GOVERNMENT ARCHIVISTS' PERCEPTIONS ABOUT THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES TO CITIZENS AND TO GOVERNMENT

"SIMPLY A MATTER OF SERVING THOSE AROUND US"?

by

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ABSTRACT

Government archivists serve more than one interest. They are responsible to citizens, as the source of democratic power, and they are responsible to government, as their employer, and as the creator of the records through which government is held accountable to citizens. This thesis explores the role that archives and archivists can play in support of democratic accountability, and traces the historical development of archivists' perceptions of that role. Examples of conflict between serving citizens and serving the state are explored to demonstrate the potential for conflict in the work of government archivists.

How government archivists perceive their responsibilities determines the role that archivists and thus archives play in democratic society. It also determines how archivists deal with the conflicts that can arise because of the dual nature of their responsibilities. Seven government archivists were interviewed about their perceptions of their responsibilities and role as public servants in a democratic state, and about their experiences with incidents when their responsibilities were in conflict. The interviews also explored the following factors that determine how government archivists fulfil their role: the expectations and restrictions put on public servants; the level of professional autonomy granted to government archivists as public servants; the predominance of economic determinism within government administrations; the attitude of the archival profession toward activism and advocacy; and the need for a watchdog over government record-keeping.

The findings of the interviews led to the conclusion that archivists need to articulate a strong, common language of purpose that emphasizes the importance of
preserving and providing access to archives as the evidence of the actions of
government administration. This strength, when accompanied by a clear understanding
of the political nature of archival work, will help government archivists deal with the
constraints and conflicts of their position within government and within society.
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From the cottage on the Sunshine Coast, overlooking Howe Sound, to the cabin in the Yukon, overlooking the Takhini River, this thesis was made possible by the encouragement of my supervisor, Professor Terry Eastwood, the generous participation of the seven interviewees, and the love of my husband, John Cameron.
Genuine politics - politics worthy of the name, and the only politics I am willing to devote myself to - is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community, and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility, expressed through action, to and for the whole...

Vaclav Havel

Summer Meditations
INTRODUCTION

The predominance of neo-conservative economic determinism within government has forced all publicly financed institutions to re-examine their mandates and responsibilities. Government archives, faced with economic rationalization and threats to their autonomy, must also examine their role within government and within society in order to justify their existence and give purpose to their strategic plans. How individual archivists and the profession as a collective perceive and prioritize their responsibilities affects all areas of archival endeavour, and especially government archivists' potential to act within the political sphere of government record-keeping.

Because government archivists are the public servants responsible for the preservation and accessibility of the archives through which governments are accountable to citizens, they are in a unique and delicate position in terms of balancing political responsibilities and establishing their sphere of competence. This study surveys seven government archivists about their perceptions of their responsibilities. The interviews explored the influences on the archivists' perceptions, their experience of conflict between responsibilities, and their opinion of the potential advocacy role for government archivists.

A review of the relevant archival literature reveals a need to bring together the idealistic approaches to the issue of government archivists' responsibilities, as represented in the literature, with the practical decisions that each archivist must make in his or her work. Interviewing government archivists about their perceptions of their responsibilities and experiences with conflicts that arise in the course of carrying out those responsibilities, offers a revealing method for examining how government archivists view their responsibilities and deal with conflicts.
The approach of asking individual government archivists about their experiences and opinions is based on the premise that it is individuals who make up governments, and who run archives, and thus it is at the level of the individual that government/archivist/citizen relationships should be studied. John Burke offers a more eloquent justification of this approach:

Individuals in bureaucracies matter even though bureaucracies are collective, well-organized, and often highly hierarchical structures. But this critical individual part, which plays such an important role in the organizational whole, has not been adequately studied.... We need to examine how bureaucratic officials conceive of their roles, duties and obligations....

It is each individual archivist's perception of his or her role and responsibilities that determines how archivists, as a profession, and thus archives themselves, perform that role within both government and society. In a study on archival ethics, Trevor May emphasizes the importance of the individual archivist in ethical decision-making. It is "... up to the individual archivist to decide on a course of action and be prepared to defend that action on the basis of principles." This thesis aims to discover, in one realm, how government archivists do that.

**Responsibility versus Accountability**

It is meaningful that this study is concerned with *responsibilities*, for to be responsible connotes far more than being accountable or liable. Responsibility involves having the authority to act, the freedom to decide, the ability to make moral decisions,

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and to behave rationally and reliably with consistency and trustworthiness in exercising judgment. Accountability implies answering for responsibilities, merely a rendering of an explanation. Liability concerns only legal responsibilities. Accountability, and especially democratic governments' public accountability, is the basis for archives' unique evidentiary role in democratic governments, but it is archivists' responsibilities, entering the moral or ethical realm, which most interest this study. Responsibility encompasses accountability. In Peter Harris' words:

Accountability envisages a political machinery to call rulers to account; responsibility is a moral quality designed to call attention to the needs of the public served. Accountability asks stewards to explain their actions; responsibility asks them to go beyond this, to develop a sense of public responsibility.4

Thus it is important to ask government archivists about their responsibilities, not just their accountability.

The word responsibility, as used in this study, refers to the political and social responsibilities of archivists, rather than their cultural responsibilities. Archivists do have cultural responsibilities to citizens, but this study focuses on the political nature of archival work, which has been emphasized less in the past than its cultural nature. Discussions of archivists' cultural responsibilities tend to revolve around the issue of public versus private records acquisition.

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Studying Government Archivists versus Private Archivists

Government, and thus government archives, have a unique role in our society, acquiring obligations and responsibilities which private institutions do not. Government is the one institution that touches the lives of all individuals within its jurisdiction.\(^5\) Inherent in that contact between government and citizen is a complex interdependence of rights and obligations, of mutual responsibility and accountability. Public records, and thus government archivists are essential to the interdependence of government and citizens.\(^6\) This study is concerned only with government archivists, to the exclusion of archivists working with private archives, because of these additional obligations and responsibilities, and because of public servants' dual role of serving government and citizens.

The issues and dilemmas discussed in this study can still be relevant to archivists in private institutions because all archivists have professional responsibilities to the records and civic responsibilities to their state and to fellow citizens. It can also be argued that the preserving of archives in any setting is an inherently socially responsible action that opens any archivist to conflicting responsibilities. However, the corporate culture of government involves a very different environment than that in which private sector archivists operate.

\(^5\) Margaret Cross Norton justifies focusing solely on government records: "Only because government touches the lives of relatively more people that its archives tend... to take on a relatively greater historical significance than do private archives". This argument is not completely convincing, but Howard Lowell's list of the importance of government records is helpful in appreciating the informational and evidential value of government records. See Howard P. Lowell, "Thoughts on a State Records Program", American Archivist 50:3 (Summer 1987): 398. The Norton quote is from Thornton W. Mitchell, ed. Norton on Archives: The Writing of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival and Records Management. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1975), 13.

\(^6\) These ideas are entrenched in the United States' "Principles for State Archives and Records Management Agencies". See Lowell, 397-398. It is appropriate to note here that this study is concerned mainly with Canadian government archivists, but literature and examples from the United States are used, because of the democratic structures are basically similar.
The unique nature of the responsibilities held by government archivists, as public servants caring for the public record which is the basis for democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights, is explored in Chapter One. Chapter Two explores the existing literature for archivists' attitudes about their responsibilities. Chapter Three uses archival and public administration literature to outline some of the factors which influence the ability of government archivists to fulfil their responsibilities. The methodology used in this study is explained in Chapter Four, and Chapter Five reports on the interviews with the seven government archivists. Conclusions and implications of the study are discussed in the final chapter.
CHAPTER ONE

The Role of Archives in Democratic Accountability

Government archives are the records made, received, and used by public representatives and administrators in the course of acting as delegates for the sovereign citizenry. This relationship between citizens, government, and government archives establishes the context for the role of archives in the accountability of government to its citizens. This role is premised on the nature of all archival documents. Archival documents (archives) provide information and evidence about their creator's activities. Archives are made or received in the course of practical activity, and because they are unconscious by-products, rather than the intended end product, they are impartial, authentic, and natural. These characteristics make archival documents reliable evidence of the actions and transactions of their creator.

The evidentiary nature of records created by governments allows these records to contribute to the public accountability on which representative democracy is based. Citizens delegate their sovereign power to elected representatives. This act of delegation grants discretionary powers to representatives who, in turn, are obligated to render an account of their actions to the citizens they represent. Records, as tangible traces of action, are the most important medium for ensuring accountability. Thus, governments can be held accountable through the records they create. Based on his experience as a former politician, Archivist of the United States, John Carlin explains:

The need for analysis of actions, and thus the need for accessible records is ongoing. That's because the ultimate evaluator of us all is History. An informed electorate needs to make judgments in the broader light of historical perspective. An informed electorate needs a continuing
analysis of its nation's experience as a whole. That requires dependable records.\(^7\)

The fundamental requirement that citizens know how their delegated sovereignty has been exercised is the foundation for the movement to guarantee access to government records. Transparency or openness of government promotes good governance in the spirit of democracy. In his book on how to curb unethical behaviour in government, J.F. Zimmerman brings together two of the key ingredients of democracy: open, transparent government and active citizenship, by stressing,

...the importance of actions to ensure open government -- the `glass house'-- as a deterrent to improper conduct, a facilitator for its detection, and a promoter of a moralistic political culture. Open government has the additional advantage of promoting citizen participation in policy-making and implementation.\(^8\)

Public access to government records is only one method of ensuring accountability, but it is a constant and continuous check that has the additional advantage of demanding citizen action in order to be exercised.

The role of government archives, as preservable and accessible remnants of the exercise of power, has only recently become a subject of interest to archivists, although the role itself has always existed. This latent potential of the evidentiary value of archives and the resulting role for government archives in open, responsive, and responsible government is ripe for exploitation, or at least recognition by both citizens

\(^7\)John W. Carlin "Keynote Address to the 1996 State Records Management Conference." The Record 2:5 (May 1996): 30. Former state governor, and now Archivist of the United States, Carlin was speaking at the time of an agreement that would give fuller access to President Nixon's tapes, through which "the public could at last have an opportunity to assess President Nixon's Administration ... The assessment will illuminate not just the achievements or failures of his particular presidency. The assessment will illuminate issues of appropriate conduct for government officials in a democracy." (30).

and government archivists. Some archivists advocate this 'new' use of the archival heritage. Terry Eastwood galvanized the Australian desire to maintain citizen control over government when he emphasized the use of archives as an "arsenal of democratic accountability".

Sigmund Diamond holds up his use of archives in research on McCarthyism in U.S. universities as an example of "how the public was made aware of the abuse of governmental authority by the illuminating power of the written documentary record", emphasizing that "a fully informed citizenry is one of the most important antidotes to tyranny." A corollary to the role of archives in democratic accountability is their role in guaranteeing the rights of citizens.

The Role of Archives in Safeguarding Citizens' Rights

Archivists have expanded the social relevance of their work with lofty references to the role of archives in safeguarding the rights of citizens. As early as 1840 the Public Records Office in Britain defined public records as those,

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The link between rights and archives has been re-discovered. Danielle Laberge's examination of the political and social issues of archives demonstrated "the broader truth that information is central to the definition and achievement of rights, as well as the identification of cases where rights have been abused."\(^{12}\)

The capacity of government archives to be used to protect the rights of citizens results from the same characteristics that permit them to be a base for democratic accountability; that is their reliability as impartial evidence of the actions of the records creator. This, too, is a latent capacity that requires the knowledge and action of citizens and the support of archivists in order to be exercised.

**Archivists' Role in the Use of Archives for Democratic Accountability and the Protection of Citizens' Rights**

The potential for archives to serve as evidence for accountability and the protection of rights is inherent in the archives themselves, and hence, once created, and as long as their integrity is maintained, they can play this role. Government archivists, as protectors of the integrity of archives, keepers and gatekeepers of the public record, determine the extent to which archives can fulfil their role of serving citizens. Dependable, accessible records are what archivists contribute to


\(^{12}\)Danielle Laberge, "Information, Knowledge, and Rights: the Preservation of Archives as a Political and Social Issue." *Archivaria* 25 (Winter 87/88): 44. Laberge also deals with the tension between archivists' responsibilities to protect the right to know and the right to privacy, which creates further conflicts of responsibility for archivists.
democracies. Diamond urged archivists to recognize their role in ensuring the capacity, if not promoting the use, of archives for democratic accountability:

> It should be enlightening, even inspiring for archivists to know that their responsibility extends far beyond the custody and maintenance of records. It is no exaggeration to say that they are charged with the custody of the republic itself.\(^{13}\)

Roy Schaeffer views archivists as social servants participating in "a noble task: a duty to the world community in the protection of its rights."\(^{14}\) With the wonder and insight of a newcomer, Archivist of the United States, John Carlin, discovered that "the records business" is even more important than he could have imagined.

> I've come to understand that [we] are involved in something that is critical for the future of democracy in this country. And our role is particularly significant right now when so many Americans are so sceptical about their institutions.\(^{15}\)

Many archivists have embraced the empowering and legitimizing political responsibility of preserving archives. In answer to his archival-soul-searching question, "Why am I doing this?", Kent Haworth answers, "the purpose of the archivist is to hold in trust for society the evidence of the truth, the evidence of justice and injustice in the society our archives document."\(^{16}\) Seeking a higher political and social purpose for archives has been an understandably fervent activity for some archivists.

\(^{13}\)Diamond, 41. It is important to note that Diamond is an academic historian and thus operates with a few degrees more freedom than do government archivists. Historians have often urged archivists to take a more advocative stand for research and access. See Howard Zinn's writing.


Other archivists fear that the talk about archives supporting social responsibility and democratic accountability may be no more than rhetorical rationalization for the continued existence of archival institutions and archivists themselves. One of the aims of this thesis is to ask working archivists about their responsibilities and their experiences, in order to assess whether these ideas of democratic accountability and protecting citizens' rights are integral motivations in their work or merely rhetoric to which lip service must be paid.

The Above Ideas Challenged

Court cases and media publications have demonstrated that governments can be held accountable through their records, but if those records are destroyed, or are never even created, or if they are not accessible, then their role in democratic accountability is extremely diminished. Even if the records exist and are accessible, citizens must then exercise their right to find out what the government has been doing with its delegated power. If citizens are not aware of their right or do not know how to exercise it, then any efforts of government archivists are moot. In addition to questioning the extent to which archives really contribute to democratic accountability there are larger questions about the verisimilitude of the concepts of democracy and accountability in modern times. Sceptics doubt that the party-based system of elected representatives is truly democratic. The reciprocal obligations and rights of citizens and government that buttress the view of archives as arsenals of democratic accountability,

\[17\] It would be very interesting to study how frequently government archives are used in the pursuit of democratic accountability or the protection of rights. However, no study could measure the inhibiting influence of access to information in curbing unethical behaviour in a democracy. How much is prevented because representatives know that they could be held accountable?
are discounted by many critics. Michel Foucault's interpretation of citizens as subjects
denies that view. Foucault saw archives as evidence of citizens' subjectification, not of
their rights. Archivists and all citizen/subjects need to consider these issues, but this
study accepts that there is a potential role for archives in government accountability.
However, even if this view is accepted, the role of archivists can be disputed.

Theresa Rowat questions the heralded image of archivists, purged of any vested
interest, objectively serving the transparency of the record. She suspects that the
sense of public mission and lofty purpose that archivists proclaim as their role in
democratic government may be in contradiction with the realities of day to day archival
work. This work can be seen as supporting the interests of the administrative regime,
thus reinforcing the oppressive authority of information gathering about citizens.
Because governments create records in the context of their own vested interest, Rowat
challenges archivists to acknowledge the inherent biases of their institutions and of the
archives themselves.

Heather Leduc also questions the perception that archives and archivists are
entities that safeguard the rights of individuals in a democratic society. Basing her
doubts on Rowat's ideas and Louis Athisser's Foucaultian conception of the
construction of subjects by ideological state apparatuses, she suggests that archivists

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18 Foucault suggests that archival institutions are sites where information gathered during the
surveillance of individuals is recorded and organized. Thus archivists participate in the state's subjectification
of individuals and then their re-subjectification under the scrutiny of researchers. See Heather Leduc, "These
Ignoble Archives: Archival Relationships to the Subject and the State." MAS Directed Study essay, University
of British Columbia, 1994: 19. The distinction between citizens and subjects is central to Trevor Liverton's
96.

19 Theresa Rowat, "The Record and Repository as a Cultural Form of Expression," Archivaria 36
actually function as, or in, apparatuses of power that serve discourses and institutions which construct subjects and reproduce relations of power which are, arguably 'oppressive'.

However, continuing in the euphemizing tradition of archivists intent on salvaging their profession from irrelevance or worse, Leduc then suggests that within this conception of the state, archival institutions can be seen as sites of potential resistance "where new knowledges can be constructed apart from the original motivations of government." Leduc's speculations are relevant to this study of government archivists' perceptions of their responsibilities because archivists "exist somewhere in the middle of power and resistance" with the potential to be agents of a repressive administrative network or agents facilitating resistance, depending on their perception of their responsibilities and their loyalties.

This study remains within the 'traditional' discourse because that is the frame of reference within which the interviewees work. However, recognizing the possibility of a shift in the frame of reference highlights the essentiality and subjectivity of discussing archivists' perceptions. Questioning government archivists about whether they serve the state or citizens provokes incomprehension if the archivists see no difference between serving the one and the other. Thus, asking about conflicts between these responsibilities is also incomprehensible, if archivists truly believe they are serving citizens by serving the government.

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20 Leduc, "These Ignoble Archives", 5.
21 Ibid, 26.
22 Ibid, 27.
The ambiguity of the role of archives and archivists in society is reflected in the ambiguity of their public image. Barbara Craig noted in her study of the coverage of archives in the Canadian press that some reports emphasized archives as places in which secrets are effectively hidden by those in power, while other reports, which featured the revelation of secrets, cast the archives as a place where past actions are documented. Craig further noted,

The ambiguity of the archives, as place for hiding or the site of revelation, has its parallel in the equally ambiguous role of the archivist that is conveyed in the press. On one hand archivists are seen to protect and save real cultural treasure, while on the other they can be portrayed as the obedient supporters of powerful vested interests in cases where citizen rights and larger moral issues are at stake.

