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This thesis examines the informational needs of historians researching women as a subject in archives. The research methodology employed combines two types of user studies, the questionnaire and the reference analysis, in order to determine both the use and usefulness of archival materials and finding aids for historians researching women. This study begins with an overview of the literature on user studies. The thesis then outlines both the kinds of materials and the information historians researching women require. Finally, this study looks at the way historians researching women locate relevant materials and concomitantly the effectiveness of current descriptive policies and practices in dealing with the needs of this research group.

This thesis concludes by suggesting a number of ways in which archivists can respond to the informational needs of historians researching women in archives. Firstly, a considerable amount of documentation relevant to the study of women remains to be acquired by archival repositories. While archives should continue to acquire textual materials, more emphasis needs to be placed upon the acquisition of non-textual materials since these materials are also very useful to historians researching women in archives. Secondly, archivists must focus more attention on the informational value of their holdings since the majority of historians researching women are interested in the information the records contain about people, events or subject area and
not the description of institutional life contained in records. Thirdly, this study demonstrates the need for more subject oriented finding aids. Archivists can improve subject access to their holdings through the preparation of thematic guides, by the creation of more analytical inventory descriptions and by indexing or cataloguing women's records.
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Many individuals have aided in the completion of this thesis. I would like to take this opportunity to thank a few of the people who made this study possible. I must thank the Canadian Committee on Women's History, in particular Rebecca Coulter, for providing me with the mailing list of members required to carry out the survey.

Thanks must also be extended to my thesis supervisor Terry Eastwood. Finally, I would like to thank Patrick Burden for his patience and support throughout this long and arduous task.
INTRODUCTION

Opportunities for scholarship depend to a large degree on support from professionals and institutions which provide information. The success of new historical initiatives such as women's history depends heavily upon the availability of relevant archival materials. As Joanna Zangrando cogently summarizes:

archivists after all, stand at the entryway to historical knowledge. They make decisions about acquisitions, they devise cataloguing and retrieval schemes, they operate on certain assumptions about what materials get priority when faced with limited resources. If they fail to deal forthrightly with women in history those who rely on their materials and assistance must suffer.1

The growing number of researchers interested in women's history since the 1970s has placed new demands on archival resources in Canada. In 1978 Canadian historian Veronica Strong-Boag called for two actions on the part of archivists in order to deal effectively with the needs of this new group of users; firstly, existing collections need to be reappraised for their value for women's history and, secondly, new materials documenting women must be acquired. Very little, however, has actually been achieved by archivists in these areas in the eight years since Strong-Boag's plea for action. For example, few archival repositories have reappraised their holdings for their value for writing women's history and those institutional guides to women's history sources which have been done have been largely undertaken by the users of these materials and not by professional archivists. Similarly, a considerable
amount of documentation pertinent to the study of women's history has not been sought by archival repositories, particularly at the regional level in Canada.2

In order for archivists to adequately respond to the needs of students of women's history they must understand the kinds of information researchers require. This thesis attempts to examine the informational needs of historians researching women in archives. The research methodology employed combines two types of user studies, the questionnaire or survey and the reference or citation analysis. The purpose of the survey is to ask questions about researchers use of and attitude towards archival materials and finding aids. The reference analysis attempts to discover the questionnaire respondents actual use of primary sources. A combination of these two methods allows for a comparison of what researchers say they use, as well as, what they find useful, with what is in fact used. This data can than be utilized by archivists in their efforts to respond more effectively to the needs of this particular group of archival users.
NOTES


CHAPTER ONE
USER STUDIES: AN OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

User studies constitute one method of systematically defining the informational needs of historians researching women in archives. To date, however, very few studies have focused on the information seeking behavior of researchers of a specific subject in archives. While archivists realize that users change over time and that new research trends such as women's history place new demands on archival resources, they have never attempted to document these demands empirically. Librarians realized as early as the late 1920s the value of user studies in determining both what scholars use and how materials are located. Faced with an increasing number of publications and inadequate funding, librarians have utilized this research methodology to decide both what materials to collect and how to provide better bibliographic control over their materials. Similarly, archivists faced with an overabundance of twentieth century documentation can utilize user studies to reevaluate current acquisition, appraisal and descriptive policies and practices.

The two most common types of user studies are questionnaires or surveys and citation or reference analyses. The questionnaire method solicits data directly from users in an attempt to record the impressions of information consumers. The citation analysis looks at references in serials and monographs in order to determine what materials are actually used. In order for these two types of studies to be useful their limitations must first be understood. A questionnaire can tell
archivists and librarians what researchers say they use and what materials they find useful but not what is in fact used. Surveys also rely heavily upon individual memory which may be faulty. By way of contrast, a reference analysis can tell us what researchers use when publishing but not necessarily what is the most valuable. A citation analysis only reveals that which is cited, which often is only a small portion of what is useful. Authors do not always cite everything which they read. Citation studies should be interpreted with caution since the precise relationship between citation and use is not clear. While high use generally represents high quality, the degree to which use represents quality is not clear. Additionally, both questionnaires and citation studies are limited in that they can only reveal what users have seen and not what they should have seen. They cannot reveal what would have been used if it were available. Researchers in archives may only use materials to which they have access. There are a number of variables which can affect use or access to archival materials such as geographic proximity, the time period and area of study, and the quality or degree of intellectual access provided by archival finding aids.

Archivists can learn a great deal from studies such as the one done in 1981 by library educator Margaret Stieg. While Stieg's focus is primarily on the informational needs of historians in libraries, she also tells us something about the use of archival materials. Stieg surveyed 767 historians in an attempt to discover their attitude towards and use of library resources such as periodicals, books, manuscript materials, maps, newspapers, theses, dissertations, films, photographs and sound
recordings. Predictably, books and articles were the most frequently used, with manuscript materials ranking third. The other archival materials listed ranked anywhere between seventh and thirteenth. One interesting fact revealed by the survey was that the formats that were seen by historians as the least convenient to use were the least used. Archival materials were seen as inconvenient by the researchers who responded to Stieg's survey for a number of reasons: they were located only in one place; guides and indexes were often inadequate; and, the quality of reference services was frequently poor. One problem with Stieg's study, however, is that it fails to make any distinction between use and usefulness. While books and articles may be more frequently utilized by historians this does not necessarily mean that these materials are more useful than other library or archival materials for the historian's research purposes.

Citation studies are also used by librarians in an effort to determine patterns of use for library materials. The majority of citation studies in information and library science, however, have focussed on use patterns in scientific literature. Very few citation analyses have been done in the area of historical scholarship. Additionally, very few of the studies which have been done on historical literature include analysis of the use of archival materials. In fact, only two citation analyses of historical literature include both published and unpublished materials. A citation analysis done by Arthur McAnnally in 1951 analysing historical literature published in 1938, revealed that only 10 percent of all references were to manuscript
Another more recent study done in 1978 looking at cited references in English history articles published between 1968 and 1969 revealed similar results. This survey revealed that only 11 per cent of all references were to manuscript materials. In light of the fact that historians have traditionally been viewed as the main users of archives the small proportion of references to unpublished materials would appear to be very low. These findings are also surprisingly low when one considers that records are the historian's primary tools for reconstructing the past.

