

ARCHIVISTS' OUTLOOK ON SERVICE
TO GENEALOGISTS IN SELECTED
CANADIAN PROVINCIAL ARCHIVES

BY

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ABSTRACT

A long-standing antipathy towards genealogists on the part of archivists is suggested by a study of the archival literature. However, there is evidence in the literature of the past decade to indicate that many archivists are reassessing their position vis à vis genealogists. There appears to be several causes. Social historians and other professionals also acknowledge that genealogical endeavours are helpful to their own purposes. Genealogists themselves recognize that their qualifications and standards must be improved in order for them to command respect. Archivists now recognize the lobbying power that can be exercised by this large user constituency. The literature suggests that all these influences are leading archivists to accept the principle that genealogy and genealogists should receive service and respect that is equal to that afforded academic and other researchers.

Interviews with seven archivists at three Canadian provincial archives were conducted. They suggest that different archivists hold different attitudes towards genealogists. One interviewee was clearly antipathetic, but three were impartial and three were frustrated and discouraged, not with genealogists per se, but with the problems inherent in putting the principle of equality into practice.

Regardless of the attitude held, each interviewee believed that an improvement in methods of accommodating genealogists would not only aid the genealogist, but would also provide some relief from the pressures of serving this large and varied user constituency. But does such accommodation through adjustments in the functions of appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description, reference and access, and public programming undermine archival theory? In general, it was found that sound appraisal practices are compromised by an approach driven by the needs of the user; however, genealogical research required no adjustment of arrangement and description practices following the principles of provenance and original order. It was also found that the functions of reference and access, and public programming could meet the needs and approaches of genealogists without jeopardizing the physical and intellectual aspects of the records.

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Any errors or omissions in the content, judgements or presentation of this thesis are the complete responsibility of the author.

INTRODUCTION

We are all aware of the fact that an unfortunate antipathy exists between members of the archival and historical professions and the genealogists. The former generally view the ancestry searchers with contempt, regarding them as people who contribute little or nothing to our knowledge of this country's past and are chiefly occupied in forging weak links between themselves and such celebrities as Charlemagne and William the Conqueror. The genealogists, on the other hand, often think that archivists and historical society personnel deliberately close their eyes to the real value of genealogical investigation and consequently are uncooperative when requested to make available records in their custody.¹

This bleak description of the relationship between archivists and genealogists was given in an article entitled "What the Genealogist Expects of an Archival Agency or Historical Society" written in 1949 for the American Archivist by genealogist Milton Rubincam. Was this a true reflection of the relationship that existed in 1949 between archivists and these members of their user constituency? Or did Rubincam overstate the case? Was he suffering from "genealogical paranoia"? A suggestion that Rubincam's assessment was correct came in 1956 from archival theorist T. R. Schellenberg. Schellenberg's relative lack of regard for the pursuits of genealogists was clearly articulated when he advised that "special consideration should be given to those [requests] from inquirers seeking information

needed in establishing their legal or civic rights or from inquirers engaged in work that will contribute significantly to the increase or dissemination of knowledge"² and "less time should be spent on requests for information that contributes only to the pursuit of one person's hobby."³ A similarly biased attitude was expressed in that same year by Howard Peckham who, speaking of primary sources in research libraries, advocated exclusion of "incompetent scholars" or anyone "whose research [the librarian] believes will be superficial or of no real significance" including "the genealogist who wants family data which will be of interest only to her children and a few relatives."⁴

These two statements are probably indicative of the mindset of many archivists at that time. Both men made negative value judgments about genealogy and those who would pursue its study. Although not completely discounting genealogists, Schellenberg clearly believed in the primacy of the academic scholar. Just as clearly, Peckham did not regard genealogists as legitimate users of archival material. Schellenberg and Peckham were among those who, as noted by Rubincam, did not regard the evidence amassed by genealogists as germane to the reconstruction of historical events.

Fortunately Peckham's call for exclusion did not become general policy in archival institutions; however, the antipathetic attitude noted by Rubincam and expressed by Schellenberg and Peckham continued in evidence for many

years. Indeed, within the last year this author has heard archivists make many derisive statements of which the following are examples:⁵

Good. Its going to rain on Saturday.
Maybe it will keep the genealogists
away.

Oh, she's a genealogist [as well as an
archivist], but we won't hold that
against her!

I get sick to my stomach every time I
see one of "them" get off the elevator.

It would appear from these comments that the antipathetic attitude towards genealogists has not improved in the last thirty-five years. Or has it? Perhaps these are isolated incidents. Perhaps these types of comments are now only made in a tongue-in-cheek sense. After all, do not most modern archivists subscribe to the archival principle of equal respect, equal service and equal access for all users?

In an effort to understand the relationship between archivists and genealogists as it exists today, chapter one of this thesis will first outline the history of genealogy and then will examine the archival literature for evidence concerning the relationship in order to determine if antipathy does indeed still exist and, if so, why such an attitude continues in the face of archival first principles. If an improvement in attitude is discerned, the influences contributing to that improvement will be examined.

Chapter two will present the results of seven case

studies carried out to determine if the evidence found in the archival literature reflects the actual situation at three Canadian archival institutions.

The third chapter will examine the case studies to determine if the interviewees have identified solutions to better serve genealogists. The solutions and their implications for the management of archives will be placed within the broader interpretive framework of an issue currently being debated in the archival community: should the needs of users drive the archival process, or should archivists serve their records first and thereby serve the users?

A concluding chapter will summarize and comment on the findings and make recommendations that may improve both the relationship between archivists and genealogists and the ways in which genealogists are served.

CHAPTER ONE

ARCHIVISTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS GENEALOGISTS:

FROM ANTIPATHY TO ACCEPTANCE

Genealogy is the study of family descent resulting in an account or history of the ancestors of a person or family. While its genesis and early history cannot be determined with any precision, historians have made educated guesses about its beginnings and can trace the broad trends of its evolution. Although it has been in existence as an area of study for centuries, many academics have not considered it a legitimate area of historical enquiry. Similarly, in the past, many archivists and librarians have referred to genealogists as antiquarians and have afforded them less than adequate regard and service. However, as will be noted in the following survey of the more recent archival literature, some archivists have reevaluated their relationship with genealogists. This chapter will examine what appears to be a trend towards a belief in a principle of equality for all users, including genealogists, on the part of members of the archival community.

History of Genealogy

American genealogist Eugene A. Stratton has proposed that genealogy may have begun with the concept of inheritance. "A primitive tribe owning all in common had no

need for genealogy. Once it was determined that crowns (and other titles) or property should remain in the family, it became necessary to determine who were the members of a family."⁶ Genealogy originated, therefore, to serve the purposes of the land-owning classes and probably dates from ancient times.

The method of determining who were the members of a family and what land was owned would have varied from culture to culture. In literate societies it is likely that written records afforded the means. Although he made no direct reference to genealogy, Ernst Posner, in Archives in the Ancient World, noted that the types of records that would have been necessary to prove land ownership existed during the time of the great, ancient, river cultures of the Nile, Tigris and Euphrates, namely: land surveys; land records that established legal ownership of areas of the land; and records establishing tax obligations from real property.⁷ Among pre-literate cultures, the oral recitation of a family pedigree was often used. Citing an anthropological study conducted of the people of the Polynesian Islands, John Orton states that, prior to nineteenth century literacy, disputes over land ownership were settled by requiring the contenders to give "in perfect order, the names of those who had kept 'the fires burning' on the land....To falter was to lose everything."⁸

The pursuit of genealogical knowledge continued as the centuries progressed but it appears that during the late

Middle Ages in England its purpose became distorted. Rich and famous people who were either discontent with their true heritage, or unable to determine it, commonly concocted illustrious family trees which linked them with royalty or nobility or some notable event. In order to counteract this subversion The College of Heralds was established during the sixteenth century in England. The Heralds determined who had the right, within the respective heraldic provinces, to bear coats of arms or to be styled "Esquires" or "Gentlemen". It recorded the pedigree of the land-owning population in order that proper inheritance was assured.⁹ In an important development, it was during this process that, for the first time, references were cited in order to give evidence of the source of the pedigree information.¹⁰ Unfortunately, the practice of citing references was not universally adopted and genealogists known for well documented work have tended to be the exception over the years.

Since the late nineteenth century, genealogical research has made great strides. J. Horace Round (1854-1928) of England, who was an authority on British feudal history, is considered the father of modern scientific genealogy. Not only was he a meticulous researcher, but he was the first to recognize the relationship between history and genealogy and, thus, the need to put a genealogy in its historical context. Stratton observed that many of Round's writings "are as much or more historical treatises as genealogical discoveries."¹¹

In the United States, Donald Lines Jacobus (1887-1970) was the foremost exponent of scientific genealogy. Jacobus' biographer, David L. Greene, asserts that Jacobus' journal The American Genealogist (TAG), established in 1922, was at the centre of a group of scholars who became known as the "Jacobus School". They used TAG as a vehicle for improving the level of genealogical scholarship in America.¹² In the words of Jacobus: "We maintain that it is our right and our privilege to apply to genealogy the same standards of research, documentation, and logical argument that are accepted in every other branch of historical study."¹³ The journal included articles that considered all facets of genealogy--the use of source material, the evaluation of evidence, its cultural and sociological aspects, the origin of American colonists, conditions in the genealogical profession, and the compilation of family histories.¹⁴ In addition, Jacobus hammered incessantly at false ancestral pride and faked pedigrees.¹⁵ In an article entitled "Fraudulent Pedigrees" which he wrote for TAG in 1935, Jacobus discussed the problem and asserted his right to expose such work.¹⁶ Over the forty-three years of his editorship (1922-1965), many such exposés were published.¹⁷ He also published an instructional book, Genealogy as Pastime and Profession, which incorporated all his wisdom about scientific genealogy.¹⁸

The period between the late nineteenth century and

World War II also saw an increasing number of genealogical societies and periodicals established. In addition, hereditary societies, such as the Sons of the Revolution (established 1876) and the Daughters of the American Revolution (established 1890), were founded.¹⁹ These societies endeavoured to deemphasize America's first families by including all the descendants of those who had participated in the American Revolution or the state militias, even if only for a short time and regardless of their social position or origin.²⁰

The 1930s brought an increased interest in genealogy. David Null has suggested that this may have been "due to feelings of uprootedness and loss of purpose brought on by the depression."²¹ Genealogists Taylor and Crandall contend that a decrease in this interest occurred after World War II and that the most noteworthy advances between 1945 and 1965 occurred in the areas of instruction and professionalization. For example, in 1949 the National Archives in Washington, D. C. instituted an in-depth course of genealogical instruction known as the National Institute on Genealogical Research. In 1950, through the initiative of Dr. Ernst Posner, then Director of the American University's School of Social Sciences and Public Affairs, the American Society of Genealogists (ASG) sponsored a three-week intensive course in genealogical training held at American University. The National Archives later combined its efforts with these two organizations. The Institute continues to

date. In 1960, the ASG introduced its text, Genealogical Research, Methods and Sources, edited by Milton Rubincam and in 1964 it, along with the National Genealogical Society, created the Board for the Certification of Genealogists to formulate standards for genealogical research. In 1971 the trustees of the Board adopted a Code of Ethics.²²

These attempts to make genealogical research conform to sound historical/scientific practices often failed to reach many persons tracing their family tree. Many remained content to produce a list of names and dates with no attempt to connect their ancestors to the historical, political, social, or economic events of which they were a part. Many did not adequately cite sources for the information they found. Some remained engrossed in an attempt to glorify their family by tracing it to nobility or an important event, often with little regard for the truth. Numerous charlatans existed who posed as professional genealogical researchers and preyed on the aspirations of their clients.²³ Genealogists themselves recognized the detrimental effect that the continued production and dissemination of false pedigrees had. As Russell E. Bidlack observes: "These genealogical absurdities have constituted splendid ammunition for the critics of genealogical study and have been responsible, in part, for the low esteem in which genealogists have been held by many librarians and archivists."²⁴

Is Bidlack correct? Is there a connection between the

judgments archivists have made about the worth of genealogy and the deliberate duplicity of some genealogists? Are derogatory comments such as those noted earlier occasioned by a lack of skill and historical perspective on the part of other genealogists? The archival literature of the last decade may suggest answers to these questions.

Assessing Attitudes From the Literature

In 1983, Roy Turnbaugh noted that "many archivists have traditionally held genealogists in low esteem."²⁵ In 1984, Elsie Freeman wrote of the "adversary relationships" that many archivists have with genealogists.²⁶ As recently as 1990, Timothy Ericson could still state that "many of us can be extremely fussy about whom we choose to serve, considering, for instance, genealogists and local historians to be second class citizens."²⁷ In addition, archivists have referred to genealogists as "mink-clad dowager[s] determined to trace [their] ancestry to Adam"²⁸ or as "wealthy, conservative, superpatriots"²⁹ for their involvement in the exclusive heritage societies.³⁰ Similarly, in Britain, archivist Michael Cook mused about the "inevitable problem" of genealogists and stated that "it is curious that archivists have not been willing, on the whole, to accept these [genealogists] as legitimate or worthy user groups."³¹

Librarians appear to have similar perceptions. The library literature is replete with evidence. For example, in

1967 P. W. Filby admitted that "there is hardly a librarian who does not speak scathingly of the genealogist."³² In 1972, J. Carlyle Parker noted the "contemptuous attitude and the frequent rudeness of many librarians"³³ towards genealogical reference questions. In 1976 R. E. Wagenknecht felt that "librarians cringe at the very word 'genealogist'."³⁴ And, in 1983, Sinko and Peters wrote that "in many public libraries today, genealogists are still considered to be nuisances who make unreasonable and time-consuming demands on the staff."³⁵

These reflections paint a picture as bleak as the one noted by Rubincam in 1949; but, the picture improves considerably when the comments are examined in context. The quotations were all taken from articles which outlined the existing situation but which aimed at exposing the antipathetic attitudes as wrong-headed, at understanding why they continued to exist, and at suggesting why such attitudes were unacceptable. The articles dealing with this issue appeared since the early 1980s.³⁶ What had brought to the fore archivists' examination of their relationship with genealogists?

The answer lies partly in the increasing numbers of genealogists arriving at archives, beginning in the late 1970s. As noted above, genealogy had always enjoyed a following of enthusiastic supporters, but it experienced a remarkable renaissance of interest after the 1976 publication of Alex Haley's book Roots.³⁷ This book, based

on Haley's search for his ancestors, was immediately popular and was eventually made into a successful television miniseries. But this was genealogy of a different stripe than had been pursued before. It touched off a revolution in the way people viewed ancestor-hunting, for Haley was an African-American descended from people brought to the American South as slaves from Africa. Haley's search popularized the notion that all classes of people could benefit from a knowledge of their family heritage. With Roots a whole new motive for genealogy was given credence. It was no longer important to be descended from kings or United Empire Loyalists. What was of primary importance was to know where one fit into society--where one "came from". This premise struck a responsive chord in the people of a mobile society. Genealogy provided a method by which to fill in the gaps of their family knowledge. Many who began the search for their family heritage may have been motivated by the desire to discover a foundation upon which to stand and face the world.

