

CANADIAN ARCHIVES AND THE CORPORATE MEMORY:

A CASE OF AMNESIA?

By

GRANT ALAN MITCHELL

B.A., The University of British Columbia, 1984

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF

THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARCHIVAL STUDIES

in

THE SCHOOL OF LIBRARY, ARCHIVAL, AND INFORMATION STUDIES

We accept this dissertation as conforming  
to the required standard

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

March 1987

© Grant Alan Mitchell, 1987

In presenting this thesis in partial fulfilment of the requirements for an advanced degree at the University of British Columbia, I agree that the Library shall make it freely available for reference and study. I further agree that permission for extensive copying of this thesis for scholarly purposes may be granted by the head of my department or by his or her representatives. It is understood that copying or publication of this thesis for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission.

~~Department of~~ School of Library Archival and Information Studies

The University of British Columbia  
1956 Main Mall  
Vancouver, Canada  
V6T 1Y3

Date April 14, 1987

## ABSTRACT

For some years North American archivists have argued that public archival repositories are unable to bear the burden of preserving the records of modern business corporations and have suggested that firms should shoulder this burden themselves by establishing corporate archives. This suggestion, however, fails to address the issue of preserving the records of small businesses, and the records of defunct firms, that are unable to support a corporate archives.

Before one can predict the effect the advocates of corporate archives will have on the preservation of business records, one needs to know what degree of responsibility repositories have accepted for preserving business records. Unfortunately, little information has been published concerning the business records holdings of Canadian archival institutions. A questionnaire asking for information on acquisitions policies and strategies, and on the characteristics of business records collections, was therefore sent to federal, provincial, municipal, and university archives. The business records holdings of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the Special Collections Division of the University of British Columbia Library were examined in detail to augment the information obtained from questionnaire returns. The value of the business records collections held by Canadian repositories was further examined by means of a reference analysis of journal articles

and monographs, published by economic and business historians, which measured the use made of business records collections by these historians.

Although some substantial collections of business records have been preserved, it appears that over three quarters of the business records collections preserved by Canadian repositories are so small and fragmentary in nature that they are of dubious value to researchers. This impression is borne out by the sparse use of business records as sources by business and economic historians. The experiences of European and American archival institutions indicate that Canadian repositories will have to accumulate a significant body of business records collections before they will see increased use of their business records holdings.

Repositories cannot reasonably be expected to devote their limited resources to collecting the records of large integrated corporations. Nonetheless, archival institutions have a responsibility to ensure the preservation of records documenting the Canadian economy. Archival institutions, and the archivists they employ, should continue their efforts to persuade companies to set up corporate archives. Many firms, however, are unwilling or unable to take such a step. Canadian repositories must therefore continue to acquire business records if they wish to fulfil their mandates of preserving comprehensive collections documenting the various aspects of the history of their respective regions. This must be done in an active and systematic manner, using such strategies as public relations programs and the provision to firms

of assistance in scheduling records. By persuading larger corporations to set up corporate archives whilst systematically collecting the records of smaller firms, archival institutions can improve both the quantity and quality of business records preserved.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  | <u>Page</u> |
|--|-------------|
| ABSTRACT . . . . .   | ii          |
| LIST OF TABLES . . . . .   | vi          |
| LIST OF FIGURES . . . . .  | viii        |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENT . . . . .  | ix          |
| INTRODUCTION . . . . .   | 1           |
| CHAPTER 1:<br>What's Past is Prologue . . . . .  | 4           |
| CHAPTER 2:<br>Companies and Public Archives: A Sorry Business? . . . . .                                     | 18          |
| CHAPTER 3:<br>The Contents of Business Records Collections . . . . .   | 52          |
| CHAPTER 4:<br>Archives: The Source of Business History in Canada? . . . . .                                  | 75          |
| CONCLUSION . . . . .   | 99          |
| BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . .   | 106         |
| APPENDIX A: Questionnaire . . . . .  | 112         |
| APPENDIX B: Repositories that received questionnaires<br>Repositories that returned questionnaires . . . . . | 117         |
| APPENDIX C: Bronson Company . . . . .  | 119         |
| APPENDIX D: St-Laurent, J. B. M. et Fils Enrg. . . . .   | 127         |

