assumed that archival institutions first establish an acquisitions policy, an official statement identifying the kinds of material it will acquire and the conditions

or terms affecting acquisitions. Ham then sets out a framework for evaluation based on an analysis of the functions to which the records are connected, their content, their context, their use, and cost-benefit considerations.

By functional analysis Ham means an examination of who created the record and for what purpose to determine the evidential or informational significance of records. This analysis is based on the premise that archivists must understand the relationship between the records and the creator's functions and activities, if they are to understand the records' significance.¹²

Functional analysis leads the appraiser to understand how the records came into being and the interconnections among the activities of the person. This provides the necessary context of the origin of the records and how they are related. It seeks to ensure that appraisal does not destroy the value of records given to them by their origin in the context of interrelated activities. Any given record obtains a vital part of its value from its relationships with other records participating in the same activities.

Functional analysis is very important in evaluating oral history documents. In fact, it would determine whether or not they are being evaluated as archives. Without placing the oral history documents in the context of the creator's activities and determining their relationships with other documents, one is left to fall back on evaluating their content alone, as Ward suggests, and on considerations of their secondary value as historical research material.¹³

To illustrate the matter, we can look at professional researchers who produce oral history documents in the course of various projects. For instance, the historian David

Bercuson recorded interviews with former labour leaders and members of the special police forces about the Winnipeg General Strike of 1919 for a book on the subject.¹⁴ The tapes were subsequently acquired by the then Public Archives, now the National Archives of Canada (NAC).¹⁵ This early 1970s acquisition is indicative of the general importance that theme and national significance played in its collection mandate, especially in the acquisition of private papers. An oral history collection on a national issue may have been acquired even though it was created by a regional or local body.¹⁶

Another example is that of Canadian historian Irving Abella who conducted several interviews with figures in the labour movement in the course of his research for subsequent articles and books.¹⁷ Copies of taped interviews were subsequently acquired by the Archives of Ontario¹⁸. It could be argued that no consideration was given in both these cases to evaluating the oral history documents as part of the records of their creators, David Bercuson as a professor in the Department of History at the University of Calgary and Irving Abella as a professor in the Department of History at York University, and no recognition that they formed part of the documents accumulated in the course of their work. These records, such as correspondence with the interviewees, notes about them, distillations of the testimony of interviewees, and so on, would throw light on how Bercuson and Abella went about their research to create and use the interviews. If the aim is to provide an adequate picture of the conduct of that business, the taped product alone is not enough.

By content analysis, Ham means the significance of the subjects or topics about which the records speak.¹⁹ Essentially, he is in the realm of what the Society of

American Archivists' definition says is informational value. There is no doubt that oral history documents can easily be evaluated for their content, for how well they provide information about subjects or topics which the appraiser, using some criterion or another, can judge to be significant. Most oral history documents have been evaluated in these terms. Lance is using a content and context analysis in Ham's terms in the example given above. However, archival appraisal is not performed on informational value alone.

By context analysis, Ham means the wider information environment is taken into consideration during appraisal.²⁰ This is really a concept related to content analysis. If content analysis is the heart of the matter, it is perfectly logical to take the wider information environment into consideration, but that leaves all the values mentioned in the SAA definition, such as evidential, legal, fiscal and administrative values out of the equation. Some would argue that most oral history documents are evaluated on the basis of their content in relation to available information about the subjects of which they speak, and that they have rarely been subjected to archival appraisal. Others would suggest that oral history documents are appraised in the same manner as all other archival records regardless of form. There are, in practice, in large institutions like the NAC a number of steps in the appraisal process, two of the most important being to assess the contents of the record and its technical aspects. A complete evaluation of sound documents cannot be made unless both steps are taken.²¹ Content, context and condition are most likely the major facets of the appraisal process carried out today, and the overriding consideration in the real world of diminishing resources is whether an institution can afford to carry out its mandate fully. Often in the real world priorities

have to be set and in the area of acquisition hard decisions have to be made.

By use and cost-benefit analysis, Ham means bringing technical and other considerations of stability and durability, cost of processing and maintaining, and the like into play.²² Some of these factors come into archival appraisal before other aspects of the evaluation have been performed, especially where sound documents are on obsolete formats which are incapable of being auditioned using today's technology. In such cases appraisal is virtually impossible, the contents unknowable. Should a potentially valuable record be so deteriorated physically that extensive conservation work would be required to identify its contents for appraisal, the acquisition process may be stopped or reconsidered.²³ In these cases, the benefit of having valuable records must be weighed against the cost of preserving them. (The conservation of oral history materials, however, is another topic beyond the capability of this paper.)

Although there are problems in the application of Ham's categories, they do present a useful structure for the discussion of ideas about the appraisal of oral history documents. They can be used to see whether the authorities on evaluation of oral history documents have taken an archival approach or not.

An Archival Approach to Appraisal of Oral History

In order to take an archival approach to oral history, a number of questions need to be asked and answered.

1. Who created the oral history documents?

This is a fundamental archival question. What is the provenance of the documents

in question? If we take the three cases already cited in this chapter, we can see that in one case the creator is David Bercuson, professor of History at the University of Calgary. In the second, the creator is Irving Abella, Professor of History at York University, and in the third, it is Ontario Hydro. It is worth noting that copies of the tapes which may have been given to the various interviewees and kept with their records may be considered to be part of their fonds. This follows the well known principle that archival documents may be *made* or *received*. The interviewee might well have received a copy of the tape with a letter from the creator. The letter and tape filed in the records of the interviewee reflect activities in which he or she participated, and rightfully can be considered part of the interviewee's fonds. However, simply answering who the creator is does not settle the matter. The identification of provenance merely indicates the context in which the oral history documents must be placed and evaluated.

2. For what purpose were the oral history documents created?

This question calls forth a functional analysis. One asks, do the documents fit into the functional activities of the creator? In the cases of Bercuson and Abella, they obviously do. One of their functions as university professors is to conduct research, and the oral history documents they produced can be seen to be records of their research activities, having relationships with the other records of that function. In the case of Ontario Hydro, these oral history interviews seem to have been conducted for Ontario Hydro's Golden Jubilee which took place in 1956.²⁴ However, it is not enough that the corporation mandated the project. Did it do it as part of its normal functions, to carry

them out? If the answer is no, then any attempt at archival appraisal ends at the point of that determination.

At this juncture, it might be noted that, in the Ontario Hydro case, if the answer is no, the documents are truly oral history documents, meant to provide a source of information about the past. If the answer were, instead, yes, then it might be argued that they are not oral history documents at all, they are simply archival records which happen to be in the form of sound recordings. But it is interesting to note that the Bercuson and Abella tape-recorded interviews are oral history documents *and* archival records; and the Ontario Hydro tape-recorded interviews are oral history documents and are *not* records. This simply shows that the *form* of the record has nothing whatsoever to do with whether a document is an archival record or not, and therefore needs archival treatment. However, for our purposes, we shall continue to refer to them as oral history documents in both cases.

Assuming that it has been determined that the documents in question are archival records, the next question can be posed.

3. What relationships do the oral history documents have with other records?

This question carries us to the next step of functional analysis, in which we determine the significance of these documents in relation to others and to the functions of the creator. As already mentioned, Bercuson's and Abella's oral history documents might very well be related to many other of the documents produced in the course of their research projects. For instance, they may have applied for and received grants to

support their travel and other expenses to do the interviews. They may have consulted many labour union figures about prospective interviewees, and so on. As one begins to see all these connections the significance and value of the oral history documents begin to take on a clearer archival light, with considerable influence on the evaluation given them, not the least because future secondary users will know much more about why and how the interviews were carried out and the records of them came into being.