Whatever their motivation--psychological or sociological--genealogists began to visit archival repositories with increasing frequency, and archivists were confronted with the challenge of coping with burgeoning numbers of that same type of user whom they had traditionally held in contempt. In many cases, the family tree researchers arrived with too little information to get started, with undeveloped research skills, and with little

idea of the types of source materials available. Many genealogists had goals that were long on enthusiasm but short on an understanding of the realities of archives and archival research. For example, archivists sometimes found themselves confronted with people who arrived at the reference desk, stated their surname and asked for their ready-made genealogy!

The archival literature of the 1980s reflects archivists' struggle to come to terms with the situation. The language used in the early articles is revealing. Jacobsen used military terminology: archives were "under seige" by "legions" of genealogists and "battle-lines" had been drawn.³⁸ Pairo referred to the "floods" and "hordes" of new users.³⁹

Gradually the issues which had always existed but which had been brought to the fore by the increase in genealogical research were sorted out and there evolved a consensus, at least in principle. The most important issue to settle was whether genealogists were legitimate users who should be treated with respect. In a 1981 article, Jacobsen noted that archivists were finally willing to acknowledge the presence of genealogists and were even considering how to educate them. She stated that "their reasons for wanting to research their personal history are not criteria that we can legitimately question or dismiss."⁴⁰ In 1983, Turnbaugh announced that "condescension towards nonscholarly users is, at last, beginning to break down everywhere."⁴¹

By the late 1980s, the change in attitude seemed complete. In 1989, Jimerson urged that "the goal of archives should be to encourage use of valuable records. All potential users of the archives should be assisted and appreciated."⁴² Similarly, Peter Bunce asserted in 1990 that "archivists must not be tempted to 'preselect' or withhold documents based on their perceptions of users or users' intent" and that there was "no excuse to be rude or condescending towards researchers because they do not meet our expectations of what researchers should be."⁴³ However, Canadian archivist Ian Wilson expressed it best. In an article advocating the principle of free access to public archival services as a vital function in a democratic society, he reminded readers that "human rights codes state explicitly that every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to services, without discrimination."⁴⁴

While conclusions based on a limited analysis of the literature must necessarily be tentative, it appears that the members of the archival community have, at least in principle, evolved from the positions taken by Schellenberg and Peckham in 1956. Present-day archivists appear to realize that they have an obligation, which is embedded in archival principle, to serve all users equally well, with equal respect for their topic of research, and to provide equal access to all records in their custody. This obligation has become a central tenet of the profession.

Apart from a growing affirmation of equality in

archives, the literature has identified other influences which have affected the attitude archivists hold concerning genealogists. As noted, the number of genealogists visiting archives rose dramatically during the 1980s; but other types of users were also on the increase. In order to serve all these new publics adequately, archivists found they had to approach their resource allocators for increased funding. They soon discovered that other cultural institutions, with whom they were competing for funding, had much higher profiles than archives. As American archivist Pairó explained: "Only a small percentage of the population either understands or appreciates the function of an archival institution."⁴⁵ Blais and Enns noted a similar problem in Canada. They wrote: "While heritage may be valued in a general way, too few people understand the role of archives in enhancing that heritage."⁴⁶ Archivists recognized the need to make the functions, goals and value of archival institutions at least as well known and well regarded as those of other cultural institutions. They searched for ways to accomplish this and a number of solutions were identified. It was imperative that the profession be grounded in a sound education and that it exhibit high technical standards.⁴⁷ It was equally as important that archives make a visible contribution to society. Archivists reasoned that by being responsive to their various publics, their contribution to society would be appreciated and that, in turn, these publics would champion archives. The support

thus garnered could be used to strengthen requests for financial resources from resource allocators. The result of this new responsiveness was noted by Blais and Enns in 1990. They concluded that "the relationship between archivists and their constituency has become more symbiotic. Archives attempt to shape the service they provide to the specific needs and expectations of their users; not only to fulfill information needs but also to guarantee public support."⁴⁸

Because of their proportionately high numbers,⁴⁹ genealogists in particular were targetted as potential supporters. Jimerson echoed others when he stated that "genealogists can be strong allies in seeking support for maintaining or expanding archival programs."⁵⁰ William Joyce specifically coupled a commitment to genealogists with their potential as lobbyists. He argued that "genealogical organizations are large, adequately financed, and politically knowledgeable....With their political leverage and concomitant interest in documentation, genealogists warrant improved service."⁵¹ Thus, archivists had realized they had to stop viewing genealogists as nuisances and start appreciating them and catering to them; however, their motivation was not one based upon respect but, rather, one based on financial considerations. Yes, the attitude had changed and genealogists were receiving more attention, but for very pragmatic reasons.

Never slow to miss an opportunity to prove their worth to archivists and historians, genealogists jumped on this

bandwagon. Elizabeth Shown Mills was one of many who spoke to the value of her colleagues as lobbyists. She reminded that "genealogists provide archives with high-use figures upon which budget allotments are often made, and they can be a very persuasive constituency when legislators have to be wooed."⁵²

The purist would argue that respect and good service for genealogists, or any other type of user, should not be predicated on their value as lobbyists; that they should be valued simply because they have information needs and not because they are a "meal-ticket". Although one may wish for a commitment based on something more than expediency, pragmatic reasoning inevitably plays a part in strategies for capturing funding.

A third influence which may have affected the attitude of archivists towards genealogists comes from a certain convergence of the endeavours of social historians and genealogists. The main thrust of historical writing until the 1960s concentrated on political, military, and constitutional matters. Any studies of groups that were undertaken tended to focus on the elite--aristocrats, political leaders and the rich. This was history "from the top down". Approximately thirty years ago historians began to place a greater emphasis on social history. Social history aims at an "historical synthesis which reflect[s] the experiences of inarticulate groups as well as upper classes."⁵³ The motivation for this change of emphasis has

been suggested by Canadian historian William Hamilton. He asserts that "the true beginnings of historical events is to be found in the lives of ordinary people, for it is an axiom of history that we cannot understand the nature of any group without detailed knowledge of the individuals who compose it."⁵⁴ Thus, social history is also known as "grass-roots" history or history "from the bottom up".

More specific areas of social history eventually emerged which are not fundamentally distinct but, rather, just differing aspects of the study of humanity through time. One of these areas is family history. American historian David Kyvig has stated that the purpose of family history is "to give insights into the nature and social influence of this fundamental institution."⁵⁵

After historians made this conceptual shift to a social-scientific perspective and began focusing on a broad network of kinship relationships over time, they began to follow a parallel course to that traditionally taken by genealogists. They also began to make use of the types of sources that genealogists had always mined--sources that provide longitudinal data. Initially it was difficult for historians to acknowledge the value of genealogical inquiry to their studies. They had long held genealogists in contempt, just as archivists had. They had dismissed them as "antiquarians" and "snobs" who were inept in historical research and uncritical in their interpretation of records. Gradually, however, some historians began to admit that the

sources of genealogy and even genealogies themselves were quite valuable tools in demographic and quantitative historical studies.⁵⁶ A number of articles by historians about the convergence of interests between historians and genealogists have appeared since the mid-1980s. For example, Samuel P. Hays confessed that he "found the information and insights from genealogical investigations to be very helpful in dealing with matters such as migration and vertical mobility, changes in family size and life cycle, and the impact of modernization on traditional values and practices in religion, family, and recreation."⁵⁷ John A. Schutz used many genealogies and family biographies in his research concerning members of the Massachusetts legislature, 1691-1776, and acknowledged that "without these accounts, often lovingly done by a family member, it would have been impossible to know as much of these representatives as has been found."⁵⁸ Similarly, Virginia DeJohn Anderson noted that "an excellent family genealogy provided much of the information" for her study of the patterns of mobility within the Danforth family in New England.⁵⁹ It would be a mistake, however, to imply that all historians have accepted genealogical data as relevant to historical inquiry. The traditional distrust still lingers in some cases, prompting one historian to preface his findings with the statement: "Since genealogical data is [sic] often regarded as suspect, a preliminary defense of my source is required."⁶⁰

Concurrent with the historians' shift to social history, genealogists have also altered their focus. At last, more and more are attempting to conform to the scientific genealogy advocated earlier by Jacobus and TAG. They have become less content with the production of simple charts of names and dates and have come to understand the importance of placing their family in its wider historical context. Many genealogists have begun to concentrate on two additional problems: migration, on the one hand, and a sense of place and the persistence of a family in a given place, on the other hand. In order to incorporate these new foci into their family histories, genealogists have become more aware of the methodological and substantive treatments of the family and its environments produced by historians and by other social scientists.⁶¹ This convergence of interests has furnished a context for interaction and, increasingly, historians and genealogists are recognizing that cooperation can be mutually beneficial.

Historians are not alone in their discovery of points of convergence with genealogists. Other professionals are discovering that the answers they seek may best be found through genealogical inquiry. Lawyers, trust officers of banking institutions and administrators of estates retain genealogists to trace beneficiaries under a will when heirs are unknown or lost.⁶²

Medical researchers, especially geneticists concerned with the transmission of hereditary conditions, are using

genealogical investigation to identify potential carriers. For example, a few years ago an investigation was carried out in Nova Scotia to identify the ancestors of a group of people who suffer from the rare Neimann-Pick Disease. The defective genes were traced to two Acadian pioneers of the 1600s. By subsequently identifying all descendants of this couple by genealogical research, doctors were able to anticipate which young people were likely to be carriers and mount an education program to inform them of the dangers of producing children with another who carries the defective gene.⁶³ Similarly, a Swedish study attempted to determine if there was a hereditary pattern to incidences of dyslexia in residents of a selected parish. The researchers used church examination records to trace seventeen families with poor reading marks and seventeen families with good readers and were able to conclude that the dyslexia appeared to be more social and environmental than genetic.⁶⁴

It is also now common practice in Canada's school system to assign genealogy projects to students in order to introduce them to history. Once completed, these personal accounts give students a firmer grasp of their own and their family's place in society.⁶⁵

In addition, there are cases where genealogical research has been able to prove or disprove commonly held beliefs. For example, in the early 1980s a building in Coburg, Ontario was designated a national landmark. Ensuing publicity attributed its stone carvings to a noted Toronto

architect, but Coburg resident Jim Leonard knew through family tradition that the carvings had been executed by his great uncle. Leonard proved his claim through the use of sources and methodologies typically used by genealogists. City directories, wills, deeds, assessment rolls and a published obituary were all studied and he was finally able to verify his assertion and have the record corrected on the Canadian Inventory of Historic Buildings of the Canadian Parks Service.⁶⁶

Have archivists been persuaded to modify their attitude by the convergence of interests noted above? Since many archivists come from an historical background, what effect does this have on this issue of attitudes? Does it follow that if historians and other professionals have come to regard genealogical methodology and sources more highly, archivists will follow suit? In order for this to happen, archivists would have to value the opinion of these other professionals. From a review of the literature that deals with the relationship between archivists and historians, it is not clear that all archivists value the opinions of historians. In 1969 historian Alfred B. Rollins Jr. noted that archivists traditionally "viewed scholars as rather dangerous and certainly annoying nuisances" and, while he felt that the situation had improved, that there was still a "natural tension between trustee and consumer."⁶⁷ More recent archival literature indicates that this tension still exists. William Joyce delved into its psychological roots.

He suggested that many historians regarded archives as a field for those historians who are not capable of teaching and that, as a result, archivists have been treated less like colleagues by some historians than as servile handmaidens.⁶⁸

Paradoxically, other archivists have noted that, in the past, archives have been known as the preserve of historians; that many archivists have believed that historians are their most important user constituency; and that archivists have sometimes hoped to gain a bit of reflected glory from the association. However, in keeping with the earlier noted movement to a belief in user equality, the same writers are quick to note that this is no longer the case. Turnbaugh calls the notion that archives are the preserve of historians "nonsense" and Ericson believes it is "our most debilitating myth."⁶⁹ Taking the denial a step further, Freeman stated that "historians are neither our principal nor our most significant user."⁷⁰ Jacobsen was even more blunt. She called historians "superfluous" and accused some of them of having research topics that were of little or no value to anyone because of how narrowly defined and obtuse they were.⁷¹

It would appear that the archivist/historian relationship is as fraught with problems as the one between archivists and genealogists. It seems unlikely that archivists would be persuaded to more highly value genealogists on the recommendation of historians. Rather, it

appears likely that the interest that archivists, genealogists and historians have in the records and resources needed for research has become the common denominator which can provide the foundation upon which to build mutual respect among the professions.

Articles written by archivists that deal with the history/genealogy convergence are quite scarce. One such article, written by Canadian archivist Hugh Taylor, encouraged cooperation between historians and genealogists for their mutual benefit, and outlined some steps archivists could take to ease the cooperative effort; but it is only by inference that one realizes that Taylor, as an archivist, is putting his seal of approval on genealogists in this regard.⁷²

A final influence on archivists' attitudes towards genealogists has come about as a result of serious attempts made by genealogists at self-improvement. The measures taken attest to the genealogical community's concern for high standards of scholarship. They have recognized that there are wide variations in the qualifications of those who do family tree research and that those who produce poor family histories reflect badly upon those who strive to produce well-researched, well-documented work. Genealogists are therefore taking steps to educate and inform those who would aspire to genealogy. Genealogical societies and journals have been in existence for decades. Members are kept up-to-date on new source materials and on the research of

colleagues. Through the journals, help and expertise in the resolution of problems may be solicited--a useful service, particularly for neophytes. The societies also educate their members by holding workshops and courses aimed at researchers at various levels of expertise.

In order to counteract the poor publicity given to genealogists in general when unqualified people offer themselves for hire, many organizations have been established which test the competency of those who desire to work for clients. These include the Board of Certification of Genealogists, established in June 1964 at Washington, D.C.; the accreditation program of the Genealogical Library of the Church of the Latter Day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah; and the Genealogical Institute of the Maritimes in Canada. To qualify for certification, prospective members must meet certain stringent conditions which include submitting samples of their genealogical research and/or completing written and oral examinations. Usually, two levels of certification are available. The Certified Genealogist conducts research in primary records and secondary sources and endeavors to construct genealogies of families based on the research. A Record Searcher searches original records but makes no attempt to reconstruct pedigrees or to prepare family histories. The various certification boards compile lists of researchers deemed qualified and potential clients are informed of the difference in the two levels.⁷³

The foregoing review of the literature suggests that the relationship between archivists and genealogists may have improved a great deal since the days of Schellenberg and Peckham. It may also suggest that genealogists are now well-regarded and that there are a variety of influences. However, if this is truly the case, how does one account for the recently-expressed negative comments noted as examples on page three of this paper? Do the comments indicate that the principled discussions found in the literature express the beliefs of a few high-minded individuals, but that many members of the archival profession have not truly internalized them? Does a dichotomy exist between what archivists believe in principle and what they practice? If so, why is this the case?