If archivists have not come to a consensus about their role, it is not surprising that the public image is ambiguous. However, it can at least be established that there is a potential for archives and thus archivists to play a role in the support of democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights. If this is accepted, then it is possible to study the factors that determine the fulfilment of that role.

These factors act on government archivists externally, from the expectations of society and the government, and internally, from professional expectations. Terry Eastwood empathizes with the difficult position of archivists:

Striving to be the disinterested preservers of archives of democratic accountability and continuity is no doubt a terribly difficult and intellectually demanding task, because no profession can stand outside the forces in society which

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24 Ibid, 115.
form its perspective, enmesh it in current events, and condition its freedom to act.\textsuperscript{25}

The next two chapters will examine how archivists' perspectives of their roles and responsibilities as agents of democratic accountability has formed and then examine some of the forces in society which condition their freedom to act in that role.

CHAPTER TWO

Archivists who are responsible for the preservation and accessibility of public records are in a special and delicate position because they serve more than one constituent: the government, the citizens, and, in a less demanding way, the records themselves. Each archivist's understanding of her or his responsibilities and the priority given to those responsibilities will determine the role that government archivists and government archives play in democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights. That the attitude of archivists is an important factor is emphasized by former National Security Archive records manager David Wallace: "... the position taken by archivists who can affect the declassification of such [government] records emerges as one of the more pressing concerns for the profession in the post-Cold War era." Government archivists' self-conceptualization of their role in political society is manifested in their understanding of to whom they are responsible. The interviews explored the responsibilities of government archivists by first asking the archivists "Whom do you serve, to whom do you have obligations?"

The question of whom archivists serve is an abstraction that exists just below the surface of archival practice and thinking, but is seldom specifically addressed. A review of archival literature indirectly reveals that archivists' loyalties have varied over the years in response to the changing political and social atmosphere.

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Historical Development of Archivists' Perceptions of their Responsibilities

Ernst Posner and Luciana Duranti studied archival traditions and found that ancient keepers of the record worked solely on behalf of the state, to ensure its rights, privileges, and positive place in posterity: "They were guardians over the arsenals of law and administration." According to Duranti, the societies of Ancient Greece and Republican Rome introduced the concept that state records should be open to the public, as arsenals of civil rights, as well as of law and authority. The French Revolution renewed the democratic tradition. Public ownership of, and accessibility to, the records of the state were proclaimed, thereby establishing archives as arsenals of democracy, as well. The tenet that the records of the state are the property of the people is the foundation for the unique role that government archivists play as servants of the state and trustees of the people's property. The model established by France's Archives National has been followed in the archival institutions of democratic states; however, the role of archivists within that model has had many interpretations.

Often consulted for guidance in archival matters, the writings of Sir Hilary Jenkinson can be read as ambivalent about the role of archivists in a democratic state.


28 Duranti, "Odyssey", 35.

For Jenkinson the first duty of the archivist is disinterested conservation of the record, to be "servant of his Archives first and afterwards of the student public". A great believer in the truthfulness of archives and the sanctity of evidence, he demanded dispassionate impartiality of the archivist, and saw a protective role for archivists, as well:

> It is his duty and privilege not merely to be as truthful as he can himself, but to be the guardian for the benefit of others of countless truths of all kinds - truths which interest him personally and truths which do not: yes, and truths of which he himself does not perceive the existence.

Strict interpretation of Jenkinson could justify serving the administrator with little thought for the public. However, through his idea of impartial service and the sanctity of the record, Jenkinson perhaps provides the best advice for archivists puzzled about conflicting responsibilities: by focussing on their responsibility to the records themselves, rather than to their employer or citizens, all other interests will be served.

Theodore Schellenberg and Margaret Cross Norton echo Jenkinson's narrowly defined role for archivists, yet both acknowledge a larger role for archives in society. Schellenberg states that, "an archivist's authority is derived from the position and responsibilities assigned to him in the government he serves." However, Schellenberg also recognizes the need for a degree of autonomy for archival institutions.

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because archivists must serve as intermediaries between the immediate needs of government officials and the ultimate needs of citizens. Schellenberg believes that archivists must also promote free inquiry to the fullest extent because "in most circumstances the public interest is best served by making known the truth about matters.... As a responsible official he is conscious of his obligation to safeguard the public interest." Schellenberg's mention of that imponderable thing, 'the public interest', greatly expands the role of archivists and suggests active protection of access.

Margaret Cross Norton's very matter-of-fact assessment of the archivist's responsibilities denies any active participation in democracy:

The real function of an archivist is that of custodian of legal records of the state, the destruction of which records might seriously inconvenience the administration of state business.

But even she, one of the more bureaucratically-minded of archivists, recognizes the role that records play in a democracy:

In a monarchy or totalitarian system of government the people are creatures of the state, and the records of the government belong to the rulers not to the people. In a democracy, on the other hand, the people delegate the functions of government to their officials who do not own the records which result from activities but merely act as custodians.

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34 Ibid., 28.
35 Ibid., 226.
37 Norton quoted in Mitchell, 9.
She acknowledged that agency officials would have a personal interest in record selection and would not want to preserve "too much dangerously controversial material." This implies that archivists are needed to balance selection decisions, and thus serve something beyond the government's interest.

The prevalent attitude in the first half of this century in North America is summed up in Solon J. Buck's 1946 presidential address to the Society of American Archivists:

The archivist is essentially the servant or representative of the agencies that created the official records that have been placed in his custody... to make them or the information in them available to those agencies and their successors, and to render such service on them to others, as does not interfere with his primary responsibility.

The atmosphere was similar in Canada, although less emphasis was placed on the legal and administrative value of archives. In 1958, Dominion Archivist, W. Kaye Lamb saw archivists as trustees on behalf of the creator, the government department:

The relationship of a responsible and conscientious archivist to much of the material in his care is essentially trusteeship.... The archivist makes the material available or restricts its use, in accordance with the rules of access laid down by the department.

In this time before access to information legislation, government agencies controlled their records and thus controlled government archivists, as well.

The political climate of North America in the 1960s altered archivists' conceptions of their responsibilities. Mistrust of government, fuelled by the unpopular

38 Ibid., 135.

39 Solon J. Buck, "The Archivist's 'One World". American Archivist 10 (January-October 1947): 10. It is interesting that this passage is from Buck's comparison of archivists, as servants of their employers, to librarians, as servants of readers. This perceived difference may account for the fact that the library profession is far more active in advocacy than the archival profession. See discussion below.

40 Lamb quoted in Parkinson, 109.
war in Vietnam and FBI abuses during the McCarthy era, later focussed particularly on the mis-management of government records during Watergate and Nixon's attempt to destroy White House records. The U.S. public began to demand more accountability of their governments and the first rumblings for access to government records were heard. Previously ignored groups, such as women and blacks, demanded representation and the resulting new history altered archival appraisal. Archivists who felt the pull of social and political responsibility, as citizens as well as professionals, formed the 'activist archivist' school that flourished at professional conferences and in the journal *Midwestern Archives* during the 1960s and 1970s.

In Canada, too, the political climate demanded more transparency of government. In response to the 1975 Symons Report, the Association of Canadian Archivists earmarked the development of the profession with this declaration: "In today's world, the principal motive for government archives [institutions] should be to fulfill the obligation to be accountable to and protect the interest of people governed." The discourse of democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights, as described in Chapter One, had entered into archivists' conception of their responsibilities.

Even in recent years archivists have been urged to change their perspective to include a broader vision of archival service. In 1991, Ian Wilson, Archivist of Ontario, said:

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41 The number and level of scandals that have rocked U.S. government record-keeping and the U.S. National Archives inspired the final question of the interviews: speculation as to how Canada has avoided that number and level of public record scandals. See later discussion of this question.

We must increasingly view archives through the eyes of society, not just our sponsors, narrowly defined as governments or institutions, but all whom they in turn represent: the Canadian public, with their largely inarticulate, often unrealized and seldom expressed needs for archival services.43

While much of the post-1960s literature urged archivists to serve citizens, the economic determinism and business approach to government of the late 1980s and 1990s has increased tension surrounding the priority archivists give to their responsibilities. Anthony Rees raised his voice to remind archivists that they are not masters in their own house:

Our obligations as archivists are clear. While we are committed to provide to those researchers the finest service we can, we have an even stronger obligation to our sponsors for the costs which they have to bear.44

He felt the needs of the sponsor should be paramount and that public service is only a by-product of service to the sponsor. His position provoked an immediate objection by Brian Osborne:

Reduction of the archivist to the role of servant of the sponsor appears to be motivated more by economic pragmatism and an implicit belief in the old adage `whoever pays the piper calls the tune'.45

The applicability of that adage depends on how government sovereignty is interpreted. Governments do pay the public archives piper. However, there may be additional obligations to citizens that, to mix a metaphor, force government archivists to `march to

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44 Anthony L. Rees, "Masters in Our Own House?". Archivaria 16 (Summer 1983): 58.

45 Brian S. Osborne, "Masters in Our Own House: A Commentary". Archivaria 16 (Summer 1983), 61.

The effect of economic determinism on archival public service was one of the questions asked in the interviews, and is discussed below.
a different drummer'. This issue was brought into the interviews by asking whether archivists had obligations beyond those of other public servants.

If his newly defined mission statement is an indicator, the approach taken by the current Archivist of the United States may herald a strengthening of the archival mission, in terms of responsibilities to citizens and government. The shift in emphasis is evident in the new strategic plan for the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA):

The National Archives is not a dusty hoard of ancient history. It is a public trust on which our democracy depends. It enables people to inspect for themselves the record of what government has done. It enables officials and agencies to review their actions, and helps citizens hold them accountable. It ensures continuing access to essential evidence that documents the rights of American citizens, the actions of Federal officials, and the national experience.46

NARA's fundamental mission is "to ensure, for the citizen and the public servant, for the President and the Congress and the Courts, ready access to essential evidence."47

The order of listing of the interests for whom NARA preserves evidence may or may not be intended to establish the priority of responsibilities, but the tone of the mission statement seems to emphasize "people" as the root of the democratic system.

Only recently have archivists recognized the significance of prioritizing their responsibilities. Concerned with the ethics of appraisal, Alexandra Nicol asked "To whom is the appraiser responsible? To the employer? I would agree to some extent, but what if there is a scandal and the employer wants the records destroyed?... The


47Ibid.
appraiser should be responsible to posterity." Such conjecture makes necessary the
difficult but crucial question, `Do government archivists ever need to protect public
records from the government itself, that is, what is the potential for conflict to arise
between government archivists' responsibilities to the government and their
responsibilities to citizens?'. This was one of the questions asked of interviewees.
Simple recognition of the potential for conflict is a first step in dealing with it. Livia
lacovino articulates this awareness:

There is a dilemma for Australian Archives arising from its dual
responsibility for, on the one hand, providing an effective service to
agencies, and on the other hand, protecting the archival resources of the
Commonwealth."

Prioritizing Conflicting Responsibilities

Many writers have realized that the responsibilities of government archivists may
potentially conflict, and advise how archivists should balance their obligations. In his
address to the 1991 International Congress on Archives, "Citoyen et Administration",
Herman Willink expresses a bluntly dichotomous view of archivists' choices, and a clear
understanding of the realpolitik of modern democracy. He saw a need for archivists to
act in favour of citizens in order to balance the power of information controlled by
governments.

Because of the self-interest of the administration and its own
partial memory, the rules established and the politics
followed do not automatically serve citizens and their
problems. A counterweight is necessary. That is why

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49 lacovino, "Accountability", 86.
information concerning the world of citizens must be improved and the rights of citizens reinforced.\(^{50}\)

Willink urges archivists to play an active role in protecting democracy, even if that means going against the dictates of the administration.

The archivist must choose his/her position in the relationship citizen-administration. Will he/she opt for the selective memory of administration or will we offer to citizens the possibility to perceive the elaboration of administration decision-making in the past and present? It is my opinion that the choice must be in favour of the latter, of the citizen, even if the archivist is formally part of the administration.\(^{51}\)

Willink advocates this stance in order to ensure the best working of democracy, but he also understands government archivists' difficult position within administration. Patrick Dunae believed archivists must distance themselves from the bureaucracy: "We must ensure that we do not become mere cogs in an administrative machine. We must remember that we are responsible not only to the powers of funding and authority, but to society and indeed to History itself."\(^{52}\) Dunae does not suggest that archivists be disloyal, but he does warn against becoming like the archivist in Huxley's 1984 who 'sanitizes' the historical record in the interest of the state:

Archivists who see themselves primarily as administrators, who feel that the most useful histories are the histories of government functions, and who believe that their principal task is to promote bureaucratic efficiency, are archivists who are likely to become subservient to the state. Once subservient, such archivists are then likely to become

\(^{50}\)Herman Tjeenk Willink, "Citoyen et Administration," Janus 2 (1992), 31. Author's translation from French. The French word partial has an interesting double meaning: 'partial' as in not impartial, and 'partial' as in not complete. Willink was speaking in the context of his view of a uniting Europe, a political world in which citizens do not know their rights and obligations, and administrations act in their own interest, having forgotten public service and the essence of democracy.

\(^{51}\)Ibid, 34-35. Author's translation from French.

subverted by the state. Driven by a belief that it is their express duty to protect and promote the interests of the bureaucracy at all costs, such archivists are apt to lose all sense of proportion, to say nothing of their historical and intellectual obligations.\(^{53}\)

Dunae’s warnings are dire, but speak to the need for archivists to be aware of the consequences of their actions and loyalties. They also support the role suggested by Heather Leduc: that archives could be sites of resistance against state oppression.

Some critics of a close relationship with government administration may be motivated more by a desire for influence than by a devotion to the ideals of participatory democracy. C.P. Stacey’s nostalgic 1972 ode to the Public Archives of Canada (PAC) shows an historian’s bias, but also reveals the growing tendency for archival institutions to be considered part of government administration:

> What are the goals of the Public Archives of Canada? Whom, or what, does it work for? Does it work for the historian, that is, people like me? or does it exist for the benefit of the Government? Obviously it works for the Government; the Government pays the bills and, therefore it will always call the tune. But this does not mean that the Archives is just a cog in the Ottawa administrative-machine... In my darker moments... I find myself suspecting that there are some persons connected with the Archives who really believe that its main reason for existence is the part it plays in that great inter-departmental parlour game of records management.... For the PAC to come to regard itself as a mere administrative convenience for the Government would be little short of a national disaster.\(^{54}\)

The implications of this shift are important in terms of archivists’ ability to play a role as agents of democratic accountability in service to citizens. Taking on responsibility for

\(^{53}\)Ibid, 288. Some of Dunae’s urgency can be attributed to the heat and passion of the debate about archivists eschewing a historical perspective. This article contributed to that debate.

\(^{54}\)C.P. Stacey, "The Public Archives of Canada at the End of Its First Century", Historical Papers (1972): 22. Stacey also said "Administrators are a necessary evil, but they should be kept in their place." (p.21).
government records management is not the only change compromising archivists' priorities. Robert Hayward recognizes that archivists' involvement in administering access to information produced a shift in allegiance:

The new role of the archivists in determining what information can and cannot be disclosed will be a difficult challenge, for it brings into conflict the archivist's professional responsibilities of encouraging free inquiry with the responsibilities of the government official. The age of the archivist has truly arrived.  

The dual nature of archivists' responsibilities would seem to put them in difficult situations of conflict. The archivists interviewed were asked how the priorities they give their responsibilities have changed, and whether they have experienced conflict. The need for government archivists to clarify and prioritize their responsibilities to citizens and to government is highlighted by noting real-life examples of conflicts between archivists' public responsibilities and the bureaucratic or political interests of government.

Examples of Conflicts

While archivists tend to stay out of the limelight, there have been noted examples of conflict arising from government archivists' dual responsibilities in the care of government records. In 1993, United States Archivist Don Wilson's eleventh hour agreement gave former President George Bush exclusive legal control over White House records, which Bush then exercised by ordering the destruction of many electronic records. This example shows the pressures that are exerted on government archivists, and also reveals the weakness of archival commitment to its broader

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responsibilities when the head government archivist cannot withstand those pressures in order to protect public records, which are public property and the basis of democratic accountability. To add to the defamation of the conflict of interest charges against Wilson, arising from his appointment to Bush's Presidential Library, the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) actually supported the Bush administration's contention that the electronic files were not records but internal communications, and therefore not subject to protection under the Federal Records Act. That a federal court dispensed with this reasoning does not diminish the disturbing nature of this incident -- that NARS was seen to be in collusion with improper government conduct.56

Former President Nixon’s efforts to destroy his presidential records offered an earlier opportunity for government archivists, and all other archivists, to show where their loyalties lie. The Society of American Archivists (SAA) has been criticized for its silence on this issue. At its 1974 annual meeting the SAA voted down a resolution responding to the Nixon affair, which proposed to declare the records of public officials as public property. Leaders of the profession fought against the resolution because it was too politically biased and might threaten the Association's tax-exempt status. There was the additional fear that it would force federal employees to violate their impartiality requirements.57 The archivists sat silent while historians and political scientists filed suit against Nixon’s actions.

56 For reports of the scandal see Washington Post, (February 17, 1993), A4; (March 3, 1993), A2; (March 13, 1993), A12.

A decade later the situation repeated itself in the PROFS\(^{58}\) case which saw former President Reagan attempting to destroy records as he left office. NARS again supported the government's position that e-mail messages are not federal records and thus not subject to the Federal Records Act. David Bearman laments archivists' failure to take a stand and the shame of having the National Archivist declared negligent in carrying out his statutory responsibilities:

> If archivists do not use this and other opportunities to articulate forcefully what we expect from records creators and systems designers and to extend our mission and authorities both legally and in practice, we will lose most of the archival record of the next decade and squander our role as protector of the public interest in documented and accountable government.\(^{59}\)

An uninitiated observer would be shocked at the behaviour of U.S. federal government archivists. Indeed, many archivists themselves were outraged at the actions of the NARS executive, but this trend of government archival institutions lying closer to government administration than to the public has a long history.