In the case of Ontario Hydro, if we have determined that we have archival records, we can go on to explore just how they fit in with other documents of the function of which they are in part the evidence. If the president of the corporation called for the project in order to assess some matters of policy, for instance, we could see that, and connect the records with others in the chain of policy considerations and decisions, much as it was speculated would be the case in a similar scenario in the first chapter. Determining the relationships among the oral history documents and other records will normally clinch the case for archival appraisal, but one other consideration is important.

4. Do the oral history documents fall within the acquisition policy of the archives?

Acquisition should complement other records acquired, and the acquisition policy of an institution should make a definite statement about whether oral history documents separate from a fonds will be collected. If, for example, a university's acquisition policy strictly implemented would require that oral history documents remain part of the fonds of the university's professors who plan and carry out research using oral history

interviews, such as the case of Professor Abella above, the oral history documents will bring more meaning to the rest of his papers. A contrary view would be that media-segregated archives are common place, with technical requirements demanding special conservation techniques and environment.²⁵

Institutions must determine whether they will take the archival view, and attempt to preserve oral history documents only in *context* as supporting records of activity so that they can be used and evaluated in the context of all the records of the activity in question, or whether they will preserve the product [sound recordings] alone. In the latter case, appraisal will be on *content* grounds alone, perhaps taking into account related documentary materials on the subject of the interviews. However, accompanying documentation, such as correspondence, lists of informants and biographical sketches, transcripts, summaries, outlines, lists of topics covered and the interviewer's questions, while helpful do *not* change the fact that these oral history documents will not be appraised from an archival records standpoint if they are isolated from their creator's fonds.

It is generally recognized that acquisition policy affects appraisal decisions. But this raises the question of why the original Bercuson tapes were preserved in the National Archives of Canada and not the University of Calgary archives, whose acquisition policy would cover the records of faculty members. The answer is not clear, but it is clear that the National Archives did not concern itself with questions of archival appraisal from a theoretical standpoint. It is presumed that the theme of the Winnipeg General Strike tied in with the NAC's mandate of national significance insofar as labour conditions and

unionism were concerned in the 1970s.

Similarly, the Abella tapes were copied for preservation in the Archives of Ontario and not the York University Archives, whose acquisition policy would cover the records of its faculty members.²⁶ The National Archives of Canada and the Archives of Ontario, in keeping with quite widespread practice for oral history documents, simply preserved Bercuson's and Abella's tapes for their informational value. Thoughts of the acquisition policies of the University of Calgary Archives or York University Archives may not have been entertained by either the donors or the recipient archives. It could be argued, with the benefit of hindsight, that the tapes were records being torn from their fonds, and in the process lost much of their value as evidence of activity.

In the case of Ontario Hydro's oral history documents, whether they are archival records or not, the corporation's archives unit is the best place to preserve them. Even if they are not records, they complement records holdings in the same way that company publications would. If they are records, they belong in the company's archives.

One of the most important factors governing acquisition is copyright. The interviewer in most cases is the owner of the copyright, as Noel explains in a *National Archives of Canada: Staff Guide to Copyright* (1994) under the heading "What is Protected?":

Ownership of copyright in a sound recording belongs to the author which means, in non-legal parlance, the person principally responsible for the arrangements made to create the recording. In practice, this usually is the interviewer."²⁷

The archives will not own the copyright in the oral history contained on the tapes unless the copyright has been specifically assigned to it. Copyright is a very important issue

to be resolved; otherwise the use of the oral history documents will be compromised. The legal rights provided by the Canadian copyright law not only entitle creators to be paid for the use of their creations, they also allow creators to control how they are used, when and by whom. The acquisition of the copyright controls what may legally be done with the physical item for as long as it remains in the collection. It is therefore important to acquire the legal rights to use the work for archival purposes when the physical property is acquired.²⁸ If a work has been published, copyright will last for the life of the creator of the work, to the end of the year in which the creator dies, plus an additional fifty years. However, if the work is unpublished, copyright will be perpetual. If a work is unpublished, copyright continues until the work is published plus fifty years. In practical terms, it is important to determine whether copyright has expired. Once protection ends a work is free for public use.²⁹ Copyright law is currently under revision in Canada and up to 1991 no Canadian case law existed which directly addressed the subsistence of copyright in an oral history.³⁰ Jarvis-Tonus has argued that in cases where transcripts are made of the sound recording, entailing editing and correcting the interview, copyright may arise in the transcript and be claimable by the historian:³¹

"The terms of these copyrights differ. Copyright in the interview and the transcript would subsist for the life of the author plus fifty years, whereas copyright in the recording subsists for fifty years from the date on which it is made. During these terms, any unauthorized copying of the tape in whole or substantial part would infringe both copyrights, for which the historian could claim damages and an injunction. It is important to note that ownership as determined by the *Copyright Act* can always be changed by written assignment."³²

Traditional Canadian copyright policy indicates protection should not extend as

far as the informant, because the informant's words, being spontaneous and random, constitute ideas rather than a "work" of intellectual labour and skill, according to Jarvis-Tonus.³³ If the oral history interviews contain sensitive or libellous information, access restriction forms ought to be signed in order to protect people during their lifetimes. Future legal problems may result from an absence of proof of copyright ownership at the point of a potential acquisition, a fact archivists should heed.³⁴

Archival institutions which collect oral history documents separate from a fonds ought to have a definite statement to that effect spelled out in their acquisition policies for the guidance of their staff members and potential donors. Acquisition policies may vary from institution to institution, but it is very important that such policies be specific as to whether or not they acquire only the records of their sponsoring body; or, perhaps the records of their sponsoring body *plus* other materials relating to the history of their community or region; or, perhaps the records of their sponsoring body *and* documents of a specialized nature, i.e. devoted to one or more subjects or themes for long-term preservation. Through its acquisition policy, the National Archives of Canada set out to develop a broad and comprehensive collection by acquiring records of national significance [both public and private] in a planned and integrated manner, according to predetermined appraisal criteria.³⁵ The legislative framework within which the National Archives of Canada carries out its acquisition policy is the *National Archives of Canada Act, 1987*, which defines records of national significance as those which document the Canadian experience: "They record the efforts and experiences of individuals, groups, institutions, corporate bodies, and other organizations which have become nationally or

internationally recognized. They also document the physical environment in Canada, as well as events and trends (cultural, political, economic, social, demographic, scientific, and religious) having a broad, national scope. They may also reveal, in a notable way, typically Canadian experiences."³⁶ Sound recordings and videotape are included among the forms a record may take.³⁷ An archival approach to the acquisition of oral history documents also would be influenced by the following practical considerations.

5. Are there any technical considerations which influence appraisal?

Historically, the high costs in terms of staff time and resources needed to adequately describe oral history documents, especially those which arrive at a repository unaccompanied by supplementary documentation, have made the acquisition of such documents prohibitive in many cases. If an oral history project has been poorly planned and carried out, informationally and technically, the oral history documents resulting therefrom will have little value. If, on the other hand, the interviews have been well planned, the interviewers in possession of as much knowledge about the topic as possible, good technical recording equipment has been employed, and the list of informants well chosen for their ability to remember and talk about past events, then the results can often be breathtaking in their ability to capture the feelings, emotions and impacts of a myriad of life's events upon individuals.