In an attempt to answer these questions, this author conducted seven case studies at three archival institutions in Canada. Chapter two will present data gathered from the case studies.

CHAPTER TWO

THE CASE STUDIES: RESPONDENTS' ATTITUDES

In order to investigate whether the present relationship between archivists and genealogists is, in fact, as improved as the discussions and conclusions of the archival literature would suggest, seven case studies at three Canadian provincial archives were conducted.

Method

After careful consideration of the various research strategies available to collect data about attitudes held by archivists regarding genealogists, the author decided to use a case-study approach. While some critics believe that case studies lead to conclusions which cannot be confirmed and that they are really only a method of last resort, research theorist Robert Yin disagrees.⁷⁴ He believes that the case-study method, although still in need of improvement, is nevertheless a serious research strategy. He has stated that the need to use a case-study arises "wherever an empirical inquiry must examine a contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident."⁷⁵ This criterion appeared to well suit the questions under investigation in this thesis. He admits that, since the number of questions asked would be more than the number of

cases, few statistics could be generated for analyzing data; however, since this study is aimed at answering "how" and "why" questions rather than questions of frequency, the case study approach was deemed an appropriate strategy.

Of the two basic types of case study designs, single-case and multiple-case, the latter was chosen because the author felt that it was important to attempt to discover evidence of the extent to which the same phenomena (certain attitudes towards genealogists) exist generally and are not limited to one archival institution. Yin cautioned that success in using the conclusions drawn from a multiple-case study lies in following an identical design within each individual case. Therefore, it was decided that the case studies would take the form of interviews using an identical set of questions, asked in an identical order, for each archivist. (The interview questions appear in Appendix A.)

The concluding step in case study research is to develop a general explanation or synthesis across the cases (case-comparison method). Yin states that "in this method, the entire explanation from each case is taken and compared with explanations from another case. To the extent that the explanations are similar, the basis for a more general explanation can be established."⁷⁶

Initially it was felt that the study should include archivists at different types of archives: government, church and university. Ultimately, in the interest of limiting the study due to time and financial constraints, it

was decided that only seven archivists at three Canadian provincial archives would be interviewed. The three provincial archives selected were chosen on the basis of their proximity to the residence of the author. While the tighter focus may limit the study in that comparisons cannot be made between attitudes held at different types of archival institutions, it nevertheless provides a foundation upon which to make generalizations about the situation in Canadian provincial archives. It will also allow for the identification of patterns that can be compared in a future study to other types of archives or, alternatively, to a broader number of cases of provincial archives.

The archivists to be interviewed within the institutions were chosen on the basis of the following minimum criteria: each had a full-time permanent position as a professional archivist; each had at least ten years experience as an archivist; and each had been involved with serving genealogists at the reference desk. In all, seven archivists were interviewed, four men and three women. All were in their 40s except one who was in her 30s. None had completed a Masters degree in archival studies, but all had a BA degree; two had a graduate degree; and two had completed the course work towards a Masters degree in history. Four had attended the six week archives course offered by the National Archives of Canada, while the other three had participated in continuing education activities. Two of the archivists are avid genealogists (Archivists Two

and Seven) and two admitted to dabbling in it (Archivists Four and Six).

Each archivist was approached through a letter explaining the objectives of the study and the methodology of the interview. Consent was sought for the use of a tape recorder and anonymity was assured for both the archivist and his/her institution. No one refused to be interviewed and all consented to be tape recorded. It was hoped that assurance of anonymity would promote candour on the part of the interviewee.

As noted, all interview questions were identical and all were asked in the same order for each archivist; however, because the questions were open-ended, the length of the interviews varied widely, depending upon how forthcoming the interviewee was.

Within the thesis, identity has been protected by naming the three institutions involved Archives A, Archives B, and Archives C. In addition, all the archivists, regardless of official job titles, have been designated "Archivist" and numbered according to the following key: Archivists One, Two and Three are employed at Archives A, Archivist Four is at Archives B, and Archivists Five, Six and Seven are at Archives C.

Definitions

For the purposes of this study "genealogy" is defined as the study of family descent resulting in an account or

history of the ancestors of a person or family. A "genealogist" is defined as any person who pursues the study of genealogy. Please note that although the term "family history" is frequently used as a synonym for genealogy,⁷⁷ in this study family history will be regarded as the scholarship pursued by social historians and other academic researchers and which is defined as "the examination of family units in terms of marriages; birth; deaths; cohesiveness; decision-making; social, economic, and geographic mobility; educational and religious practices; and definition of sex roles."⁷⁸ In other words, the difference between genealogy and family history is that the former examines individual families, while the latter is concerned with a great many families and with understanding the broad patterns of family structure and change.⁷⁹ Each archivist interviewed was informed of this distinction at the outset.

Results: Attitudes*

The interviews first established that, as is the case at many archives in North America,⁸⁰ the proportion of researchers at each institution who identified their research topic as "genealogy" was greater than any other

* The author has departed from the usual procedure of putting quotations in a blocked format in order that the narrative may flow more freely.

category of user. The genealogical user percentage at Archives A had remained stable over time at an average of approximately fifty percent. The percentage at Archives B was expected to increase by about thirty percent (to bring it to about seventy percent) due to the recent incorporation into the archives' system of extensive genealogical finding aids from a heretofore separate agency. Archives C had noted a decrease in the proportion of genealogical users to fifty percent from the previous seventy percent; however, this was due to an increase in academic researchers and not a decrease in real numbers of genealogists. At each of the three archives, lower percentages of the other categories of users were identified: academic researchers such as historians and sociologists, university students (both undergraduate and graduate), junior high and high school students, government employees, local historians, paralegals and general interest users.⁸¹

After gathering demographic descriptive information about the archives and its users and background information about the archivists themselves, the author moved to immediately establish the presence or absence of an antipathetic attitude towards genealogists and their research. The question asked was:

In terms of rating their goals, which type of researcher do you feel is your most important user?

Every archivist, without exception, denied that the goals of one type of researcher were more or less important than those of another. Archivist One stated that "every

researcher is important in terms of us being able to supply them with information or give them the evidence they need to answer their query. So, myself, I never rank people in terms of importance." Archivist Two felt that public service had to be given according to a "democratic mean". Archivist Three said she would find it hard to rate users because "each person that is doing the research, its their research and I don't find its any better or any greater than the next person's." Archivist Four felt there were no second-rate research topics. Archivist Five stated that "our objective is to make records accessible to everyone who needs them. Certainly genealogists have as equal a part in that as anyone else." Archivist Six said that he treated everyone the same because there were no value judgments made, and Archivist Seven contended that "you don't evaluate any researcher's goals--you just deal with them." Similarly, when asked if they thought the goals of a genealogist were as valid and/or legitimate as the goals of an academic scholar or other type of user, they unanimously responded that the goals were equally valid and legitimate.

The author also attempted to determine if the attitude professed by the interviewees had been affected by any of the influences noted in the literature, that is, a convergence of interests with other professionals, especially social historians; their efforts at self-improvement; and their potential as lobbyists. Regarding a convergence of interests with other professionals, the question asked was:

Are you aware of other people with different research goals who use the same sources and/or methodology as genealogists? (If yes): In what ways are the sources and methodologies of these researchers different/similar from those of genealogists?

Archivists Two, Three, Six and Seven all noted that many social historians are using genealogical sources and methodology. They could also cite specific cases where actual genealogies had been incorporated into an academic study. As Archivist Seven noted: "[The family histories] are good, bad and indifferent, but if there is a body of them to work with, [academics] are much farther ahead than if nothing has been done." Although this convergence of interests was noted, there was no indication in the responses of the interviewees that it had had any influence on their attitude towards genealogists.

A shortcoming of the interview was that the author neglected to ask a direct question regarding self-improvement. Several of the interviewees mentioned that they had noticed a progression from "names and dates genealogy" to "contextual genealogy" when asked question number 17 (see Appendix A); but only two archivists dealt with the issue in more detail. Archivist Seven noted and applauded efforts at self-improvement. He felt that, through their membership in genealogical societies, many genealogists now arrived at the archives with more realistic expectations than had previously been the case. He did not say that this made them easier to serve or respect, but the inference can be drawn.

Archivist Four directly tied self-improvement by genealogists to his attitude towards them. He noted that "we're seeing more and more people who I respect for what they have produced in terms of going beyond the chart with the names and dates. I have seen researchers here who four years ago started off and knew nothing about genealogy. They pursued it; they have obtained the qualifications that they can as certified genealogists; they are now actually doing research on a fee-for-service basis at a very high level of quality. And I respect their ability. We have people who know far more about some of the sources in this institution than I do. I have to respect that." It would appear that his respect is extended only to those who have become more competent and not to genealogists in general.

A link between regard for genealogists and their potential as lobbyists was discerned as the interviewees answered the questions:

Have you received complaints about how this institution carries out its mandate or suggestions from users of ways in which this institution can improve?

Can you give specific instances when a user's suggestion or complaint has resulted in a change of policy or way of doing something?

While originally meant to elicit responses about the internal policies of the various archives, the interviewees took the opportunity to also expound on genealogists' value as lobbyists with their resource allocators.

Archivist One stated: "I think we haven't recognized the importance of, or used the power of the genealogist's

interest, to exploit that interest for our own purposes-- that is, in having them as stronger allies in pointing out the value of archives to society in general.... I think that they're going to be another voice of which we have so few, which we can mobilize to express the value and importance of archives."

Archivist Two explained that Archives A had had its funding reduced and, as a result, the open hours of the institution were reduced. She had had to field many complaints and had been told to refer them to the Provincial Archivist so he could deal with them. But Archivist Two felt that "its not enough to write to him. The user needs to write to the government officials. The more letters that you get downtown complaining about the hours here, the more the government is forced to look at the reduced funding that it is doling out. The users have a difficult time seeing that we answer to somebody else and that it is the somebody else that they need to complain to."

Archivist Three also mentioned the complaints about reduced hours at Archives A. She noted that, at the time of the reduction, it was important that users mount a letter-writing campaign, but that she could not be seen as the instigator of the campaign. As a government employee that would not have been appropriate. However, she surreptitiously encouraged the members of the Genealogical Society to write letters and felt that they had done some good in as much as there were no further cuts in hours and no staff positions were lost.

Archivist Four explained the need of Archives B for support from genealogists. The archives has to "defend [itself] against budgetary claims from museums and other heritage-related institutions. I see that we have a constituency out there and we do not do anything for that constituency or ourselves by giving second-rate or shoddy service because they won't be supportive.... We have had the Genealogical Society write letters of support and I would rather have a letter from the Genealogical Society than from some high-powered academic from the University of Toronto. Its going to go a lot farther." He explained that the Genealogical Society had also contributed in a direct financial way, by donating computers and software and he asserted: "I don't see the university Faculty Association or Student Union doing that!"

Archivist Five had some qualms about using genealogists as a lobby group. She explained that the staff at Archives C were not permitted to lobby government and, as with Archivist Three, would have to approach a user constituency very carefully so that it would not be construed that the Archives' staff had encouraged the group to lobby. She felt that an academic might be more discrete in this regard than the members of the Genealogical Society. She worried that "with the genealogists I can see me going to the Society and saying 'This is the situation and we need this' and letters going in saying '[Archivist Five] said to write and tell you that we need this'. So we haven't pushed using it." As an

alternative, the management of Archives C was considering forming a friends of the archives board which would raise and manage money for the Archives. Once again, however, Archivist Five foresaw difficulties with this approach. She expected that it would be difficult to make a board fully understand the Archives program and this misunderstanding might cause it to recommend things that were unacceptable to the administrator of the Archives. A decision had yet to be made on this issue.

Archivist Six also mentioned the tentative plans for a friends of the archives board at Archives C and felt that, with respect to obtaining a new building for Archives C, "some of them are really getting into it. Once the thing gets a little more firm, I would think that they would be very much involved."

Archivist Seven felt that if genealogists complained to government, it was far more effective than if an archivist complained. "I can complain and nothing will be done; but it just takes one letter to the Premier about such and such and things happen.... If the public complains, they have weight. Every letter is like one hundred people who wouldn't write."

Thus, from the interviews, it was not possible to establish a definite link between two of the influences noted in the literature. The interviewees were aware of a convergence of interests between genealogists and historians as well as of the efforts of many genealogists to improve their qualifications; however, their responses did not

indicate that this awareness led them to have a greater respect for genealogists. On the other hand, the third influence, the potential power of genealogists as lobbyists, was a well-recognized phenomenon and did appear to have some influence on the attitudes of the interviewees.

The interviewees were then asked to:

Reflect upon your knowledge of genealogists and their goals and upon your attitude towards these members of your user constituency as it exists now and compare it to your attitude and knowledge as it existed when you first began your work in the archives. Are you more aware or less aware of their motivations, sources, and methodologies? Do you regard their quest more highly or less highly than you once did?

Archivists Two, Three, Five and Six felt that, in general, a genealogist's goals, sources and methodologies are quite straightforward and that they understood and respected them then, as they do now. The others confessed that they had not always held an impartial attitude. Archivist One stated: "I used to [harbour antipathy towards genealogists] in the early part of my archival career. I probably shared a lot of those feelings of stereotyping genealogists as not serious researchers and therefore not deserving of the same sort of respect and treatment we would give, say, a hot-shot academic.... My view has changed substantially on that score." Archivist Four said that he "used to really think of them as the blue-haired ladies on bus tours from Boston" but that now he has respect for their abilities. Archivist Seven confessed to stereotyping genealogists as "little old ladies in sneakers" when he first began working in the archives. He now acknowledges the diversity of family tree researchers.

The responses to the foregoing questions suggest that at all three institutions the interviewees have assimilated the archival principle of equal regard for all researchers regardless of their focus. This would appear to bode well for genealogists and their reception at archives. But can this belief in equal regard be assumed, by extension, to reside in the majority of archivists and at all archival institutions? The author's speculation (occasioned by comments such as those appearing on pages two and three of this paper) that negative attitudes continue to exist, was given credence by the interviewees. Although they denied the existence of such attitudes in themselves, they were quick to acknowledge that a poor attitude exists in other archivists.

Archivist One felt that others at Archives A took the attitude that "we've got to get these people out of our hair as soon as possible!" Archivist Two expanded on these feelings held by other archivists at Archives A. She stated that antipathy "manifests itself in general derision of and disdain for genealogical users..... Some of those who are very antipathetic towards genealogists tend to try to push the genealogists off. They say, 'Here's the handout. There's the biography card catalogue. Now, don't come back.' [laughs] I won't say they're that brusque but they vent their contempt in the staff lounge or around the committee table and it tends to be vented quite a bit." Archivist Three, speaking of archivists in general, noted a

contemptuous attitude and felt that an archivist's background might affect his or her attitude. She believes that an archivist coming from an academic historian's background would feel more contempt for genealogists than one whose education centred on another discipline, such as her science background.

Archivist Four noted others at his institution, Archives B "who are less well disposed towards genealogists" than he. One archivist in particular had been caught muttering "bloody genealogists!" under her breath and he noted that "people, quite correctly, discovered that they weren't getting the level of service they might and complaints were made."