The 1979 FBI files case is another scandal in which public interest groups filed suit against the government and the National Archives was named as a defendant, this time for authorizing the destruction of branch records that had never been reviewed by archivists. The judge's ruling that NARS had failed to draft and enforce records management standards showed that the court recognized that the National Archives had duties both to government and to the public, but that the archivists' loyalties should

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\(^{58}\)PROFS is the acronym for the computer operating system used in the White House at the time.

be with the public. In her assessment of the case Susan Steinwall condemns archivists' adherence to procedures which are detrimental to their public image.

While efficient records management is certainly a worthy goal, the writings of Brooks, Schellenberg and Brichford, combined with the practice of relying on agency-generated descriptions of records, invite and encourage archivists to be biased on behalf of government administration needs.60

As a sad testament to the public's perception of government archivists, Steinwall quotes from a plaintiff's newsletter article titled 'We Win a Big One for the People', which said they were jubilant that the judge had found that "the National Archives cannot be left to their own devices."61 The public image of the National Archives of the United States was damaged by these cases.

The latter case also had disturbing repercussions for individual government archivists, for among the defendants in the FBI files case was a NARS working level archivist, a fact that establishes legal obligations to those who are officially delegated a professional responsibility, and emphasizes the importance of examining how individual archivists view and act on their responsibilities. Mark Hopkins considers the effect of this burden on individual archivists:

It is a cold and sobering thought to realize that our activities as archivists could ultimately be judged in a courtroom! This predicament is magnified by the knowledge that one's professional activities as an archivist may be politically displeasing to one's superiors. Where can an archivist turn should he or she be facing the dilemma of rendering a professionally unconscionable decision under pressure from


61 Ibid, 59.
superiors? Is it better to ignore the situation hoping it will go unnoticed? 62

Hopkins' questions were turned on the archivists interviewed in this study in an effort to uncover the many pressures under which government archivists struggle. The questions also hoped to discover where archivists turn for advice and guidance in times of conflict.

The fact that the scandals mentioned have all occurred in the United States may or may not be significant for Canadian government archivists. 63 Asking the interviewees to speculate about how Canada has avoided this level of scandal served to gather possible reasons for this phenomenon and provided an opportunity to assess interviewee's understanding of the political dimension of their work.

Government archivists' perceptions of their responsibilities to government and to citizens, and their conception of the place of archives in the political realm of society are elements which determine how archivists fulfil their role in supporting democratic accountability and protecting citizens' rights. Discovering the influences which form those perceptions and conceptions is part of this study's intent. There are also external societal factors that affect government archivists' ability and eagerness to accept and


63 Canadian archives have landed in the news occasionally, but those incidents have been relatively minor: the Deschênes Commission queried why the National Archives had failed to keep the immigration records of suspected war criminals; Gregory Kealey published on his experience accessing restricted RCMP files at the Public Archives of Canada, and former International Trade Minister Pat Carney was very upset that some of her records from the free trade negotiations had allegedly been destroyed. [See Gregory S. Kealey, "The Royal Canadian Mounted Police, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, the National Archives, and Access to Information: a Curious Tale." Labour/Le Travail 21 (Spring 1988): 199-226, re. the Deschênes Commission see Robert J. Hayward, "Working in Thin Air": Of Archives and the Deschênes Commission" Archivaria 26 (Summer 1988): 122-136. For the Carney papers case, see "Carney Papers Shredded" Halifax Chronicle Herald January 24, 1991, A4; "Carney paid $20,000 from External Affairs for lost files" Vancouver Sun November 1, 1991, A4; "No paper, no payback, senator says" Vancouver Sun March 31, 1993, A5.] These were ripples compared to the scandals in the U.S. The more current Somalia affair certainly questions the record-keeping practices of the military; archivists have not been implicated, but neither have they seized the opportunity to speak out.
support this role for archives. The next chapter will examine some of the forces acting on government archivists.
CHAPTER THREE

The most significant factor to affect government archivists' ability to act as agents of democratic accountability is their position as public servants. Literature on public service ethics and public service accountability is applicable to government archivists only if they consider themselves as public servants. An interview question about the interviewee's self-perception, asked how they tend to introduce themselves in a social situation: as an archivist, government archivist, public servant, or just saying they work for the government. That this is even at question is a consequence of the total archives tradition in Canada, in which government archival institutions considered themselves, and were considered, more as cultural institutions than integrated arms of government administration. And yet, government archives are publicly funded institutions and government archivists are on the public payroll, and thus subject to the regulations on public service conduct.64

The Nature of Public Service and Expectations of Public Servants

What does it mean to be a public servant? Textbooks of public administration give procedural definitions, the public has its popular perception of public service, and politicians have their view of the role of public servants. Amidst the varied expectations, public servants themselves have only their jurisdiction's code of conduct to negotiate their way through conflicting responsibilities.

64 It is acknowledged that federal and provincial jurisdictions within Canada have their own standards of conduct and also that public archives hold variant positions within government structure - from being a central agency in BC, to being run by an independent board in Nova Scotia. These differences affect the responsibilities of government archivists, and so it should be mentioned that every archivist interviewed worked for governments in which the archival institution and records management play a central, integrated role.
Public administration theorists and practitioners are divided about the nature of the tripartite relationship between government, citizens and public servants; that is, to whom do public servants owe the strongest lines of responsibility, to government or to citizens? Frank Cassidy describes the Westminster model in which public servants are "the more or less passive agents of the elected officials they represent. It is the responsibility of public servants to elected officials which is always primary." Cassidy goes on to argue for a revision of this relationship to recognize that public servants also have responsibilities to the public. In the words of Jean-Pierre Kingsley:

A social contract exists between public servants and the public, just as surely as a social contract exists which permits the public to give its confidence to its elected representatives who take the actions they think are in the best interests of the public. This social contract is at the base of a representative democracy. For the public servant, this contract means the acceptance of a responsibility; it means one must carry out one's duties fairly and equally for all. A government official acts as a trustee for every Canadian, and as a trustee, it is important that this trust not be broken.

The American Society for Public Administration entrenched a priority of responsibilities in its "Workbook and Study Guide for Public Administrators": "Accountability is based

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65 This is a simplification of the lines of responsibility of a public servant, but it does highlight the potential for conflict for public servants. Lennart Lundquist describes a bureaucrat's ethical relations as loyalty to superiors, consideration of citizens and obedience of the law. Lennart Lundquist, "Freedom of Information and the Swedish Bureaucrat." In Ethics in Public Service, ed. Richard A. Chapman, 75-91. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1993), 78.


on the idea that the public administrator is answerable first to the public and second to his or her organization for the results of work performed."68

The nature of public service, with its fiduciary and employee responsibilities, inevitably creates a clash of behavioral expectations. Elaine Todres notes:

To be a public servant is to be perpetually divided. On the one hand you work for the government of the day; on the other, you work for the public at large. Working for the two simultaneously is not always compatible, and this sense of divided loyalties can pull you in different directions.69

In dealing with conflicting responsibilities Todres recommends that public servants take personal responsibility for the work they do: "The ideal is to achieve a balance between personal moral integrity and public service."70 The nebulous role of moral integrity in the responsibility of public servants and especially government archivists was brought out through the interview questions on the effects of codes of ethics and oaths of allegiance on government archivists' handling of conflicts.

Public servants must follow certain norms of behaviour. Theoretically their unique position within government demands allegiance and self-control in order to allow political accountability to flow from elected representatives to the people. The autonomy of public servants is thus restricted:

Administrators are duty bound, in all democratic systems of government, to recognize the power of political authority to


69. Elaine Todres, "The Ethical Dimension of Public Service". Canadian Public Administration 34:1 (Spring 1991): 14-15. Todres was Ontario's Deputy Minister of Human Resources during the Bob Rae government.

70. Ibid, 15.
regulate, set priorities, redistribute resources, and to ensure compliance with orders.\textsuperscript{71}

Restricted autonomy limits the role government archivists could actively play either as advocates of public access or as a watchdog over government record-keeping.

Max Weber has provided the model for modern bureaucracies. He states that "according to his proper vocation, the genuine official... will not engage in politics. Rather he should engage in impartial `administration'."\textsuperscript{72} Restricting the political rights of public servants is justified by the desire to promote political neutrality in the public service, which in turn, promotes public confidence in the impartiality and integrity of public servants, gives public servants security of tenure, and assures the government of loyal advice and execution of policy decisions.\textsuperscript{73} One of the political rights restricted is the right to comment publicly on government policy and administration. The courts have supported this tradition; however, "slavish adherence to civil service taciturnity" is also seen as a denial of the democratic rights of public servants, a group who makes up a significant portion of Canadian citizens.\textsuperscript{74} One judge suggested that public servants may speak out publicly in certain circumstances involving illegal acts or if life and health are jeopardized, although such support for so-called `whistleblowing' has nowhere been


\textsuperscript{73}Kenneth Kernaghan, "Political Rights and Political Neutrality: Finding the Balance Point," Canadian Public Administration 29:4 (Winter 1986): 641. In Canada these restrictions vary from federal to provincial governments, and from province to province. For a refreshing reminder that such restrictions are not part of all democracies see Lundquist, 75-91.

\textsuperscript{74}Stewart Goodings, "Making Public Comment: When Is It Acceptable?" Canadian Public Administration 29:4 (Winter 1986): 670-672. Goodings examines two cases in which courts upheld the dismissal of public servants who publicly voiced criticism of government. To the uninitiated such restriction is more reminiscent of China than Canada.
entrenched in Canadian regulations or law. There is no protection against the adverse repercussions of speaking out.

Canada's reluctance to entrench the protection of whistleblowers is yet another difference between the social and political systems of Canada and the United States. Many Canadians support such protection for Canadians, but the prevailing attitude even among those who admire the courage and conviction of whistleblowers, is that it should not be encouraged and that the repercussions must simply be borne:

This is a sacrifice they [whistleblowers] must be prepared to make if they face up squarely to their responsibilities as citizens or, more narrowly, as public servants.

While no questions were asked directly about whistleblowing, interviewees were asked about their professional autonomy and if they had ever been asked to defend a controversial action or decision.

The traditional idea of public servants as cogs in the government wheel, who must suppress all personal beliefs in blind obedience to elected officials, still has many supporters. H.L. Laframboise argues, "had I taken to heart the political acts and policies with which I strongly disagree I could not have pursued a public service career."

The plight of government archivists can be considered all the more complex if they accept responsibility for democratic accountability and protection of citizens rights through safeguarding and providing access to government records. As another way of assessing how the interviewees perceived their responsibilities, they were asked if they

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75 Kernaghan, 651.

76 Todres, 77.

believed government archivists have obligations or responsibilities beyond those of other public servants, given that government records are the basis for democratic accountability.

The study also sought to assess how free government archivists are to pursue their civic responsibilities within the public service, by asking interviewees about their level of professional autonomy.

**Effect of Level of Professional Autonomy**

The reasons for studying the level of professional autonomy of government archivists are similar to those for interviewing individual archivists: it is the moral/professional ethic of each individual archivist that determines his or her action in the archivist's role in democratic accountability. However if the individual has no power to act, or perceives that she or he has no autonomy, then there will be no action.

Brichford urges archivists to act with strong independence:

> ...individual archivists must assume a personal responsibility for archival principles, independent of institutional allegiances and responsibilities. Modern society breeds institutional co-option.... The archivist must have the ability to say "no" and "never" to the powers of authority and funding.**78**

Brichford's assessment of modern society may be accurate but the individual archivist's ability, let alone power, to challenge authority is still heavily circumscribed in Canada.

Trevor May found that a relatively high degree of professional autonomy is required for professionals to honour their code of ethics: "In other words, are they [the rules in the codes] realistic given the position of archivists as salary-dependent

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employees?" It is a painful reality that the best intentions can be frustrated by impotence.

Interviewees were also asked how the public service oath of allegiance, the archival code of ethics and their education or training had affected their perceptions and actions. Another external factor which may affect government archivists' ability to serve the public is the predominance of the business model and economic determinism within governments.

**Effect of the Business Model and Economic Determinism**

After the consciousness-raising of the 1960s and the activism of the 1970s and early 1980s, bureaucratization and economic determinism of the late 1980s and 1990s can be considered the next stage in the historical development of government archivists' responsibilities. Colin Campbell sees that advances made by activists in the 1980s for freedom of information and open government have been rolled back under the willingness of governments to compromise moral agency and accountability in favour of fiscal restraint. Governments' new economic orders have ushered in an era in which those who dream about what government might do and those who cannot silence their conscience have found public service very difficult indeed.... While the desire to restrain government spending has motivated political executives, their actions bear the cost of making public service something to which no able person would dedicate his or her life.  

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79 Trevor May, 30.

His assessment of this difficulty for conscientious public servants provoked an interview question about the effect of the predominance of the business model and economic determinism on government archivists' ability to serve the public. This question was included in order to more fully understand the pressures under which archivists work.

The pressures on government archivists are manifold. Some proponents of archival activism, like Brian Osborne, are less understanding of the pressures involved.

Advocacy of the importance of records and archives requires that professional archivists not capitulate to the immediate economic interests of a narrowly defined sponsor, but rather strive to serve the broader interests of their true sponsor, the general public.\textsuperscript{81}

He did not expect archivists "to emphasize the costs of such actions or to attempt to advance a financial rationale for doing so. Others perform that role all too well."\textsuperscript{82} The fiscal restraint of the 1990s no longer permits such a perspective.

Evidence that Canadian governments at every level are preoccupied with fiscal concerns, and take a business world approach to governing, can be read daily in the newspapers. However, this trend is questioned by political scientists like O.P. Dwivedi who believes that making the public sector behave like private industry is impracticable. Making a point relevant to archivists, he said he would like to see others besides those from the business world advising government about management.\textsuperscript{83}

In Australia, as well, Livia Lacovino observes that the spirit of the 1980s was obscured by the economic determinism and managerialism of the 1990s. She says this

\textsuperscript{81} Osborne, 61.

\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.

has directly affected the archival environment by forcing an emphasis on institutional accountability and serving efficiency gains, even when the Australian Archives is designated a public service body and therefore not required to be driven by purely commercial motives.\textsuperscript{84}

This anxiety about the ascendancy of a bottom-line approach was predicted even before the business model had infiltrated everyday thought. The spectre of Orwell's 1984 was raised by Patrick Dunae on the eve of that red-letter year:

> Down the road, we may also find archivists, whose sole interest is 'business efficiency', being compelled to compromise their ethics for the sake of administrative or political convenience. It is a bleak and frightening prospect.\textsuperscript{85}

Like a doomsday soothsayer he predicted an end to the acquisition of private records, the erosion of reference service and the impersonalization of services - all now on the horizon of the present archival reality.

Donald McCoy's history of the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) describes the effect, even in the 1960s, of 'jargon-laden programs of management' which archivists had to undergo when reporting to the General Services Administration (GSA). He found the new management concepts were not easily adaptable to an archival institution, which focuses on service and worried that:

> Could not NARS' cultural functions be throttled by GSA's business-management attitude, by the principle that everything had to be viewed in terms of economy, efficiency and measurable productivity? Could not politics enter the picture and be equally destructive to archival and scholarly principles by leading to the use of documents... for partisan purposes? Indeed, could not the top administrators in

\textsuperscript{84}Iacovino, "Reflections", 39.

\textsuperscript{85}Dunae, 289.
NARS eventually become so oriented toward business-management concepts that they would be more concerned with getting rid of archives than with preserving them?^86^ 

McCoy's fears show how interesting and useful it can be to look back in history to think about how past predictions have fared in the present.

Sarah Cooper was also concerned with the negative effect of business values on the management of archival institutions, because the business world's purpose is its own survival not the enhancement of the public good or service to society, which motivates archivists. This feeling that archives are more 'high-minded' than 'the bottom line' also came up for discussion in the interviews.

The role that archivists have in supporting democratic accountability can be played with varying degrees of activism. Having examined the factors that determine government archivists' ability to be active in this role, it is now possible to explore archivists' attitudes toward activism and advocacy.

**Activism and Advocacy**

As mentioned above, the political climate of the 1960's ignited a spirit of activism in the archival profession. Even the somewhat staid Maynard Brichford caught the spirit: "As the servant of truth and change, the archivist is no longer expected to be an

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^86^McCoy, Donald R. *The National Archives: America’s Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968*, (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 345. The bureaucratic model may not be appropriate for archives. John Burke questions whether it is appropriate for any democratic endeavour, because bureaucracies’ promise of efficiency, order and stability compromises democracy’s promise of responsiveness. He searches for bureaucracy’s elusive but rightful place in democratic politics in Burke, 3.

anonymous public servant....The archivist might even be mistaken for an activist.88

Through the 1970's and 1980's archivists were encouraged by researchers such as Howard Zinn and Sigmund Diamond, and by archivists like Gerald Ham, Patrick Quinn, Allan Spear, Susan Steinwall, Archie Motley, John Smart and Hugh Taylor to get "out of the(ir) Hollinger box" and into the active world of advocacy.89

The role of government records in democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights has been furthered by the entrenchment in access to information legislation of the right of citizens to have access to their governments' records, subject to specific exemptions. Yet, the appropriateness, let alone the obligation, of archivists to act as advocates for access to public records has not become entrenched in the archival psyche. Diamond, expressing a view common among researchers using public records, made the case for the archivist-advocate:

...archivists have an ethical and civic obligation to support the right of citizens to as free access as possible to public records and an equally important responsibility to discourage

88Maynard J. Brichford, "Informing the Government About Its Archives", American Archivist 30:4 (October 1967): 566. Brichford's activism should not be misinterpreted though. By calling archivists "servants of truth and change" he did not intend that they lead a revolution, but that records document change and truth, and that archivists serve the records.

the imposition of unduly restrictive conditions of access on records held by private organizations. 90

Because Diamond's call might ring in the civic hearts of some archivists, while many others would want to be far more cautious, this study examines archivists' attitudes to advocacy and activism in the political sphere.