Ham stated that before the appraisal is complete, the archivist must weigh the value of the information against retention costs. In an age of documentary overabundance, archivists must "attach a price tag" to their appraisal decisions. "In

conducting a cost-benefit analysis the appraiser needs to ask the following: What are the costs of identifying, appraising, and accessioning the records? What are the costs of processing the acquisition to an affordable level? What are the costs for affordable preservation treatment? What are the annual costs of housing?³⁸

Oral history records require the use of technology to create, identify, reproduce and retrieve their contents. The physical composition of many audio-visual records is not stable and may require special techniques to preserve their contents. And, audio-visual records require special storage conditions and containers in order to prevent further deterioration of the record itself.³⁹ The particular technical properties of a sound carrier may affect its stability and permanence and thereby threaten the integrity of the document itself. For example, paperbacked audiotape which becomes dried out and brittle with age, the 'vinegar syndrome' in acetate audiotapes, and the 'glue factor' in 2" videotapes.⁴⁰

It could be argued that the conservation problems of oral history documents pale in comparison to other audio-visual records, for example film and fine art. And, due to the historic reality that Canada's broadcasters, archivists and historians have been directly involved in the creation of good technical quality as well as the preservation of Canada's oral history heritage, Canada's aboriginal, English speaking, French speaking and multicultural society is fortunate to have a generous portion of their unwritten history preserved in archives and museums and libraries. Nevertheless the costs of acquiring oral history documents in terms of staff time and resources must be part of each new acquisition proposal.

Dryden suggested archives should be expected to apply their standard appraisal criteria to such oral history records, i.e duplication of information, technical quality, etc. before making a commitment to accept the tapes.⁴¹ Questions related to the informational content of oral history documents, an analysis of the role of the interviewer and/or the video camera operator in the process of creating the sound recordings, and the archivist's knowledge of the creator's reliability, and as earlier mentioned the fallibility of the human memory, are all part of the appraisal process as well. However, archivists have been known to have their own biases with regard to informational content (as historians do) and attempts at acquiring a representative sample of record creators from the community around the institution may be less than perfect. In the end there are many factors to be taken into consideration by users of oral history, like any raw archival material; their *use* is beyond the scope of this paper.

6. Considering the answers to all the above questions, what is the cost benefit analysis?

Determining what Ham calls a cost benefit analysis means projecting into the future some value or values in continuing to preserve the documents. Once the origins, functions, relationships, and larger context in which the documents reside is understood, we are ready to make a decision. The use to which the documents have been put by their creator will influence the decision, as will many other factors depending on the case. No doubt the tapes of the labour figures were attractive to the National Archives because labour history was then a popular subject of investigation. In the case of the

Archives of Ontario, the Multicultural History Society's collection of ethnic histories, including the Abella tapes, were acquired through Robert F. Harney's efforts as a way of preserving its large collection under the provincial archival roof. In the case of the Ontario Hydro interviews, these were retained in the form of transcriptions in its own corporate archives.⁴² Paparella stated that the method of capturing this information was via long-hand notes which were subsequently transcribed, a process not without considerable cost but which may lead to increased use. Situations arise in Canada where corporations do not incur the expense of preserving their archival records, including oral history documents. For example, in 1979 a west coast forest industry, whose early archives were missing and the remainder survived only by chance, piled up in closets, hired contract archives personnel to assemble its records with a view to writing its corporate history.⁴³ The journalist-historian hired for this purpose found that the lack of organized original documentation made it imperative that he depend on oral history methodology, and MacKay acknowledged interviewing more than fifty employees of the company, as well as labour leaders during his research.⁴⁴ At the conclusion of this company history project, the archival unit was closed. Psutka made a plea in her corporate archival report of 1981 that, because of the lack of written records, the oral history tapes ought to have been considered historical records and housed in the archives.⁴⁵ One wonders where these oral history documents are today.

Only if the oral history documents are considered archival records will there be any question of continuing value as evidence of activity, which brings legal, fiscal, and other primary values into play. Even so, these values are not easily applied to oral

history documents, even those created as records, for almost always the oral history documents serve an information gathering purpose, whether or not it supports the activities of the creator directly or not. It is this fact that leads to them being evaluated in terms of their informational value exclusively. It would appear to be difficult to counteract this tendency except in cases where the information gathering is clearly not for anything like historical purposes (to record things for posterity's sake) but is rather part of accomplishing the creator's functions.

Thus, it is safe to conclude that the vast majority of oral history documents will be appraised solely for their content and not in an archival manner. And those that are appraised as archives will probably hardly seem to be properly classed as oral history documents.

Notes to Chapter 2

1. Jean-Pierre Wallot. "Building a Living Memory for the History of our Present: New Perspectives on Archival Appraisal." Paper delivered at the Canadian Historical Association, Kingston, 5 June 1991, at a "Distinguished Speaker" session. (Typescript: 18.)
2. David Lance, *An Archive Approach to Oral History* (London: Imperial War Museum in association with International Association of Sound Archives, 1978): 3.
3. David Lance, "Oral History" in *Sound Archives: A Guide to their Establishment and development*, edited by. (International Association of Sound Archives, Special Publication No. 4, 1983): 191.
4. Allan Nevins, first Director of the Oral History Research Office at Columbia University, New York, was called the "father of oral history." His historical writings include biographies of Henry Ford, Grover Cleveland, Henry White, Herbert H. Lehman, James Turslow Adams, John D. Rockefeller and President Abraham Lincoln, and numerous others.

Paul Thompson, Social History Department, University of Essex, England argued that oral history helped to create a truer picture of the past, documenting the lives of all kinds of people. Thompson's *The Voice of the Past, Oral History* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1978, 2nd ed. 1988) became the leading methodological tool. He was the founding editor of *Oral History: Journal of the Oral History Society* (1969). One of his landmark books is *The Edwardians: The Remaking of British Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1975) was based on a national survey of 500 life-story interviews of family life, work and the community.

Ronald J. Grele, ed. *Envelopes of Sound: Six Practitioners Discuss the Method, Theory and Practice of Oral History and Oral Testimony* - Studs Terkel, Jan Vansina, Dennis Tedlock, Saul Tenison, Alice Kessler Harris and Ronald J. Grele. (Chicago: Precedent Publishing, Inc., 1975).

David Henige, *Oral Historiography* (London: Longman Group Limited, 1982).

Jean Elaine Mann Kendal, *Oral Sources and Historical Studies* (Edmonton: The University of Alberta, Department of History, 1976), Canadian thesis on microfiche No. 27673. Chapter V of Kendal's thesis is entitled: "A place for contemporary history and oral sources in the general education of historians."

Shirley Elizabeth Stephenson, *Oral History Comes of Age: A Comparative Analysis* (Fullerton: California State University, Department of History, 1981), M.A. thesis (University Microfilms International, Ann Arbor, MI 48106).

5. James E. Fogerty, "Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives," *The American Archivist*, Vol. 46 (2), Spring 1983: 150-51.
6. Ontario Hydro Archives, Toronto. Call No. 91082 (Personal Interviews with Senior Hydro Personnel) comprises a complete transcription of 490 pages but no tapes. Call No. 91027 (Roderick King Tapes) consists of 209 audio-tape interviews conducted from 1965 to 1970 with long-service employees. The latter were broadcast as a 5-year series on CBC. *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada/Guide des fonds d'histoire orale au Canada* edited by Normand Fortier (Ottawa: Canadian Oral History Association Journal, Vol. 13, 1993), 204.
7. Derek Reimer, "Oral History and Archives: The Case in Favor," *Canadian Oral History Association/Société canadienne d'histoire orale Journal* 5 No. 1 (1981-82): 33.
8. Jean Dryden, "Oral History and Archives: The Case Against," *Canadian Oral History Association/Société canadienne d'histoire orale Journal* 5 No. 1 (1981-82): 36.
9. William W. Moss, "Oral History," *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions* edited by James Gregory Bradsher (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988): 149.
10. William W. Moss and Peter C. Mazikana, *Archives, Oral History and Oral Tradition: A RAMP Study* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1986), 68.
11. Lewis J. Bellardo and Lynn Lady Bellardo, *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* (Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 1992), 2.
12. F. Gerald Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1993), 64.
13. Alan Ward, *A Manual of Sound Archive Administration* (Aldershot, Hampshire: Gower Publishing Co. Ltd., 1990), 5.
14. David Bercuson, *Confrontation at Winnipeg* (Montreal: Queens-McGill Press, 1974). See also *1919: A Year of Strikes* (Ottawa: National Museum of Man; National Film Board, 1974). 13 pages and 30 col. slides.
15. The David Bercuson collection (#1970-0011 in the Visual and Sound Archives Division) comprises a total of 29 interviews, 12 of which relate to the Winnipeg strike, the remainder having been accessioned between the initial accession in 1970 and the

1990s. David Millar, a colleague of Bercuson on the Winnipeg project, subsequently donated typed transcripts of the 12 interviews in the Manuscript Division (MG 31 B 7, accessioned in 1971).