Richard Lytle outlines a number of reasons why archivists are hesitant to utilize this particular research methodology. The main obstacle is the resistance by many archivists to social and behavioral science techniques, especially those used in library and information science. Some archivists argue that there are too many variables which hinder the usefulness of such studies. It is also generally believed that research needs are difficult to assess within specific fields of historical scholarship because needs are diverse and users unaccustomed to articulating their needs. While it is true that user studies have their limitations, it is also true that they can provide archivists with empirical data on the information seeking patterns of researchers. While archivists can not base decisions upon user studies alone, they can contribute to our understanding of users by objectifying and formalizing existing impressions and assumptions.
Only recently have archivists begun to acknowledge the value of user studies. This change of attitude is best represented by two American archivists, Elsie Freeman and William Joyce, in a 1984 issue of the *American Archivist*. Freeman points out that there is currently very little empirical or statistical data on archival users, and argues that archivists need to learn more systematically, as opposed to impressionistically, who their users are, what kinds of projects they undertake, and more importantly how they approach records. Archivists must spend less time attempting to analyse what users claim to want and more time looking at how they actually perform their research. Freeman concludes that "our failure to gather this information and apply it gives credence to our prejudices, which in turn, govern our practices."10

Similarly, Joyce urges archivists to find ways to enhance the cultural value of their materials by learning more about research behavior and use of archives.11

The few archival user studies which have been done have yielded very interesting results on how researchers locate materials. In an effort to discover how historians locate materials, Michael Stevens sent out a questionnaire to 123 historians with doctorates in departments of history at colleges and universities in the state of Wisconsin in 1977. The questionnaire revealed that the most useful sources for locating archival materials were secondary materials such as books and articles and by word of mouth. Of the formal descriptive tools only the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC) received a high rating and Hamer's Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States and
accession lists were the least useful. Stevens' questionnaire results also reveal that researchers frequently used both name and subject terms as access points when searching for relevant archival materials even if they claimed that they used one more than the other. While he concedes that historians probably use names as search points more often, a considerable minority use subject terms. He therefore concludes that to exclude subject terms from archival descriptive systems would hamper many scholars.12

In the 1970s the Committee on Finding Aids of the Society of American Archivists conducted two studies of user's access requirements. The first study, done in 1976, asked archivists their opinions of user access requirements, the second, done in 1979, collected data directly from the users themselves. The tentative results of the second survey revealed that most users located materials equally by means of archivists and teacher's suggestions, citations in the literature, and repository guides. These methods, however, all ranked well below suggestions from colleagues. This study also found that NUCMC was not extensively used, and the most useful way of searching a repository's finding aids was by proper name rather than by topic.13

The user studies by Michael Stevens and the Committee on Finding Aids of the Society of American Archivists call into question the usefulness of formal descriptive systems in locating archival materials. Both studies also reveal that researchers find it useful to approach archives in the first instance by proper name and less often directly by
subject. If it is true that researchers more frequently search for materials by proper name this may simply reflect the user's ability to internalize the limitations of existing archival descriptive systems. Researchers frequently only ask for what they know they can get. While a study might reveal that researchers more often use proper name it is possible that researchers want or prefer to have better subject access.14

There has only been one citation analysis, or for that matter user study, that focusses on the use of archival materials in a specific field of history. In 1981 Clark Elliott analysed footnotes and references cited in 50 articles published between 1976 and 1977 to determine patterns of use in the history of science. The chief categories for this study were primary unpublished, primary published and secondary. Under unpublished primary, the sub-categories were personal and corporate records. Within the sub-category, personal, the forms of the materials noted were correspondence, diaries, and memoirs. Under corporate archives the types of materials noted were correspondence, minutes, and reports. Out of some 3,600 references 20 per cent referred to primary unpublished sources, 46 per cent referred to primary published and 26 per cent referred to secondary sources. Unpublished and published primary sources together accounted for 69 per cent of all references. Within the category of unpublished and published primary materials nearly 59 per cent of the references were to personal papers, and 41 per cent were to corporate records. Correspondence was the most frequently cited and accounted for 68 per cent of all references. The main limitation of
Elliott's study is that it only looks at the form of the materials and this cannot always be equated with quality.\textsuperscript{15}

When undertaking a user study a distinction should be made between needs, wants, demands, and uses. Need is a potential demand or what a researcher should have for their work. A want is also a potential demand and is what a researcher would like to have. A demand is what researchers ask for and represents a potential use. A demand should not be equated with a need or want since the information once provided may not satisfy a want or need. A use, as the term implies, is what an individual actually uses and may or may not have been demanded or asked for, but is recognized as a need or want once received. Use, therefore, can be a partial indicator of demand, demand or want and want or need. Use can be determined by a reference or citation analysis. Demand can be revealed by recording user search requests. Want can be revealed by directly surveying users. In order to get a fuller picture of need, archivists must relate want, demand and use.\textsuperscript{16}

One way to get a fuller understanding of need is to combine a questionnaire which reveals what researchers say they use and what they find useful, with a citation analysis which reveals what they actually use. For this reason when looking at the informational needs of historians researching women, it was decided to combine a questionnaire with a reference analysis. A combination of these two methods would allow for a comparison of want and use in order to get a better understanding of informational need. The first step in carrying out a
survey was deciding who to send the questionnaire to. The obvious choice when looking at the needs of historians researching women in archives is the Canadian Committee on Women's History (CCWH) because it is small enough to be manageable yet large enough to be representative of the needs of this particular user group. The CCWH was founded in 1975 and is affiliated with the Canadian Historical Association. The main purpose of the CCWH is to foster the study of women's history in Canada. There were sixty-eight members in the CCWH in January 1985, at the time the survey was carried out. Out of the sixty-eight questionnaires sent out, there were forty-one responses, a sixty per cent rate of return.

The majority of CCWH members are historians with extensive experience researching women as a subject in archives. The survey results revealed that over three quarters of the CCWH members who responded to the questionnaire were active in the field of history. Out of these respondents over one half were university faculty members and approximately one fifth were graduate students in departments of history in universities and colleges. An additional fifteen per cent were historical researchers working outside universities and colleges. Only one tenth of the questionnaire respondents were in the field of women's studies, an interdisciplinary field of study. All of the respondents in the field of women's studies were faculty members in universities and colleges (see Table 1). The questionnaire results also revealed that CCWH members have considerable experience using archival materials. Almost all of the respondents said they either always or frequently utilized archival materials when doing research. Seventy-five per cent
of these same respondents listed women as one of their main areas of research.

Table 1

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<tr>
<th>Occupational or Field of Study</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>University Faculty Members (history 51.2%, women's studies 9.7%)</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate Students (history)</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historians and Researchers (not in universities or colleges)</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Archivists</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
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The main purpose of the questionnaire was to discover researchers' use of and attitude towards archival materials and finding aids. The questionnaire sent out to CCWH members consisted of four main sections: section one, personal and background information on researchers; section two, research experience in archives; section three, types of materials used; and section four, the usefulness of existing finding aids in locating information on women. The first two sections were intended to elicit information on the background and experience of CCWH members. This section focussed on publishing background, experience in archives and subject areas of research. In order to determine both use of and attitude towards different types of archival materials and finding aids, sections three and four asked respondents what they used and asked them to rank each one in order of usefulness. The respondents were also asked the kinds of information they were looking for and how they generally
searched for relevant documents or materials in archives. A copy of the entire questionnaire is included in Appendix A. The main problem encountered when tabulating the questionnaire results was that the respondents did not always answer all of the questions. While this may not significantly alter the results of a much larger survey, it can alter the results of a survey of this size. Therefore, the percentages for each question were based on the number of responses to each question and not the total number of responses to the questionnaire.

The main purpose of the reference or citation analysis was to discover what materials were actually used by historians researching women in archives since the survey results revealed that almost all of the CCWH members who responded to the questionnaire had published articles or books (see Table 2). It is important at this point to make a distinction between a reference and a citation analysis. A citation analysis is concerned with the number of times a particular publication or, in the case of unpublished materials, a particular collection, is

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of publication</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tr>
<td>Books</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Articles</td>
<td>87.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unpublished theses</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
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cited in footnotes, whereas a reference analysis is concerned more with the characteristics of the materials cited. A citation analysis means literally recording every time a work is cited while a reference analysis only counts each reference once. Most citation studies do not make this distinction clear and therefore some errors can be introduced as a result.\textsuperscript{18} Strictly speaking the method employed in this study is a reference as opposed to a citation analysis in that each reference to a collection was counted only once in any one article rather than every time it was cited. However, if the same reference is cited in another article it was also counted there. A reference, as opposed to a citation analysis, was decided upon because the purpose of the study was to reveal the characteristics of the materials used and not to determine the frequency with which a particular collection was cited.