The many calls to action mentioned above failed to transform the archival profession into a battalion of activists. Most archivists are still hesitant to embark on the advocacy trail. 91 The government archivists interviewed were asked about the pros and cons of taking an active advocacy stand for public research and about what role the Association of Canadian Archivists' Advocacy Committee should play. In his review of archivists' responsibilities Mark Hopkins noted the need for professional organizations to represent archivists through situations of conflict:

Success in maintaining a thoroughly professional stance in difficult situations will require the support of a strong professional association, be it the ACA or one's union. It would be difficult for a working level archivist to resist the coercive power of his or her superiors who dare not displease their political masters or departmental colleagues. 92

That advocacy is one of the roles of professional organizations is well-established, but as John Smart noted, archival organizations have not lobbied beyond narrowly-defined professional interests:

One of the characteristics of a profession, is that it advocates a common good which is greater than the direct interests of its own members and which may at times conflict

90 Diamond, 29.

91 Reasons for this hesitancy are legion, and include the public servant's taboo on public comment, and a belief that the impartiality demanded of archivists prohibits any activism, even for the cause of access.

92 Hopkins, 136. The role of unions in upholding archival ethics would probably be minimal unless the situation grew to an employee versus management scale.
with the interests of those who employ members of the profession.... Canadian archivists cannot allow themselves to be limited in this area solely by their own interests or those of their employers.93

An example of Canadian archivists' hesitancy to pursue active advocacy for free and open access to government records was their participation in the development of freedom of information legislation in this country's various jurisdictions. Archivists often participated in the formulation of legislation but were generally lukewarm to the idea. John Smart criticized the Association of Canadian Archivists for not being more vocal in support of the principles of access, and for concentrating too much on demands for increased resources to handle the anticipated increase in archivists' workload:

We have spoken to our narrower professional concerns, but not to the larger question involved in the freedom of information debate [i.e. citizens' right of access to government records]... I think we conveyed the impression to the lawmakers that we were not particularly enthusiastic about the proposed legislation and that we were more concerned about the changes that would occur in our professional lives than we were about the positive social benefits of the legislation.94

Many archivists were concerned about the effect that legislated access would have on the quality of the eventual record. One archivist responding by letter to Smart's call for advocacy for public research, warned that acquisitions would dry up and bureaucrats would fear recording their actions, all to thwart the archivist now seen as the enemy. Ethically speaking, should the archivist not wait twenty years to ensure a full, historical record, rather than acting in an advocacy role that may well cause the destruction of perhaps the best parts of that record by paranoid

93 Smart, 140-141.
94 Ibid., 143.
administrators? Short-term access pain to ensure long-term historical gain?\(^95\)

Smart noted that he was most concerned with government archivists who have a greater responsibility to public access and whose acquisitions are guaranteed by records scheduling. He also retorted that the past neutrality of archivists had not produced a full historical record. In short, he felt there is nothing to be gained "by sitting on our hands".\(^96\) In a similar call to action, Allan Spear admonished archivists by noting that "the world has not been changed for the better by quietism".\(^97\)

The interviewees were asked to assess government archivists' role in the formulation of access to information legislation in their jurisdiction, as an example of their opinion on the potential for advocacy.

That archivists should contribute to the best working of democracy is a very activist position that defines their social and political responsibilities in the broadest sense. Herman Willink felt that the deterioration of democracy within modern governments means that archivists have to be more active: "Archivists must choose their position. Their task consists not only of gathering and conserving information, but also in particular stimulating the use of the right to information."\(^98\)

\(^{95}\)Anonymous letter quoted in Smart, 145. Another reason for archivists' failure to advocate for access legislation could be the restriction on public comment. If the employing institution was not enthusiastic about access legislation it would be dangerous for archivists to have been outspoken.

\(^{96}\)Smart, 146.

\(^{97}\)Spear, 75. Spear's call was not very effective perhaps because of its vehemence. Perhaps the activist archivists of the early 80's may have frightened or shocked many archivists from acknowledging or taking responsibility for the political nature of their work. Even at the burgeoning of the freedom of information movement in the 1960s, archivists were silent. O.W. Holmes noted "Archivists have tended to remain on the sidelines in this battle, although obviously they are caught squarely in the middle between opposing forces and opposing interpretations." Oliver W. Holmes, "Public Records' Who Knows What They Are?". American Archivist 23:1 (January 1960), 5.

\(^{98}\)Herman Tjeenk Willink, "Citoyen et Administration." Janus 2 (1992), 35. Author's translation from French.
A new blend of archival activism is brewing in Australia. In a brave submission to a Standing Committee of the House of Representatives, a group of academic archivists acted on their philosophy about the role of archivists:

If archivists and records managers are going to play an appropriate role in Australian society, we need to work through suitably refocused machinery to strengthen our own images of the significance of our role, produce coherent programs arising from these strengthened images, and pass both on into wider forums, thus positioning ourselves to influence federal and state legislation and archives and records related policy.  

They demonstrate how archivists' perception of their role in society and in government can inform attitudes about advocacy, and enunciate the need for archivists to have a strong language of purpose to present to society. Their agenda is focussed on the active integration of archival concerns into government policy, and reads like a manifesto for a 1990's brand of activist archivists.

Admittedly the appropriateness of government archivists participating in advocacy is questionable, given their responsibilities and limitations as public servants, but, as interviewees were asked 'if not you, then who?'

The Appropriate Sphere for Archival Advocacy

In promoting activism within the ranks of archivists the issue arises of the appropriate sphere of competence for archival advocacy. Australian archivists have gone as far as to speak out against the media's influence on politics and the

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99 McKemmish and Upward, 19.
privatization of government services in a submission to the government.\textsuperscript{100} At the 1979 annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), members had protested that the meeting was held in a state that had not ratified the Equal Rights Amendment, and wore buttons saying "Archivists for ERA".\textsuperscript{101} In 1982, non-archival issues again took the floor at the SAA annual meeting. The Association passed a resolution calling for the President and Congress to adopt a US-USSR agreement for nuclear non-proliferation.\textsuperscript{102} These actions were indicative of the political atmosphere of the 1970's and early 1980's. The political atmosphere has since swung to the right to the point that professional archival organizations seldom speak out on any issue, even if within the sphere of recorded information. However, it is evident that archivists feel more comfortable, if they do at all, in speaking out only on issues relevant to archives. The interpretation of relevancy is, of course, always at question. In 1995 the ACA demoted the issue of employment equity in its priorities for advocacy, because members felt it was not a relevant archival issue. They also defined advocacy "only as it pertains to

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\textsuperscript{100}McKemmish and Upward, 17-31. This is an incredibly strong and far-reaching document that does deal with relevant archival issues; they just boldly take their competence a little further. Actually, all of the points raised do relate to the integrity of records: Privatization brings to question the public accessibility to and ownership of previously public series of documents, and "The integrity of the record is also under threat from a media-driven approach to political activity where the 'angle' is vital to gaining exposure for ideas, policies and programs, and there is little place for substance within public debate. In this context the archival document becomes a threat as it reveals instances where action is all form and no substance, or where the truth is different from the public presentation." (25). Such an interpretation of the appropriate sphere for archivists' comments would embolden some and horrify others. See also lacovino, "Reflections", 30-47.
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\textsuperscript{102}"Minutes: Annual Business Meeting 1982", American Archivist 46:2 (Spring 1983), 232. The justifications statement for the resolution shows how any issue can be made relevant to archival advocacy: "Whereas the use of nuclear weapons could cause immense indiscriminate destruction of people and the records of the people, and whereas one of the primary purposes of the SAA is to preserve the nation's documentary heritage...".
\end{flushleft}
professional interests" and gave it medium priority. Others define the appropriate sphere more broadly, but still within the bounds of archival work. Anne Cooke felt it should be the role of archivists to contribute to debate in public policy areas, such as privacy, freedom of information, data collecting techniques and copyright. Sarah Cooper laments the narrowing of the archival profession's priorities and values:

> Today's inward-looking professions are immersed in what they have defined as professional interests. Engagement in the outside world, in larger social issues, in the on-going struggle to make democracy work for all citizens, are outside the professional archivists concern.

In this study interviewees were not directly questioned about which issues it would be appropriate to speak out on. In these conservative times it is enough to achieve recognition that the integrity of recorded information and access to government records are worthy of advocacy.

**Archivists as Muckrakers**

Talk of advocacy offends the propriety of some archivists. Schellenberg warned archivists that they may at times come across unsavoury matters but that "he [the archivist] is not himself a muckraker... He is not a gravedigger who disinters the bones of rottenness and holds them up to public view." Archivists tend to shy away from

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104 Anne Cooke, "A Code of Ethics for Archivists: Some Points for Discussion," Archives and Manuscripts 5:2 (November 1987): 101. Allan Spear also suggested guidelines on when and how professional organizations should take a political stand. He puts forward the idea that every decision is a political decision, and that even the purportedly neutral stance of not taking a position is political itself because a refusal to support change is a tacit vote for the status quo. This type of thinking questions the honesty of archival neutrality. See Spear, 76 and 79.

105 Cooper, 10.

106 Schellenberg, 226.
political scandals but such queasiness about the not so gentle art of muckraking does not diminish the challenges archivists face in supporting the use of records in democratic accountability. Jack Waterford reassures:

"Indeed the idea of accountability only as a matter of finding the appropriate scapegoat for a manifest failure is itself far too narrow: most of what accountability is about is simply the right to know what is going on." 107

While conscious avoidance of the temptation to air the government's dirty laundry is commendable, an accompanying reluctance to act when wrongdoing is apparent is also a failure of government archivists' responsibilities.

J. Frank Cook emphasizes the social and political responsibility archivists have to stand up for access to public records, not to embarrass governments, but to promote good governance:

"A policy of restricted access that hides past errors in policy may lead to similar mistakes being made in the future simply through ignorance of past decisions. Archivists who acquiesce in such a policy are in effect colleagues of the undertaker who quietly buries the doctor's mistakes." 108

Archivists should also be aware that too rigid an adherence to neutrality and a failure to advocate public access to government records could backfire. Jane Parkinson suggests that archivists' lukewarm reception of access to information legislation could be interpreted as an argument "that officials should be left to engage in corrupt activities" rather than as concern over the naturalness of the record. 109


108 J. Frank Cook, 321. Cook recognizes that for archivists to play this role effectively "it behooves us not to place ourselves solely at the service of officials who are reluctant to inform the public fully." (319)

109 Parkinson, 72.
Consider also the poor publicity earned by U.S. government archivists in their handling of various scandals.

**Activism in Librarianship - A Comparison**

To help understand the potential for activism and archivists' hesitancy to be active, a useful comparison can be made between archival activism and activism in librarianship. Librarians have been far more active both in information-related issues and in issues outside of their profession. During the Vietnam War, 'Librarians for Peace' galvanized the profession into a tradition of forthright advocacy on controversial issues. Intellectual freedom and information rights have been the banners under which librarians have marched, and which could have benefitted from the support of archivists. Librarians' anti-censorship campaigns have frequently made the headlines.

The need for sustained library advocacy is recognised at every level of librarianship. Even the smallest community library participates in Freedom to Read Week. The president of the Canadian Library Association saw the critical importance of nation-wide advocacy training for librarians: "There is nothing about being a librarian that disenfranchises us, that stops us from speaking out on issues of concern. We must start doing it consistently and in an organized fashion." Librarians' active

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participation every year in Information Rights Week begs the question: 'Where are the
archivists? Are they not concerned with information rights?'

Librarians are arguably more free to speak out than are government archivists,
because of their distance from the centre of government administration. However, many
of them are also public servants with the accompanying disincentives for activism, and
impartiality is an important tenet in the library world, as well. Their freedom, or will, to
act is a factor of a more strongly articulated language of purpose. However, the right of
access to government information is as legitimate a campaign as the freedom to read.
The library profession has had debates similar to archivists about the appropriateness
of advocacy, but more often they have weighed the importance of raising their voices in
support of citizens as greater than the risk of reprisal.

Potential for a Watchdog Role

The role of archives and archivists in government accountability can be
expanded in response to the need for a watchdog role over government record-
keeping. The appropriateness of archivists playing this role has been a matter of
debate in recent years. Terry Eastwood speaks about the need to watch out for the
corruption of the record.

Given the many reasons why people, in their own name or in
the name of the corporate entity they serve, are something
less than disinterested in the face of the prospect of having
the evidence of their actions and transactions speak for
them, it is left to archivists to try to act impartially on their
behalf from a sense of commitment to and belief in the
knowledge which will become the outcome of the exercise of
preserving archives and which will redound to the benefit of
society at large.112

112Eastwood, "Reflection", 37.
Eastwood is not alone in recognizing the human weakness for power and corruption. Herman Willink promotes "une politique active des archivistes" to balance administrators' predilection for secrecy. Because information signifies power, administrations tend to favour secrecy. Government archivists are in the unique position of being responsible for the preservation of and access to records that they have not created. Free of a direct vested interest, they can act for the public good. The government archivists interviewed were questioned about their opinion of the potential for government archivists to play a watchdog role over government record-keeping.

Australian archivists have been among the strongest advocates for authorizing archival bodies to watch over government record-keeping. They believe a watchdog role would enhance archivists' traditional concern for preserving the integrity of records, to ensuring that records do provide these qualities and thus assist in 'keeping government honest'. In their very strong and proactive submission to the Australian government, a group of academic archivists from Monash University proposed a role and legislative base for an archival authority to guard the integrity and useability of archival documents and to promote ethical record-keeping. Livia lacovino acknowledges that such a role would require investigative powers and the authority to monitor and regulate government agencies' compliance to record-keeping standards. She likens this accountability mechanism to that of the Auditor General or

113 Willink, 35. Sissela Bok holds the same view that governments are inherently secretive. See Sissela Bok, Secrets: On the Ethics of Concealment and Revelation. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1982).

114 McKemmish and Upward, 22.

115 lacovino, "Reflections", 33-34.
Canadians Marion Beyea and John Smart have also envisioned the independence, respect and authority of Ombudsmen and Auditors General as ideals for government archivists. At a 1995 ACA conference session discussing the most effective place for archival institutions within government hierarchies, the provincial archivist of New Brunswick, Marion Beyea, gave voice to her 'wild fantasy' in which "As the Ombudsman is the protector and champion of the mistreated public, the Archives would have a similar role in regard to the record."

For the archives component of a government to be a record-keeping watchdog, it would need to have a degree of independence from the government. Anthony Rees gave metaphorical expression to a sentiment held by many archivists by denying that archivists are 'masters in their own house': "What the archivist really needs is not a house, but a room of his own." The requisite independence of action also becomes an independence of reputation that is crucial if archivists are to maintain both the public trust and the trust of government. The Public Archives of Canada (PAC) successfully projected this independent image to First Nations researchers, according to Terry Cook:

In most cases, native researchers see the PAC archivists as neutral and trustworthy custodians of their heritage, qualities

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116 In a related article Marion Renehan examines the important use made of government records by Auditors General and Ombudspeople. They rely on a complete, reliable and accurate record and their job is hampered by ineffective record keeping, unauthorized destruction, inadequate documentation and inappropriate storage or maintenance. These are all areas in which an archival authority could support the government watchdog function. See Marion Renehan, "Unassailable Evidence: The Nexus Between Record-keeping and Public Sector Accountability," in Archival Documents: Providing Accountability through Record-keeping, eds. Sue McKemmish and Frank Upward, (Melbourne: Ancara Press, 1993), 131-144.

117 Smart, 146. In this 1983 article, Smart gave archivists practical suggestion how they could actively work as advocates for public research. Many of these subsequently became part of access to information practice.


119 Rees, 53.
they often do not accord to officials of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs.\textsuperscript{120}

Wilcomb Washburn fears that archivists will lose credibility if they forgo their identity as scholars committed to truth before administrative convenience: "He will be seen as another government employee serving at and for the convenience of his administrative bosses."\textsuperscript{121}

As government archives divisions are forced to justify their public budget and demonstrate service to the government, the arms length position shortens to the point that some archivists feel compromised. Cook argued for the protection of that arms length position:

\ldots the independence of the archivist as the guardian of the essential records of civilization against all comers should never be abandoned. Can one really believe that archivists hired by and under the control of the FBI or the RCMP will preserve a neutral, disinterested archival record? If Richard Nixon had hired his own archivists to conserve his tapes and records in some hypothetical White House Archives can anyone believe that the result would be the same as under the neutral control of the NARA? In-house archivists would be like in-house record managers - despite the best will in the world and solid professional leadership, usually impotent before the power of their bureaucratic masters.\textsuperscript{122}

Not appearing to be "flunkies of the establishment" is ever more difficult to achieve as archives become more integrated into government administration and threatened funding promotes a 'don't rock the boat' mentality.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[120] Terry Cook, "From Information to Knowledge: An Intellectual Paradigm for Archivists". \textit{Archivaria} 19 (Winter 1984-85), 34.
\item[121] Washburn, 140.
\item[122] Ibid, 31.
\end{footnotes}
No discussion of the need for a watchdog over government record-keeping would be complete without consideration of the work of the National Security Archive. Based in Washington, this private institute uses FOI requests to compile and then make available government documentation on certain issues and events. They initiate and participate in litigation in support of access to information, widening of the definition of public information, and broader reading of the FOI Act. While their methods are not purely archival and their choice of issues and events is not impartial, their approach could serve as an advocacy role-model for government archivists. Indeed an idealist would question why a private institution is doing what the National Archives is supposed to be doing? It does seem like a missed opportunity, because a national archives could be more credible as a watchdog if it truly was impartial, neither pro-government, like the NARS, nor anti-government, like the National Security Archive - just an active advocate for public research of any type.