16. National Archives of Canada. *Moving Image and Sound Archives: Guidelines on Appraisal*, section 2.1: Provenance. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada (October 1990), 7.

17. Irving Abella and Harold Troper, *None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948* (Toronto: Lester Publishing, 1991) 3rd edition and *A Coat of Many Colours: Two Centuries of Jewish Life in Canada* (Toronto: Lester & Arpen Dennys, c.1990) 1st edition. Abella edited *On Strike: Six Key Labour Struggles in Canada 1919-1949* (Toronto: James, Lewis and Samuel, 1974) and along with David Millar edited *The Canadian Workers in the Twentieth Century* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1978). See also his historical booklet *The Canadian Labour Movement, 1902-1960* (Ottawa: The Canadian Historical Association, 1978), No. 28.

18. The Irving Abella Collection, Sound & Moving Image Portfolio of the Archives of Ontario, 77 Grenville Street, Toronto, Ontario (Call No. C 82) constitutes 122 interviews (167 h) with Canadians of Jewish, Russian, or Polish origin, documenting communist and labour union activities, and immigration. Abella was particularly interested in the garment industry. Reference: *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada/Guide des fonds d'histoire orale au Canada*, compiled and edited by Normand Fortier (Ottawa: Canadian Oral History Association, 1993), 177.

19. F. Gerald Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives*, 1993, 64.

20. Ibid, 64.

21. National Archives of Canada, *Moving Image and Sound Archives: Guidelines on Appraisal*, section 1.2.5: Appraisal Process. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada (October 1990): 3.

22. Ibid, 64.

23. National Archives of Canada, *Moving Image and Sound Archives: Guidelines on Appraisal*, section 2.4, General condition of the records (October 1990): 9.

24. Telephone interview with Rosa Paparella, Ontario Hydro Archives, 16 August 1995.

25. Interview with Joan Fairweather, sound archivist, NAC, 1 May 1995.

26. Irving Abella initially deposited the 125 interviews conducted for the York University Labour History Project with the Multicultural History Society of Ontario

Archives, whose Robert F. Harney facilitated their acquisition by the Archives of Ontario (AO) through Karen Levine in 1978. Information obtained by W. MacDonald through telephone conversations with Irving Abella on 6 March 1995 and Janice Simpson, sound archivist at AO, on 3 January 1995.

27. Ibid, 35.

28. Wanda Noel, Discussion Paper for the Task Force on the Preservation and Enhanced Use of Canada's Audio-Visual Heritage. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada (July 29, 1994): 3 (26-page typescript).

29. Ibid, 4. See also *National Archives of Canada: Staff Guide to Copyright* written by Wanda Noel for the National Archives of Canada. Ottawa: Minister of Supply and Services Canada, 1991. Updated November 1994. Moving Images and Sound Section: 34-40.

30. Jill Jarvis-Tonus, "Legal Issues Regarding Oral Histories," *Canadian Oral History Association/Société canadienne d'histoire orale Journal* 12 (1992): 19.

31. Ibid, 19.

32. Ibid, 19.

33. Ibid, p. 20.

34. Richard Lohead has estimated that perhaps 75% or more oral histories in archival institutions probably do not have signed Release forms. Paper presented at the Canadian Oral History Association "Conference '91", Osgoode Hall, Toronto, 3 May 1991 (unpublished).

35. Acquisition Policy/Politique d'acquisition, Archives nationales du Canada/National Archives of Canada (Ottawa: March 8, 1988/le 8 mars 1988): 2.

36. Ibid, 1988: 4.2.

37. Ibid, 1988: 4.1.

38. F. Gerald Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives*, 1993, 58.

39. National Archives of Canada, Moving Image and Sound Archives: Guidelines on Appraisal. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada (October 1990): 18. Section 5, Technical Analysis.

40. Ibid, 19.

41. Jean Dryden, "Oral History and Archives: The Case Against," *Canadian Oral History Association/Société canadienne d'histoire orale Journal*, Volume 5, No. 1, 1981-82: 37.
42. Rosa Paparella, Ontario Hydro Archives, Toronto, interviewed via telephone, 16 August 1995.
43. Mary Psutka, Report of the Archives. October 15, 1979 - September 1, 1980. Vancouver: MacMillan Bloedel Limited [1981]: 1. (Typescript)
44. Donald MacKay, *Empire of Wood: The MacMillan Bloedel Story* (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1982), "Acknowledgements." This book does not list the informants names.
45. Mary Psutka, op. cit., 13.

CHAPTER THREE
ARRANGING, DESCRIBING, AND INDEXING
ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS

"...Everyone deserves a say in the formation
of public memory, and it is our task as
archivists to see that they have it...."¹

Whether they are part of a fonds or not, oral history documents residing in the holdings of an archival institution need to be arranged, described, and made accessible through finding aids. There are, then, two cases to be examined: oral history documents as part of a fonds and oral history documents in a collection. This chapter will examine arrangement, description, and indexing as applied to these two situations in which repositories may face oral history documents. In each case, a single hypothetical example will be used to illustrate the issues. Furthermore, it will assess matters of arrangement, description and non-subject indexing from the perspective of the Canadian *Rules for Archival Description* issued by the Bureau of Canadian Archivists (hereafter referred to as RAD).²

ORAL HISTORY DOCUMENTS AS PART OF A FONDS

In the case where oral history documents are part of a fonds, the first issue is one

of identification of how the documents came into being in order to establish their relationship with their creator and with other records in the creators fonds. This identification is in fact the essence of arrangement. As the glossary of the Canadian RAD puts it, arrangement is "the process and results of identification of documents as they belong to accumulations within a fonds."³

Arrangement

The first identification question that comes up is, are a set of oral history documents alone to be considered part of a fonds? This question is an awkward one, because the common assumption is that all of the records of a particular creator held by an institution constitute its fonds for the practical purposes of description. Obviously, that will only be true in a practical sense in many cases, for other records generated by the creator may remain in the creator's hands or be preserved by another institution. But, as a practical matter, institutions have to report their holdings, and all the records they hold of a particular creator are taken to constitute the fonds of that creator for the practical purposes of reporting holdings.

For present purposes, that resolution of the matter is unsatisfactory. It is better to take the view that oral history documents are either acquired along with other records to which they relate or they are "collected" for the information they contain without consideration of their archival nature and, in particular, their relationship to other records. Obviously, in the former case, the precepts and terms of RAD apply; in the latter they may not.

If oral history documents are acquired as part of a fonds, the first step in the process of arrangement and description is to identify the various relationships of the documents with their creator and with other of its records. Take the example of the Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. oral histories of its company employees. The first question is who created these records? As has been argued, they can be considered records of the company, but who carried out the project? In this case, the project was the responsibility of the Archives Department of the company. Let us say that the oral history documents are part of a complex of records the Archives Department created in the course of accomplishing the project. It may also have produced correspondence soliciting advice about candidates to interview and about arrangements with interviewees; lists of questions and research notes prepared in advance for each interview; and a number of progress reports and a final report on the project to the President of the company by the Corporate Archivist. With this essential information established, we can see that the oral history documents are part of the records of the Archives Department and constitute one of the groupings of records created during the project, the correspondence, lists of questions and research notes, and reports being three other, related groupings.