The procedure followed for the selection of articles was fairly straightforward. A list was made of the forty-one individuals who responded to the questionnaire. This list was then checked against pertinent indexes and bibliographies and a list of articles published by the questionnaire respondents was compiled. The major source used to find articles written by the questionnaire respondents was the \textit{Canadian Periodical Index} (CPI). The search was further limited to articles published in the last ten years, or between 1975 and 1985. Since the CPI does not index all the relevant publications I also used the only comprehensive bibliography for women's history sources in Canada, \textit{True Daughters of the North}.\textsuperscript{19} For example, the CPI does not index one of the major women's studies journals in Canada, \textit{Atlantis}. Neither does the CPI
include articles published in historical anthologies or collections of essays which contain a great many articles on women. A total of thirty-three articles were published by the forty-one individuals who responded to the questionnaire.

For each article one survey form was completed. A sample of this survey form is contained in Appendix B. For each article the subject, geographic focus, and time period was noted. The rest of the survey recorded the characteristics of the materials cited. For comparative purposes the same kind of information revealed by the questionnaire was recorded on the survey form. Each reference was categorized by type of material. The types of materials noted were: maps, photographs, oral histories, government or public records, films and manuscript materials. Only manuscript materials and government records were broken down further. Government records were categorized into operational files, court records, case files and census records. Manuscript materials were classified into seven main categories: papers of individuals, business records, union records, church records, hospital records, women's organizational records and the records of other organizations.

A few methodological problems which were encountered when doing the reference analysis should be discussed since they can influence the final results. The main problem which must be addressed is how to count archival materials. When counting each reference only once, it can be argued that documents within collections should be counted as separate references. For example, in the two citations studies in library science
which were discussed earlier, entire manuscript collections were counted as single references; this probably accounts for the low percentage of references to manuscript materials. Clark Elliott maintains that each item within a collection should be counted as a separate item when comparing the use of published and unpublished materials. Since this study is concerned with the use of archival materials and not with published materials, single documents within a collection were not counted separately. There are numerous methodological problems that make it difficult to count documents within a collection as single references. The largest problem is keeping track of individual items or documents within a collection so that it is not counted more than once. Counting, whether documents or collections, must be done accurately if the study is to have any usefulness. Additionally, footnoting formats for archival materials, unlike for published materials, is fairly unstandardized making item distinctions frequently impossible. While some scholars footnote particular documents, others only footnote the collection or container of manuscript materials in which a particular document is found.

The final problem relates to classifying the subjects of the articles since some articles pertained to more than one subject. Articles are not easy to categorize and often it is simply a matter of personal interpretation by the reader. Since the purpose of this study is to analyse the footnotes, not the actual text of the articles, the categorization of articles in this study was somewhat impressionistic. In cases where the article pertained to more than one subject it was
noted only under what was considered to be the main topic of the article. In most cases the subject of the article was clearly stated in the title of the article and no further reading was required. When the main subject of the article, however, was not clear the article was perused to allow for categorization.

User studies are one method archivists can effectively employ to define systematically the informational needs of historians researching women in archives. This research methodology can be used by archivists in deciding both what to collect and how to provide better intellectual access to their materials on women. It should be pointed out, however, that this study does not pretend to be statistically representative of the needs of all historians researching women in archives. The intention of both the questionnaire and the reference analysis is to create data upon which generalizations about the informational needs of this particular user group could be made. Despite the limitations of this research methodology, it can provide archivists with valuable empirical data on the information seeking behavior of historians researching women in archives.
NOTES


6. Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 133-144.


9. Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 132-133.


15. Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 134-136 & 140.

17. According to the questionnaire results 46.3 per cent of the respondents always used archives in their research, 46.3 per cent frequently used archives, 4.8 per cent infrequently used archival materials, and only 2.4 per cent did not use archives at all.


20. Elliott, "Citation Patterns," 137.
CHAPTER TWO
THE ACQUISITION AND APPRAISAL OF RECORDS PERTAINING TO WOMEN

Archivists are responsible for deciding what aspects of society are documented in the records preserved for future use. Research can be paralysed by the unwitting destruction of records or the failure to retain records.¹ A well defined acquisition and appraisal policy is essential if archivists are to preserve a representative picture of the past, and to provide users with the sources they require for their research. Traditionally, archivists have only discussed acquisition and appraisal in terms of how best to document society. Archivists have been less concerned with defining acquisition and appraisal in terms of the needs of users.² If archivists are going to respond adequately to the needs of users, however, they must understand both the types of materials and the kinds of information researchers need. Acquisition and appraisal principles have also been largely based on an intuitive feeling for the types of information users are looking for. While this intuitive sense will continue to be important when deciding the kinds of records archives should acquire, it must be supplemented by other appraisal information. Acquisition and appraisal decisions will always contain an element of risk but it is possible to minimize these risks by testing current assumptions with empirical data.³ The purpose of this chapter is to outline both the kinds of materials and the information historians researching women in archives require.
One of the main obstacles confronting historians researching women in archives is the lack of relevant materials. Until relatively recently very little special effort has been made by archivists to acquire materials specifically on women. Faced with a paucity of relevant materials, historians researching women have both reexamined existing archival sources in light of the new questions they are attempting to address and have extended the range of materials traditionally employed in their research. A number of historians who responded to the questionnaire stated that one of the main obstacles encountered when doing research was the lack of relevant materials. Materials deemed by researchers as pertinent to their research have not yet been acquired by archivists. It is noteworthy that three doctoral theses written in the late 1970s on the history of women in Canada cited materials which had not yet been acquired by archival repositories. For example, the records of influential national women's organizations such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, the Girl Guides of Canada, and the Young Women's Christian Association have not been extensively collected at the regional level in Canada. The records of women's union leagues or the personal papers of female trade unionists are also rarely housed in public repositories. Similarly, little material has been collected which documents women's participation in clubs and associations such as the Loyal Orange Order, the Order of the Maccabees, the Independent Order of Foresters, or the Knights of Columbus. Equally neglected have been women's religious or lay orders, missionary societies, and confraternities in the Catholic church or Jewish women's groups such as the Zionist Women of Canada.
The most difficult and least recognized problem currently facing archivists with regard to collection development is the structural bias in the national archival record. Archives have too much documentation on certain aspects of our past and almost nothing on others. Women's records are certainly one of the areas where not enough material has been collected. Archivists in both Canada and the United States have long acknowledged that archival institutions have preserved an unrepresentative picture of the past. The records of government, prominent individuals, organizations and associations are frequently viewed by the profession as containing the only significant information required for reconstructing the past. Concerned with documenting the activities of the elite and powerful in society, or white middle class men, archivists have largely ignored women, ethnic minorities, working people and the poor. Materials which do exist on women are not representative of women of all socio-economic backgrounds and therefore reflect the same biases as the materials which exist for men. Collections that document the activities of women are heavily biased towards middle and upper class women of national and political significance such as Nellie McClung, Agnes McPhail, and Lady Aberdeen. While archivists should continue to collect these materials these records alone will never provide an adequate basis for generalizing about women as a whole.