There is obviously a need and support for this type of activity, as the National Security Archive is very busy and very well funded. In the words of its co-founder, Scott Armstrong, "The image of rocking chair repository has been overshadowed by the aggressive image of an information advocate." As one archivist commented "If NARA [National Archives and Records Administration] and other government archives had the authority and political independence - and if their leadership showed some...


backbone now and then - there'd be less of a need for outfits like the National Security Archive." ¹²⁵

The role that government archivists can play in democratic accountability and the protection of citizen rights has been established, and some of the factors that influence how that role is played have been introduced. The issues discussed suggested the questions that were asked of the seven selected government archivists. The next two chapters demonstrate how the interviews were conducted and report the interview responses.

¹²⁵Philip N. Alexander, "National Security Archive" on "Archives and Archivists" Listserv, June 29, 1995, in response to a question asked by Susan McClure about archivists opinion about the National Security Archive.
CHAPTER FOUR

Methodology of Study

In-depth naturalistic interviews were chosen as the research tool because open-ended, neutral questions encourage longer, more detailed responses that can be more varied in content, than the standardized responses required in more quantitative research tools such as a questionnaire. Research methodologists support this choice: "Methods of naturalistic inquiry should be selected where in-depth understanding of human actions is the primary focus." Because the study focuses on government archivists' experiences and perceptions, an open, natural research method allows a closer view of the world as understood by the interviewee.

Open-ended, neutral questions also help to remove any influence that the interviewer's perceptions might have on the interview process. Michael Patton's book on qualitative evaluation methods was not only very helpful in formulating the interview questions, but also in justifying the chosen method:

The purpose of gathering responses to open-ended questions is to enable the researcher to understand and capture the points of view of other people without predetermining those points of view through prior selection of questionnaire categories.

In this study, the archivists were free to discuss their perceptions of their responsibilities. Indeed, how they interpreted the questions sometimes revealed how their personal frame of reference differed from that of the interviewer.

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The disadvantages of using a qualitative research method are the difficulty of including a large number of subjects and the invalidity of any statistical analysis and generalizations from the chosen population to the population as a whole. This study included seven interviewees, a number too small to allow any generalizations to the larger population of Canadian government archivists, but sufficient to generate an amount and variety of data which permits useful discussion of the issues. There is no intention, indeed the temptation must be resisted, to generalize from these seven archivists to any broader population. Their interviews are only to be used as a basis for discussion of the issues.

The selection of interviewees was inevitably subjective, as more objective methods of sampling were not feasible. Interviewees were chosen from the larger population of Canadian government archivists on the basis of two criteria: that they have at least three years experience in a federal or provincial government archives, and that they were geographically located in the regions where they could be interviewed. Within those very general criteria a balance was sought between managers and line archivists, and of experience in the various archival activities, from acquisition and appraisal to reference and access. Names of potential interviewees were suggested by professors and other archivists.

This method of culling potential respondents introduced a possible bias into the sample that was not considered until it was questioned by some of the chosen

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128 Ibid., 97.

129 Municipal archivists were excluded because, although they are government archivists whose opinions and experiences could validly be included in the study, provincial and federal government archivists may more frequently encounter conflicting responsibilities and thus provide richer, more focused interviews. In retrospect, municipal archivists may be closer to the citizens of their jurisdiction and thus might have provided an interesting opportunity for comparison. However many municipal archivists might not consider themselves as government archivists, and thus the crux of the topic would be irrelevant to them.
interviewees. A balance was not ensured between archivists with a degree in archival studies and those without (the ratio in the chosen population is 6:1). Because the study did not deal directly with education and because of the variety of points of view represented in university programmes, it was not thought necessary to ensure that there was equal representation in the sample. The fact that most (5 of 7) said that their archival education had no bearing on how they viewed their responsibilities is somewhat reassuring. As well, the variety of opinions expressed in the interviews demonstrates the independent thinking that was assumed when this factor was not considered.

The sample did balance three manager-level archivists with three line archivists and one former supervisor. The balance among archival duties was adequate, with most of the interviewees having had experience in many different archival functions. The contextual information of each interviewee’s experience was gathered in the first question of the interview. While all interviewees were Canadian government archivists, it is important to recognize that each has had different experiences in different postings under different jurisdictions. Research methodologist Patton advises: "One of the cardinal principles of qualitative methods is the importance of background and context to the processes of understanding and interpreting data."\(^{130}\) In reporting the interviews, as much contextual information is given as possible without revealing the identity of the interviewee.

The archivists selected were asked, by letter, to participate in the study, whose purpose and methodology were fully explained in this introductory letter. They were given assurances of the confidentiality of the interview and anonymity in the reporting of

\(^{130}\)Patton, 9.
the study. Interviews were scheduled and respondents were sent a list of scenarios to stimulate and focus their thoughts on the issues to be discussed. See Appendix One for a copy of the letter and list of scenarios. The scenarios were not used in the interviews unless brought up by the respondents, because the study was intended to concentrate on their own experiences.

The questions asked in the interviews are listed in Appendix Two. The list was used as a guide for interviewing, and so each question may not have been asked in exactly the words given or in the order listed. The interviews often became extended informal conversations but for the most part every interviewee responded to all the questions. Many questions were expanded and additional ones were asked for elaboration and confirmation. Interviews lasted from 1.5 to 3 hours, and were recorded and later transcribed to facilitate analysis. All but one of the interviews were held in a private room at the interviewee's place of work. Though difficult to arrange, a more neutral location might have facilitated more frank discussion, because even though the interviews were confidential the archivists were still at work. The one interview held at the home of the interviewee was markedly more frank, although other factors may have contributed to this.

131 Confidentiality was necessary to encourage frank answers to potentially controversial or sensitive questions. This precaution was justified because several of the respondents mentioned after their interview that they were glad that their identities would be protected.

132 Those participants who did bring up the scenarios found that they were not very realistic, and so, in the effort to learn from the real experience of working archivists, it was appropriate to only use the scenarios to promote reflection. One participant said the scenarios were reminiscent of questions asked in a job interview, which may be a disturbing (or, on the other hand reassuring) assessment of how often working archivists think about ethical dilemmas.

133 The discussion of the interviews does not directly report the responses to questions #7, #9, and #11, because, in the end they did not stimulate much useful comment. The questions were about defending controversial actions, opportunities to contribute to public policy and professionals who also serve more than one constituent. Any relevant comments to these questions are incorporated in the discussion of other questions.
Interview questions focused on the personal experiences and opinions of the respondents. They were asked to reflect on their own experience throughout their careers, not just from their current position. They were also encouraged to bring up any other relevant experiences, even if they had not been personally involved.

In order to protect the identities of all interviewees and to maintain clarity, pseudonyms were randomly chosen from the Sunshine Coast telephone directory and randomly assigned to the interviewees, regardless of gender. The names used are Lucy, Keith, Frank, Martha, Ken, Robert, and Ronald. It is hoped that the renaming is not disturbing to readers or interviewees.

Direct quotations from the interviews are not referenced and identifying characteristics are masked to protect the interviewees. Contextual information is given where necessary. Any resulting confusion is regrettable, but is necessary to protect the confidentiality of the interviews.
CHAPTER FIVE
Interview Findings

Perceptions of Responsibilities

Responses to the fundamental question, whom do you serve?, or to whom do you have obligations? (question #2) were revealing, even within the pre-established context of responsibility to government versus responsibility to citizens, which had been explained to each interviewee in the introductory letter. While all interviewees eventually described their responsibilities in terms of the government and the public, it is interesting that two of them, Ronald and Lucy, immediately leapt into a description of where they fit into the chain of command within their institution. That their initial response was to equate their responsibilities with managerial accountability, exposes the difficulty in maintaining a distinction between accountability and responsibility. That the immediate need to account for their own actions to superiors was foremost in their minds also indicates the narrow scope on which obligations and loyalties operate. While Max Weber assumed civil servants would feel a sense of loyalty to the nation-state, conflict theorists have since found that loyalties tend to operate on a much narrower frame: to immediate superiors and to the work unit. To expect archivists to act on loyalties to abstractions such as government and citizens may be naive, but the need to base moral responsibilities on broad principles is unavoidable.

Ronald went on to express his understanding of the link between his broad and narrow responsibilities.

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134Michael A. Lutzker, "Max Weber and the Analysis of Modern Bureaucratic Organization: Notes Toward a Theory of Appraisal." American Archivist 45:2 (Spring 1982), 127. These responses are even more telling when it is understood that the letter requesting participation in the study and the scenarios sent out established that the area of focus was government archivists' conflicting responsibilities to citizens and to government.
As a government archivist I see first and foremost my allegiance, responsibility is, I am accountable to the government, and of course the government is an extension of the people. The government is not the bureaucrat or the elected officials, the government is ultimately the people.\textsuperscript{135}

He succinctly describes the line of delegated authority through which public servants are accountable. However it is important to note that, in the above quotation, Ronald switched from discussing his `responsibility' to the term `accountable'. Distinguishing between responsibility and accountability is important, as expressed in Chapter One, but stressing that distinction was difficult in the casual rapport of the interviews. Interviewees seemed to be more comfortable talking about their accountability than about their responsibility. Questions were couched in terms of `responsibilities' but interviewees tended to talk about being accountable. This may reveal a need in the interviewees to diminish the moral imperative of the responsibilities of a public servant. It may also reveal the hierarchy of priorities that the predominance of a business model within government forces upon public servants, which is discussed in a later interview question. However, it is not certain that responses would have been any different if the questions had been asked in terms of accountability.

Juxtaposed to the preference for talking in terms of accountability, rather than responsibility, was a predilection, when discussing responsibilities, to emphasize their broad responsibility to the public over direct responsibilities to government. Martha, Frank, Keith and Robert seemed more at ease articulating their "societal obligations", as Martha put it; and could wax almost poetic in their descriptions, whereas the responsibility to government was almost denigrated as "serving the person paying your

\textsuperscript{135}Ronald admitted to being puzzled by the thesis topic because the terms government and citizens were considered as distinct entities. As he said later "When I read your letter [requesting the interview and explaining the study] I thought, well, I don't really have anything to say".

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salary" (Keith), or through giving an oath of allegiance to the government (Robert).
Responsibility to the public was more often emphasized, as in Ronald's terms of serving the public through serving the government. This may be a manifestation of society favouring democratic rhetoric or simply evidence of the archivists' political world views.

The variety of ways in which interviewees expressed their responsibilities, and the subtle nuances of their descriptions bespeak the importance of context in assessing these findings. Ronald and Lucy who immediately described their place in the bureaucratic hierarchy were mid-level line archivists with very direct lines of bureaucratic authority to follow. Ken, because his work with government departments and records scheduling had been re-named 'client services', talked in terms of 'clients' and 'sponsors'. The public was his "main client", indirectly, while "the daily concerns are with our sponsors [client ministries]." Robert, Ken and Lucy had felt their duty to the public most strongly when doing reference work, but all of them made a connection between their archival work and service to the public. Because her position mainly involved interaction with government records managers, Lucy felt removed from her obligations to the public:

I don't feel very connected to the public, but then, having said that, a lot of the arguments we use to advance records management in the government, and why it is important, are the government accountability reasons.

These "reasons" presumably hinge upon the public's right to hold their delegated representatives accountable through their records, and thus provide a way in which government archivists are responsible to the public. Lucy expressed surprise that her

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136 The language used is evidence of the predominance of the business model in governments. Its effect on government archivists is part of this study.
response to this question had brought her around to this direct link between her work and responsibility to the public.

There was a sense that the question, whom do you serve?, sometimes evoked stock responses because the issue had not often, or at least not recently, been explored or thought about. Ronald admitted that:

To be honest I don't think abstractly about my professional responsibilities. I can't articulate to you what my professional responsibilities are. I just know what I feel is right and what I feel is wrong.

Another interviewee later wrote to say that the interview had been a pleasant break to think and talk about these issues, something he did not do often in his work situation. It is difficult to articulate abstract motivations in an interview setting, and also difficult to translate daily work practices into generalizations about the priority given to those motivations, as was required in the second part the question about responsibilities.

This question concerned how the priority given to their responsibilities had changed over their careers. The interviewees first discussed what their priorities were. Frank, Keith and Robert stressed that their responsibilities to the government and to citizens were equal. Keith cannily described his response of "I would hope that you could accomplish both", as a "weasel answer".

Lucy and Ken found that the priority they allotted their dual responsibilities had changed more because of changes in job descriptions than because of any philosophical or political change in their own thinking. They were now in positions that were more removed from the public. That several archivists felt greatest responsibility to citizens when they were face to face with the public, is evidence of the difficulty of recognizing the abstract nature of much of government archivists' responsibility to the
public. Presumably they could sense their abstract obligations more acutely in face to face situations with members of the public.

**Experience of Conflict**

One of the aims of this study was to talk to government archivists about how they deal with incidents when their obligations to the public conflict with government policy or practice. This aim was met through question 5, but a preliminary question should perhaps have been whether they ever encountered such conflicts, or even perceived the possibility of conflict, because three interviewees, Ken, Ronald and Lucy, felt that this type of conflict could not occur. Ronald simply stated, "It can't be. We can't be in conflict with government policy." Stronger records scheduling regulations and access to information legislation were acknowledged as having given archivists and departmental records managers fairly strict guidelines on the proper procedures to follow. Robert also noted that access to information legislation had obviated many ethical dilemmas. These archivists believed that by following the legislation and regulations they could fulfil their responsibilities. It can be considered reassuring that they had not encountered any conflict arising from the government's failure to follow the legislation and regulations, but it could be disturbing if this was more a failure to recognize or perceive the possibility of conflict occurring.

Regulations and legislation do not completely obviate the need to make moral decisions, as other interviewees had discovered. Those who did discuss situations of conflict, Robert, Martha, Frank and Keith, because of their positions had more discretionary power in applying policies. Thus, exposure to conflict may be a factor of degree of responsibility and discretion.
The conflicts mentioned in the interviews tended to be situations in which government ministries tried to push their privileges as far as possible. Resolutions to these situations seemed to depend on the relative positions of power of the archival branch or unit and of the department concerned, as well as on the strength of character of the archivists involved. Ronald described how one archivist's principled objection to a government decision had just been circumvented by not assigning controversial cases to that person. Because of his/her position in the bureaucratic hierarchy, this archivist could not act on her/his concern. In discussion of this incident, in which he was not directly involved, Ronald conveyed the sense that principled objection, in this case to premature, unscheduled destruction of records, is considered a bother: the archivist was "still holding out" over something "not worth creating a fuss over".

Some of the situations of conflict that the interviewees discussed made it clear that government archivists were not always free to fight for the 'archivally correct' solution, because of the constraints of broader government interests. Robert found it was not enough to judge or justify actions based on archival legislation. He found he was not supported by his institution in some instances because "they [his superiors] would say you have to choose the right places to fight", and disposition agreements or record transfers could be jeopardized by untimely pressure on the offending ministry. Martha had encountered similar instances where ethics took second place to political considerations:

They never came out and said no you can't do it, because I was right. It wasn't a question of right and wrong. It was a question of ripples. No one wants ripples. Just because you're right doesn't mean you're going to be supported with something, in fact often you're not.
Keith had also witnessed an incident when an archivist was forced to bow to political pressure:

I don't think [the archivist involved] felt he could push that issue too far because the cabinet is his paymaster and also the group that appoints him, so there was a bit of conflict of interest. The pressure wasn't direct; it was all done through lower functionaries, but the word was quite clear in this case.\textsuperscript{137}

Frank told of another incident which illustrates the difficulties of standing up for professional responsibilities and principles. The police wanted to remove records from the Archives for an investigation into an abuse case, but the archivists held firm that the police could only examine the records at the Archives, under reading room supervision, so that they could continue to vouch for the integrity of those records. Frank noted that many interests were involved: the government, as defendant of this case and any other future cases involving those records; the public, in seeing justice done; the individuals named in the records; and the press, which also demanded access to the restricted records, as representatives of the public interest. Frank felt that the archivists had taken the best action to serve all interests even though there was a perception that they were obstructing justice. This case is an argument for the position that archivists can best serve all interests by protecting the integrity of the record.

Ken became aware of the potential for conflicting responsibilities in a case which expands the concept of 'citizen'. A foreign government was researching a case against Ken's government, and while it was awkward, Ken said: "You're not obliged to gush forward but you are duty-bound to help them equally archivally." Frank was concerned

\textsuperscript{137}The fact that governments, as creators of government records and regulators of record-keeping and access, are in a conflict of interest points to the need for a watchdog over government record-keeping, as noted earlier. Interviewee's thoughts on archivists playing this role are reported below.
about the discretionary power that archivists have in the comprehensiveness of the assistance they offer researchers. He felt archivists had an obligation to give a full response, no matter who makes the request. As Ken noted, sometimes archivists must "try to ignore what side these people are on, and forget who they work for."

Robert's experience of government's expectation of loyalty during times of conflict came in a hypothetical situation posed in a government job interview. Asked what he would do if a supervisor told him to do something that violated his professional ethics, Robert said he would object as much as possible and want the objection recorded. From the reaction of the job interviewer, compliance was obviously expected. Robert objected to the question and what it represented:

They are testing your loyalty to the institution, and the implication to me is that they predict that there may be circumstances in which your loyalty to the institution versus the public or your own personal sense of ethics will come into conflict. I find that a morally reprehensible thing to do in a job interview because people who would like the job are morally compromised and you end up feeling bad about yourself.

In contrast, Frank cautioned that government interests should not be ignored. From his perspective as a freedom of information officer, he believed that too many archivists diminish the need for timely but not premature disclosure, and do not understand the government's interest in its records. He said:

I think too often archivists aren't aware of that [the impact on policy-making of premature disclosure]; either they just don't have an understanding, perhaps, of the larger issues that are going on, or they just think that now that it's down in the archives it should be disclosed, with little thought with what goes beyond that.
Ken also recognized the need to consider archival work within the context of the complexity of government operations:

I would never consider trying to obstruct the workings of government. I don't always agree with the way things are done... [but it is] still important to try to figure out the big picture and do our bit to make the government as effective as possible.