Archivist Five denied that she had ever heard any negative comments made about genealogists or their goals at Archives C. She commented, however, that she was "surprised when I go to archivists' conferences and still hear the jokes [about genealogists]. And its not like, 'We used to tell those jokes some years ago--and that's the way it used to be, or how we used to feel.' They still feel that way! And I would tend to think they're primarily out of the National Archives of Canada." Archivist Six also denied that any contemptuous attitude existed against genealogists in general, but that occasionally the staff at Archives C would joke about the idiosyncrasies of individual genealogists. In contrast to his colleagues, Archivist Seven noted that at Archives C not many of the staff were "even slightly

interested in genealogy." He asserted that "you would get a world of difference in interviewing me and, say, [name of colleague] who hates genealogists. He acknowledges they are there, but he does not like to be involved in family history." He also stated that "as you go up through the ranks [of management at Archives C] there is a condescending attitude towards genealogists." In addition, as with Archivist Three, he believes that "archivists who are from an academic background believe that academic research is the most vital and important type of research.... You'll find that not many archivists are actually genealogists and there's the problem. If they are, you usually get some very good attention to genealogists and if they aren't, you won't. That's a fact of life."

What can one conclude about the contradictions inherent in these responses? The interviewees perceive antipathy in other archivists, but they themselves believe in the equality of researchers' goals and therefore do not discriminate. Ultimately, little can be determined regarding the interviewees' perceptions of attitudes held by other archivists. Without a more widespread survey of opinions it is not possible to judge to what extent their perceptions are a true reflection of reality nor, if true, how widespread the phenomenon is and why archivists hold these views. However, it is possible to examine the interviewees' responses about their own attitudes in more detail. Have they been completely honest? Because a "politically correct"

initial response had been anticipated (that those being interviewed would be sufficiently professional in their approach to users that they would know and profess this principle of equality) and because there was a question of whether the principle was truly assimilated and then translated into practice, the author designed a question which departed from the conceptual issue of "goals" to pose a less abstract query. The question tested how the interviewees perceived genealogists as researchers/users. The question asked was:

When you think of genealogists as a user constituency, do they possess a body of similar characteristics that you can identify? In other words, is there a typical genealogist?

Archivist One felt that genealogists exhibit qualities that distinguish them from other researchers. They are very focused, determined, exhibit much perseverance and get much personal satisfaction from their research. Archivist Four noted that genealogists are highly motivated and more persistent than academics. Archivist Six agreed and stated that "they are a lot more thorough [than academics]." He attributed this to "their lack of inhibitions or formal training that allows them to go into any document at all."

But most notable in the responses to this question was the contention that there are subgroups within the genealogy user category. Archivist Two felt that of the fifty percent of users at Archives A who identify their research as genealogy, ten percent could be classified as "scientific"

genealogists who pursue its study seriously and conduct their research properly. She felt that they produce reliable results and always explore the context of a family's existence. In contrast, the remaining ninety percent "are completely unskilled and unprepared. They think they can walk into an archives and be given a folder, or press a [computer] button that will have everything on their family." In addition, this ninety percent "are only interested in tracing the family with names and dates. Where the members lived is secondary. The context of their interaction with the community is meaningless."

Archivist Three identified three subgroups. The first consists of those "who are completely organized when they come in." The second is composed of those who are in the archives for the first time but who catch on very quickly. "They get their work organized. They follow some of the how-to-do genealogy books, and they work out a system." The third subgroup comprises the "very amateur type who doesn't want to prepare or read. They actually want you to do everything for them." They typically "tell me their whole life story as soon as the come in the door" and when they "present themselves to the desk, they are confused--and some are always going to be confused."

Archivist Five agreed that there are three subgroups. There are those who "know what they are about and know how to get things without demanding or asking things that aren't the usual run of things. They may want to give you things,

do things for you, or help out in other ways through their good support. There is probably the average one who isn't as experienced in dealing with those things but catches on quickly or has gone through the Genealogical Society and is an informed and active member. Then there are a few difficult ones. They are difficult because this is a little beyond their ability to deal with and they have real trouble grasping things."

Archivist Six also noted three subgroups. He felt that twenty-five to thirty percent of genealogists are well prepared and skilled. "There seems to be almost a "professional" genealogist. They've been doing it for years. They've gone out of their way to understand how our system works--how our finding aids are set up and structured. And they've taken the time to learn how to use them the way we have shown them. They take their time in dealing with an archivist." He identified "complete bollocks" at the other end of the spectrum and about twenty-five to fifty percent who are somewhere in between. When asked to give the characteristics of "the complete bollocks", he stated that they are the persons who "want everything NOW. Their appreciation or knowledge of archives is nil. They are upset that we don't have one file on John or Jane Doe.... They can't believe that, in the past, mistakes were made. They have this rosy view of the past. I think that this is the one who is going to tell you everything about his family as if you really understood it and could connect into it." He

softened this indictment by saying that perhaps this was somewhat of a stereotype but that "they do exist and the stereotype is therefore valid to a certain extent."

Archivist Seven felt that one subgroup consisted of those who were "almost professional"; but that members of the other subgroup "are just at the stage where they are gathering names and dates. And not only that, they don't know research techniques." Archivist Four agreed that some genealogists go beyond filling in names and dates on a chart and are attempting to put their family in its social, economic, and political context, but that many do not.

The almost unanimous belief that there are different subgroups within the genealogical user category is striking. It immediately leads one to speculate whether the attitude of the interviewees differs according to the subgroup under consideration. Are the adjectives used to describe the genealogist subgroups telling of the interviewees' attitudes towards each? Is a genealogist who is skilled, prepared, thorough, persistent, organized, analytical, patient, willing to take instruction, willing to learn the archives' system and interested in putting their family in context, more highly regarded than one who is described in an unrelentingly negative way: unskilled, unprepared, unorganized, frequently unwilling or unable to learn the archival system and/or research techniques, too chatty, confused, and possessing unrealistic expectations about what an archivist will actually do for them? Or are all, as

suggested by the initial responses of the interviewees, equally regarded and served? The responses to two further questions reveal their attitudes, not only towards the genealogical subgroups, but also in comparison to the members of other user categories. The questions were:

In terms of research skill and preparedness, which type of researcher is the easiest/most difficult to serve and why?

In terms of rating your ability to satisfy their research needs, which type of researcher is the easiest/most difficult to satisfy and why?

The response of Archivist One indicates that he indeed treats all users according to the principle of equality of service and respect that he initially espoused. He was the only archivist who had not identified subgroups within the genealogy user category. Inexperienced researchers in any category were viewed with neither antipathy nor contempt. Archivist One identified the types of researchers whom he felt were the easiest/most difficult to satisfy and serve; however, he appeared to hold an impartial attitude towards all. He thought that the person who had experience in using the archives is the easiest to serve and that would probably be the experienced genealogist, once that person got over the hurdles of finding out how the records are organized. On the other hand, he felt that junior high students are the most difficult to serve because they are not well-informed and because they lack interest. He further felt that the most difficult researcher to satisfy is the person who lacks information to get started. Although he used a particular

genealogical patron's request as an example, it was plain that he meant any patron who did not have sufficient background information. The impartial attitude of Archivist One was reflected in his reference "philosophy". He felt that, if a genealogist or any other type of researcher is inexperienced in research "that's not in my purview to assess as an archivist. It's my responsibility to try to provide them with information " and "if they're not getting it, then maybe it's because I'm not explaining it well enough or clearly enough and so I'll repeat it, especially [because] people are in a place that is very foreign [and] unfriendly, in terms of its culture." He also stated that "it's not the genealogists' fault that there are a lot of them that want service. We have to figure out ways of providing service to them." He recognized that the reference system at Archives A has flaws and he was frustrated with some administrators at Archives A "because these things [suggestions he had made for improvements in reference and access] are very simple to do and don't cost any money; but what they do represent is a change in the way of doing things and there is a very strong element against any kind of change here."

Despite being an avid genealogist herself, Archivist Two held strong views about genealogy and genealogists. She felt that it is the genealogical users who drain the staff the most and that "no matter how much you like genealogy or respect it or feel that it is worthwhile, it is very

draining to have to deal with it day in and day out from a constituency of users who don't understand what its all about." Clearly she spoke of the ninety percent of genealogists whom she felt did not pursue it in a "scientific" way. She explained that "something you do twenty times a day is take them over to the card catalogues and explain how they work.... And you know that its just gone [right over their head]. And you know that they haven't a clue what you have just spent two or three minutes describing for them as clearly as you can and you've already done it twenty times that day and they can't follow that. Even when its set out on a typed list in front of them. I don't know why they can't follow it!" She admitted that student users are also guilty of this lack of understanding and that this type of uninformed user is the most difficult to serve and satisfy. It seems obvious that Archivist Two is frustrated and discouraged. To her credit, she realizes that despite these feelings she must "keep it under control. I'm there thinking, 'I can't stand this another time' and knowing that I have to."

Archivist Three belied her initial response regarding her lack of discrimination towards the goals of users when she expressed concern over genealogists who "only do one part of the family so that you're putting out all that service, but you know that that person is only going to do this for a little while and then they're gone. And so you wonder if you should put out that kind of service. Someone

who is really interested in pursuing it, I think, attracts more support [from archivists] because they actually are going to produce something from it. And they're putting out and they're learning and they are developing skills. To me that's important because genealogy should be an educational pursuit as well as a hobby." A more blatant value judgement cannot be imagined. In terms of her service to this subgroup, Archivist Three confessed that, in contrast to her early days as an archivist, she is now "not as involved in their research because I feel they should be learning more [on their own]." She just quickly steers them to a source and then leaves them alone. Despite this, Archivist Three felt that the genealogist (without distinguishing a level of expertise) is the easiest to serve because Archives A has created a number of guides and finding aids to pertinent records in order that the genealogist can be guided quickly to information. She felt that academics are the most difficult to serve because the archives' finding aids are not adequate for their more esoteric research topics.

Archivist Four felt that ease of serving users is predicated on their research skills and he strongly asserted that that had nothing to do with the subject matter being pursued. "If you have genealogical researchers who have a Masters degree in something, they're likely to be as easy to serve, be as familiar with research as someone who has a Masters degree and is researching the history of agriculture." He did admit, however, that "there are certainly more people who enjoy genealogy who are starting

off at a less sophisticated research skill level, just in terms of raw numbers." As regards these less sophisticated researchers, he confessed to feeling a sense of frustration when on the reference desk and stated that "of all the reference tasks, I think the one that is the least rewarding is the prospect of day after day after day of having to start out with someone who has never been in here before--starting at the same level, repeating yourself. And in some cases (and you encounter this sometimes in more cases with genealogists than with academic researchers) we have people who have difficulty understanding some things. We have people who have difficulty reading and they can be very consumptive of time." However, as with Archivist One, he did not think that "we can take the attitude that all we do here is put the material out and if you can't understand it, if you can't read it, that's your problem. I think that is a very self-defeating attitude." Archivist Four also identified motivation as a factor in that highly motivated people ("and family researchers, if nothing, are motivated") are easier to serve. In response to the question of which type of user is easiest to satisfy, Archivist Four felt that genealogists are most easy to satisfy because of their persistence and their open-mindedness about approaching all types of sources. Academics are most difficult because "they come to us with expectations that records will be there which are not" and will not pursue other sources.

The responses of Archivist Five gave very few clues as

to how she felt about the genealogy subgroups she had identified. When asked about the ease or difficulty of serving and satisfying researchers, she responded in a noncommittal way that "there is good and bad, accomplished and non-accomplished in any type of researcher."

Although Archivist Six had professed to believe in equal respect and treatment of all users, he admitted to suffering from reference desk "burnout". He stated that he could be "very, very short with them [researchers]. Let me rephrase that. I'm not short with them but I could be. I never used to be like that. Never. Now, if a person comes in and they are a real dick--pardon the expression--I just tend to shy away. I just don't have the time nor the emotional energy to spend on this fellow. Before I would have plowed right into it and tried to convert him. Sometimes you get really tense about someone who is coming at you and you end up shortcircuiting your own job--your way of doing things. You take a shortcut. Instead of taking ten to fifteen minutes, you figure that this is a person who's not going to do it and so is a write-off. You become more judgmental." What saves this potentially volatile reference situation is that Archivist Six recognizes how impatient he has become and states that "I go out of my way to get rid of [those feelings]--to really push them into the background [because] it is a bad thing to do." Archivist Six felt that the burnout had less to do with unprepared, unskilled genealogists than with aggressive, pushy ones. He noted that

a group of genealogists from a certain part of the province are very aggressive and "are going to be secretive and milk the archives" whereas other groups are cooperative and willing to work well with the archives. Once again, he is aware of his personality conflict with the aggressive genealogists and tries to overcome it.

Archivist Six identified academics at the graduate or postgraduate level as easiest to serve because they are very focused and because they know how to research. He qualified this statement, however, by saying that although academics are usually the most skilled and the most prepared, there is always the exception. "My experience with a lot of genealogists is excellent." As Archivist Four had noted, he also felt that "its the numbers that come into play." In other words, there are more genealogists to serve.

Archivist Seven exhibited a quite pragmatic attitude about the foibles of genealogical researchers. He elaborated on the different subgroups with no discernible rancour and stated that "you do have to treat each one in a unique way. The big thing is to get them to a source as quickly as possible and, secondly, to give them a source that they can look at next." As Archivist One had mentioned, Archivist Seven also believes that the most difficult person to satisfy is "the researcher who comes in with a vague thesis--whether it's a genealogist, an academic or whatever--if they haven't thought out ahead of time precisely what they want.... Some researchers don't possess

the clues to find the front door, but its not just those doing genealogy who are doing that."

Have these latter responses substantiated the interviewees' initial assertions regarding their belief in equal regard for all users, including genealogists? Or did antipathy become evident when the focus of the questions was altered? What other feelings inform the interviewees attitudes? A number of observations can be made. Archivist Three made a negative value judgement about the goals of some genealogists. Her contempt for them is apparent and manifests itself in less than adequate service to them. At the other end of the scale, Archivists One, Five and Seven appear to be pragmatic and impartial in their judgements of and service to genealogists. Archivists Two, Four and Six are frustrated, impatient and/or discouraged; however, all three are aware of their shortcomings and make every effort to overcome their negative feelings and serve the users well.

These observations do not support the author's speculation that there is a general, all encompassing antipathy on the part of archivists towards genealogists. Indeed, the opposite appears to be the case. Only one archivist of the seven harbours a contemptuous attitude. The other six archivists are clearly not antipathetic, although three exhibit high levels of frustration. Although there are too few cases to generate any valid generalizations or make any firm conclusions, it may be possible that the attitude

of the interviewees are representative of the members of the greater archival community. The evidence suggests that archivists' attitudes are not monolithic in this regard. Different archivists have different attitudes about genealogists: antipathy, impartiality and/or frustration.