The paucity of information on women from certain social, economic and cultural backgrounds can also be explained by the fact that often this type of material simply does not exist. Working class and poor women,
unlike middle and upper class women, had very little leisure time or education and thus left fewer personal records behind. Often the only time these women created documentation was when they organized into unions or protest groups. The problem, however, with the records of short lived protest groups is that both the movement and the records disappear before they can be collected. As Ellen Starr Brinton observed almost thirty years ago, the problem with the records of causes and movements is that once the job is done, the cause won or lost, the group and their records disappear.9

There has always been a close relationship between the writing of history and the keeping of records. How society conceives of its past is largely dependent upon the evidence archivists acquire and make available. As Canadian archivist Derek Reimer cogently states "the act of conception always follows the path of the richest evidence."10 The bias of existing archival materials towards documenting the activities of middle and upper class women partially explains the initial concentration of women's history in this area. Women's history, like Canadian history, was originally political and national in scope. Canadian history until the early 1970s was mainly the history of great men and great events. When women did appear in Canadian historical literature the same standards of significance which applied to men were applied to women. Therefore, the early women's history focussed largely on "women worthies" or female equivalents of the great men of history.11 While the early women's history aided in correcting the bias of a history which focussed solely on men, it also suffered from the same limitations. This view of
the past clearly excluded from serious consideration those women, as well as men, who were without power. Additionally, by focussing largely on women's role in the public sphere the early women's history succeeded in minimalizing women's role in the past. According to Eva Moseley this type of women's history is inadequate because the majority of women did not play a prominent role in the public sphere. Women's history, therefore, needs to focus on the areas where women have been active, influential and important, including, for example, the home, voluntary organizations and associations, and professions such as nursing, teaching, and social work.

Developments in women's history since the early 1970s has placed new demands on archival resources in Canada. The new women's history shifted the focus away from the experiences of individual women to the group or collective whole. The biographical studies of unique women that marked the first attempts at writing women's history began to be replaced by the study of experiences common to all women. The new women's history as a part of the developments in the new social history is less concerned with the political achievements of exceptional women and is more concerned with the economic, social, and cultural experiences of ordinary women. This new focus is evident in the subjects of the articles written by the CCWH members who responded to the questionnaire. The reference analysis revealed that the articles written by members of the CCWH focussed mainly on women's organizational activities; marriage and motherhood ranked a close second and work was third. Only a very small number of articles were biographical or political in focus (see Table 3).
Table 3

Subjects of Articles Written by CCWH Members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject of Articles</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organizational life</td>
<td>30.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographies</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage and motherhood</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>6.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideology</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In an effort to locate relevant materials, members of the CCWH utilized both traditional and non-traditional forms of documentation. While textual records are most frequently utilized, the questionnaire results revealed that non-textual materials, in particular photographs and oral histories, are also quite extensively used. It is not surprising that private manuscript materials, government records and photographs are the most extensively utilized since these are the materials archivists have most commonly acquired. On the other hand, oral histories which have only relatively recently been acquired by archives are less frequently used (see Table 4).

Table 4

Types of Materials Used When Researching Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Material</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>74.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>12.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral histories</td>
<td>64.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/Public records</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript materials</td>
<td>94.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Within the category of textual records, private manuscript materials are the most useful to historians researching women in archives (see Table 5). Over three quarters of the respondents ranked manuscript materials as the most useful, while less than half ranked government records in the same category. Similar results were revealed in the reference analysis. A survey of archival materials cited in the footnotes of articles published by CCWH members revealed that there were twice as many references to manuscript materials as there were to government records. There is a great deal of information on women in manuscript collections which can be located by the experienced researcher. Manuscript materials are probably more useful than government records because women's activities take place more frequently in the private sphere of the home, family, factory, organization, and association. In addition to the personal papers of individual women and various women's organizations there is also a considerable amount of documentation preserved in collections which at first glance do not appear to be "women's collections." This includes everything from the family papers of a colonial administrator to the records of labour unions, political parties, and associations which have women as members or are involved in activities that affect women's role in society.

The survey results revealed that within the category of manuscript materials, the personal papers of individuals and the records of women's organizations were almost equally utilized by historians researching women. The reference analysis, however, revealed somewhat different results. While almost one half of the references cited organizational
Table 5
Archival Materials Ranked in Order of Usefulness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Material</th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
<th>Fifth</th>
<th>Sixth</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Maps</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>11.7%</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Photographs</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
<td>12.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oral Histories</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
<td>29.6%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government/Public Record</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>22.8%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manuscript Materials</td>
<td>76.4%</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
records, the personal papers of individuals were only referred to in slightly over one third of the total number of footnotes. If the more frequent citation of organizational records in footnotes does in fact represent higher quality it could be concluded that organizational records are more useful to historians researching women than the personal papers of individuals.¹⁷

Organizational records are extensively used by historians researching women because they can provide information on a larger number of women from various social, economic, political and cultural backgrounds. These records often contain the only documentation which exists for those women who have not left personal papers behind. For example, frequently the only glimpse historians can get of working class and poor women are through the records of middle and upper class reform and social welfare organizations such as benevolent societies, orphanages, and reform schools which aided these women.¹⁸

Similarly, personal papers can be used by historians researching women both for the information they contain on the experiences of individual women and for what they can reveal about the experiences of women as a whole. Like organizational records, the personal papers of individual women can provide valuable information on those aspects of the female experience for which little documentation exists. The papers of individuals can be used to write the biographies of prominent middle and upper class women, but they can also be utilized from a new perspective
to answer questions about health, attitudes towards sexuality and reproduction, abortion, child rearing and household management.\textsuperscript{19}

Government records are also a valuable source for writing women's history. Within the category of government records departmental operational files are the most frequently used materials. The survey results were again confirmed by the reference analysis. Over two thirds of all references within the category of government records cited departmental operational files.\textsuperscript{20} While these records primarily document the activities of government departments they also contain considerable information on the private and public lives of women. With the expansion of government, particularly, in the twentieth century, into areas such as work, education, health, and welfare many departments began to deal with policy matters of specific concern to women. The Federal Archives Division of the Public Archives of Canada recently did a survey of its holdings and discovered a wealth of records containing information pertinent to women. For example, the records of the Department of Labour contain the files of the Women's Bureau, the National Selective Service, and the Employment Relations and Conditions of Work Branch, all of which deal with issues and concerns of specific interest to working women in Canada. The records of the Department of National Health and Welfare also contain valuable information on motherhood and family planning in the files of the Child Maternal Health Division.\textsuperscript{21}

Demographic sources are a valuable source of information on otherwise obscure or anonymous groups such as working class and poor women. Census
records have extensive research potential and can provide information on such topics as female mortality rates for various age groups; the number of women married, widowed, divorced, or deserted and at what age; the number of children per mother in relation to mortality rates; how many women worked and at what jobs; and a variety of other topics. While case files may not provide the breadth by comparison to census materials, they do allow for considerable depth of analysis or sharpening in detail. For example, social welfare case files frequently contain biographical information and are one of the few sources which can be used to create a detailed analysis of the experiences of poor women.

Within the category of government records, census materials and case files ranked almost equally as the second most useful types of records. Over two thirds of the survey respondents said they had used census records in their research. However, only one tenth of the articles studied in the reference analysis actually refer to these materials. Similarly, while over two thirds of the respondents to the questionnaire said they had used social service and court case files in their research, less than one tenth of the footnotes in the reference analysis actually cite these materials. The low number of references to case files and census materials is puzzling since the questionnaire results revealed these sources to be quite extensively utilized. This discrepancy would suggest that while the CCWH members who responded to the questionnaire used these materials they did not find them particularly useful for the kinds of topics under investigation in the articles perused for the reference analysis. It is also possible that these types of materials
were simply not available for these particular subject areas of research. Additionally, because computers are really the only effective way to compile the results of this kind of research, the sophisticated methodology required to utilize demographic sources may have prohibited researchers from realizing the value of these sources.