In this case, it has presumably been decided that the Archives Department has responsibility to carry out oral history projects with employees of the company as informants and the work of the company as the subject of the interviews. If this is a distinct function of the archives, all the records generated in carrying out this function can be considered a series, and each of the four groupings of records is a subseries.⁴

To sum up, then, in the Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. case, all the records of the oral

history project (assuming that only one project happened) would constitute a series in the records of the Archives Department of the company consisting of four subseries: the oral history documents, the correspondence, the lists of questions and research notes, and the reports to the President.

Description

The task of description is to describe this series. In RAD the series would be described as part of the records of the Archives Department. At a higher level, information would be given about the administrative history of the Department. RAD recommends that each series be described by the following elements (see rule 1.0D2)⁵:

Title proper. -- Class of material, specific details. -- Date(s) of creation. -- Extent of descriptive unit. -- Administrative history/Biographical sketch. -- Custodial History. -- Scope and content. -- Note(s).

Values for each of these elements must be determined on the basis of information gleaned from all the material in the series (the chief source of information for a series according to rule 8.0B1) or in the case of the last five elements (Extent of descriptive unit, Administrative history/Biographical sketch, Custodial history, Scope and content and Notes) from any source. (See rule 8.0B2 in Chapter 8 for Sound Recordings for the prescribed source of information for these elements.)

The title proper will be a supplied title, and so rule 8.1B4 applies. It says "compose a brief descriptive title as instructed in 1.1B4 and its subrules." These rules prescribe that, if the name of the creator differs from the name of the creator of the

fonds as a whole, it and a description of the nature of the series constitute the title proper. Thus in this case, the series might be given this title:

Oral history project records of the Archives Department

The second element, the class of material specific details, is not used for sound recordings. The third element is date of creation. Rule 1.4B2⁶ prescribes, "always give inclusive dates." This usually means the earliest and latest dates of documents in the unit being described. Let us say that the earliest record is dated May 1965, the date of a letter from the President to the corporate archivist mandating the project, and the latest March 1967, the date of the archivist's final report. Then the dates of creation are (Note: With the exception of May, June and July, months of the year are abbreviated):

May 1965-Mar. 1967

The extent of the unit being described is part of the physical description (Rule 1.5B)⁷. It may be combined with a specific material designation. In this case, we have textual records and sound recordings. The physical description area is repeatable in such a case. So we might have:

0.5 m. of textual records. -- 30 audio cassettes : chrome dioxide

The next element is the administrative history (Rule 1.7B).⁸ Administrative historical information can be provided at the fonds and series level, as appropriate to that level. The appropriate information of an administrative nature about the series is about the oral history project, whereas the administrative information at the fonds level will be about the history of the Archives Department, when it was established, its functional responsibilities and principal activities, its administrative relationships, and so on as

indicated in the sub elements of rule 1.7B1. In this case, the administrative history of the series might be as follows:

On 6 May 1965, the President directed the Archives Department to make arrangements to interview employees and retired employees who had been involved in the management of company affairs since 1945. The President wished to have memories of important decisions and events in the company's history recorded and made accessible to current employees, many of whom had been appointed since 1961. In consultation with the President and other officers of the company, the Corporate Archivist planned and directed what became known as The Oral History Project. The project was completed in March 1967.

The next element is the custodial history, which, according to rule 1.7A1, "gives information about the chain of agencies, officers, or persons, if different from the creator(s), that have exercised custody or control over records at all stages in their existence."⁹ In this case, these records have remained in the continuous custody of the Company and the Archives Department since their creation, so there is nothing to record.

The next element is the scope and content. Rule 1.7D2 covers scope and content for a series, which gives "information on the specific activity generating the records...any administrative or documentary processes or procedures which explain how the series came into being...[and] the internal structure of the records, including the arrangement, classification scheme, or documentary forms of the records."¹⁰ In this case, where there is a series composed of subseries, each of which will be described, only information pertaining to the whole series is described. This might be done economically as follows:

Series consists of correspondence, research materials, reports and oral history interviews produced during the conduct of the project.

All of the above elements combined would yield the following description:

Oral History Project records of the Archives Department. -- May 1965-Mar. 1967. -- 0.5 m. of textual records. -- 30 audio cassettes : chrome dioxide

On May 6, 1965, the President directed the Archives Department to make arrangements to interview employees and retired employees who had been involved in the management of company affairs since 1945. The President wished to have memories of important decisions and events in the company's history recorded and made accessible to current employees, many of whom had been appointed since 1961. In consultation with the President and other officers of the company, the Corporate Archivist planned and directed what became known as The Oral History Project. The project was completed in March 1967.

Series consists of correspondence, research materials, reports and oral history interviews produced during the conduct of the project.

Main entry for fonds : Cape Breton Hydro Ltd.

Added entry for series : Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. Archives Dept.

Subject : hydro electric plants

It must be noted that this series description assumes the larger context of descriptions and the information they contain. Similarly, more detailed information about each of the four subseries would follow at the next level of description. These four descriptions would make the relationships among the subseries evident, and provide information about the activities and procedures generating each subseries. For present purposes, the subseries of the oral history documents is of greatest interest.

The oral history documents qualify as sound recordings, for which Chapter 8 of RAD applies. There is no need for an administrative history at the subseries level, because the administrative context for all subseries is given at the series level. Using the

applicable rules in this chapter for the same elements which appear at the series level might yield the following description:

Oral history interviews. -- Sept.1965-Feb.1967. -- 30 audio cassettes (ca. 30 hr.) : 19 cm/s

Subseries consists of taped interviews with 12 employees and retired employees on the subject of the post-war development of the company. The interviews were conducted by Corporate Archivist Jean Murdock, and bear on the policy decisions, hydro electric plant construction, public relations, and financial and personnel management.

A list of the names and dates of interviews is available.

Excerpts of the 12 interviews were published in *Cape Breton Hydro News* in twelve successive monthly issues beginning in Jan. 1968.

Added entry for subseries : Jean Murdock

**Subject : construction financial management hydro electricity
 public relations personnel management**

The next level of description would be the item level (passing over the file level option which in this case is not applicable), equivalent to the individual interview, that is, it is a subseries made up of items. "In RAD one is not required to use all levels; only those levels which are the ones appropriate to the material."¹¹ This is quite common with photographs, films, sound recordings, and cartographic materials. A description of an item might look like this:

Interview of James Lesley. -- Nov.18,1965. -- 2 audio cassettes (ca. 2 hr.)

From 1947 until his retirement in 1963, Lesley was Chief Engineer in the Plant Construction Division. He was responsible for directing construction of the Salmon Falls Plant on the Mira River and Green Rapids Plant on the Margaree River. He discusses these two projects, the individuals involved in them, and their impact on the company. A transcript of the interview is available, and an excerpt of it appears in the Feb. 1969 issue of *Cape Breton Hydro News*.