The other important issue which the responses bring to light is that of attitudes about the appropriate level of service to genealogists and other users. Once again the interviewees differ in their opinions. Archivist Three in particular, and perhaps Archivist Two, appear to take the view that it is not reasonable to expect them to teach users how to conduct research. They seem to want users to be perfect--well informed about the archives' access systems, able to conduct research in a sophisticated way, and quick-witted. On the other hand, Archivist One in particular, but also Archivists Four, Five, Six and Seven, appear to believe that their job description encompasses the instruction of users in sources, access systems and research methodology. As will be seen in chapter three, they may differ in what they believe is the most effective approach, but they all agree in principle that it is important to educate the users.

In view of these differing attitudes, which of these archivists was most likely to have uttered the negative comments cited on pages two and three of this thesis? It seems unlikely that the impartial archivist would express

such opinions. It is much more likely that the antipathetic archivist would make the comments. In addition, the archivist who is frustrated by circumstances might be inclined to make disparaging remarks, despite an underlying belief in the validity and importance of the genealogical user.

All of the interviewees, whether or not they actually articulated frustration, seem to recognize that improvements in the reference and access functions of the archives would make life easier for user and archivist alike. They offered solutions to improve the situation and these will be discussed in chapter three.

CHAPTER THREE

THE IMPACT OF GENEALOGISTS ON THE PERFORMANCE
OF ARCHIVAL FUNCTIONS

The findings reported in Chapter Two indicate that the archivists interviewed display differing attitudes towards their genealogical patrons, and one can tentatively assert that the interviewees are representative of archivists in general. However, regardless of the attitudes held, the increasing numbers of patrons with genealogical queries using archival holdings have made it imperative that archivists devise effective, efficient and economical ways of accommodating this user group. Numerous articles found in the archival literature reflect a healthy self-evaluation on the part of archivists regarding this challenge. While some of the articles are narrowly focused on practical solutions, other authors have addressed an issue which places the accommodation of genealogical users in a broader context: should the approaches and needs of researchers be the criteria which drive the archival processes, or should archivists serve the records first and thereby serve the researchers? In other words, is an archivist's primary responsibility to the user or to the records? This debate will be examined prior to considering the accommodations described by the interviewees.

Theoretical context

The title and theme of the 1990 Annual Conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists was "Facing Up, Facing Out: Reference, Access and Public Programming." The conference represented an attempt by the members of the Canadian archival profession to review their approach to public service and outreach activities. This review of how users are accommodated was necessary because of "recent developments in information technology, the emergence of new user groups and new uses for archival records, increasing sophistication of public service delivery systems, and generally increasing public demand."⁸² While four papers and a commentary were presented on this theme,⁸³ the address of Gabrielle Blais and David Enns on the one hand, and of Terry Cook on the other, will be summarized here as representative of two opposing points of view.

Blais and Enns are typical of a growing number of archivists who would place a stronger emphasis on the approaches and needs of users as a driving force behind all archival activities.⁸⁴ Cook challenges this user-centred approach and calls it a "dangerous reorientation" which would "undermine archival theory."⁸⁵ Blais and Enns propose to "rescue the notion of public programming from the periphery of archival tradition"⁸⁶ in order that it no longer be viewed as a luxury. Innovative public programming, they argue, would improve the image of archives in the public's perception. Cook agrees that enhancements to the

archival functions of reference service and public programming that are premised on a solid understanding of users and use are a worthy goal. However, Blais and Enns extend their arguments to include appraisal and description in their vision of a greater responsiveness to users needs. Citing archivists' lapse in anticipating the trend to social history, they argue that "these new areas of inquiry have posed new questions and occasioned a rethinking of archival appraisal, both of potential acquisitions and existing material. This provides dramatic evidence of how questions of use impinge on acquisition and appraisal decisions."⁸⁷ They further argue that archivists should describe records to meet researchers needs. It is with these two points that Cook disagrees. He objects strenuously to allowing users and use to determine appraisal and descriptive practices and states that "records are not appraised and acquired to support use; rather, they are acquired to reflect the functions, ideas and activities of records creators and those with whom they interact."⁸⁸ His is a holistic perspective which emphasizes the context of records and which is materials-centred rather than user-centred. Cook does think, however, that it is possible to reconcile the need to improve a user's experience in an archives with the need to retain sound archival practices. He suggests training users in order that they understand the contextual richness of archival holdings. This training, he asserts, can be tailored to the means and backgrounds of various

types of users, as determined by user studies and surveys. Nevertheless, the surveyed users should not be allowed to drive the appraisal and description functions. He insists that archivists focus appraisal, description and public service and outreach on the process of records creation and the creator, and the archival materials that resulted from both.⁸⁹

In essence, Cook argues for a provenance approach as opposed to a pertinence approach with regard to appraisal. In the pertinence approach, archivists would consult with users, determine which processes of society they find valuable to study and then evaluate the contents of records presented for appraisal and possible acquisition in light of these desired characteristics. In contrast, in using a provenance approach, archivists would analyze the records in the context of their creation and establish their value in relation to that context. In other words, the specific content of a fonds is less important than its contextual relationship to its creating body.

In connection with this issue, the interviewees were asked the question:

Do you believe that an archivist must understand the various uses to which records will be put in order to serve the users more effectively, or do you believe that an archivist's first obligation is to the records and that by serving the records, he/she will most effectively serve the people?

The answers of five of the interviewees suggested one of two things: either they had never considered the question at all, or they had a vague and imperfect understanding of

the issues involved. On the other hand, Archivist Seven had given the issue his attention and favoured the user-driven/pertinence approach. He stated that "if I had a scale, I would say that an archivist's responsibility is fifty percent to the records to be processed and fifty percent to the users because there is no use whatsoever in processing records that are never going to be used. So that should determine...what records you process, how you process them and how you produce a finding aid.... You not only have to understand how the records are going to be used, but you also have to anticipate [trends] down the road. When you are culling out a collection, what are you throwing out? Is it something that someone is going to want in twenty-five years?"

Only Archivist One supported Terry Cook's materials-centred/provenance approach to appraisal. He articulated the issue well. "I'm very leery about use as an appraisal criteria because we just don't know what a document will be used for. Its impossible to anticipate..I think one has to look at, in terms of preserving government records, the primary criteria of on-going, continuing value to the records creator, the legal rights values, [and] the evidential values to the government. What are the information assets to the government? That's what we are trying to determine in our appraisal and if we do that job well, we know we're going to have all the registrations of births, marriages and deaths; we know we're going to have

all the documentation relating to land registrations, assessment rolls, etc. After that, what more could a genealogist want?"

It appears from the foregoing that this issue has not been widely considered by the interviewees and, thus, no conclusion can be drawn from their answers.

Results: Procedures for Serving Genealogists

A series of nine questions (see Appendix A, question numbers 20-21, 30, 32-37) elicited the information that archivists at Archives A, B and C have instituted procedures and, sometimes, policies by which they hope to serve genealogists more effectively, efficiently, and economically. They have also identified further measures and certain modifications in existing procedures which could be implemented to improve service to genealogists. Having examined the broader context into which these procedures and improvements should be placed, let us now assess them within that context to determine whether they contravene or support proper archival principles. The procedures will be considered in relation to each of the core archival functions of appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description, reference service, information retrieval or access, and public programming.

With regard to appraisal and acquisition, the responses of all seven interviewees indicate that much material of a non-archival nature has been and continues to

be acquired at their institutions. This material falls into three categories. There are published items such as secondary sources which complement the archival holdings, completed genealogies, transcriptions of primary sources such as census records, family bibles, and so on. Secondly, discrete items are acquired and, frequently, their provenance is unknown. These include such items as photocopies of the family data sheet from a family bible, scrapbooks of newspaper clippings, a photograph of a person or event, and so on. Thirdly, many microfilmed or microfiche copies of original records held at other repositories are acquired. For example, Archives A has fiche of Scottish church records. In all three categories, the material has been acquired for its informational value and as a convenience for users, especially although not exclusively for genealogists.

None of the interviewees recognized that this approach to appraisal and acquisition is inconsistent with sound archival practice. Indeed, most of them had to be reminded that this type of material is not archival in nature. Once challenged, each offered a defence of the practice. Archivist Four suggested that the definition of what constitutes archival material was overly strict and that "we have an obligation to bring in reference material of an archival nature because, otherwise, there is no other provincial access to it." Archivist Five supported the acquisition of genealogies but recognized that "they come

out of a different context and they are here for a different reason." She also felt that the acquisition of records relating to Ireland was necessary, not just for patrons, but for the archivists themselves because "we need an understanding [of Irish culture and society] in order to know what to acquire." Archivist Six justified the acquisition of this same Irish material by explaining the interest that the local Irish Association had in genealogy and all aspects of Irish culture. Archivist Seven asserted that published genealogies or cemetery transcriptions should be acquired because "in the long run probably they will be used more than [some archival records]."

Are these defences valid, either wholly or partially? Should material be acquired because it contains information that will be of interest to genealogists and in order that genealogists, or any other user, have the convenience of "one-stop shopping"? Based on his earlier cited article, Terry Cook would probably argue that it should not be acquired. The purists who agree with Cook would argue that, while the material may have value to the users, it is not archival value and thus does not belong in an archives. They might also argue that complementary secondary sources belong in a library and that a Genealogical Society could establish its own library and collection of genealogical material for the convenience of those interested.

Are Terry Cook and the hypothetical purists being, as suggested by Archivist Four, overly strict? What danger is

there in being flexible with proper appraisal criteria? Several problems seem apparent. In an era of declining budgets and an information explosion, can a provincial archives justify the expenditure of time and money on non-archival material and material acquired merely for the convenience of users? The decision to acquire material sets in motion the whole expensive process of accessioning, arrangement and description, preservation, and reference and access. Resources directed towards non-archival material could conceivably create backlogs in the processing of archival material for which the institution has a proper mandate. Priorities in conservation and preservation could become skewed. Storage space for the material would have to be provided in institutions which frequently have little or no extra space. Questions of copyright would have to be taken into consideration for the non-archival material. Already a thorny issue, how much more difficult it would be to determine ownership, for example, of discrete items for which provenance has been lost.

There are also implications for the actual processing of non-archival material. How does one do it? How can non-archival material be arranged and described according to the principles of provenance and original order? Archivists would have to learn how to catalogue the material according to library methods. Is it reasonable to expect archivists to learn this? Who will pay for the retraining?

An institution would also have to decide which

reference material is acceptable and which is not. If, as was the case at Archives A, a gift is accepted from the Genealogical Society of microfiche of Scottish church records, how does the archivist answer the person of, for example, German descent when he/she asks why German church records are not available too? Since many of these records are available through a convenient interlibrary loan program from the Mormon library in Salt Lake City, Utah why, then, is it necessary to duplicate its efforts? And even if all records of all countries could be acquired on fiche or film for the convenience of users, who would be able to provide reference to those records in foreign languages, or arranged by principles unknown to Canadian archivists and users?

A final danger exists and it is perhaps the most serious. Several of the interviewees bemoaned the fact that many users have no understanding of what the functions of a provincial archives are, nor what the role is of the principle of provenance in those functions. For example, Archivist One said that "users don't care [about provenance]. They don't make the connection that the records they have were found as a result of the principle of provenance. They just want the archivist to find stuff for them." Archivist Two agreed and stated that users have, "no concept of what government records are or what our mandate is for them. No concept of the life cycle of records. No concept of the work that goes into acquiring, arranging, describing, making available for use government records and

private sector material. No concept at all! Many think that we are organized and run entirely to provide information in packages for genealogists." There was also some agreement that the solution to these misconceptions lies in educating the users. Methods for educating them were put forth and involved outreach programs and more sensitive reference service within the archives. These will be discussed later in more detail. But, what will be a more persuasive argument--what users are told in lectures and workshops, or what they see first-hand as they use the archives? It is not difficult to imagine what confusion there will be when a user is told that archival material is unique, impartial, authentic, interrelated and naturally accumulated and that it reflects the functions and activities of the government of the province, but is then told to consult a certain author's published genealogy in the archives' library, or to consult the records of the Presbyterian church of Aberdeen, Scotland which are on microfiche. Archivists must not ask users to believe what they say and not what they do.

Some will argue that the facts of genealogical use and research cannot be denied and must be taken into account in appraisal. Others will assert that there are benefits that outweigh the dangers of contravention of appraisal theory. As noted earlier in this paper, genealogists wield a certain amount of power with resource allocators. How will genealogists react if they perceive a shift from their accommodation to a more precise adherence to archival theory

and practice? Can archivists explain their stance effectively, or will genealogists and other users become sufficiently disenchanted that they remove their support? In addition, since one of the duties of the reference archivist is to help users understand the context within which records have been created, do not complementary secondary sources aid in that task? Reference duties can be onerous and some non-archival material such as published indexes to original records, may aid the archivist in more easily orienting a user. As regards copies of archival series held at other repositories, it may be argued that the copies simply act to extend the opportunity for access. As Archivist One explained: "I think it's important to get as much information to the people that need it with as little difficulty as possible. And with things like census records [on microfilm] that are going to be used [heavily], it makes sense for there to be a user copy here." Finally, the argument for space problems may be irrelevant if non-archival records are acquired on fiche or film or CDs as these take very little storage space.

Much of the reason why confusion exists regarding non-archival material stems from the acquisition policies of these three institutions. In all three cases, the policy regarding government records is well-articulated and linked to a records management program for provincial government records. However, the policy regarding private archival material is less clear. In general, any material of a

private nature may be acquired if it reflects the activities of citizens or private corporations of the province. This very broad and imprecise definition gives rise to confusion on the part of those who must interpret it. The grayness of the criteria allows decisions to be made based upon the special interests of archivists and favourite users, or upon the "politics" of a situation. Firm criteria for private sector records would help eliminate the worst of the contraventions and would prevent situations such as happened in Archives A where an archivist was persuaded by a patron to accept a donation of an American baseball card collection as "documentary art"!

The answers of the interviewees regarding the arrangement and description of records were uniform and very encouraging. At all three archives, archivists are attempting to assimilate the principles upon which Rules For Archival Description⁹⁰ is based in order to implement the rules in their processing practices. Thus, if an original order exists it is retained and if one does not exist the archivists make every effort to identify the functions and activities of the creator in order to recreate as closely as possible the original order. Description is based upon provenance and administrative histories are provided in order to provide the user with the context in which the records were created. All interviewees admitted that adherence to the principles of provenance and original order had not always been followed and, further, that retroactive

conversion of previously arranged and described records would be prohibitively expensive; however, proper archival practices are being followed presently. There is one aspect of this function that is driven by users. Processing priorities are based upon what will be useful for the most researchers in the short run, recognizing, however, that eventually all fonds must be described. This practice in no way affects the records and, therefore, is innocuous.