Such a humble, and essentially democratic ethic will serve well, if it is balanced by strong adherence to archival principles, and a commitment to supporting archives’ role in democratic accountability, because conflict can and does arise for government archivists, as illustrated by the interviewees and in the examples of real-world conflicts mentioned in Chapter Two.

In the final question of the interview (#14), interviewees were asked to speculate on why most conflicts that have become public have occurred in the United States, while, for the most part, Canada has avoided similar levels of scandal. Their responses are pure speculation but also reveal something about their attitudes towards the Canadian archival environment. Frank suggested that the difference in political systems has meant that in Canada much of the deliberation that results in policy-making does not generate public records, and that therefore this sensitive material would not be in the public domain\(^1\). Ken and Ronald commended Canadian government archivists for doing a good job of preventing such problems by pro-actively informing ministers of the regulations surrounding their records and offering support in managing and storing them. It was also suggested that perhaps Canadians are more ethical.

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\(^{1}\)As an example, Frank mentioned that the recently elected Harris government in Ontario had completed much of its policy making before they were even elected, and thus the public record of that administration will not show that level of decision-making.
Other interviewees felt that incidents happen in Canada, but that the Canadian media and public interest groups are not attuned to detecting them. Frank surmised,

That's just it. Are the scandals there, they just don't become public? Canadians are much more conservative in some ways, maybe archivists have checked themselves, and maybe are not disclosing records that may create public debate.

His speculation that Canadian policy regarding disclosure is more conservative than that in the United States may account for its apparent monopoly on scandals, but also suggests where the loyalties of many archivists may lie, and how free they are to promote the public debate upon which democracy thrives.

The responses to this question contributed to the conclusion that the archivists' level of interest in the issues of this study correlate with their level of active interest in political affairs. Those who were eager to discuss political issues and demonstrated a keen understanding of the workings of politics were also the archivists most keenly interested and concerned about the political dimension of their professional responsibilities. This brings into question whether it is desirable to have government archivists who are interested and knowledgeable in the political affairs of their jurisdiction, and who have contemplated the political nature of their work, or to have government archivists who distance themselves from political considerations.

Martha made an interesting observation that scandals do occur in Canada but that the destruction of public records is not newsworthy in this country, because individuals do not become outraged that their rights have been damaged; and the collective Canadian consciousness does not often register injury. She speculated that this was because in Canada, unlike in the United States, individual rights have not yet superseded those of the collective.
Whether a society has a collective or individualist mentality affects archival institutions and archivists' responsibilities. Most government archivists acknowledge their obligation to the citizenry, however it often remains unclear whether the citizenry is considered in individual or collective terms. The chosen approach would influence archival actions. Keith commented on how difficult appraisal decisions are if you accept the obligation to protect every individual's rights as documented in government records. As Danielle Laberge has noted, case files are evidence of citizens' closest interactions with government, and yet archivists responsible to the collective cannot justify keeping the records of each individual case.  

Another interviewee, Frank, who had experience determining access to information, explicitly mentioned individual citizens when enunciating his responsibilities:

I'm very much of the opinion that people have a vested interest in what government holds in their records about them individually and collectively as a society. I've taken a view that there is a responsibility both to individual citizens as well as to groups in society, as well as to the government as my employer.

With archivists' emphasis on the collective memory, and their societal obligation to preserve the documentary heritage for the society as a whole, it is sometimes too easy to forget the stake that individuals have in government records. This comes into play particularly when an individual's right to privacy may be violated by the collective need

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for the disclosure of government records. Thus, an additional layer of complexity and potential conflict complicates the work of government archivists.\textsuperscript{140}

The questions asked of interviewees about their experience with conflict and conflict resolution were also intended to discover what influences determined the archivists' recognition and resolution of conflicts. They were asked directly about the effect of education and training, oaths of office and codes of ethics. Each of these phenomena is intended to support a standard of conduct, and thus is a likely source of guidance during difficult decision-making.

From the responses to questions \#5c and \#6, which asked about the influences on their decision-making, and from other discussions during the interviews, it was apparent that most of the interviewees' perceptions were based on a personal set of beliefs that developed through a complex interplay of family, education and work experiences. As Lucy noted, "Most people have their own ideas on how they think and approach issues." While this study can make no attempt to uncover the source of these essentially moral beliefs and attitudes about the role of government and the role of archives in our society, it is a logical step to next ask how archival codes of ethics affect the work of government archivists.\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{Effects of Codes of Ethics}

\textsuperscript{140} Even the purpose and hence viability of keeping archives is affected by whether a society has an individualistic or collective mentality. Canada's past collective mentality has emphasized the cultural role of archives in documenting our nation's collective history while concern for individual rights is growing and requires emphasis on government accountability and the protection of rights.

\textsuperscript{141} See question \#6c. I use the plural form of 'code' because the Association of Canadian Archivists has a code, the Society of American Archivists has its code, and the International Council of Archives is developing a code. It would seem logical that Canadian archivists would follow the ACA code, but it is yet another example of the lack of consensus within the profession that the national code is not everywhere endorsed. Interviewee Martha expressed her indignation that archivists within her institution would even consider adhering to the U.S. code rather than their own national code.
A code of ethics is a statement of the professed commonality among the relevant professional and moral beliefs held by a group. However, the utility of the archival code of ethics in providing guidance in situations of conflict or for formulating perceptions of responsibilities, is questionable. Five of the seven interviewees said their profession's code of ethics had little effect on their work.

The comments that accompanied some of the admissions of the codes' lack of influence do not suggest that archivists are therefore acting arbitrarily or irresponsibly, but suggest that because the code coincides with the archivists' personal morality they did not feel it necessary to refer to it in specific situations, and that its guidelines are not particularly relevant. Frank noted that the written codes had little effect, but that he was very influenced by the archivists with whom he has worked who shared certain ethical principles and incorporated them into their work.

Robert made some insightful comments about the inadequacy of the North American codes of ethics in guiding the conduct of government archivists. He notes that the U.S. code reflects an archives system that distinguishes between historical manuscripts and government archives. Using the U.S. code as a model, the Canadian code maintained emphasis on issues concerned with donor agreements and authority to transfer which are irrelevant to archivists dealing with government records. There is little to guide government archivists in balancing their unique responsibilities to citizens and to government. In Robert's words, "It was a code of ethics that does not take into account the idea that you have a split constituency." He felt that the archival codes of ethics do not directly guide government archivists' conduct in situations of conflict between the various interests to whom they have obligations.
Robert's observations echo those given by Trevor May in his assessment of the North American archival codes of ethics. May notes the lack of any prioritizing in both the SAA and ACA codes, as well as the lack of any statement addressing the issue of loyalty to employer. He feels that principles should be emphasized in a hierarchical order that recognizes the paramountcy of society's interests. However, he also recognizes that there is no consensus regarding the priority of archivists' responsibilities. May questions whether conflicting principles within a code of ethics should be prioritized to assist in ethical judgments. The usefulness of a code of ethics is extremely limited if no priority of responsibilities is given to help archivists resolve conflicts and judge their actions. Perhaps this limitation of the North American codes partially explains why so few of the archivists interviewed referred to it in their work.

Because government archivists are public servants as well as archivists, they must have a public morality in addition to a professional morality, which are both above any personal morality. As Paul Appleby states, "Public morality should be of a higher calibre than private morality, because public employees carry out the public's trust."  

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142 Trevor May, 102-107.

143 May situates archivists (private and government) in the middle of a hexagon of obligations: to the creator of the records, to the employer, to the donor, to the people discussed in the records, to the user, and to the records. (p.23) The fact that, for government archivists, the creator, employer, donor, user, and person discussed in the records can all be embodied in the government, while citizens encompass users, the person in the record, and the society's interests which are represented in the records, does not at all simplify the situation. However, polarizing the interests to whom government archivists have obligations (citizens and government) does highlight the potential for conflicts.

144 Ibid, 29.

Public servants must follow the code of conduct established in their jurisdiction, but how do government archivists balance that code with their professional code?  

In 1995, the British Columbia Archives and Records Service entrenched the responsibilities of its employees in a "Standards of Conduct" which incorporates the "Standards of Conduct for Public Service Employees" and the professional codes relevant to each profession working within the Service. The priority of responsibilities is established in this statement: "We endeavour to conduct our business so that it does not contravene the code or codes that apply to our work, while recognizing that we are public servants first and foremost."  

A thorough assessment of the implications of this priority would require study of the various public service codes of conduct, which is beyond the scope of this study, but from general discussions the codes seem to emphasize serving the public interest through serving the elected representatives. If more meaningful direction was given in the code of ethics, archivists might find the code more useful in their work.

**Effect of Education and Training**

In response to question #6b, 5 of the 7 interviewees said that their education or training did little to prepare them to deal with conflicting responsibilities. Frank and Martha did credit their archival education for exposing them to writers like Howard Zinn and Ernst Posner who had influenced the conception of their professional ethic. Frank appreciated the freedom that education provides for students to build a personal

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146 It would have been useful to supplement the interview question about the effect of archival codes of ethics with a question about the effect of public service codes of conduct on government archivists' work. One interviewee mentioned the influence of the public service code of conduct.

philosophy to take into their work situations: "Philosophical discussions really shaped my outlook on what archivists do and what they're about." Formal education is not the only site of this type of professional development. Lucy, Robert, and Keith noted that discussion with colleagues at work was a preferred way of dealing with difficult situations.

Robert actually experienced a negative effect from his archival education, developing an antagonism towards historical researchers, and added: "I don't think [education] really provides very much preparation in terms of resolving ethical dilemmas because it is not something that is discussed."

Martha also observed that education had a damaging effect on archivists' perception of their responsibility:

That is the problem with many archivists today, that they have an education and somehow in the transmission of education they have got a sense of being an elite... in the sense of being above, some sort of class distinction because of their education.... The staff [here] is one of the highest educated in the ministry if not the government. And yes, you have a different perspective, and yes, you have a different way of looking at things, but what that doesn't give you is the right not to adhere by the rules that they [the public service] all live by.

Martha's theory about an educational elite suggests that archival education, rather than leading archivists to a better understanding of the political nature of their work, has led them to think they are above politics. Martha also blames this "educational elitism" for archivists' failure to really serve the public. She expressed regret that the abstract language of openness and providing service spoken in archival classrooms is revealed as mere rhetoric when it comes down to real issues like opening on Saturdays and allowing children in the reference room.
Apparently, and inevitably, education does have some effect on archivists' attitudes and actions concerning their responsibilities to government and to society. However, from the interviewees' comments, it is not apparent that the ethical dilemmas that can arise from those responsibilities are discussed in archival education. The similarity of educational backgrounds among the interviewees prevents comparisons, however, all interviewees were highly capable of, and very interested in discussing the ethical issues brought up in this study.

Effect of Oaths of Allegiance

An oath of allegiance is a condition of employment in most governments in Canada. Government archivists must swear allegiance to their government, through the head of state (i.e. the Queen).

For the government archivists interviewed, attitudes about public service, and consequently about government itself, were manifested in their attitudes about taking the oath of allegiance. Feelings varied from being very proud to take the oath to feeling very uncomfortable and compromised because, as Robert said, "you can't help but feel that you're selling out."

Robert, the archivist who felt compromised, even violated, said, "It's not that I don't feel a sense of obligation to the government, it is just all of the negative connotations with that." Our society has developed a popular cynicism about the integrity and honesty of government, and hence, of public servants. The interviewees' reluctance to be identified as public servants, which is discussed below, is a

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148 The relationship between government archivists' attitudes about their role in society, and their attitudes about government (ie. political beliefs) would be an interesting topic of study.
manifestation of this maligned reputation, but may also reflect a uniquely archival 
expression of responsibilities, in the sense that, as archivists they have unique 
responsibilities that are very different from those of other public servants, and so do not 
want to be identified only as public servants. This was the subject of another interview 
question and will be explored below.

The archivist who felt honoured by the oath admitted to being "a throwback" to 
the time when a public servant was a very respectable thing to be. Martha said: 
"Service was an important thing and people didn't laugh at that, as much as they laugh 
at it today." Ken, too, was honoured: "I am an individual who respects authority by and 
large. I don't have a problem with [giving an oath]... I've always been proud of doing 
that."

All interviewees said they took the oath seriously, though one, with an 
embarrassed laugh admitted that he took the oath because it was a job requirement, 
even though he is not a Canadian citizen. Ronald felt it was irrelevant to his work: "It 
hasn't come up since I went to the courthouse to swear allegiance." For Lucy, the oath 
was just a manifestation of the entrenched understanding that public servants will be 
loyal to the agenda defined by the government of the day. Frank appreciated the oath 
because it reminded him of his responsibility as a public servant to be very cautious 
about how he handles information, what he talks about and to whom; not to the extent 
that he would be restricted, but it made him aware that the government is a very 
different environment from any non-government archives, requiring a special 
awareness of public authority.

This reminder of the need for control and caution was resented by Robert 
because pledging allegiance built in a sense of imposed obligation that was never
clarified. He wondered, "Does that mean if you have certain evidence within your own department... does your oath of allegiance prevent you from opening your mouth and spilling that to the press?... It makes you feel compromised because it is not exactly clear when that oath might be used against you."149

The oath of allegiance and security checks that sometimes accompany them as requirements of employment are accepted by government archivists, but Robert voiced concern about the effect of these impositions on the impartiality of the work of government archivists:

From the time you are hired into the civil service you feel yourself being watched, which encourages a certain kind of paranoia which I think always compromises your ethical response because... someone at the RCMP has done an investigation on you; they interview family and friends.... It is very violating and I think it does have this kind of insidious effect in terms of a certain paralysis that can creep in when it comes to challenging that system, because you are very aware of it, you work within it.... [It affects] your capacity to see things, like cognitive dissonance, you have to kind of rationalize the situation so it isn't a moral dilemma anymore. Because if it is a moral dilemma you are called upon to be courageous in a way that maybe you don't really feel up to being.

While admitting to perhaps overstating the effect of government surveillance, Robert does describe the pressures under which public servants, and government archivists in particular, must work. Secrecy and public service loyalty are required in Canada's inherited Westminster system of government, for the unobstructed development and delivery of government policy and programmes. However, the implications of secrecy and loyalty are unclear if government archivists are also supposed to play a role in

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149See the discussion below on limitations to public servants' right to speak out. This interviewee also regretted the lack of whistleblowing legislation in Canada.
supporting the protection of citizen's rights even against injustice within the government itself.

**Responsibilities above and beyond other public servants**

Interviewees were asked whether they believe, given government records are the basis of democratic accountability, that government archivists have obligations or responsibilities beyond those of most other public servants (question #4). Their responses revealed as much about their conception of public service as about their conception of archival responsibilities.

For several interviewees any special responsibilities held by government archivists resulted from their unique position of selecting and preserving records which they themselves had not created. Frank said "I think archivists have the opportunity to be more objective than a public servant who is actually dealing with records or dealing with the issues." This connects with the viewpoint expressed by Keith and Ken, that archivists are better able to be responsible for government accountability. Keith saw that while other public servants are busy delivering programmes, archivists can offer a perspective with some distance from the issues of the day to determine what is needed to maintain accountability. Ken saw a definite role for government archivists in ensuring that government records survive:

> We struggle to keep it [records scheduling] in the forefront of people's minds and we are empowered to do it... We are accountable for making sure they [government ministries] know that they are accountable. I think we feel we have a strong role.

Government archivists' responsibility for government accountability was taken very seriously by these interviewees.
Ronald's response to this question emphasized the need for archivists to be more fiscally responsible, perhaps implying that government archivists, rather than having greater responsibilities, need to catch up on being as responsible as other public servants.

Noting that it is the duty of public servants to serve the government of the day, Frank added, "I think that archivists do have something above and beyond public servants, in that they do have the obligation to protect records for posterity". Martha remarked that it is the longevity and independence of the archival perspective that archivists have to offer above and beyond other public servants: "A unique perspective, the longevity of our profession, and our perspective both corporate and historical: those things are unmatched in public service." Not all interviewees felt that government archivists have additional responsibilities. Lucy said, "I think our responsibilities are different, but I wouldn't say beyond [those of other public servants]."

Perceptions of their Identity as Public Servants

As noted in Chapter Three, the extent to which the demands and restrictions placed on public servants come into play for government archivists depends on whether they consider themselves as public servants. The importance of this distinction prompted the inclusion of the somewhat coy question about how the interviewee would tend to introduce himself or herself in a social situation (question #3).\(^{150}\)

\(^{150}\)This type of question is not the most reliable indicator of the self-identity of the interviewees. Many qualified their response saying that it would depend on the type of social situation, the interest of their companions, and also how much energy they had to explain what archivists are. However, some of the responses were direct and firm enough to be revealing.
The responses to this question and the one just discussed about the effect of the required oath of allegiance (question #6) gave insight to the interviewees' feelings about being a public servant and about being an archivist.

Only one interviewee, Martha, positively identified herself as a public servant. Other responses varied from "I would never use the word public servant" (Ronald); to saying they work for the government, mainly to avoid having to explain what an archivist is (Frank and Lucy); to staunchly stating: "I say I am an archivist. I have always been proud of being an archivist, and that is what I am." (Ken).

The lone archivist who identified herself as a public servant is in a managerial position in which she demands that her staff consider themselves public servants first and archivists second. She justifies this:

because in that way our society knows exactly what can be expected of them [her staff] by the rules that public servants have, both by statutory rights and by traditional right. So they are required to be unbiased, impartial, service-oriented: the public service image.

Martha's conception of the public service informed her perception of conflicting responsibilities. In situations where a government department demands uncontrolled and unsupervised access to archives, she feels there is no conflict for the government archivist:

You're not in conflict with your oath or what society demands. What you're in conflict with is what you think you are. You think you are just an employee, but you're not. You're a public servant and that means you have special obligations, both internally and externally. If it's not fair, it's not equitable, it's not just, then the public service would agree with you and that's the way you go.
The image she puts forth of public service differs vividly from the popular image of the public servant as a self-serving bureaucrat, an image succinctly described in Peter Harris' article on public service accountability:

...bureaucratic inertia, all types of vested interest, a sense of helplessness in the population at large, a degree of fatalism, a belief in the importance of tradition, a prevalence of corrupt practices among officials, a concern to follow the prevailing ideology and, in the context of accountability, a predilection to shun responsibility.\(^{151}\)

Martha's image would be the result of strict adherence to the public service ethic. That there is often a difference between word and deed, is a fact that Martha felt government archivists can turn to their advantage. She likes the public service oath of allegiance because when government archivists go out into other government offices they know that all public servants have to live by the same standards of conduct. "So when they're doing something that you think violates that oath, then it is a serious matter and we should pace them for it... we mustn't be passive about adhering to it."