Added entry for item : James Lesley

**Subject : Cape Breton Hydro. Salmon Falls Plant
Cape Breton Hydro. Green Rapids Plant
construction
hydro electricity**

Parker has suggested that users could refer to the *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules* in order to supplement RAD in describing interviews since RAD does not have a lot of rules for interviews.¹² Rule 21.25 of AACR2I entitled "Reports of Interviews or Exchanges" sets out examples for creating main and added entries under headings for "the principal participant, participant named first in the chief source of information of the item...[and] for the other person(s) involved...."¹³

If there are no system limitations within the archival repository, a principal feature of multilevel description is that information given at a higher level may not be repeated at lower levels. That is, elements of description of the whole fonds need not be repeated at the lowest level of the individual interview. A researcher would be able to put the interviews in context by reading the descriptions from the series and subseries level, and even beyond that to the description of the whole of the records of the Archives Department. As well, certain elements of the description, such as the name of the interviewer or the playing speed, need not be repeated at the file/item level. However, each institution will have to look at its own automated data capture system to see just what it is capable of doing and then decide how to proceed regarding how much information may be repeated at lower levels for the convenience of the user.

Indexing

Indexing makes each of these descriptions accessible and from them the records themselves. The records the project generated may be approached from a number of perspectives. In particular, a potential user might be interested in the persons involved in the exercise or the subjects of the interviews.

The names of the persons having a part in the creation of these records may be indexed according to Part II of RAD. RAD rules only cover names of persons and corporate bodies involved in the creation of records, and geographic names used to qualify personal and corporate names.

Subject indexing introduces a broad range of other issues. Names can be used as subjects. For instance, it would be possible to use the name of the Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. Plant Construction Division as a subject access point because Lesley speaks about the Division's administration of the two projects, the names of which could also be access points to the description of the Lesley interview.

Indexing of topical subjects would require some authority list of headings, although automation of the descriptions would also make natural language searching feasible, using boolean and other search techniques. Every institution has a policy on the type of subject analysis they wish to implement in their institution. For instance, they may choose to use the Library of Congress Subject Headings or a thematic thesaurus of one kind or another. The main point is to develop a controlled vocabulary and to avoid relying on free text.¹⁴

DESCRIPTION OF A COLLECTION

If a different set of assumptions is entertained, description takes on a quite different cast. Suppose that the very same twelve interviews were made not by the Archives Department but by an experienced oral historian on contract, and copies of the interviews were deposited in an archival institution. That is, the institution acquires the copies of the oral history documents from Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. as an addition to the institution's holdings of oral history collections, but holds none of the Company's other records. What form does the arrangement and description of this collection take?

Arrangement

Arrangement is a relatively simple matter. The whole of the interviews is treated as a collection. The tape or tapes of each interview are treated as items in the collection.

Description

In this case, description is at the collection level and the item (individual interview) level, as the collection is made up of the individual interview documents. Description of a collection is not covered strictly by RAD, but it is recommended that the rules be adapted for description of collections. In particular, it makes sense to collapse the administrative history and scope and content into one narrative explanation of the collection when describing at the aggregate level. The collection level description might read as follows:

Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. collection [sound recordings]. -- 1965-1967. -- 30 audio cassettes (ca. 30 hr.) : 19 cm/s : chrome dioxide

The collection consists of interviews with 12 employees of Cape Breton Hydro about development of the corporation since 1945. The interviews were conducted by oral historian Arley MacDonald under contract to the corporation. The interviews bear on policy decisions, hydro electric plant construction, public relations, and financial and personnel management.

The taped interviews were acquired from the Public Relations Department of Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. in 1980.

Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. holds copyright in the interviews according to an agreement with Arley MacDonald as part of his contract with the corporation. No reproduction, publication or broadcast of the contents of the interviews is allowed without the written permission of Cape Breton Hydro.

Detailed abstracts of the contents of some interviews are available.

In this description, what are the access points? The main entry would be Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. If there are no further descriptions for lower levels made, then an added entry for Arley MacDonald and perhaps added entries for the 12 employees are possible, but the names of the employees would have to appear in the description for this to happen. Some mention of either the name or the subject must be present in the descriptive record in order to make an access point.

Also, in this description the "no reproduction, publication or broadcast..." note brings up the issue of access restrictions which, if they exist, ought to be noted in the description.

DESCRIPTION OF AN ARCHIVAL FONDS [INDIVIDUAL]

A fictitious third situation arises from this collection description. Suppose a number of oral history documents were created by oral historian Arley MacDonald,

including his interviews with former employees of the Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. about the early days of electrification in Cape Breton, for a chapter of a book he eventually had published on the history of the Island. The interviews would be attributed to MacDonald as part of his lifetime work of research and writing and constitute part of his archival fonds. The interviews conducted with the Cape Breton Hydro Ltd. employees would form part of a series devoted to all his interviews within MacDonald's archival fonds which may have been acquired by the Beaton Institute of Cape Breton Studies, even though the original taped interviews would form part of the archives of Cape Breton Hydro by virtue of having been contracted by them. Copies of the interviews would also form a subseries of the MacDonald fonds, part of the series containing transcripts of his interviews. The elements of description at the subseries level would be similar to those referred to in the corporate archival fonds description at the beginning of this chapter, i.e. Title proper. -- Date(s) of creation. --- Extent of descriptive unit. -- Scope and content. -- Note(s)] and may read as follows:

Fonds : **Arley MacDonald**

Series : **Oral History Interviews (General)**

Series consists of correspondence, research materials, oral history interviews, transcripts and manuscript of *A Modern History of Cape Breton Island: 1890-1990*.

Subject : hydro electric plants Cape Breton Hydro Ltd.

Subseries : **Interviews with Cape Breton Hydro Employees. -- 1965-1967. -- 30 audio cassettes (ca. 30 hr.) : 19 cm/s : chrome dioxide.**

Interviews with 12 employees of Cape Breton Hydro about development of the corporation since 1945 contracted by the

corporation. The interviews bear on policy decisions, hydro electric plant construction, public relations, and financial and personnel management.

A list of those interviewed and a note regarding reproduction, publication and broadcast rights to the contents of the interviews only allowed with the written permission of Cape Breton Hydro would also be provided for the information of the researcher.

This chapter has shown that whether or not the oral history documents are part of a fonds, the Rules for Archival Description provide intellectual control over the documents and serve to inform researchers in a standard format of all the essential elements of description. The type of description provided of the oral history materials, whether they are parts of archival fonds or parts of collections, will reflect the true character of the sound recordings. It has been shown that all oral history documents are not the same and that their treatment is vital to reveal their true nature.

The Rules for Archival Description may be relatively new in the world of archives, but their application will ensure informed access to records and documents by the research public, donors, creators and better knowledge of archival holdings.

Notes to Chapter 3

1. Terry Eastwood, "How Goes it with Appraisal?" *Archivaria* 36 (Autumn 1993): 120.
2. Bureau of Canadian Archivists, *Rules for Archival Description* (Ottawa, 1990). Hereafter cited as RAD.
3. RAD Glossary, 1992: D-5.
4. See Terry Eastwood's discussion of the question of series based on function in *The Archival Fonds: From Theory to Practice / Le Fonds d'archives: de la Théorie à la Pratique*. (Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists / Bureau canadien des archivistes. Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards / Comité de planification sur les normes de description, 1992), 11.
5. Chapter 1, General Rules for Description: 8.
6. Chapter 1, General Rules for Description: 30.
7. Chapter 1, General Rules for Description: 40-42.
8. Chapter 1, General Rules for Description: 47-50.
9. Chapter 1, General Rules for Description: 45-46.
10. Chapter 1, General Rules for Description: 55.
11. Velma Parker, Visual and Sound Archives Division, National Archives of Canada, in conversation with Wilma MacDonald, 1 May 1995.
12. Ibid, 1 May 1995.
13. Michael Gorman and Paul W. Winkler, editors. *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*. (Ottawa: Canadian Library Association; London: Library Association Publishing Limited; Chicago: American Library Association, 1988 revised, second edition), 349-350.
14. Velma Parker in discussions with Wilma MacDonald, 1 May 1995.