The second component of a descriptive finding aid is the provision of access points. A minimalist approach would provide an access point based on the provenance heading; however, archivists at all three archives provide further access points which reflect lower levels of description. Indexes containing subject, name, form/genre, occupation terms, for example, allow ease of retrieval for all users. Their ample provision in no way contravenes sound archival principles and is even educational if the access points lead the user to a finding aid based on provenance which illuminates the context of the records. In spite of the extra time it takes to decide upon terms and create authority records, several interviewees called the provision of many access points a "self-preservation technique" in that they aid the reference archivist in coping with large numbers of users. Although deciding which terms to include is a subjective activity, the archivist bases the decision on his or her best knowledge of the research needs of users. If research trends move in another direction in the future,

further access points can be provided. Neither activity adversely affects the intellectual or physical context of the records.

Unfortunately, the access points provided by Archives B in its Master Name Index do not direct the user to a finding aid which illuminates provenance. In fairness, it must be noted that this Index is a recent acquisition from a previously separate genealogical agency which merely wished to assist genealogists to find information. The Index now provides "instant gratification" for users at Archives B, but since it does not require that the user go to a finding aid or an original source, it provides very little in the way of education to the user in proper research methodology nor an understanding of the principles upon which an archives is based. It buys into the impulse of users who do not care to understand the milieu in which their ancestors lived. It also raises the expectations of users. They expect that all the records held by Archives B will be accessible in the same way and they expect that other archives will have a similar system of access. But the Index has one benefit. Archivist Four has noticed that since the Index has been housed at Archives B, many users who were once content to copy the information from the card are now electing to consult the original record as well.

Another method of giving access to records is the creation of indexes to particular types of records, or of thematic indexes. At Archives C there has been support given

to individuals, often members of the local Genealogical Society, who wish to transcribe and index census records, for example. A fund has been set up to allow the archives to print the material once it is produced and, in addition, the archives may lend microfilm of the records and a reader on which to view it to the person doing the work. Archives A does not so directly support the production of such indexes; however, it acquires the finished product in order that users may use it. The land petition index produced by Archives C also includes an explanation of the very complicated processes of petitioning and granting of land in order that users may better understand the processes of which their ancestors were a part. Interviewees at Archives C have found that this explanation and index saves them much time in reference work.

The function which elicited the most response from the interviewees was that of reference. It is in this area that there is the most scope for accommodating the genealogist or other user without contravening proper archival theory and practice. The techniques described by the interviewees are constantly evolving as better methods are conceived.

The problems inherent in providing reference service to unique and complex archival records are numerous and stem from a variety of causes. In order to provide good reference service, solutions and procedures must simultaneously balance the emotional and research needs of users, the nature of the records, shortages in money and staff time,

idiosyncrasies in archives' systems and procedures, and the competence of staff. There is little wonder that provision of this function is complicated.

Several interviewees recognized that users are frequently intimidated by archives because, as Archivist One noted, archives are not particularly welcoming places. Archivist Six felt that "that's our first duty on reference--we've got to put these people at ease because they're not going to learn anything if they're tense." Thus, it is important to be a friendly, as well as an informative, presence. As in any situation where one attempts to serve the public, a unique dynamic occurs between the archivist and each user. The archivist's success in this regard is predicated largely on his or her personality. Excellent interpersonal and communication skills, patience and a belief in the validity and importance of all user's goals are qualities that a reference archivist must possess. Archivists must also have a firm commitment and belief in the importance of providing reference service. Archivists Four, Six and Seven identified a difficulty in this regard. Archivist Four noted that "in general, archives are not real big on service. There are a lot of archivists out there who share the feeling that [reference service] is fine, but there is nothing like the real thing [processing records]." Archivist Seven agreed. He asserted that "there is a mental mindset among archivists. First of all, the most important thing you do is administration, and the least important

thing you do is public service." Archivist Six confessed that he sometimes resented the time he had to spend on the reference desk. He finds that management of the Section of which he has charge is a fascinating challenge. "You want to do so much and you have only so much time. Anything that impinges on that is resented. You're saying, 'I want to do the best I can for this Section because this is my primary interest. Public service is a secondary interest'." Fortunately Archivist Six is aware of the dangers inherent in that attitude and tries his best to serve users well. When asked how he would instill a good attitude towards reference service, Archivist Four stated that "I think its a matter of confronting the situation and laying down a better understanding of what it is that we do here. This is not a closed private institution where we can go off and pursue our individual interests. Creating the ultimate finding aid to this or that collection may be a very good thing, but it is not the only business that we're in."

Beyond the psychology of the reference situation, difficulties arise out of the varying degrees of knowledge, ability and expectations possessed by individual users. First time genealogical users range from those experienced in research and knowledgeable of other archives' systems, to those who have never been in an archives before, have never researched before and who expect to see a ready-made file containing all the information about their family. As noted earlier in this paper, in terms of raw numbers, there are

more genealogists who are starting off at the unsophisticated level than any other type of user. Even users who have conducted research before may have gained their experience in a library and therefore expect an archives to be similarly organized, complete with catalogues and subject indexing. And users who visit one archives frequently possess varying degrees of ability. Some may very quickly learn the sources and how to access them, while others only slowly become independent of the archivist's help. In addition, different users have varying ideas about the amount of time they would like to devote to their quest. Archivist Seven laughingly described some summer visitors: "... and they say, 'I left the kids out in the car and I've got to get this done this afternoon.' We see a lot of that." This diversity of researchers challenges the reference archivist. Archivist Six explained that "we have this philosophy that everybody is treated equally, but how can we apply it?"

Another aspect of the reference dilemma rests in the idiosyncratic nature of archives' systems. Unlike libraries, there is no standardization among archival institutions in the way records are described or accessed. Indeed, within a particular archives there are frequently a number of different methods employed among Sections or even within Sections. Archivist Four recognized this shortcoming in Archives B. "I have a great deal of sympathy for people who have difficulty in using the finding aids here because,

frankly, they are god awful. We have a legacy of twenty years of ad hocery in regards to finding aids." Similar sympathy should be felt for users at Archives A which creates finding aids in three different formats and provides access by several methods. Archives C has more uniform finding aids, but access methods are varied. This multiplicity of finding aid and access formats is certain to confuse users, even if experienced and knowledgeable. The new user must invest a certain amount of time in learning, or, if experienced, in "unlearning" and relearning a system. An understanding and tolerance of this fact on the part of archivists could spell the difference between a good or a poor experience for genealogical users.

Problems also arise due to inadequate resources allotted to the improvement of the reference function. As Archivist Five explained: "Public service is something that we discuss endlessly and I think it is because we are trying to do it without adequate resources." Much of reference work is repetitious and tedious--a restating of the same basic information over and over again. No matter how committed an archivist may be to serving the public well, the nature of the work can lead to "burnout". Archivist Two described the wide variety of tasks she is expected to perform while working on the reference desk. She explained that "you bounce from answering a question about finding an Indian treaty in very early government records to answering the phone and telling them that you are open until 4:30 after

you've thought about what day of the week it is; to having to go and retrieve material; and then go over and help somebody use a fiche reader; and then go solve a problem at the reader/printer; and then go back and answer a question about white collar crime in the nineteenth century. That mixture of responsibilities is very tiring." The interviewees felt that frequent relief from the duty is advisable.

They also felt that a clear distinction should be made between reference duties and those of security, telephone answering, registration, retrieval and reshelving. In order to do this, there must be sufficient staff who are able to take over. Lack of resources which result in cutbacks in hiring may affect this. Similarly, some users need more time than others in orientation procedures; however, if an archives is short-staffed all users tend to be processed quickly, with a two to three minute interview and orientation session. This may suffice for those who are already knowledgeable and who are quick to grasp the implications, but, as Archivist Two complained: "You know that [some genealogical users] haven't a clue about what you have just spent two or three minutes describing for them as clearly as you can." When short-staffed, reference desk duty might be assigned to staff members who are less than prepared to serve the public. Archivist One noted that this occurs at Archives A and he abhors the situation. "We have part timers who often fill in or are a surrogate for the

reference archivist and it puts them in an awful position. I think its reprehensible. These people are being paid maybe six dollars per hour and they're trying to answer questions that are the responsibility of the duty archivist. No one has told them, 'You don't answer those questions. The duty archivist answers them'." In a situation such as this, the user may be receiving less than adequate help and not realize that it is not full and complete.

Given the complex nature of the reference function, it would seem reasonable that extensive training be provided for those required to perform reference duty; however, none of the interviewees identified in-house training procedures beyond what was variously termed seat-of-the-pants learning, learning by osmosis, and learning by shadowing. Neither had any of the interviewees who attended the NAC course received any in-depth reference training. Archivist Six did not believe that training was necessary. He believes that "there is no big science to it! You find your own way of approaching people. You have to have a thorough knowledge of the finding aids and have to be easy and patient with people." However, the majority of the interviewees disagreed and felt that there should be more emphasis placed on training. For example, Archivist Five stated that although they did not have a policy at Archives C that everyone had to undergo training, they did have a vision that they would like to do that. Most felt that trainees, at a minimum, should be oriented to the whole repository, be taught the

psychology of information retrieval, learn basic interpersonal skills, be instructed in the types of sources most valuable to different user constituencies and how to access them, and be instilled with a correct attitude towards users and towards reference service. Archivist Five suggested that test scenarios and questions could also be devised.

At each of the three archives, procedures have been initiated and tools introduced to help alleviate many of the reference duty problems. In recognition that every first-time user needs to be apprised of certain basic information and that the delivery of that information is more efficiently handled in a "batch mode", each institution has created two similar guides. The first is a brochure or pamphlet which outlines the mandate of the archives; its address, phone numbers and hours; types of records held; rules and regulations; and general information about how to access records. The brochure of Archives C is particularly useful as it places extra emphasis on its mandate concerning government records, an explanation which will go a long way towards disabusing users of the notion that the archives is a family resource centre. The second guide produced by all three is a guide to genealogical sources held. Each guide first gives abbreviated "how-to" advice and then lists the source material available and how to access it. Archives A and Archives C accompany this guide with a short checklist which gives pertinent sources in the order in which

genealogical researchers should most effectively consult them.

Archives A and Archives C have also compiled a series of county guides for each county in the province. Within the guide is a brief historical sketch of the establishment of the county and the dates of any boundary changes, followed by a listing of genealogical sources, both published and unpublished for the particular county and how to access them. Archives A charges a fee for these guides, while Archives C distributes them without charge.

Archives A and Archives C also conduct orientation sessions for researchers who arrive in groups, such as the participants of Elderhostel.⁹¹ These sessions take about two hours and impart all the basic rules and regulations, include a basic how-to-do-genealogy session, give an introduction to sources available and how to access them and conclude with a tour of the institution. When asked if researchers who had participated in such a session were more prepared and thus easier to serve, the interviewees agreed that it helped greatly because their expectations were more realistic and because they felt less intimidated by the process. Archives A also holds these sessions at regular intervals throughout the summer and will also design them for other categories of users. The Public Programs Archivist, who conducts the sessions at Archives A, supplements them with a slide-tape show which gives a further introduction to the archives. Unfortunately there is

no provision for its independent use by all new patrons as they register. The interviewees at Archives A agreed that, if the show were updated and improved, its interactive use by patrons would be helpful in imparting basic information and in reducing lineups at the reference desk. Archives C also expressed an interest in producing an interactive slide-tape show or a video, but is unable to do so at this time due to a lack of resources.

Archives C began to microfilm its records in the late 1960s and most of the records, particularly the ones which have heaviest use, are available from self-serve shelving in the reading room. This saves much valuable time as the reference archivist does not need to retrieve as many items. In addition, multiple copies make it possible to lend the microfilm to patrons by interinstitutional loan through their local library. This saves hundreds of research visits per year, a convenience to the user who does not have to travel to the provincial capital, but also making the duties on the reference desk much less onerous. Archives A studied this system and has begun to emulate it. Those records that have been microfilmed have been placed on shelves in the reading room where once they had to be requested. In the future they too would like to begin an interinstitutional loan service.

The introduction of microfilm lending at Archives C has greatly aided in answering written inquiries as well. All three archives receive a great number of inquiries per year

and each has set a time limit for research per inquiry. Archives A will do a one-hour search for genealogical inquiries and a three-hour search for academic inquiries. The time allotted includes responses and they have developed a series of nine form letters which speed this process. Archives B decided that it would be discriminatory to search longer for an academic than a genealogist and thus settled on a limit of one-and-a-half hours per inquiry. They have computers and thus have form paragraphs which can be dropped into the word processor to speed responses. Archives C allots one-half to one hour for each search and response. The existence of microfilmed records which can be lent allows them to reduce the time it takes to answer a letter because they can simply cite the reel upon which users will find the answer and ask them to borrow it through their local library. If the answer cannot be found on a microfilm, the archivist will spend a little more time in researching the inquiry.

Archivists One, Four, Six and Seven all stated that they take every opportunity to give "mini-lectures" to users. They felt this was part of their duty and that it aids them, in the long run. For example, they will remind users of the importance of recording the reference number or other identifier for each piece of information gathered. Aside from being sound research methodology, it saves time for the archivist when a user returns at a later date and wants to view a record again, but does not know where it was

found. In contrast, Archivist Three felt that teaching research methodology or reminding users of sources they might be missing was not part of her job. She also felt that she would not give more help to the user who had difficulty in grasping concepts and was therefore confused. In fact, she stated that she would "do less for them because its not going to make any difference." This is further evidence of this archivist's antipathetic attitude. Archivist One advocated a completely different approach. He felt that one had to use one's judgement. "When there's a man who is seventy-five years old and he's hard of hearing and he's never used the archives before, I'm going to take him right to the document and I'm going to find it for him and say, 'Would you like a printout of it? And if you would, just give me a quarter and I'll push the button for you.' Now, if we're talking about someone who is thirty-five years old and bouncing along and exhibits a little bit of intelligence, they can do things on their own that that older person can't." Archivist Two felt that "[reference] has to be done very carefully so that you help the researcher but that you don't help them overly. We want to have them go away with the feeling that they have been treated kindly and helpfully by the staff; but, we don't want them to go away saying, 'Oh, they sat down and they did everything for me and if you go, ask for that person and she will be so helpful'." Archivist Four agreed. He stated that "its a fine line that the staff have to develop between holding hands and being friendly and encouraging."

As demonstrated, the challenges of the reference function are multi-dimensional. At all three archives, solutions have been formulated, implemented, and adjusted or rejected to alleviate the pressures for archivists and to provide the best possible service to users. Each interviewee recognized that improvements require an assignment of more resources to the function in order that orientation and continuing service to all patrons be more thorough and that it be carried out by properly trained staff. Adherence to the Rules for Archival Description will standardize descriptive elements, but members of the archival community should also decide upon a standardized format for finding aids, both among and within institutions, to reduce researchers' confusion. As a tool to improve archivists' understanding of the needs of users, Archivist One referred to user studies and surveys, saying that "one of the biggest problems that archivists have is that we don't know who our users are and what they would like and how they respond." In this regard he is echoing other members of the profession who have written that archivists do not really know their clientele and that they have an inaccurate notion of the information that researchers need and how they seek it.⁹² William J. Maher and Paul Conway have considered methodological options and have proposed ways to systematically study users and use.⁹³ As stated above, a user-driven approach to reference does not hold any perils for the records and, thus, user studies and surveys are desirable.