Faced with the scarcity of relevant textual forms of information on women, researchers are turning increasingly to non-textual forms of documentation such as photographs and oral histories. The survey results revealed that photographs and oral histories ranked third and fourth respectively in terms of frequency of use. Approximately three quarters of the respondents used photographs and almost two thirds utilized oral histories in their research. These results are again confirmed by the reference analysis. While photographs are cited in one fourth of the references, oral histories are cited in less than one tenth. When the same group is asked to rank these materials in order of usefulness, however, different results emerged. The same group of respondents ranked photographs and oral histories equally as the third most useful. Clearly a distinction can be made between use and usefulness. While photographs are more frequently used than oral histories this does not necessarily mean they are more useful to researchers. One important factor which determines use is availability. The time period of research is one factor which will affect the types of materials which are available to users. For example, almost all of the articles in the reference analysis focused on the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. While photographic evidence is available for all of this period, twentieth
century forms of documentation such as oral history are not. Another reason why oral histories may be less frequently used than photographs or textual materials is the resistance of archivists to develop active programmes to acquire this type of material. While few archivists would argue that oral evidence should not be preserved, few institutions have active oral history programmes. A fledgling oral history programme was terminated at the Provincial Archives of Alberta in the late 1970s. At the provincial level that leaves the Provincial Archives of British Columbia as one of the few institutions which have an active oral history programme to acquire oral histories.26

There are many reasons why archivists have resisted actively collecting oral histories. At the centre of the debate is the question of whether or not archivists should actively participate in the creation of evidence. One side of the debate in Canada is represented by Jean Dryden from the United Church Archives who maintains that archivists are custodians and not creators of records. Dryden does not object to archives collecting sound recordings but to archivists actively engaging in running oral history programmes: that is, to archivists "arranging, researching and conducting interviews as well as preserving them and making them accessible to researchers."27 Derek Reimer from the Provincial Archives of British Columbia represents the other side of this debate. Reimer refutes the accusation that in recording oral history archivists are creating records. He maintains that the record already exists in the minds of the interviewee and that the archivist by asking questions is simply selecting from the totality of the record. Reimer
also rebuts the notion that archivists are mere custodians or objective non-participants in the selection process. Records have their own subjective meaning for three reasons: no record is a complete replica of an event; there is incomplete documentation within this imperfect record; and selection decisions are never made in a vacuum and will always reflect the views of the selector. Reimer concludes by arguing that archivists have been applying a double standard to oral evidence and that the criticism leveled at this type of record can equally be applied to other forms of documentation.

Films and maps ranked last both in order of use and usefulness. Not unexpectedly maps ranked last in both these categories since this material rarely provides any information on subject areas such as women's history. It was surprising, however, that films ranked so low both in terms of use and usefulness. As a combined visual and oral medium there is little doubt that films have considerable research potential. Again part of the reason why films are infrequently used by historians researching women is availability. Films, like oral histories, are mainly a twentieth century form of documentation and therefore are rarely available for studies focussing on the nineteenth century. In fact, archivists have only recently started to preserve films. For example, the film division of the Public Archives of Canada was not even established until the early 1970s.

Another obstacle facing historians researching women in archives is the emphasis of archival appraisal policies on the evidential as opposed
to the informational value of records. In this article, "Social History and Archival Practice," Frederic Miller argues that social history, which includes the new women's history, will require not only a reassessment of acquisition policies and the types of records archivists collect but will also require changes in existing appraisal standards which may alter how archivists view appraisal generally. Miller maintains that archival principles of appraisal, are based on nineteenth century historical concerns and methodologies and therefore are not appropriate in terms of modern historical research. Miller argues that archivists have traditionally emphasized the evidential value or the description of institutional life contained in the records and not the description of people involved in or affected by these institutions. He argues that the informational value of records while important is frequently viewed by archivists as subordinate to the evidential value of the material.  

The preponderance of minute books, annual reports and memoranda which document institutional and organizational life and the scarcity of case files which provide information on the individuals affected by institutions certainly gives credence to Miller's arguments. This is particularly true with regard to government records, where administrative files are usually kept, and case files which have considerable informational value, are only sampled, if kept at all. While records which have evidential value frequently also have informational value, the minutes of an organization do not contain the wealth of information for researchers interested in subjects such as women's history that they do for researchers writing the history of the organization itself.
In actual fact the number of researchers who use archives to write the history of a government department, agency or public institution are in the minority. As Michael Cook points out, "the great majority of researchers are attempting to coordinate scraps of information gleaned from the records of a variety of organizations, which will give them a picture of a certain event, person, place or subject."³⁰ Certainly this is true in the case of historians researching women as a subject in archives. When asked what kind of information they were looking for when using the records of a government department, a private organization, or an individual, over half of the respondents said they were looking for the information the records contained about people, events, or a subject area. Only one fourth of the same group of respondents were interested in the information the records contained about the policies and activities of the individual, agency or organization which created the records. The remaining one fourth said they were looking for both types of information.³¹

Despite the advent of non-textual sources the written word still dominates; this tends to emphasize the most literate elements or the elite in society. Locating documentation on the lives of the anonymous is difficult in archives. While historians researching women continue to rely heavily upon manuscript materials and government records, the questionnaire results revealed that they are also turning increasingly to less traditional forms of documentation such as oral history as a means of overcoming the limitations of existing textual collections. Archivists should therefore acquire oral histories regardless of whether
or not they feel they should actively participate in oral history programmes. As Veronica Strong-Boag notes, any reluctance on the part of archivists to accept oral records as their legitimate preserve will have detrimental affects on the history of women and non-elites.\footnote{32}

While repositories should continue to collect the papers of the elite in society, since they represent an important part of the nation's culture, archivists should reassess the priority assigned to the collection of such papers. Too much time and money is spent documenting the well documented. American archivist Linda Henry argues that the emphasis of collection policies should instead be on "broad coverage," by which she means archivists should collect papers which serve a dual purpose of providing access to the biographical information the records contain on a prominent individual, as well as, the broader coverage of the society or field in which the person attained fame.\footnote{33} Clearly the same concept can be applied when defining appraisal criteria in archives. The evidential and informational value of records should be given equal consideration when determining what materials are retained for future use. Archivists should retain those records which document both the concerns and activities of a government agency but they should also retain materials which provide information on the individuals affected by the activities of a government agency. Additionally, archivists must learn to put more emphasis on the typical as opposed to the unique document if they want to get a more representative picture of society. This will require a shift in emphasis away from just keeping
the letters and diaries of prominent middle and upper class women to preserving social welfare, court, hospital and other case files.34

It should be the aim of any repository to build up within its defined area or field, a documentation which is sufficiently complete to give an accurate and balanced response to a research enquiry.35 Assuming that a repository has a more or less well defined subject or geographic focus, only a small mental leap is required to extend the focus to include women. While some information exists on the activities of middle and upper class women very little documentation exists on working class or poor women in archival repositories. If archivists are going to adequately respond to the needs of historians researching women, they must provide a more balanced or representative documentation of the past. This will require archivists to play a more active role in the acquisition of non-textual materials such as oral history, as well as, to place more emphasis on the informational value of their holdings.
NOTES


2. Elsie Freeman, "In the Eyes of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," American Archivist 47 (Spring, 1984): 111-112.


14. Moseley, "Sources for the 'New Women's History,'" 181.

15. A study of articles published by the CCWH members who responded to the survey revealed that 56 per cent of the footnotes referred to manuscript materials while only 24 per cent referred to government records.