CONCLUSIONS

"...[W]e have not succeeded in unlocking the full value of archival resources. ...we have largely limited our own achievements by building upon existing practice, rather than on what should or might be."¹

The post World War II period has seen a steady growth in the creation of oral history documents in Canada, as well as around the world. Regardless of who have been the creators of such oral history documents, a large quantity of oral history documents are preserved in Canada's national, provincial and territorial (NPT) archives. An increase of 16,734 hours of taped interviews has occurred over the past ten years in thirteen public repositories, for a reported total of 46,746 hours.² Oral history is most often seen as a tool of investigation and as a source of historiographical information. This technology has assisted university faculty members to carry out multidisciplinary studies of interest to them, to publish books and articles, some of which put a private face on official history. Oral history methodology, more often than not, has been used by researchers, historical societies, and the public particularly to explore areas of social history, such as women's, children's and family history, labour history, homeland and ethnic history. Oral history documents add flesh to the bare bones of official documents.

While a lot has been written on the subject of oral history and archives, rarely has the literature dealt with the application of archival principles to the handling of oral

history documents. Oral history documents have often been isolated from any evidence that they form part of the organic and natural activity of a person, organization or institution. This reflects the historic practice of depositing only the end results, the *products* of oral history projects, in an archives, divorced from other record forms to which they relate. This paper puts forward the thesis that oral history documents could be appraised and arranged and described using traditional archival principles, and Ham's appraisal theory³ is used to show that at the appraisal stage an archivist can distinguish oral history documents which form part of an *archival fonds* from those which are only a *collection*. Archival fonds provide evidence of the day-to-day activity of their creator (juridical or personal) and may include oral history documents integrated with the other record forms created by the individual, organization, corporation or government department. A collection, on the other hand, does not provide evidence of the day-to-day activity of its/their creator(s) but is rather a quantity of taped interviews which may focus on a variety of subjects, created for the sake of posterity. Different standards of appraisal apply to the two cases. Whether oral history documents are determined to have archival qualities *or* are merely a collection of interviews, archivists ought to ensure that accurate descriptions are carried out for retrieval and use of these documents by interested researchers.

During the appraisal process, the question to be asked is "are the oral history documents archival documents?" The answer depends entirely on the *context* in which they are created. If the method of recording information about a person or persons' experience(s) is used in the context of the conduct of some natural activity, public or

private, organizational or personal, and "preserved as evidence of those functions and activities,"⁴ then an argument can be made for treating oral history documents as archival documents. In the example of Fournier, her oral history documents were created as part of the records accumulated during the course of her Master's of Archival Studies research. They form part of her archival fonds, the whole of the records she generates in the course of her various activities as a natural person. Likewise, in the case of the oral history documents created by Bercuson and Abella for the purposes of teaching and writing articles and books during their day-to-day activities as Professors of History at the University of Calgary and York University respectively, these may be considered to be archival documents provided they remain interrelated with the other records in their archival fonds. However, if the oral history documents are removed from their natural office of accumulation and are isolated as sources of information about the past, they are better treated as a collection. The documents with which the oral history documents are related may include the professor's in-coming and out-going correspondence, appointment diaries, course outlines, lecture notes and reference materials, research project files, manuscripts, reports, and so on. When the oral history documents can no longer be seen in the context of the *whole* of their creator's naturally accumulated records, they lose their archival quality.

On the other hand, when an archivist is appraising a collection of oral history materials whose origins may be traced back to a variety of creators and whose value rests in their informational content alone -- perhaps focussing on some central theme or subject matter -- an appraisal based on archival theory does not apply. In these circumstances

they are appraised on the basis of their historiographical and technical qualities, with a view to their usefulness as pure research materials. A collection of oral history documents would not be expected to shed any light on the day-to-day activities of their creators. The identification of this fundamental difference between an archival fonds and a collection is essential in the archival treatment of oral history documents and must be the first step in their handling.

Thus we see that archival practices of appraisal can be applied only to archival documents, and not to collections. In order to appraise oral history documents within an archival fonds a number of questions need to be answered, including who created the oral history documents in order to establish their provenance, for what purpose they were created, what relationship they have with other records, and whether the oral history documents fall within the acquisition policy of the archives. Also the archivist needs to find out if there are any technical problems which affect the use of the recordings, whether there are any legal problems such as unresolved copyright issues, and all these factors must enter into the archivists's cost benefit analysis, greatly influencing the appraisal of oral history documents offered for acquisition. Issues related to copyright and access are all part of a manuscript archivist's daily work in dealing with private papers, and the same issues apply to oral history documents. Revisions to the Canadian *Copyright Act* are underway but the key sections of the current legislation most likely will continue to apply into the future.

The question of whether oral history documents ought to be acquired by archival institutions very much depends on the *policy* of the institution. A strict acquisition policy

would welcome oral history documents which meet their archival criteria. A less strict policy would permit the acquisition of oral history documents as collections, with greater focus on making the contents available than on issues of provenance and archival theory. For example, interviews with senior personnel of Ontario Hydro may contain a wealth of information on topics such as energy, labour relations, politics and government but would still only constitute a collection.⁵ The value of certain documents alone does not make them archival, and the same is true for oral history documents.

More often than not sound archivists have written articles from a preservation standpoint in dealing with oral history documents, with a view to *creating* and/or *using* oral history documents in museums, or for broadcasting purposes, or for filling in gaps in the written record, or for correcting the elitism of official records, rather than from an archival standpoint.⁶ Lance set up and developed the oral history programme at the Imperial War Museum and was chiefly interested in establishing professional standards of practice and useful methodology which would be beneficial to the membership of the International Association of Sound Archives. This association was established in 1969 to represent, focus and develop the work and interests of institutions and individuals professionally involved in the collection, preservation and dissemination of documents of recorded sound.⁷ Lance's manual has been one of the reference books for archivists who have been actively collecting oral history and is the Great Britain equivalent to manuals by Baum and Moss of the United States, and the Canadian manual by Reimer *et al.*⁸

Notwithstanding the involvement of archivists in the creation of oral history

around the world -- a debate which could be the focus of another thesis and on which a substantial body of literature exists -- archival theory provides a set of professional principles to guide the keepers of these materials through the appraisal, acquisition, arrangement and description processes.

The no-never content-*always context* view of oral history documents is the most important factor when using an *archival* approach to their appraisal, acquisition, selection, arrangement and description. When oral history documents are in fact archives, that is when they reveal something about their creator's activities, then an archival approach is in order; when oral history documents are created for historiographical purposes, and not seen in the context of other records then they are treated differently, they are a collection. In the case of the oral history documents created by the Joint Library of Parliament (LOP) / National Archives of Canada (NAC) Oral History Interviews Programme, the NAC acquires the *original* taped interviews and copies of the edited transcripts, while the Library of Parliament retains copies of the sound recordings and the original transcripts. These oral history materials may supplement the official records acquired through the scheduling procedure from Federal Government departments, as well as supplementing the private manuscripts of various Cabinet Ministers and Members of Parliament acquired by the NAC. These oral history documents are predominantly collections because of their focus on informational content only, revealing no more about these creating bodies -- the LOP/NAC -- nor interrelated with LOP/NAC records in the normal course of day-to-day events. On the other hand, the fact that such an oral history programme exists within the LOP/NAC is evidence of

one of their natural activities or functions and can be seen to be a series within their respective corporate archival fonds. In addition, their creation is evidence of the day-to-day activity(ies) of the interviewer(s) who have been conducting this joint oral history programme and could be considered part of the archival fonds of either Peter Stursberg or Tom Earle, and others, over the years.