A final function, public programming, overlaps with reference in many ways. For example, orientation sessions and tours might be considered public programs as well as aids to reference. However, the interviewees also identified separate measures taken to familiarize patrons and potential patrons with the functions of archives in general, as well as with genealogy specific matters. Archives A has assigned one archivist as a full-time Public Programs Archivist. Aside from conducting the orientation tours and sessions, this archivist is responsible for exhibits and for responding to comments placed in a suggestion box. Although all agreed that the sessions he conducts are excellent, Archivist Two complained that the Public Programs Archivist was not proactive and that he would be more effective if he had a five year plan; and Archivist One and Archivist Three were quite vague in their knowledge about his activities. The interviewees themselves were also involved in public programming. Archivist One had written an article for the Genealogical Society newsletter which explained the government records finding aid, and he believes that a regular column in the newsletter which informs readers about relevant records held at Archives A would be beneficial. He envisions this column emphasizing the functions and activities of the creating body and why the records were created in order that genealogists start thinking about records in terms of their context. Archivist Two, a member of the Genealogical Society, takes the opportunity at

meetings to inform other members, in an informal way, of the archives. She will also give lectures and workshops on various topics if requested because she firmly believes in the need to educate the public about the primary mandate of Archives A in order that they understand that it is not merely a family resource centre. Archivist Three joined the executive of the Genealogical Society at the request of a previous provincial archivist. She believed that, while Archives A should be supportive of the Society, it should not be so inextricably linked with it that the public perceive the archives and the Society as the same body. Consequently, Archivist Three will give advice, but encourages the Society to conduct its own education sessions, market its own products and maintain its own networks independently of the archival community. As a result, Archives A no longer sells publications for the Genealogical Society and no longer provides space for a file which listed genealogists seeking other genealogists working on the same family. In essence, Archives A is attempting to become a more professional institution by disassociating itself from too close a relationship with the Genealogical Society and by emphasizing its primary responsibility for the records of the provincial government. Concern was expressed by Archivists Two and Three that the genealogical "tail" not be allowed to wag the archives "dog".

In contrast, Archives B is presently forging a stronger link with the genealogical community following its

assumption of responsibility for the genealogical research service of the Provincial Museum and Heritage Board. Two staff members and a small amount of operating resources were also transferred in order that the archives could carry on some of the programs that had been provided. One of the transferred staff members was assigned the duties of Genealogical Coordinator. He is responsible for conducting workshops with the members of the Genealogical Society, with writing a column for the Genealogical Society newsletter concerning sources, and with coordinating Society volunteers to carry out activities such as the computer generation of an index to the 1901 census. He also sits on the executive of the Society board. The staff of Archives B has decided to retain and improve a file called the Kindex which informs genealogists of others working on the same family name. However, any major Society activities will remain the responsibility of the Society, with only resource, not financial, assistance from Archives B. Archivist Four explained this shift in emphasis by asserting that "there is a factor that may exist in this province but less so in other provinces. I think that family history and family connections may be more important here than in other places. It is government policy to place a high value on community and family. I'm not saying that [we] slavishly follow government policy, but I think that they have identified something in [province name] character that is very basic."

From 1970 to 1975, Archivist Seven organized and ran a

Genealogical Section at Archives C. Unfortunately in 1975, with the appointment of a new, unsympathetic provincial archivist, this Section was dismantled and ceased to exist for a decade. Since 1985, with the appointment of another provincial archivist, the genealogical aspect is once again being given more emphasis. Archivist Seven conducts a non-credit Introduction to Genealogy course at the local university, provides an orientation session for groups such as Elderhostel and the Genealogical Society, and is presently revising and updating a "how-to" publication that he wrote in the early 1970s. Archivist Five and Archivist Six also give lectures and workshops to interested groups such as the Irish Association and the Genealogical Society and, while speaking about the requested topic, try to inject insights about the primary mandate of Archives C. Archivist Six would like to microfilm all the institution's finding aids and place them in libraries around the province in order that patrons be more prepared upon arrival at the archives. He would also like to publish a pamphlet entitled "An Archivist Talks to a Genealogist" in which he would explain transgressions of genealogists which are unacceptable to archivists. He specifically mentioned a lack of respect for microfilm readers and photocopiers, a tendency to chattiness, and the propensity for some genealogists to be aggressive and impatient. Archivist Seven, an avid genealogist and a member of the Genealogical Society, will not accept an executive position as this might

be construed as a conflict of interest; however, the Society sends a copy of its minutes to the archives in order that staff are aware of any concerns which the Society members have vis à vis Archives C.

The opportunities for public programming are endless. While creativity may have to overcome lack of resources, the results of outreach activities make the effort worthwhile. Archivists help themselves by educating the user in that an educated user is easier to serve, has more realistic expectations and is less intimidated. Some archivists suggest that public programming is a double-edged sword. By informing potential patrons of the value and holdings of archives, the archivist creates an understanding of the value of these institutions; but, increased awareness sparks the curious to visit, thus creating more work load for staff. Regardless of the advantages and disadvantages, an archivist who decides to conduct public programming activities can do so in the knowledge that such activities in no way contravene archival theory for they affect the user and not the records.

CONCLUSION

The decision to embark on this study was made because of the widespread occurrence of uncomplimentary remarks made by archivists about genealogists. Its aim was to examine the relationship between archivists and genealogists, both in the past and present, in order to determine if a deep-seated antipathy towards genealogists exists and underlies the remarks and, if so, what effect such an attitude has on service to genealogists who are frequently an archives' largest user constituency.

A literature review revealed instances where an antipathetic attitude existed in the past, but it also revealed that, since the early 1980s, some archivists have argued that such an attitude is unacceptable. The authors stress the right of all users, not just genealogists, to equal service, equal access and equal respect in archival institutions.

The literature also suggested that there are other influences at work. Social historians and other professionals have begun to recognize the value of genealogical sources and methodologies to their own purposes. Genealogy has many new purposes. Some have a direct, practical application in society; others make a valuable contribution to scholarship. Genealogy is a field that can no longer be dismissed as mere antiquarianism.

In addition, many genealogists have begun to improve their skill and expertise. The best genealogists now present themselves at the reference desk having adequately prepared; with sophisticated research skills; with a knowledge of the sources; and with a willingness to be analytical in their interpretations. While many do not measure up to these standards, the authors have noted and appear to be heartened by the genealogical societies, journals, training institutes, etc. that are attempting to professionalize the field.

Finally, archivists now recognize that the large and increasing numbers of genealogical users can be used as justification for requests for funding from their resource allocators. The literature suggests that genealogists have been the recipient of more attention because of the financial problems of archives.

In order to determine if the evolution in attitude noted in the archival literature accurately reflects the present situation, seven case studies of archivists at three Canadian provincial archives were conducted. It is important to reiterate two points regarding the data gathered from the case studies. First, one cannot establish direct cause and effect linkages from case studies; one can only say that certain attitudes and opinions were held by the seven interviewees at the time of the interviews. Secondly, one cannot generalize the findings obtained through the case studies to any other archivists or archival institutions.

Comparing and contrasting the data allows a number of

conclusions to be drawn about the attitudes of the interviewees and how these attitudes affect the way they carry out their various duties. All seven interviewees believed themselves to be free of bias vis à vis categories of users. Each expressed the opinion that all types of users, including genealogists, were equally important and their goals were equally legitimate. Thus, all professed to adhere to the principle of equality as regards users of their institutions. They unanimously stated that they make no value judgements about users based on skill level or topic of research or any other characteristic. However, further probing revealed that there the archivists find it difficult to give effect to this principle.

Archivist Three clearly held an antipathetic attitude towards genealogists in particular, but also against all unskilled, unprepared users. Her attitude was reflected in the limited service she felt obligated to give these patrons. Archivists One, Five and Seven, on the other hand, seemed truly impartial and appeared to strive for equality of service for all users. Neither antipathy nor impartiality can be attributed to Archivists Two, Four and Six. Instead, they all exhibited high levels of frustration. The frustration seemed to stem from two sources: the users' characteristics, and their institution's policies and procedures. For example, they were frustrated with users who arrive unprepared; with the inability of some users to grasp what is being imparted; with those who do not understand

that a provincial archives does not exist primarily for genealogists; with those who return often but do not make progress in their expertise; with the time it takes to teach beginners; with those who are rude; and with those who expect the archivist to do the research for them. The systemic problems that created frustration were the repetitious nature of reference service; their own inability to devise a method whereby all researchers can quickly become relatively independent of them; and the lack of resources allotted to the improvement of the reference function. The responses of the frustrated archivists made this author feel uncomfortable about the level of reference service they were providing the users. All three appeared to consider reference duty as the least important of their functions--something over which they had to grit their teeth and do the best they could.

Thus, diverse attitudes exist and manifest themselves in varying levels of service. However, the author's speculation that a general, all-encompassing antipathy is present towards genealogists was not borne out.

Regardless of the attitude held, each archivist identified methods by which genealogists were accommodated in the archives' procedures of appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description, access, reference service, and public programming. They also suggested improvements and modifications. These solutions, improvements, and

modifications were examined within the broader context of the user-centred (pertinence) versus the materials-centred (provenance) issue to determine if they contravened proper archival theory. It was found that as regards access, reference service and public programming, all three institutions conduct the functions according to a user-centred approach. This approach does not appear to contravene archival theory as it does not affect the physical or intellectual aspects of the records. However, in carrying out appraisal and acquisition, many non-archival materials are acquired for the convenience of users (using the pertinence approach) and not in the interest of carrying out the archives' mandate for archival records relating to the province. The advantages and disadvantages of acquiring such material were discussed and it appears that each institution must give more thought to its private records acquisition policy. At all three institutions, arrangement and description properly adheres to the principles of provenance and original order.

Recommendations

Several recommendations suggest themselves from the responses received by the interviewees. Although the interview questions specifically referred to genealogical users, the following recommendations that are based on the data collected apply equally as well to archival users of any type.

First and foremost, the attitudes of archivists towards users--all users, not just genealogists--who are unskilled, unprepared, and unsophisticated in research must improve. Negative value judgements are unacceptable. Neither should the topic of a user's research be judged. Provincial archives are public institutions and, as such, all researchers who use them have a legal right to equal service and regard. Archivists employed by provincial archives are public servants and thus have an obligation to assist researchers in the exercise of these rights. Non-discrimination is the only acceptable ethic, both legally and from a professional point of view. Even if done in a tongue-in-cheek sense, derogatory remarks about users, including genealogists, are completely insupportable. Archivists should challenge their colleagues who make such condescending remarks. As more archivists defend the rights of users to equality of service and regard, not only in principle but in practice as well, the relationship between archivists and their users will eventually improve, to the benefit of all.

Appraisal and acquisition policies, particularly for private sector materials, appear to present a problem for archival institutions. The appraisal and acquisition of non-archival material by all three institutions at which interviews were conducted indicates that archivists must learn proper appraisal principles. Appraisal should identify material that exhibits the archival characteristics of

impartiality, authenticity, interrelatedness, uniqueness and naturalness and which has value in relation to the context of its creation. Appraisal should not be based on the pertinence approach because it is a very subjective methodology which forces the archivist into the role of fortune-teller in order to determine if current research needs are permanent or merely passing fancies. Following the provenance approach allows the archivist to acquire records that give an impartial picture of society without interfering with the nature of archives. If the acquisition of non-archival material cannot be avoided, guidelines should be developed to determine the line beyond which archives should not accept material. Genealogical Societies may be willing to accept responsibility for acquisition, on their own, of published genealogies, transcripts of original records, and so on. A dialogue concerning this possibility may be in order.

It is encouraging that the archivists interviewed follow the Rules for Archival Description in the compilation of their finding aids. Arrangement should continue to follow the rules of respect des fonds and original order, and description must continue to reflect both principles. As geographer/user Darrell A. Norris has perceptively pointed out: "I would be disturbed to encounter an a priori organization of records, catering to the brief half-life of a research orientation in a social science discipline, my own included." Although he admits that he would find

archival cross-linkage valuable within the particular records he uses, he recognizes what every archivist knows when he observes that, "one researcher's taxonomy and organization of material is another's nightmare of obstacles and confusion."⁹⁴

In addition, the format of descriptive finding aids and indexing systems needs to be standardized both within institutions and among institutions. Archival records are unique and complex and the elimination of idiosyncratic systems will greatly aid independent use by researchers, and will speed access.

Finally, there is much that could be improved regarding the function of reference service. Reference is pivotal in the relationship between archivists and their users. The findings indicate that there are two aspects to reference service that need to be addressed: the attitude of archivists towards providing it, and the actual mechanics of conducting it.

The responses of the interviewees suggest that they do not have a well-developed ethic of public service. Service is considered "exhausting", "unrewarding", "repetitious" and not as important as other tasks. The causes of this are not clear and further investigation is warranted; however, at least part of the reason may be that there is a dearth of education in all aspects of this key archival function. In-depth training for those who staff the reference desk is crucial. Archivists must be instilled with the importance of

this duty. It is during such instruction that they will learn that it is unacceptable to make value judgements about users' needs and approaches. Antipathy towards any type of user must certainly be eliminated, but so must the confusion that appears to reign regarding how much reference service is enough and how much is too much.

The other aspect of reference service that must receive attention is that of the mechanics of delivery. The interviewees, in general, seemed to be at a loss to devise systems that serve first-time and unskilled users as well and easily as experienced researchers are served. This appears to lead to the frustration and feelings of stress articulated by Archivists Two, Four and Six. There is a need for studies to design more user friendly systems and a need for an examination of the optimal ways of educating users.

Opportunities for Future Research

A limitation of the present study is that it has examined only the archival side of the equation. Therefore, a future study could examine genealogists' perceptions regarding attitudes held about them by archivists. Such a study could examine how genealogists feel about the quality of service they receive and what improvements they would like to have instituted. It could be established whether genealogists are indeed improving their qualifications as regards research methodology, knowledge of sources, and so on.

Surreptitious observation of the reference desk of various archives would reveal much about the dynamics of the reference situation. This could be followed up by interviews of those served to determine if they felt satisfied with the approach and knowledge of the archivist.

There are also opportunities for further investigation on the archivists' side. Those at other types of archives and those at other provincial institutions could be interviewed to determine if the findings of this study are widespread.

ENDNOTES

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4. Howard H. Peckham, "Aiding the Scholar in Using Manuscripts," American Archivist XIX(3) (July 1956): 225.

5. In exchange for permission to use these quotes, the author has promised anonymity to those who made the comments.

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31. Michael Cook, The Management of Information from Archives (Aldershot: Gower Publishing Company Limited, 1986), 186.

32. P. W. Filby, "This Librarian Asserts: Genealogy Is Reference," RQ 6 (Summer 1967): 166.

33. J. Carlyle Parker, "Resources in the Field - Genealogy: Part I: Discrimination Against Genealogists," Wilson Library Bulletin 47(3) (November 1972): 254.