17. The questionnaire results revealed that all of the respondents had used the papers of individuals and 92.1 per cent had used the records of women's organizations. Different result emerged from the reference analysis. While organizational records accounted for a total of 49.9 percent of all references within the category of manuscript materials, only 36.4 per cent of the references cited the papers of individuals.


19. Moseley, "Sources for the 'New women's History,'" 185.

20. Departmental operational files were used by 86.1 per cent of the questionnaire respondents and accounted for 78 per cent of the total number of references.

21. John Smart, Canadian Committee on Women's History Newsletter (November 1984): 8f-8m.

22. Moseley, "Sources for the 'New Women's History,'" 183.


24. The survey results revealed that 66.6 per cent of the respondents had used case files, both social service and court records, and 69.4 per cent had utilized census materials. Within the category of government records 3.1 per cent of the references to archival materials included court records and 9.3 per cent included census materials.

25. Photographs were cited in 18.1 per cent of the references and oral histories were cited in 1.5 per cent of the total number of references.


31. The survey revealed that 51.3 per cent of the respondents were searching for the information the records contained about people, events, or subject areas. Only 24.3 per cent of the CCWH members who responded to the questionnaire were interested in the information the records contained on the policies and activities of the creating agency or individual. The remaining 24.3 per cent were looking for both types of information.

32. Strong-Boag, "Raising Clio's Consciousness," 76.


34. Miller, "Social History and Archival Practice," 120.

CHAPTER THREE
PROVIDING ACCESS TO MATERIALS ON WOMEN

As American archivist Michael Stevens notes, archivists have long been concerned about providing effective intellectual access to the subject matter of their materials. Surprisingly, however, archivists have done very little research on how users actually locate archival materials and therefore have no way of measuring the usefulness of current descriptive systems. Since assumptions about research strategy determine the types of finding aids produced, archivists should test their assumptions about how users approach materials.¹ A common weakness of many studies of archival finding aids is their failure to ask two very important questions: what descriptive information is needed by users to facilitate their access to archival materials; and, do users have special requirements or needs that are not being met by existing descriptive tools.² In order to respond to these two very essential questions archivists need to have a better understanding of both the types of research projects undertaken by various users groups and the modes of access available. Not all research topics are compatible with traditional descriptive methods. New fields of historical enquiry such as women's history have dramatically altered both the needs and expectations of researchers. The purpose of this chapter is to look at the way historians researching women locate relevant materials and concomitantly to determine the effectiveness of current descriptive practices in dealing with the needs of this particular user group.
Information on women is frequently lost in archival collections because of the limitations of traditional descriptive systems in providing adequate subject access. As American archivist Miriam Crawford noted thirteen years ago, there are numerous sources pertaining to the activities of women in every archives in the country; the problem is providing access to these materials. The results of the questionnaire sent to members of the CCWH call into question the effectiveness of formal descriptive tools in locating information on women. Two thirds of the respondents ranked archival finding aids as only fair or poor. Out of the remaining respondents, one fourth ranked archival finding aids as good (see Table 6).

There are two main types of research tools or methods of research employed by historians when searching for relevant materials. One category of research tools is employed to locate possible sources of information and another is used to search relevant materials in detail. Researchers usually begin their search by perusing published guides, union lists, catalogues, footnotes and references in articles and books, or through consultation with archivists and colleagues. Once relevant materials are located researchers may carry out a more detailed search of the appropriate inventories, lists or indexes. If materials are not located through the use of guides, union lists, catalogues, secondary literature or by word of mouth then detailed finding aids in the repository remain unseen and virtually useless.
Table 6
Quality of Archival Finding Aids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>very good</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>27.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>48.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>poor</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

While certain finding aids or methods of research are more frequently used than others the results revealed that the majority of researchers are willing to utilize all available access tools. Of the seven research methods listed in the questionnaire only union lists received a low rating (see Table 7). It is possible that union lists received a low rating because the questionnaire respondents were not familiar with the terminology used and therefore did not understand what was meant by the category, union lists. This would appear to be the case because when the same group was asked if they had specifically used the Union List of Manuscripts two thirds of the CCWH responded positively. In light of these subsequent findings it can be concluded that union lists were more extensively utilized than this question actually revealed.

The results revealed that formal descriptive tools in archives are less frequently consulted by historians researching women than informal research tools. Most researchers attempt to locate sources on women, firstly, by consulting archivists, secondly, through citations in serials
Table 7
Finding Aids Used When Researching Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Finding Aids</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catalogues/indexes</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories/lists</td>
<td>73.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published Guides</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Lists</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting Archivists</td>
<td>89.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to Colleagues</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footnotes/references</td>
<td>84.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

or monographs, and, thirdly, through discussions with colleagues. Of the formal descriptive tools, inventories and lists ranked first in terms of frequency of use, catalogues and indexes were second, published guides were third, and union lists were last. Once again, however, a distinction was made between use and usefulness. The same group responded quite differently when asked to rank these finding aids or research methods in order of usefulness. While informal research methods are more frequently used by historians researching women in archives, they are not more useful than the formal descriptive tools available (see Table 8). Of the informal research methods consulting the archivist ranked highest with regard to both frequency of use and usefulness. Citations in secondary literature and discussions with colleagues, the other two informal methods of research, dropped to fifth and sixth place respectively. The questionnaire results reveal that while historians frequently try to locate relevant materials through colleagues and
Table 8

Usefulness of Archival Finding Aids in Locating Material on Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>First</th>
<th>Second</th>
<th>Third</th>
<th>Fourth</th>
<th>Fifth</th>
<th>Sixth</th>
<th>Seventh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Catalogues/Indexes</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>27.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inventories/Lists</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>12.9%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Published Guides</td>
<td>32.1%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>21.4%</td>
<td>10.7%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union Lists</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>14.2%</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulting Archivists</td>
<td>35.2%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>20.5%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking to Colleagues</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>17.5%</td>
<td>20.6%</td>
<td>24.1%</td>
<td>13.7%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footnotes/References</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>22.5%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>9.6%</td>
<td>6.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
references in serials or monographs, these methods are not as useful as formal research methods. Different results also emerged when the respondents were asked to make a distinction between the use and usefulness of descriptive tools. When the same respondents were asked to rank both formal and informal research tools in order of usefulness, published guides ranked above both inventories or lists and catalogues or indexes.

The questionnaire results confirmed the fact that the archivist plays an essential role in linking subject requests with relevant archival materials. In her article "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and the Reference Archivist," long time reference archivist Mary Jo Pugh argues that

the archival system is predicated on interaction between the user and the archivist. Indeed, the archivist is necessary, even indispensable for subject retrieval. The archivist is assumed to be a subject specialist who introduces the user to the relevant records through the finding aids and continues to mediate between the user and the archival system throughout the user's research.5

It has long been acknowledged by archivists that they must personally assist researchers in locating the fonds or series which are relevant to their research purpose. Archivist theorist Theodore Schellenberg believed that subject access came naturally from the archivist's firsthand knowledge of the records. Schellenberg argued that the archivist was an essential intermediary between the user and the records because finding aids, regardless of how well they are prepared cannot
provide all the information possessed by a well informed archivist. Frank Burke also emphasized the need for personal interaction between users and archivists. Burke noted that while archival records were arranged by provenance or organization and function, researchers frequently made subject requests. He therefore maintained that only the archivist with their knowledge of the records could link subject requests with archival materials.