Can archival methods of arrangement and description be applied to oral history documents? Here again the answer is yes if the taped interviews are considered archival documents, but no if they are just collections. To help facilitate the use of RAD in describing oral history documents, a few fictitious descriptions have been offered to provide practical examples to archivists handling oral history documents as a series within a fonds. The adaptation of the Rules for Archival Description (RAD)⁹ in both cases reveals that the descriptions do not vastly differ for the oral history documents themselves. The important thing is to distinguish whether they are part of a fonds or not. The application of RAD to all forms of records which come under the custody of an archives is very important for intellectual control of their holdings, and if oral history documents form part of an archives holdings they are no exception.

RAD currently have limitations in rules specifically to deal with interviews¹⁰ and this ought to be addressed by the Planning Committee working with Chapter 8 of RAD dealing with sound recordings. Oral history documents ought to be described either as part of a fonds (as warranted by the appraisal process) or as a collection. A fictitious example herein demonstrates the applicability of the RAD which would apply in both situations, and although the rules are just beginning to take a hold in the archival

community in this country, their application can only result in more awareness of what may lie hidden in the fonds or collections preserved in archival repositories. This time-consuming archival function may be eased with the help of today's advanced technology in combination with dedicated people.

Archivists ought to treat oral history documents like any other archival record. There is no reason why archival institutions cannot continue to preserve oral history materials, but as a matter of principle the archival quality of the documents, where it exists, should be preserved. Much more work needs to be done, for instance in such areas as access to information and privacy legislation related to oral history documents; conservation issues; and what role archivists may play in ensuring the creators of oral history documents preserve their original, and unedited, work as part of their archival fonds.

Archives must determine in their acquisition policy whether they will acquire collections or restrict themselves to those oral history documents which happen to be part of the fonds which they acquire. In both cases, whether as a fonds or as a collection, a different approach to arrangement and description is needed, but the results in terms of access to content is not appreciably different. A single approach is not viable. Everything depends on the circumstances of creation, on context, on custody, and on the acquisition policy of the institution.

Notes to the Conclusions

1. Ann Pederson. "Unlocking Hidden Treasures Through Description: Comments on Archival Voyages of Discovery," *Archivaria* 37 (Spring 1994): 51.
2. Wilma MacDonald. A survey of the National Archives of Canada, ten provincial archives and two territorial archives were carried out to determine the extent of oral history holdings in these institutions. Statistical reports on the extent of oral history holdings reported in 1983-84 and 1994 are in the possession of the author, Ottawa.
3. F. Gerald Ham, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1993).
4. Terry Eastwood, "Towards A Social Theory of Appraisal," *Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor* (Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992), 72.
5. Ontario Hydro Archives, Toronto. Call No. 91082 "Personal Interviews with Senior Hydro Personnel." *Guide to Oral History Collections in Canada/Guide des fonds d'histoire orale au Canada* compiled by Normand Fortier (Ottawa: Canadian Oral History Association *Journal*, Vol. 13, 1993), 204.
6. See David Lance *An Archive Approach to Oral History* (London: Imperial War Museum in association with International Association of Sound Archives, 1978); James E. Fogerty, "Filling the Gap: Oral History in the Archives," *The American Archivist*, Vol. 46(2), Spring 1983: 150-51; and Derek Reimer, "Oral History and Archives: The Case in Favor," *Canadian Oral History Association/Société canadienne d'histoire orale Journal* 5 No. 1 (1981-82): 30-33.
7. Dietrich Schuller, Foreword to *An Archive Approach to Oral History* by David Lance (London, Imperial War Museum in association with International Association of Sound Archives, 1978), vii.
8. Willa K. Baum, *Transcribing and Editing Oral History*. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1981); William W. Moss, *Oral History Program Manual*. (New York: Praeger Publishers, 1975); and Derek Reimer, ed., David Mattison and Allen W. Specht, assistant eds. *Voices: A Guide to Oral History*. (Victoria, B.C.: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, Sound and Moving Image Division, 1984). [Note: PABC changed its name to British Columbia Archives and Records Service.]

9. Bureau of Canadian Archivists/Bureau canadien des archivistes. *Rules for Archival Description* (Ottawa, 1990). Chapter 8 of the Rules apply to sound recordings.

10. Velma Parker, Visual and Sound Archives Division, National Archives of Canada, Ottawa, 1 May 1995.

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i) Directories of Canadian Oral History Collections [With apologies to any NPT repositories, omitted from the following list, which may have published a guide to their oral history holdings subsequent to the completion of this thesis.]

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ORAL HISTORY QUESTIONNAIRE

I Scope of Your Programme

1. Do you collect oral history tapes? Yes____ No____

If your answer is "No",
please turn to question
#19 and complete the
remainder of Questionnaire.

2. When was your oral history programme established? _____

3. Who are the creators of your oral history tapes?
Estimate the %.

a) journalists _____

b) university based researchers _____

c) historical societies/other community groups _____

d) independent private researchers _____

e) archival staff _____

4. Is your archival staff involved in the acquisition
of such tapes:

a) as promoters through training workshops Yes____ No____

b) as supervisors of contracted personnel Yes____ No____

c) as interviewers themselves Yes____ No____

5. Does your archives:

a) copy tapes which are loaned to you Yes____ No____

b) provide blank tapes to non-archival

- interviewers (at your expense) Yes ____ No ____
- c) supply tape recorders to interviewers (on loan) Yes ____ No ____
- d) provide Release Forms for obtaining copyright Yes ____ No ____
- e) require full identification of the tapes before deposit in your archives Yes ____ No ____
6. Is there a separate amount in your operating budget for your oral history programme? Yes ____ No ____
- If your answer is "Yes",
what is the annual amount? _____
7. Do you receive funds from outside sources? Yes ____ No ____
- If your answer is "Yes",
what is the annual amount? _____

II Nature of Your Holdings

8. What subject areas are emphasized in your oral history programme?
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
9. How many tapes do you have in your collection? _____ tapes
- _____ hours
10. Upon what criteria do you select oral history tapes?
(number 1, 2 and 3 in order of priority)

- a) to add supplementary information on established themes _____
- b) to fill in gaps in other forms of record _____
- c) to "second guess" future needs _____

III Administrative & Intellectual Control

11. Has your archives conducted a Survey to determine how much oral history has already been generated in your region? Yes ____ No ____

If your answer is "Yes",
is this available to users? Yes ____ No ____

12. Are tapes accessioned by the archival staff:
- a) transcribed in full _____
 - b) summarized _____
 - c) indexed _____
 - d) none of the above _____
13. Which of the following do you produce for oral history tapes?
- a) accessions register or other preliminary listing _____
 - b) detailed catalogue _____
 - c) special indexes _____
 - d) published guide _____

IV Use

14. How many researchers would you estimate consult

your oral history collection per month? _____

15. What theme is most in demand?

V Preservation/Conservation

16. Are copies of your oral history tapes made for reference? Yes ____ No ____
17. Are the masters kept in a temperature and humidity controlled environment? Yes ____ No ____
18. Are procedures followed to prevent deterioration of tapes, such as rewinding periodically? Yes ____ No ____

To be completed by all respondents to this Questionnaire.

VI General

19. Would you expand your programme to include oral history given the availability of funds? Yes ____ No ____
20. Should the taped interviews, including documentation, of an oral history programme be in an archives? Yes ____ No ____

If your answer is "No", who should be responsible for preserving all the documentation thus generated?

- a) libraries _____
- b) institutes of oral history _____

- c) museums _____
- d) the creating bodies _____
- e) other (explain) _____

21. Would you like to see a Central Registry of oral history projects established:

- Regionally _____
- Provincially _____
- Federally _____

22. Please use the following space for any additional remarks, including comments on your programme or your institution's plans regarding oral history materials.

Name of Repository:

Date of Reply:

.....
(signature)