Emphasizing the public service side of being a government archivist was viewed as a strengthening asset by Martha whereas Ken felt the value of being an archivist was diminished by putting the obligations of an archivist secondary to those of a public servant. He said that he had always been proud of being an archivist and resisted when told upon taking a government job that he was a public servant first, and archivist second. After five years of working in government, Ken now wearily admits, "You are a civil servant. The word archivist is not highly valued." Martha and Ken both recognize that archivists are public servants, yet represent opposing perspectives on the value of that position.

\(^{151}\)Harris, 241.
Martha also believes that government archivists' failure to accept that they are public servants is the greatest dilemma faced by late twentieth century archives. As a high-level archival administrator who must deal with other government departments and justify her institution's budget, she is frustrated with archivists' refusal to talk and dress like other public servants. She feels their refusal to accept that role only ends up hurting archivists, in terms of staff and budget cutbacks. After some awkward faux-pas by her staff during an Auditor-General's audit, she said nobody in the government would believe that archives staff simply did not know how to conduct themselves: "Nobody would believe me until they come to visit these people and watch them in their day to day operation, and they say, 'These people are not public servants. These archivists that you have, I don't know what they are, but they don't act like public servants'."

In response to a question querying which other professionals might have similar problems in terms of conflicts arising from serving more than one constituent (question #9), Frank made some insightful remarks on the unique position of government archivists within the public service. "You are neither part of the bureaucracy nor part of the community." Like people who work with access to information, archivists are viewed by the public as another bureaucrat protecting the government first and foremost, and thus not to be trusted; while on the other hand fellow public servants distrust the archivists' power to make disposition and access decisions. "So there is very often a very live element of suspicion and distrust." And yet, archivists very much believe it is their role to serve the public. Caught in this in-between role, Frank noted that archivists are always "dealing with competing values and attitudes, with balancing to keep in mind."
Having a clear vision of purpose simplifies the government archivist's responsibilities, whether falsely or not. Martha, who was proudly a public servant first and archivist second, articulated a clear vision of purpose throughout her interview. Her vision was rooted in the longevity of the two traditions she shares:

As an archivist I do have societal obligations, ones which go back millennia; and also as an archivist, I have obligations to society in a different way, as a public servant in the life of the Crown. In this country, in our modern world, the Crown is the people.

She challenges the image of public servants as government 'yes-men'. "Our job is to safeguard the system, the public service, and the Crown. That's our job. Anything that interferes or damages that system must be stopped, and sometimes that means not doing what you are told."

This interviewee believed that archivists have an additional responsibility to safeguard information "for the society and the Crown, even against itself. So if the Crown itself request us to violate our professional ethics... then an archivist has a responsibility to say no." Martha expects archivists to couch that refusal in the language of the public service so that it is understood that the incident is one of public servants fulfilling their duty as established in policy, not one in which archivists are acting arbitrarily on some unknown ethical principle. This is an important point; if government archivists espouse responsibilities greater than those of other public servants, then those responsibilities must be clearly stated in the professional code of ethics, and fit into the mandate granted by both government and society. This was,

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152 She adds to this: "There are punishments in place for that [not doing what you are told], but most people will survive those." This assumes that a public servant with the moral integrity sufficient to stand up against wrong-doing would also have sufficient fortitude to withstand the punishments of breaking rank. While this attitude is intended to avoid the unjustifiable abuse of privileged information by disgruntled employees, it does not support good administration, especially in times of government downsizing.
presumably, the rationale behind BCARS entrenching archivists' responsibilities in a
Standard of Conduct.

Two unavoidable aspects of being part of the public service in modern
governments were introduced in Chapter Three: the predominance of the business
model and the issue of professional autonomy.

Effect of the Predominance of the Business Model

Interviewers were asked if the predominance of managerialism and the business
model in government affected their efforts to serve the public, (question #13). Frank
liked the business-model approach because it helps sharpen our focus on what we're doing. The attitude
that archivists had in the past that they could just go about
doing their thing, and don't really have to tell people [no
longer works]. Business cases do help us articulate to a
wider community what we're about, what does arrangement
and description mean, and what that means in terms of
public access, and how we're going to allot our dollars.

He recognized that some archivists feel they are spending more time justifying
expenditures than in actually describing records, but he felt that the era in which
archivists "just did their work" was over, and that being forced to "sell" your institution
"even if it means filling out more forms, that's not such a bad thing. We just have to
accept that that is part of what our job is."

Those interviewees in managerial positions found the business method to be "a
very useful tool", as Ronald put it. Martha said she liked the required break down in
costs because it facilitates change: "We can point to a service and say it costs this
much so do it a different way." She felt it has been helpful to be more aware of the real
costs incurred by archival institutions, compared to the benefits of the services
provided. She found it was very difficult for the older generation of archivists to understand that justifying every expenditure through cost/benefit analysis is necessary. Ken admitted that, "For me, its been quite a hard shift to make, I don't think that way very well." He found the need to count everything and worry about budgets to be very distracting from real archival work: "The sense that archives have to pay their way and be seen to be efficient and effective, sometimes it just really gets in the way". And yet, like the others, he accepted these demands: "We have to do it, it is part of our world."

The expectation that archives be more fiscally viable was recognized as unreasonable by most of the interviewees. Keith argued that archives' benefit to society is not quantifiable, and a demand for income generation would require such phenomenal costs to users that archives would just not be viable. Lucy said frankly, "The archives isn't run like a business that would succeed. There is no profit incentive. You can't charge, and even if you did you couldn't recoup."

Only one interviewee vigorously objected to the detrimental effect managerialism and the business model had on archivists' ability to serve the public. With increased budget cuts, Robert felt that the possibility of taking a proactive stance or being a watchdog was diminished. In efforts to justify budgets to government administration, he felt that government archivists spend so much time providing service to government departments that public service is compromised.

Comments by the interviewees reflect society's acceptance of a world in which economic concerns are paramount, yet the stress of being committed to a service that has very little justification in purely economic terms, is also evident in their frustration. One manager interviewee tried the tactic of protecting her institution's budget by asking government administrators to imagine a court case against the government that could
not have recourse to government records, and told them the settlement of that case would be the value of the archives. This is a rather risky approach, but one that emphasizes the fact that governments do need archives even though their net worth is intangible. Government archives have little market value but their value to society is immeasurable.

Martha noted that a business approach to government accompanies the shift from a collective to individualist society. She was concerned that this will erode archivists' ability to safeguard information, because it reinforces the 'employee' mentality:

For government archivists, being an employee puts us in a more dangerous position, because it will rob us of our right as public servants to maintain the system. Employees don't maintain anything. Public servants do. For archivists being public servants is wonderful because it allows us to force upon others an approach to information that complies with both our professional ethic and our public service oath, and that is to safeguard the information.

**Level of Professional Autonomy**

The level of professional autonomy of government archivists is a factor in how effectively they can act as agents of democratic accountability. Interviewees were asked to describe their level of professional autonomy and whether they were satisfied with that level (question #8). Responses to this question did not reveal a lot, perhaps because professional autonomy has many manifestations. However, thoughts on this issue also came out in other questions.

It was noted earlier that the more responsibility and discretion individuals had, the more aware they were of the potential for conflict, and that they therefore had less
autonomy than those at lower levels. Lucy had also observed that the higher someone is in the hierarchy the more cautious their approach tends to be: "So if you're at the level of an access review officer... you're much more free to argue for broader disclosure because it's not ultimately your head on the line if something wrong goes out that embarrasses the government." She should perhaps take a lesson from the situation of the working-level archivist who was charged in the FBI files case, which suggests that the perceived autonomy of lower levels is really just, as Robert noted, a delusion: "If you are given a certain amount of trust from your supervisor then you don't feel the reality of the situation, which is that your autonomy is very constrained." He felt very frustrated with this, whereas Keith, Frank and Ronald were satisfied with the autonomy at their level in the hierarchy, noting, as Keith did, that "trust is autonomy". Ken's acute sense of dissatisfaction with his level of autonomy was probably more due to the shock of a recent 'corporate restructuring' than a more dispassionate assessment of an archivist's professional autonomy.

Martha reflected not on her own professional autonomy, but on that of the archivists below her. She felt that they had more autonomy than they really deserved. Because archivists have not been trained to be decisive, she observed that their effectiveness belied the autonomy they are given; this became another source of frustration for other public servants dealing with archivists within the government bureaucracy.

Another factor that arises from government archivists' position as public servants, is the restriction on public comment on government action and policy.
Comments on Restrictions on Public Servants' Freedom of Speech

Comments on the requirement that public servants not comment publicly on government action and policy within their sphere of responsibility, were not directly solicited in the interviews, but some of the interviewees did raise this issue during discussions of conflicts and autonomy. Admitting to being very cautious in dealing with the media, Keith said, "Most staff are aware, or should be, that talking to media is really inappropriate." Frank, who professed very high ethical standards and a commitment to the public, brought up an issue that had always troubled him:

If you found out, from reading the records, and saw wrongdoing in some instance, would you bring it to the public's attention? I don't know what the answer to that is.

Government archivists are in the privileged position of having access to most government records, no matter how confidential. They are also in the privileged position of taking responsibility for the protection of the records that document rights and support accountability, for the purpose of maintenance of good government. Government archivists are also public servants who have declared oaths of secrecy and allegiance, and thus are subject to the aforementioned limitations and reprisals. How are they to respond in such potential situations of conflict? Most would hope never to encounter such dilemmas, an understandable position that was described by Robert as cognitive dissonance, in which you rationalize your way out of recognizing a moral dilemma so that you can avoid dealing with it.153 The government archivist's ability to act as an advocate or in a watchdog role is compromised. The need and potential for these roles will be discussed in the next chapter, but Frank did make the connection

153This supposition may explain why so many (4 of 7) interviewees initially said they had never encountered any conflict between their responsibilities as an archivists and government policy or practice, in answer to question #5.
between the limitation on public comment and the ability of government archivists to play a watchdog role:

I bet we [archivists] are reluctant to speak publicly on things [scandals involving government records] because so many of us are public employees, so what can we say? What is the Dominion Archivist going to say when Pat Carney's records are destroyed, because since they are the government in power, he could be restricted. Maybe that's when we have to look to a public advocacy committee having a role because public archivists can't speak out. Or maybe that's when we look to the academic community to speak up on our behalf, because government archivists can't because of our oath of allegiance, or political reasons.¹⁵⁴

The public service environment is not conducive to government archivists acting as advocates for open access and the protection of citizens' rights. The need and potential for archival advocacy for open access and watching over government record-keeping has been established. The next section will discuss the interviewee's attitudes on advocacy and watchdog roles.

Attitudes about Activism and Advocacy

Several interviewees interpreted advocacy as meaning public outreach. Simply promoting the value of archives is really advocacy for the profession more than advocacy for abstract principles, such as the right of access to information. This attitude is in tune with professional associations' reluctance to speak out on any issue that does not directly promote their own narrowly defined self-interest.

¹⁵⁴These comments add a dimension to the archivist-historian relationship hinted at earlier in a footnote on Sigmund Diamond. Archivists have resented academics 'meddling' in archival matters, but this interviewee suggests that archivists may need academics to use their freedom on the behalf of archivists to speak out on shared concerns.

The Pat Carney reference is to the 1989-1991 incident when Carney's records from the free trade negotiations were allegedly destroyed without authorization. See Halifax Chronicle Herald (January 24, 1989) 1; Vancouver Sun (November 1, 1991): A4; (March 27): A8; (March 31, 1991): A5.
Acting purely within her role as a government archivist, Lucy found that there is not much opportunity for advocacy because the terms of providing access are laid out in legislation that must simply be followed. This perception counters the conviction of others that the attitude of individual archivists can influence the execution of government policy.\footnote{See earlier quote by David Wallace.}

For Martha, the limitation on the right of public servants to make public comment eliminated any possibility of advocacy. She was angered that the Association of Canadian Archivists had shirked its responsibility to act as a national lobbying power, when it suggested that individual archivists act on their own to challenge government policy. Martha felt that this demonstrated a failure to understand the dual role of a government archivist. She thought that their suggestion was dangerous, as well as "preposterous", because some government archivists might lobby against the government:

> If people understood their role, they would naturally say, 'well that's a stupid idea', but there are some staff that would do it, sign their name, send it [a letter of protest] to the minister, criticizing legislation, and they say 'I don't know why I'm in trouble all the time?' and the answer is 'Because you're stupid'.

While some archivists may feel the need to exercise their democratic right and comment on government actions, the public service system works against government archivists being active advocates in terms of affecting government policy.

Among archivists there is also an attitude which scorns or reproaches activism. Robert was sensitive to "digs" from colleagues who presume he is less competent and trustworthy because he has been active.
Keith and Robert did make the important point that providing high quality finding aids is the best way of advocating access to government records. This is definitely within the sphere of archival competence, yet few archivists would classify finding aids as advocacy. However, this is evidence of an attitude of seeking opportunities to act where possible and when appropriate, without risk of reprisals. This was also evident with another interviewee, Lucy, who began her comments by stating that being an advocate would conflict with the proper conduct of a public servant. However, she then realized that by making representations to the government as a stakeholder in the process, as her institution had with respect to copyright legislation, government archivists do lobby for change. Yet, she did not consider that to be advocacy:

That is more acting as a player in the process, covering your interests, and doing your job, rather than advocating on behalf of a public interest group. You couldn't really do that.

Several interviewees were wary of the word "advocacy", immediately associating it with political lobbying and public interest groups, and thus deeming it inappropriate activity for public servants. The misconception that advocacy involves ugly confrontation and media attention is an obstacle, but Lucy's realization that archivists really are advocates just by doing their job, is an important discovery.

Frank seemed to be aware that advocacy was integral to the professional responsibility of archivists. By ensuring that records survive, that they are accessible and that the public knows what is available, "you can have different kinds of advocacy to ensure that the greater public is served." Frank expressed a desire to see archivists play a larger role in society. He was inspired by Hugh Taylor who had made space available at an archives for public interest groups to meet after hours. Noting that no
one questioned the appropriateness of this, Frank thought that archives should be much more active and involved in their communities.

The Role of Professional Associations in Advocacy

If individual government archivists feel it is not appropriate to be advocates, then the obvious place to look for advocates, is the professional organizations. Indeed, Frank made this connection: "Maybe that's when we have to look to a public advocacy committee having a role because public archivists, as public servants, can't speak out".

Most of the interviewees (5 of 7) did not know what role the ACA Advocacy Committee should play, in answer to question #12. They also admitted to not being familiar with its activities. However, they did recognize a need for their professional associations to play an advocacy role, but were generally disappointed with the ACA's efforts.

They were also frustrated with the lack of organized advocacy by archivists. Lucy complained that in recent initiatives by the information community, archivists seemed the least organized:

They're the ones who don't make representations. Museums and libraries are always there, but archivists frequently don't even show up. It's an odd bunch. They're not very proactive, they're not very together.

156 Indeed, none of the interviewees were aware of the Committee's recent efforts to establish an Advocacy Network (outlined in ACA Bulletin 17:4 (March 1993) and 18:3 (January 1994), or of more recent activities.

157 It is telling that all interviewees spoke of their professional organization as "they", rather than "we". Perhaps it is also considered inappropriate for government archivists to be active in their professional organizations. It would be interesting to correlate the institutional affiliation of those active in the ACA to see if many government archivists accept this limitation to their professional activity.
Robert echoed this sentiment: "It is very disappointing to me that the ACA consistently fails to appear at Standing Committees." Ronald suggested that the ACA could not influence government policy: "I don't think the government is going to listen to them."

Despite the present weakness of public advocacy in Canadian archival organizations, Robert definitely saw potential for archivists to speak out on issues relating to the management of information. Because of their historical perspective and unique archival understanding, he felt archivists have a lot to contribute to debates about the information superhighway and the implications of electronic records:

> We know better than anyone the implications of keeping so much personal information [etc.]... We should be participating in those kinds of debates.

He also emphasized the usefulness of archivists' understanding of the acts and regulations governing the management of government records. Robert believed that archivists have a lot to contribute, if they feel it is appropriate to participate actively.

Robert felt strongly that a professional association should also speak out when records are destroyed, "reminding citizens that the [legislation] prohibits the destruction of records, that this is a violation of law. This isn't just government incompetence, this is actually government breaking its own laws." The outrage and impotence that individual government archivists, like Robert, may feel needs a legitimate outlet that active professional organizations can provide.

The media is another potential partner for archivists in the support of democratic accountability and the protection of rights. Although the role of the media in protecting citizens' rights can be questioned, it is an important conduit of information between government and citizens. Moreover, much government malfeasance comes to light only
through the efforts of journalists. Sisella Bok notes that journalists often serve as researcher for the society at large:

> [the] public's right to know about government activities can rarely be satisfied directly. To be sure some can have direct access to certain information, or request it in person; but most people must rely on the media as indispensable intermediaries.\footnote{Bok, 257.}

A partnership between archivists and journalists in the struggle to balance and check the power of government might be possible, but is highly unlikely because of the negative attitude of some archivists towards the media. Animosity towards journalists was evident in one interviewee's discussion of her justification for giving preferential service to government ministries. Martha said that because ministries act on behalf of thousands of citizens it would be ridiculous and unjust to make them wait in line behind individual researchers. When pressed if it would make a difference if that individual researcher was a journalist working to inform thousands of readers, her answer, for which she immediately apologized, was: "I tend to treat the media and lawyers lower than real people."\footnote{It is true that the media, with their demands and deadlines, have probably done little to endear themselves to overworked archivists, but such attitudes are very disturbing and are worthy of further investigation.} The sincerity of archivists' service to citizens is dubious if Martha's remark is representative of their attitude towards journalists. Lucy also noted that archivists are more cautious when members of the media request government records - a comment that reveals where the loyalties of government archivists often lie.