Mary Jo Pugh in her examination of the traditional role of the reference archivist, however, maintains that current descriptive practices rely too heavily on the subject knowledge and memory of individual archivists and is too dependent on the personalities of researchers and archivists. Some users are better at articulating their needs and thus in helping the archivist to link subject with source material than others. Dependence on a particular archivist's subject knowledge also leaves too much to chance. Archivists resign, change jobs within a single institution, die, and go on vacation which means the quality of reference services can vary considerably. Furthermore, many archivists are not in a position to become subject specialists. Not every archives is organized so that archivists can become specialist in records relevant to a particular subject. In some cases, the work of archivists is divided by function and thus reference and processing are done by different people. In many repositories, reference duties are rotated amongst archivists. More importantly, the sheer volume of modern records means it is no longer possible for archivists to remember what is in every administrative history, biographical sketch, series descriptions
and box lists required in order to associate subject request with provenance related information. The notion that the archivist is a walking finding aid has become obsolete. While Pugh admits that no finding aid system will eliminate the need for reference assistance, archivists should codify what they can in order to provide a more consistent and therefore higher level of access to their holdings. 

Some institutions achieved subject access through the preparation of special subject guides. In the case of women's history a well prepared guide with a good index is frequently the only comprehensive means of subject access researchers have to a particular institutions or province's holdings on women. While published guides are not extensively used by the CCWH members who responded to the questionnaire they were ranked the most useful within the category of formal descriptive tools. One of the main reasons that the respondents did not use guides as frequently as other descriptive tools is because few Canadian repositories have published thematic guides to their holding on women. There are currently only five guides published in Canada specifically on women's history sources, three of which focus on institutions in Ontario. British Columbia and Alberta are the only other provinces which have guides to their holdings on women.

While the guides which have been published to date in Canada are enormously useful they are not without their shortcomings. All of them organized their entries alphabetically by title of the collection and do not include indexes. An essential feature of any published guide is an
index, preferably listing both subject and name. Too frequently guides are simply alphabetical lists by title of collection. As a result if researchers are interested in a subject area such as domestic labour they must peruse every entry in order to locate fonds or series relevant to their search. If a guide is to fulfil its purpose, which is to provide multiple access points in archives, an index is essential. Additionally few of these guides include descriptions of government records and therefore a large body of information on women is omitted.

Clearly one way to provide adequate subject access to archival materials on women is through the publishing of thematic guides. Ideally, a guide to women's records should exist for every province or major institution in Canada. Another approach however, would be to create a national guide similar to the Women's History Sources: A Guide to Archives and Manuscript Collections in the United States which was published in 1979 in an effort to make accessible the wealth of information on women in American repositories. Women's History Sources is a guide to 1,586 repositories holding primary sources relating to women. The two volume guide describes 18,026 collections arranged alphabetically by state and city, then by institution and collection title. This allows the researcher to refer to the holdings of an institution, city or state without having to consult the index. It also includes an alphabetical listing of contributing repositories and the addresses. Volume two is a name, subject and geographic index. The index anticipates many researcher's needs. Maiden names, marital information and life dates are provided. Subject headings are both broad
and narrow. Entries under terms such as "diaries and journals" bring together collections by form.10

Having located relevant collections through archivists and published guides, researchers generally turn to more detailed finding aids such as inventories or lists and indexes. It should be noted that the Bureau of Canadian Archivists' recent study of descriptive standards revealed that the most commonly created archival finding aids are indexes. Including catalogues, nearly half of all descriptive tools reported by Canadian repositories are indexes and 30 per cent are inventories. The subject index is the most common type of index which indicates that providing subject access to their materials is a major preoccupation of most archival repositories.11 While indexes and catalogues dominated in sheer numerical terms, the questionnaire results revealed that inventories and lists ranked higher than catalogues and indexes both in terms of use and usefulness within the category of formal descriptive tools.

Current practices as well as archival principles call for arrangement according to provenance or the structure and filing system of the creating agency and therefore description is frequently by inventories and lists. Inventories, however, because they focus strongly on the organizational and functional aspect of records, are heavily biased in favor of biographical and organizational narrative as opposed to subject oriented research.12 For example, topics such as women's history frequently transcend individual collections and therefore to provide access only through provenance related information contained in
inventories is not enough. Additionally, the biographical sketches, administrative histories, series descriptions and file lists contained in inventories do not always shed light on material within collections pertaining to women. As a result sources on women frequently remain buried in collections whose general description rarely highlights its existence.

Another major problem with the provenance method of subject access provided by inventories is that it assumes researchers can link their subjects with the names of individuals and organizations. Archivist Richard Berner, in fact, argues that access by proper name is sufficient since most researchers are able to link subject with the names of organizations and individuals. To a certain degree Berner's theory is confirmed by the questionnaire results. When researchers are asked how they search for relevant documents in archives two thirds of the respondents said that they associate the names of people, organizations and government agencies with their subjects while less than one fifth of the respondents said that they approach their subjects directly through available indexes or catalogues. Only one fifth of the CCWH members responded that they used both methods when searching for relevant materials on women. It is possible that in some instances researchers did not approach their subjects directly through catalogues and indexes because these tools did not exist or those which did exist did not provide adequate subject access to materials on women. More importantly while this may prove that researchers are capable of linking subject with the names of individuals and organizations contained in inventories, this
does not mean they prefer to use inventories as opposed to catalogues or indexes. As Richard Lytle reminds us, the assertion that researchers prefer access by proper name has never been subjected to empirical testing. Lytle in fact suggests that researchers may approach archives by use of proper names only because they have learnt that archives access techniques are more effective at retrieval by name than by subject.\textsuperscript{15}

Indexes and catalogues are clearly one of the most effective ways to provide subject access to fonds or series. Even though there are a larger number of indexes or catalogues than inventories available to researchers in Canadian repositories they still ranked well below inventories in terms of both use and usefulness. The main reason historians researching women do not find existing indexes or catalogues to be very useful is because as one respondent remarked, archivists have been "shockingly negligent" in cataloguing or indexing records containing information relevant to women's activities. Archivists need to be more aware of the needs of this particular user group when cataloguing or indexing materials. For example, catalogues or indexes often only include the names of notable women. Information on working class or poor women is harder to locate since researchers are less likely to know the names of domestic servants, schoolteachers, millhands, and housewives, all of which terms are suggestive of subject headings. As Eva Moseley points out, if the new women's history is to include ordinary women, the papers by and about them have to be made available through the use of subject entries in catalogues or indexes. Moseley provides archivists with an example of how this can be done effectively. For example, the
main entry for the memoirs of an immigrant woman or the diary of a schoolteacher would be under the author's name but there should also be entries for emigration or immigration and for teachers.  

The survey results revealed that historians researching women generally found the formal descriptive tools more useful than the informal methods of research. While informal research tools such as discussions with colleagues and citations in secondary literature were more frequently used they were not as useful as formal descriptive tools such as guides, inventories or lists, and catalogues or indexes. Consulting the archivist was the only informal reference tool which received a high rating in terms of both use and usefulness. The results also revealed that while this user group relied heavily upon all available access tools they did not find these tools very effective in locating information on women.

One way archivists can respond more effectively to the needs of historians researching women is by developing more subject oriented finding aids. Archivists should publish more guides to women's history sources because they provide researchers with a powerful means of subject access to information on women. Thematic guides which are simply summaries of inventories, however, do not provide adequate subject access. The subject access provided by published guides can be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of a comprehensive index. A guide is as important for its index as its descriptive matter, yet too frequently these indexes are hastily contrived if not omitted all together.
Archivists also tend to be too passive and bureaucratic when writing inventories. Inventories are frequently merely lists and file titles. In order to meet the needs of subject oriented researchers, archivists should rethink the content of finding aids. The scope and content notes of an inventory should be both analytical and descriptive. It should note omissions and reveal biases of record creators. Biographical sketches and agency histories should be more than factual accounts of an individual's or agency's life. They should relate the materials with the specific events or interests of an individual or agency and assess the success of the collection in documenting an individual's or agency's life. Finally archivists should be more sensitive to the needs of historians researching women when indexing or cataloguing archival materials.
NOTES


4. Out of the questionnaire respondents 62.8 per cent said they had used the ULM.


14. Of the questionnaire respondents 65.7% located relevant materials with the use of proper name, 14.1% through available indexes, 17.1% used both of these methods and 2.8% used neither.


17. Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience," 35 & 42.

If archivists are going to respond adequately to the needs of historians researching women in archives they must have a better understanding of the kinds of information this new group of researchers require. User studies are one research methodology which can be employed by archivists in an effort to understand the informational needs of specific groups of users in archives. Faced with a superabundance of twentieth century documentation and limited financial resources archivists can utilize this research methodology to decide both what materials to acquire and how to provide better intellectual access to materials on women.

The main limitation of user studies is that they can only reveal what users have actually located and not what they should have seen or what would have been used had it been available. Factors which may affect researchers use or access to archival materials include: geographic proximity; the time period and area of research; and, the quality of intellectual access provided by archival finding aids. It should also be noted that this particular user study does not claim to represent the needs of all historians researching women in archives. The intention of this thesis was to create empirical data upon which generalizations about the informational needs of this group of researchers could be made. Regardless of the limitations of user studies they can provide archivists with valuable data on the informational needs
of specific groups of users in archives. While archivists should not base decisions upon user studies alone, these studies can clearly improve our understanding of users by objectifying and formalizing current impressions and assumptions.

This study combines two types of user studies, the questionnaire and the reference analysis, in order to determine both the use and usefulness of archival materials and finding aids for historians researching women in archives. The research results disclosed that one of the main obstacles encountered by historians researching women is the paucity of relevant archival materials. Confronted with a scarcity of pertinent materials this groups of archival users has both reexamined existing sources and extended the range of materials traditionally utilized in their research. The research findings also revealed that information on women is frequently lost within existing collections because of the limitations of current descriptive practices in providing adequate subject access.

The results of this study suggest a number of ways in which archivists can effectively respond to the informational needs of this particular groups of researchers in archives. Firstly, a considerable amount of documentation relevant to the study of women's history remains to be acquired by archival repositories in Canada. While archivists should acquire textual materials, because they continue to be heavily utilized by researchers, they must place more emphasis on acquiring non-textual materials. Particular emphasis should be placed upon the
acquisition of sound recording since these materials are very useful to historians researching women. Secondly, archivists must focus more attention on retaining those records which have informational value, since the majority of historians researching women in archives are looking for the information the records contain about people, events or a subject area and are less concerned with the evidential value or the description of institutional life contained in records. While archivists should continue to retain records which have evidential value such as minute books, annual reports and memoranda they should also retain select case files and census rolls which frequently have considerable informational value. Finally, this study demonstrates the need for more subject oriented finding aids. Access to materials on women can be improved considerably through the preparation of thematic guides, by the creation of more analytical inventory descriptions, and by indexing or cataloguing women's records.
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APPENDIX A

QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

Part I - Personal or Background Information on Researchers.

1. Name:

2. Mailing address:

3. Occupation
   (a) University faculty member (specify discipline)
   (b) Student (specify discipline and degree program):
   (c) Other (please specify):

4. Publishing background
   (a) Number of books:
   (b) Number of articles:

Part II - Research Experience in Archives.

1. How frequently do you use archives when doing research? Please check only one.
   (a) Always
   (b) Frequently
   (c) Infrequently
   (d) Not at all*

   *Note: If you answered d there is no need to complete the rest of the questionnaire. Please return with Part I completed.

2. What subject areas of research have you used archives for?
Part II (con't)

3. Describe your main areas of research?

4. What type(s) or archival institutions have you used? Please check.
   (a) Federal records and archives
   (b) Provincial archives
   (c) Municipal archives
   (d) University archives
   (e) Church archives
   (f) Business archives
   (g) Private archives (organizational, club etc.)
   (h) Others (please specify)

Part III - Types of materials used when researching women in archives.

1. Which of the following materials have you used when researching women? Please check.
   (a) Maps
   (b) Photographs
   (c) Films
   (d) Oral histories
   (e) Government or public records
   (f) Manuscript materials (diaries, letters etc.)

2. Which of the following materials do you find most useful? Rank in order of usefulness (1 most useful, 2 etc.).
   (a) Maps
   (b) Photographs
   (c) Films
   (d) Oral histories
   (e) Government or public records
   (f) Manuscript materials (diaries, letters etc.)
3. Which of the following public records have you used? Please check.

(a) Departmental operational files (correspondence, memoranda etc.)
(b) Court records
(c) Social service case files
(d) Census records
(e) Others (please specify)

4. Which of the following manuscript materials have you used? Please check.

(a) The papers of an individual (letters, diaries, etc.)
(b) Business records
(c) Union records
(d) Church records
(e) Women's organizational records
(f) Others (please specify)

5. What kind of information are you looking for when using records of a government department or the records of a private organization, association, or individual? (Rank 1, 2 etc.).

(a) The information the records contain about the policies and the activities of the department, individual, agency or organization which created the records.
(b) The information the records contain about people, events or a subject area.

Part IV - Assessment of the usefulness of current finding aids.

1. How would you rate archival finding aids with regard to locating material on women?

(a) Excellent
(b) Very good
(c) Good
(d) Fair
(e) Poor
Part IV cont'd

2. Which of the following finding aids or methods of research do you find useful in discovering information on women? Please check.
   (a) Catalogues/indexes
   (b) Inventories or lists
   (c) Published guides
   (d) Union lists
   (e) Consulting archivists
   (f) Talking to colleagues
   (g) Footnotes or references in articles and books

3. Rank in order of usefulness the following finding aids or methods of research (1 most useful, 2 etc.).
   (a) Catalogues/indexes
   (b) Inventories or lists
   (c) Published guides
   (d) Union lists
   (e) Consulting archivists
   (f) Talking to colleagues
   (g) Footnotes or references in articles and books

4. Which of the following guides or union lists have you used? Please check.
   (a) Union List of Manuscripts
   (b) Brown Catherine. "Sources on Women in the Toronto City Hall Archives."
   (c) Dryden Jean. Some Sources for Women's History at the Provincial Archives of Alberta.
   (d) Hale, Linda. Selected Bibliography of Manuscripts and Pamphlets Pertaining to Women, Held by Archives, Libraries, Museums, and Associations in B.C.
   (e) Light, Beth. "Sources in Women's History at the Public Archives of Ontario."
Part IV (cont'd)

(f) Reilly, Heather & Hindmarch, Marilyn. Some Sources for Women's History in the Public Archives of Canada.

5. Do you search for relevant documents in archives more often by (check one):

(a) Association the names of people, organizations or agencies with your subject(s).

(b) Approaching your subject directly through available indexes.

(c) Neither of the above.

6. Please comment on any particular problems you have encountered in locating materials relevant to your research in archives.
APPENDIX B
REFERENCE ANALYSIS FORM

1. Subject of article
   (a) Work
   (b) Organizational life
   (c) Biography
   (d) Marriage/Motherhood
   (e) Sexuality
   (f) Education
   (g) Other

2. Time period of article
   (a) Early 19th century
   (b) Late 19th century
   (c) Early 20th century
   (d) Late 20th century

3. Geographic focus of article

4. Total number of references to archival materials.

5. Types of materials used
   (a) Maps
   (b) Photographs
   (c) Oral histories
   (d) Government or public records
   (e) Films
   (f) Manuscript materials
6. Types of government or public records used

(a) Departmental operational files
(b) Court records
(c) Case files
(d) Census records
(g) Other

7. Types of manuscript materials used

(a) Papers of individuals
    (i.e., letters, diaries, etc.)
(b) Business records
(c) Union records
(d) Church records
(e) Women's organizational records
(f) Hospital records
(g) Organizational records
(h) Other