34. Robert E. Wagenknecht, "Genealogy Reconsidered," Illinois Libraries 58 (June 1976): 456.

35. Peggy Tuck Sinko and Scott N. Peters, "A Survey of Genealogists at the Newberry Library," Library Trends 32(1) (Summer 1983): 106.

36. Note that comments in a similar vein in the library literature began appearing some fifteen years earlier than those in the archival literature.

37. Alex Haley, Roots (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976).

38. Jacobsen, 346.

39. Pairo, 4.

40. Jacobsen, 346.

41. Turnbaugh, 40.

42. Randall C. Jimerson, "Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society," American Archivist 52(3) (Summer 1989): 339.

43. Peter W. Bunce, "Towards a More Harmonious Relationship: A Challenge to Archivists and Genealogists," SAA Newsletter (May 1990): 18 and 19.

44. Ian Wilson, "Towards a Vision of Archival Services," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 97.

45. Pairó, 4.

46. Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in Management of Archives," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 105.

47. In Canada, definite strides were taken in this regard. In 1981 the University of British Columbia instituted an Archival Studies program at the Masters level to improve the education of archivists. In addition, members of the Canadian archival community undertook the task of creating standards for archival description in the Rules for Archival Description.

48. Blais and Enns, 103.

49. Ian Wilson stated that 50% of requests at the Archives of Ontario come from genealogists while scholarly researchers, the next largest group, made up only 25% of users. Wilson, 93; Elsie Freeman noted that in some regional archives in the United States, genealogists made up 80% of the clientele. Elsie Freeman, "Education Programs: Outreach as an Administrative Function," in A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice, ed. Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch (Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Service, 1984): 284; Figures at the National Archives and Records Administration in Washington, D. C. have risen from 60% in 1971 to 65-70% in 1983. James B. Rhoads, "Genealogists in the National Archives: Profile of Partnership," National Genealogical Society Quarterly 59(June 1971): 84 and Richard S. Lackey, "Genealogical Research: An Assessment of Potential Value," Prologue 7 (Winter 1975): 225. See also, Bill Linder, "An Overview of Genealogical Research in the National Archives," Library Trends 32(1) (Summer 1983): 27-28.

50. Jimerson, 339.

51. Joyce, 132.

52. Elizabeth Shown Mills, "Genealogists and Archivists: Communicating, Cooperating and Coping!" SAA Newsletter (May 1990): 20. See also: Kermit B. Karns, "The Care and Feeding of Genealogist: Or What Every Archivist Should Know About Genealogy," SAA Newsletter (March 1987): 12; and Bidlack, 17.

53. David Kyvig, "Family History: New Opportunities for Archivists," American Archivist 38(4) (October 1975): 509.

54. William Hamilton, Local History in Atlantic Canada, (Toronto: MacMillan Co., Ltd., 1974): 203.

55. Kyvig, 510.

56. Null, 32.

57. Samuel P. Hays, "History and Genealogy: Patterns of Change and Prospects for Cooperation," Prologue 7 (Spring 1975): 39.

58. John A. Schutz, "The Massachusetts Towns and the Legislature, 1691-1776: Contributions of Genealogy to Collective Biography," in Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History, ed. Ralph S. Crandall (Macon, Ga.: Mercer Press, 1986): 163.

59. Virginia DeJohn Anderson, "Migration, Kinship, and the Integration of Colonial New England Society: Three Generations of the Danforth Family," in Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History, ed. Ralph S. Crandall (Macon, Ga.: Mercer Press, 1986): 271.

60. Lawrence J. Kilbourne, "The Fertility Transition in New England: The Case of Hampton, New Hampshire, 1655-1840," in Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History, ed. Ralph S. Crandall (Macon, Ga.: Mercer Press, 1986): 206.

61. "Preface," in Generations and Change: Genealogical Perspectives in Social History, ed. Ralph S. Crandall (Macon, Ga.: Mercer Press, 1986): xi-xv.

62. For a discussion of this practice, see Mary N. Speakman, "The User Talks Back," American Archivist 47(2) (Spring 1984): 165.

63. J. P. Campbell, "The Genealogy and Genetics of the Nova Scotia Variety of Neimann-Pick Disease," Nova Scotia Genealogist VIII(1) (Spring 1990): 21.

64. Ingvar Lundberg and Lars-Goran Nilsson, "What Church Examination Records Can Tell Us About the Inheritance of Reading Disability," Annals of Dyslexia 37 (1986): 217-236.

65. Laurn Wilhelm, "Back to the Past: A Guide to Juvenile Genealogy," School Library Journal 37(8) (August 1991): 101.

66. Jim Leonard, "Charles Thomas: A Stonemason's Legacy Restored," Society for the Study of Architecture in Canada 14(3) (September 1989): 60-64.

67. Alfred B Rollins Jr., "The Historian and the Archivist," American Archivist 32(4) (October 1969): 370.

68. Joyce, 131.

69. Roy C. Turnbaugh, "Living With a Guide," American Archivist 46(4) (Fall 1983): 451; Ericson, 118; Jacobsen, 347.

70. Freeman (1984): 116.

71. Jacobsen, 347.

72. Hugh Taylor, "Family History: Some New Directions and their Implications for the Archivist," Archivaria 11 (Winter 1980-81): 228-29.

73. David Mayfield, "The Genealogical Library of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," Library Trends 32(1) (Summer 1983): 122; "Other Professional Organizations - Board for Certification of Genealogists," American Archivist 28(3) (July 1965): 471; Mills, 21.

74. This discussion is a synopsis of Yin's article: Robert Yin, "The Case Study as a Serious Research Strategy," Knowledge, Creation, Diffusion, Utilization 3(1) (September 1981): 97-114.

75. Ibid, 98.

76. Ibid, 108.

77. Harvey, 8.

78. Kyvig, 510.

79. Kirk Jeffrey, "Varieties of Family History," American Archivist 38(4) (October 1975): 525.

80. See footnote 49.

81. None of the three archives had ever carried out a bona fide user study. These figures were taken from patron registration forms and are, therefore, impressionistic. It was also not clear if the archivists were identifying numbers of researchers or numbers of research visits. Neither was there a standard method of defining the various user categories. Despite this, it is probably not incorrect to conclude that genealogists are in a majority.

82. Association of Canadian Archivists, Fifteenth Annual Conference. Facing Up, Facing Out: Reference, Access and Public Programming, (1990): 5.

83. See Ian E. Wilson, "Towards a Vision of Archival Services," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 91-100; Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in the Management of Archives," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 101-113; Timothy L. Ericson, "'Preoccupied With Our Own Gardens': Outreach and Archivists," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 114-122; Terry Cook presented a counterpoint. Terry Cook, "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on the Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 123-134; A commentary was provided by Barbara Craig. Barbara Craig, "What are the Clients? Who are the Products? The Future of Archival Public Services in Perspective," Archivaria 31 (Winter 1990-91): 135-141.

84. See for example, Elsie Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," American Archivist 47(2) (Spring 1984): 111-123; Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," American Archivist 51(Winter and Spring 1988): 74-95; Randall C. Jimerson, "Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society," American Archivist 52(3) (Summer 1989): 332-340.

85. Cook, 123.

86. Blais and Enns, 101.

87. Ibid., 109.

88. Cook, 130.

89. Ibid., 131.

90. Bureau of Canadian Archivists. Planning Committee on Descriptive Standards, Rules for Archival Description (Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1990).

91. Elderhostel Canada is an organization which coordinates and offers opportunities for people over the age of sixty years to travel to participating universities in Canada. The universities offer courses covering a wide range of topics. The university in the city where Archives A is located usually conducts a course in genealogy, and relies upon the staff of Archives A to orient the participants to the archives. This also occurs at Archives C.

92. See for example, Mary Jo Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and the Reference Archivist," American Archivist 45 (Winter 1982): 33-44; Elsie Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," American Archivist 47 (Spring

1984): 111-123; William Joyce, "Archivists and Research Use," American Archivist 47 (Spring 1984): 124-133.

93. William J. Maher, "The Use of User Studies," Midwestern Archivist 11(1) (1986): 15-26; Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives," American Archivist 49 (Fall 1986): 393-407; and Paul Conway, "Research in Presidential Libraries: A User Survey," Midwestern Archivist 11(1) (1986): 35-56.

94. Darrell A. Norris, "Archivists Should Not Be Tailor-Made for Historical research," Archivaria 18 (Summer 1984): 9.

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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Explanation of the Parameters of the Study

I am studying the relationship which presently exists between archivists and genealogists, from the viewpoint of the archivist. I wish to determine if the relationship as it exists now is the same as it has been in the past, and if it has changed over time, what influences have effected the change.

I also wish to examine the effect, if any, that rising numbers of genealogists have had on archival functions and practices within this institution.

For the purposes of this study I am defining a genealogist as any person who is tracing his/her family tree and particularly the patron of this institution who signs the registration log as 'genealogist' or 'family tree researcher' or any such variation.

I am defining genealogical methodology as those research practices that result in an account or history of the ancestors of a person or family.

The term 'family historian' is defined in various ways in the literature. When I speak of the family historian, I will be referring to the academic social historian who specializes in the examination of family units in order to give insights into their nature and social influence.

Information about Archives at which Interview is Taking Place (This section to be asked of the Provincial Archivist only.)

In what year was this institution established? What is its stated mandate? Do you have a written acquisition policy? Are there any other policies regarding the basic archival functions which are common to all the Sections?

How many people use the archives per year? (Are there statistics for the last twenty years?)

Of these people, what percentage identify their purpose as 'genealogical research' or 'family tree research'?

How many staff members are there, broken down into categories: professional archivists, archival assistants, etc?

Is there a specific position called the 'genealogical archivist' or one archivist who is in charge of overseeing genealogical concerns?

Are there specific goals vis à vis specific user constituencies, especially genealogists, within the overall future plans of the archives?

Are there allotments in the budget that are earmarked specifically for improvements that will benefit genealogists?

How much autonomy does each Section Head have?

A. Information About Archivist Being Interviewed

1. Name:
2. Job Title:
3. Job Description:
4. Gender: M F:
5. Age: 20-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60-69
6. Education:
7. Date began working at this archives:
8. Previous job titles at this archives:
9. Other archival experience:
10. Own research interests:
11. Are you a member of a genealogical certification organization?

B. Attitude of Archivist Towards Genealogists

12. Which type of researcher constitutes your largest user constituency?
13. What other types of researchers use this institution?

14. In terms of rating their goals, which type of researcher do you feel is your most important user? Why? Least important? Why?

15. In terms of research skill and preparedness, which type of researcher is the easiest to serve? Why? The most difficult? Why?

16. In terms of rating your ability to satisfy their research needs, which type of researcher is the most difficult to satisfy? Why? The easiest? Why?

17. When you think of genealogists as a user constituency, do they possess a body of similar characteristics that you can identify? In other words, is there a typical genealogist?

[If yes]: What are the adjectives that you would use to describe the typical genealogist?

[If no]: Describe the different subgroupings that you can identify.

18. What would you say is the goal of the genealogist? In other words, to what end is the genealogist researching?

19. On its own, how would you rate the legitimacy or validity of this goal? How would you rate its legitimacy or validity in relation to the goals of an academic researcher?

20. Do some genealogists find it difficult to use the services of this archives?

[If yes]: What part of the process of using this institution and doing research seems to be the most confusing for genealogists?

[If no]: How do you know that the genealogist is not confused and is using the facilities effectively?

21. I understand that this institution has [an orientation session or printed information sheets or etc.] designed specifically for genealogists. Do you find that those who [take this session] [read the sheet] are better prepared and have a better understanding of the nature of an archives in general, and how research is carried out here in particular, than those who do not?

[If yes]: What further similar measures could be instituted to help? Why have these measures not been instituted?

[If no]: Why are such measures not accomplishing their purpose? What measures should be instituted in lieu of the ones in use?

22. Do you find a difference in the research competency of a genealogist who is a member of a genealogical certification body, as opposed to one who is not? In what ways do the two differ?

23. What sort of specific training have you been given in order to better serve genealogists on the reference desk? Are there specific questions that you are to ask a genealogist researching in this archives, in order to ascertain his/her area of interest, level of research skill, amount of prior preparation, etc.? Have you been given limits beyond which you should not offer nor carry out help?

24. American archivist Elsie Freeman has stated that, "[a]mateur researchers and researchers seeking information for other professional purposes will pursue or integrate information in records differently than trained historians." Do you believe this to be true?

[If yes]: In what way is there a difference in the way they use the material?

[If no]: Why not?

25. Do you believe that an archivist must understand the various uses to which records will be put in order to serve the users more effectively, or do you believe that an archivist's first obligation is to the records and that by serving the records, he/she will most effectively serve the people?

26. Reflect upon your knowledge of genealogists and their goals and upon your attitude towards these members of your user constituency as it exists now and compare it to your

attitude and knowledge as it existed when you first began your work in the archives. Are you more aware or less aware of their motivations, sources and methodologies? Do you regard their quest more highly or less highly than you once did?

C. Attitude of Archivist Towards Genealogical Methodology and Sources

27. Are you aware of other people with different research goals who use the same sources and/or methodology as genealogists?

[If yes]: How do you rate the importance of their research as compared to that of genealogists?

[If no]: Do you serve researchers such as lawyers, medical geneticists, family historians, journalists, and/or anthropologists?

[If yes]: In what ways are the sources and methodologies of these researchers different from or similar to those of genealogists?

D. User Feedback

28. Have you received complaints about how this institution carries out its mandate, or suggestions from users of ways in which this institution could improve?

[If yes]: How are such complaints and suggestions dealt with?

[If no]: Do you believe that this is because people perceive this archives to be well run? Or is it because there is no mechanism by which users can be heard?

29. In general, how realistic are the complaints and suggestions, vis à vis correct archival theory and practice? (Do not consider lack of resources in your answer.)

30. Can you give specific instances when a user's complaint or suggestion has resulted in a change of policy or way of doing something?

31. Is there a difference in the way that a suggestion or complaint from an academic researcher is dealt with, as compared with those from a genealogist?

E. Intrainstitutional Feedback

32. Are you, as an employee, encouraged to make suggestions for improvements in all aspects of archival functions with which you are involved?

[If yes]: Is there a formal procedure by which suggestions are considered?

[If no]: Why do you think your suggestions are not considered?

33. Have you ever identified a problem with the way in which

genealogists are served and made a suggestion that would solve the problem? What happened?

34. Do you agree with your institution's policy or rules as regards service to genealogists?

[If yes]: Do you think that the policy is carried out in practice by all the staff?

[If no]: What do you disagree with and what improvements would you make?

F. Solutions/Modifications/Improvements

35. What specifically has been implemented to fulfill the research needs of genealogists (chronologically)? Have they been successful?

36. How were the solutions/modification/improvements determined? Who determined them?

G. Effect of Genealogical Requirements on Archival Functions

37. Has your institution initiated any alterations in its primary archival functions in order to accommodate the needs of genealogists? What are they?

Appraisal and acquisition

Arrangement and description

Reference service

Access

Public programming