The archivists interviewed recognized the need for advocacy but for the most part, felt that as government archivists they were unable to perform that role and looked to professional organizations and other archivists to do so. Their attitude about the

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\footnote{Bok, 257.}
need and appropriateness of government archivists playing a watchdog role over
government record-keeping was similar.

Thoughts on a Watchdog Role

In answering the interview question (#10) about the need and potential for a
watchdog role over government record-keeping, all interviewees saw a need, but
doubted the practicality of government archivists having the authority to enforce record­
keeping standards in government departments. In most Canadian jurisdictions
archivists participate in the approval process for the destruction of government
documents, and in some jurisdictions archivists are involved in setting government
records management standards, thus participating in overseeing government record­
keeping. Two of the archival institutions from which interviewees were chosen already
play a type of watchdog role. One has the authority to order record audits of
departments, and another prepares the policies on which government information
management standards are based, subject to approval. Interviewees from these
institutions felt that they already had the responsibility to help ministries be accountable.

Ken said,

We are accountable for making them accountable.... That is
very important to us. We really would not be doing our job if
we didn't worry about what was happening in the ministries
and corporations. We do worry a lot.

In this instance concern for government record-keeping was a very co-operative effort
between archivists and ministry officials. The archivists could order record-audits, but
situations would seldom deteriorate to that extent.
To play a watchdog role, archivists require a strong mindset and a strong belief in the validity of their role in ensuring government accountability. Martha said, "Much as I'd like to see archives play a more active role in the day to day lives of our governments, in some jurisdictions the philosophy [of archivists] is not there for it to do that well." She observed that other government archives in Canada lacked a sufficiently aggressive philosophy to assert a central role in government record-keeping.  

Another concern voiced in the interviews was that even with the authority to play a watchdog role, archival institutions do not have the resources to perform that role well. In this vein, Robert thought an additional auditing or watchdog role would detract from archivists' ability, at the very least, to ensure that records are being scheduled, brought into archival custody, and not destroyed. To him this was the best way for archivists to contribute to government accountability, and a responsibility for which they already have authority. He also did not think it appropriate for archivists "to be acting as some kind of moral authority with respect to the business of government." Frank had a similar concern about the idea of a watchdog role, "because I think that assumes we are in someway either purer than some folks, or that we have a sense of what is definitely right or wrong, so I think we have to be very careful how we approach that idea."

Leaving aside the moral authority of archivists to be a watchdog, Lucy cynically doubted their authority to stop unauthorized records destruction:

160 She mentions a possible reason for this philosophical variance is that other archival administrators thought they could survive better as cultural agencies rather than as public service agencies. As she said, "The verdict is still out [on which role is most secure]."
Stuff will always be destroyed... We can't go in with machine guns and threaten them... What can you really do about it? Even if the archives had the authority I don't know what we would do with it. We don't have trained SWAT teams to go in.

Such blunt honesty is rare among archivists and perhaps that is why it is so disturbing in this case. However, Lucy's cynicism is less worrisome than the cognitive dissonance mentioned by another interviewee, in which archivists refuse to acknowledge any moral dilemma for fear of having to deal with it.

Frank's response to the idea of a watchdog role was more tempered:

If we take seriously the fact that we assist in keeping government accountable through record-keeping; if we take seriously the notion that the rights of people are documented and contained in those records,... then I do like that notion, it would be useful if the archives had more authority and played a watchdog role. I don't know practically if we're ever going to get that. I tend to think we're not.

This is a familiar archival dilemma: responsibility without authority, and responsibility without resources.
CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Because of its scope and size, this study of government archivists' perceptions of their responsibilities to citizens and to government cannot support any solid conclusions. However, as discussed in the previous chapter, the interesting and revealing comments of the interviewees present implications for the work of all government archivists and for the archival profession as a whole.

The findings of this study seem to support Jenkinson's timeless advice to concentrate primarily on the responsibility to preserve the integrity of the records. Focussing on the records may help archivists to negotiate the conflicts that this study has shown can occur. However, the simplicity of this approach may also allow archivists to hide behind their professed impartiality and neutrality, and to avoid making difficult decisions. Trevor May recognized the problem inherent in this narrow focus:

Archivists' ethical development is impeded by the unavoidable fact that they serve society primarily through serving the records in their care.161

Because records are not sentient they cannot demand to be cared for, nor do they protest when their integrity is compromised. The archivist's plight is similar to that of the environmentalist, with the added nuance that, while the environment, like records, cannot represent itself directly in human issues, the environment is recognized to have value in and of itself, beyond any human involvement. Archives, however, have no value beyond the use that humans can make of them. The integrity of records must be protected because of the value these records have for people, not for any esoteric, antiquarian reason. Preserving archives is an unabashedly anthropocentric activity, whose importance is expanded because of the value people place in good governance

161 Trevor May, 36.
according to democratic principles. If archivists are encouraged to consider only the records, they will be even more likely to ignore, or avoid, the political nature of their work.

Focussing primarily on the responsibility to protect the integrity of records could still be the appropriate mechanism for fulfilling archivist's broader responsibilities. This process was evident in the case, mentioned by interviewee Keith, in which archivists acted to physically protect records against police demands, when, ultimately the reason for protecting the integrity of the records was so that justice could be done, and continue to be done, for the people involved. While there are many examples of despots and dictators using archives and archivists as arsenals of administration to justify tyranny, injustice and the denial of rights; archivists, as evidenced in this study, have taken on a societal role in supporting the use of archives for democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights.  

Focussing exclusively on the records may also allow archivists to become tools of the social control against which Dunae and Foucault warned. Immersion in one's profession or craft can exclude consideration of what part that craft plays in the total social scheme. Howard Zinn advocated awareness of "the relation between professing one's craft and professing one's humanity." Several interviewees conveyed that their personal morality most influenced their perceptions and actions. William May also

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162 The U.S. Army has apparently also taken on this responsibility. John Carlin noted that during the Persian Gulf War the United States "went to war to preserve records as well as borders," because Iraq was destroying the civil records of the Government of Kuwait. He used this example to illustrate the importance of records in documenting the legitimacy of government and the legal rights of citizens, "however democratic or undemocratic Kuwait itself may have been." John W. Carlin, "Keynote Address to the 1996 State Records Management Conference." The Record 2:5 (May 1996): 3.

emphasizes this influence and suggests the need for studies such as this one, and the need to support the ethical commitment of individuals:

Important to professional ethics is the moral disposition the professional brings to the structure in which he operates, and that shapes his or her approach to problems. The practitioner's perception or role, character, virtues and style can affect the problems he sees, the level at which he tackles them, the personal presence and bearing he brings to them, and the resources with which he survives moral crises to function another day. At the same time, his moral commitments, or lack of them, the general ethos in which he and his colleagues function, can frustrate the most well-intentioned structural reforms.164

May's words provide a framework to reflect on the different perceptions and attitudes of the seven interviewees, as well as to consider the implications of the lack of consensus among archivists about how to fulfil their role in society.

While the range of perceptions and approaches put forward in the interviews does not indicate unbridgeable differences of opinion, the lack of consensus among archivists regarding their roles and responsibilities does hamper the profession's ability to develop an effective code of ethics, and to act effectively in a society increasingly dominated by economic determinism. Asking government archivists how they perceive and act on their responsibilities highlighted the importance of being able to articulate a strong, common language of purpose. Kent Haworth recognized this need:

A language of purpose founded on those [archival] principles will focus the attention of users, keepers, and sponsors of archives on the archival record, the impartial and authentic evidence of transactions, decisions, and information necessary for the sustenance of democratic societies. Such a focus will guide archivists in the confident execution of their primary tasks and provide a more dependable

Each archivist's understanding of the purpose for preserving archives informs their response to the questions "To whom are you responsible?" and "Whom do you serve?" In order to understand to whom they have obligations, it is necessary to understand why they preserve archives, and thus a more fitting initial question to the interviews might have been, "Why are you doing the work that you are doing?" It is the basic question that should be part of the preparation for any endeavour.

The language of purpose brought to archival issues will determine how archivists deal with the factors, mentioned in this study, that influence how effectively they fulfil their responsibilities. The fact that government archivists are public servants influences the nature of their responsibilities and, concomitantly, their ability to fulfil those responsibilities. While interviewees all recognized the special responsibilities they had as keepers of the public record, there were varied interpretations of how the expectations put on public servants affected their work. Whether they interpreted being a public servant as a strengthening or a restricting factor seemed to depend on each interviewee's perception of public service as either a noble calling or a necessary evil. It also seemed to depend on the clarity of their understanding of the purpose of their work. Just as Lucy discovered that she was being an advocate simply by doing her job, if government archivists understand that part of their professional responsibility is the support of democratic accountability and the protection of citizen rights (through the preservation of archives as evidence), then individual archivists become unwitting advocates.

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165 Haworth, 91.
Studying the influences on government archivists' perceptions of their responsibilities, reveals that the archival codes of ethics, and archival education could offer more guidance to help individual archivists to develop the strength of professional and ethical commitment required to fulfil the archival mission. Perhaps courses in public administration are as important for archivists as history courses were once deemed to be. Government archivists' awareness of their obligations as public servants, as formalized in the oath of office, must be integrated and balanced with their obligations as archivists. As several interviewees intimated, archivists can no longer "cocoon" themselves from the political reality of being an integral part of government administration, while also being responsible for the archives through which that administration is accountable to citizens.

Because of the profession's tradition of scrupulous neutrality, it is controversial to argue that archivists, and government archivists in particular, need to be aware of the political nature of their work. As expressed in the literature and in the interviews, archivists are understandably wary of taking a more active role in the political realm of society. Others, like Howard Zinn and Allan Spear urge archivists to accept that their work is inevitably political.\textsuperscript{166} More recently Bruce Montgomery considered the question of why archivists are failing in their responsibility to society: "The problem is that the archival community is generally apolitical despite the chronic problems concerning politics and the preservation of federal records."\textsuperscript{167} Government archivists, by the

\textsuperscript{166}Zinn, "Secrecy", 20 and Spear, 78.

\textsuperscript{167}Bruce Montgomery, "National Security Archive" on "Archives and Archivists" listserv, June 27, 1995.
nature of their work, are involved in politics, as understood by Vaclav Havel, as "serving those around us."\footnote{Havel says, "Genuine politics - politics worthy of the name, and the only politics I am willing to devote myself to - is simply a matter of serving those around us: serving the community, and serving those who will come after us. Its deepest roots are moral because it is a responsibility, expressed through action, to and for the whole..." Vaclav Havel, \textit{Summer Meditations}. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992), 6.}

It is important for archivists to discuss their roles in the FBI and Nixon affairs of the past, and the Somalia affairs of today. Perhaps the greatest implication of this study is that it reveals the need for archivists to grapple with ethical issues. Discussing these issues with working archivists had the indirect benefit of encouraging self-reflection among all the archivists involved as well as their colleagues. Several interviewees expressed their appreciation of the opportunity to think and talk about the ethical issues of their work, an opportunity that rarely occurs in their daily schedule. The importance of self-reflection to the development of professional integrity was noted in the workbook of the American Association of Public Administrators:

\begin{quote}
If the definition and application of professional ethics are to be effective, the thrust cannot be simply directed toward 'catching' people engaged in unacceptable behaviour. The basic goal is more fundamental - to spur development of professional integrity. This calls for assisting public administrators in being self-reflective about whether their expressed values coincide with the values that they actually apply in their daily conduct.\footnote{"American Society for Public Administration's Workbook", 458.}
\end{quote}

Some of the archivists interviewed implied that there may be a discrepancy between archivists' words and their deeds. This would be very difficult to measure, yet the suggestion of its existence supports the need for studies, like this one, of the perceptions and experiences of archivists.
Acknowledging the important role that archives can play in society can also lead to frustration as archivists become more keenly aware of the constraints on fulfilling that role, as well as society's failure to support that role with adequate resources and power. Most of the interviewees expressed some degree of frustration with these constraints. Paul Klep succinctly summarizes one of the dilemmas of being an archivist: "Ethics between pragmatic goals and intrinsic values. Responsibilities without sufficient resources."\(^{170}\)

Awareness of political realities and of the potential for conflict can paralyse government archivists, as seen in the profession's lack of advocacy for access to information legislation, and the prevalent 'don't rock the boat' attitude. If archivists acknowledge that they have the responsibility to support the use of archives for democratic accountability and the protection of citizens' rights, then there is some expectation that they act on that responsibility. Yet, because of the constraints of archivists' position within government, professional organizations need to take on an advocacy role, as suggested by the interviewees. Each government archivist in his or her daily work can be guided by the language of purpose spoken of, but during times of conflict an independent body may be needed to act as the balancing influence between government and citizens which Herman Willink advocated.

The perceptions and experiences discussed in the interviews revealed varying levels of awareness of the potential for conflict that arises from the dual nature of the responsibilities held by government archivists. An understanding of the political system, coupled with an ethical commitment to archival and democratic principles make conflicting responsibilities a potential reality. Recognition of this possibility is the first

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step in preparing archivists to balance their responsibilities. Government archivists need not shirk their albeit ominous responsibilities, but a strong articulation of those responsibilities and their priority, accompanied by a keen understanding of the political nature of their duties, is essential in being able to handle conflicts.
SOURCES CONSULTED


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APPENDIX I

INTRODUCTORY LETTER AND SCENARIOS
Scenarios

If you have an opportunity before our interview, please take a few minutes to consider how you might respond to the following situations. They are difficult dilemmas to which I do not expect 'answers', they are only to help stimulate and focus your thoughts for the interview.

A. You are working at the reference desk when the provincial archivist stops by to say that a deputy minister's aide will be in this afternoon to look at certain records. These are the same records that an unaffiliated researcher has just requested to have ready for the afternoon. What would you do in this situation?

B. You are the public awareness officer for your archives. A provincial newspaper reveals that the premier who has just left office has taken with her many disputably public records. There is no mention in the article of the Archives' role in records disposition, but you know that archivists are still negotiating with the former premier about the disputed records. How would you handle this situation, as the person responsible for media relations?

C. Having worked on the records schedule for the department of the environment, you are aware of the existence of records that resulted from the clean-up of a polluted area. These records are still under departmental control, but there is access to information legislation in your jurisdiction. A community group has filed a case against the government's handling of the clean-up. The group's lawyer comes to the reference desk while you are working, asking if you know of any historical records relating to the area in question. What would you tell him?

D. You are working with a department to establish a records schedule. As you are about to leave one of the department's offices one day, an administrative assistant pulls you aside to say that there is a whole 'secret' series of documents that the department has not revealed in their classification system. How would you respond to this information?
APPENDIX II

LIST OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

N.B. questions may not have been asked in these exact words, or in the order given
INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. Tell me a bit about your experience as an archivist. How many years have you been an archivist? What types of positions have you held within government? How many years have you been at your current institution?

2a. For my study it is essential to establish to whom archivists feel they have responsibilities. As [position of interviewee], whom do you serve, to whom do you have obligations?

2b. [for non-managers] How has the priority you give to your various responsibilities changed since you began working as an archivist?

2c. [for managers] How has your position as a manager altered the priority you give to your various responsibilities?

3. Out in a social situation, how would you tend to introduce yourself? - as an archivist, a government archivist, a public servant, just say you work for the government?

4. Given that government records are the basis for democratic accountability, do you believe that government archivists have obligations or responsibilities beyond those of most other public servants?

5a. Can you describe any incidents in which you felt your responsibilities as an archivist were in conflict with government policy or practice?

5b. In this (these) situation(s) of conflict how did you attempt to resolve the dilemma?

5c. What influenced your decision? [bureaucratic hierarchy, fear of reprisal, need for job-security, professional responsibility, structure of govt and archives, attitude of superiors, personal morality or beliefs]

6a. From my own experience in situations of conflict, it is difficult to know on what to base your decision. Where do you turn for advice or guidance on how to resolve conflicting responsibilities? [colleagues, codes, institutional guidelines, personal ethics, superiors, archival theory, professional associations]

6b. How has your education and training prepared you for dealing with these conflicts?

6c. How have archival codes of ethics affected the way you work?
6d. Have you been required to take an oath of office in accepting any position with
govt? If yes, describe the oath, and how it has affected your actions.

7. Have you ever been asked to defend a 'controversial' action or decision?
Describe the situation.

8a. How would you describe the level of professional autonomy you have?

8b. Are you satisfied with that level?

9. What other professionals do you think might have similar problems in terms of
conflicts arising from serving more than one constituency? (eg. lawyers, doctors,
nurses, engineers, teachers, librarians, social workers, auditors)

10. Some archivists, have suggested that government archivists should play a
watchdog role over government record-keeping, like the auditor-general does for
government financing, or the Ombudsman. From your experience as a
government archivist what do you think? [follow-up: if not archivists, then who?

11a. What opportunities do you have to contribute to public policy, especially in areas
such as freedom of information, copyright, and transfer of records?

11b. Looking back to the formulation of access to information legislation in your
jurisdiction, how do you assess the role played by government archivists?

12a. What do you view as the pros and cons, and consequences of taking an active
advocacy stand for public research?

12b. The Association of Canadian Archivists has a standing Advocacy Committee.
What role do you think it should play?

13. Have you felt that the predominance of the bureaucratic model (managerialism,
business model) in government has affected your efforts to serve the public?

14. The most public conflicts between archivists' obligations to the state and
obligations to the public have occurred in the U.S.. There was the FBI files case,
the Wilson-Bush agreement scandal, and the list of presidents who have
attempted to destroy White House records upon their departure from office,
include Nixon, Reagan and most recently Bush, with the PROFS case. Can you
speculate how Canadians have avoided such controversy (beyond the
Deschenes commission)?

-end-