## LIST OF TABLES

|            | <u>Page</u>   |
|------------|---|
| Table I    | Annual Budget of Canadian Repositories, 1985 . . . . . 23   |
| Table II   | Repositories Ranked by Annual Budget and by<br>Volume of Business Records Holdings, 1985 . . . . . 25       |
| Table III  | Annual Acquisitions Budgets of Canadian<br>Repositories, 1985 . . . . . 26                                  |
| Table IV   | Annual Acquisitions Budgets of Purchasers<br>of Business Records, 1985 . . . . . 26                         |
| Table V    | Repositories from which Copies or Descriptions of<br>Acquisitions Policies or Legislation were Received. 29 |
| Table VI   | Repositories with Business Records Programs . . . . . 32  |
| Table VII  | Source of Records of Active Businesses . . . . . 34   |
| Table VIII | Strategies Used to Acquire Records of<br>Active Businesses . . . . . 34                                     |
| Table IX   | Sources of Records of Defunct Businesses . . . . . 35   |
| Table X    | Strategies Used to Acquire Records of<br>Defunct Businesses . . . . . 35                                    |
| Table XI   | Methods of Acquisition of Business Records . . . . . 35   |
| Table XII  | Dimensional Characteristics of Business<br>Records Collections . . . . . 40                                 |
| Table XIII | Proportion of Business Records Collections of<br>30 Centimetres or Less in Extent . . . . . 41              |
| Table XIV  | Status of Businesses Whose Records are<br>Housed in Selected Repositories . . . . . 42                      |
| Table XV   | Number of Business Records Collections<br>Documenting Each Economic Sector . . . . . 43                     |
| Table XVI  | Percentage of Canada's Gross Domestic Product<br>Produced by Each Industrial Sector . . . . . 45            |

|             | <u>Page</u>  |    |
|-------------|--|----|
| Table XVII  | Dimensional Characteristics of Business Records Collections at Selected Repositories, After Microfilm Collections Have Been Converted to Linear Metres . . . . . | 59 |
| Table XVIII | Types of Records Contained in Business Collections <1m: Percentage of Collections Having Each Type of Record, by Repository . . . . .                            | 63 |
| Table XIX   | Further Types of Business Records Preserved by Repositories . . . . .  | 65 |
| Table XX    | Types of Records Contained in Business Collections <1m: Percentage of Collections Having Each Type of Record, by Status of Creator. . . . .                      | 66 |
| Table XXI   | References to Manuscript Collections, Divided According to the Creator of the Collection . . . . .   | 87 |
| Table XXII  | Location of Manuscript Collections Referred to By Authors . . . . .  | 90 |
| Table XXIII | References in the <u>Canadian Historical Review</u> . . . . .  | 91 |

## LIST OF FIGURES

|          | <u>Page</u>  |
|----------|--|
| Figure 1 | Reference Sources in All Types of<br>Business History Journal Articles . . . . . 81          |
| Figure 2 | Reference Sources in Journal Articles:<br>Biographies and Corporate Histories . . . . . 82   |
| Figure 3 | Reference Sources in Journal Articles:<br>General Business and Economic History . . . . . 83 |
| Figure 4 | Reference Sources in All Types of<br>Business History Monographs . . . . . 84                |
| Figure 5 | Reference Sources in Monographs:<br>Biographies and Corporate Histories . . . . . 85         |
| Figure 6 | Reference Sources in Monographs:<br>General Business and Economic History . . . . . 86       |

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following people for their contributions: my advisor, Terry Eastwood, for his support, advice, and suggestions; the staff of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the Special Collections Division of the University of British Columbia Library for their assistance; and the many archivists across Canada who took the time to respond in such thorough fashion to the questionnaire. I would also like to thank Beryl Mitchell for critically proofreading the draft versions of this thesis, and June Bull for typing it.

## INTRODUCTION

Publicly funded archival repositories do not have the resources to cope with the enormous annual volume of records created by businesses. This has been acknowledged in recent years by archivists in Canada and the United States of America, and they have concluded that companies should be encouraged to establish in-house corporate archives. Few writers, however, have supported their observations with definite information on business records holdings of archival institutions or on acquisition policies towards business records. Archivists have also commented upon interest in the economic sector of North American society belatedly shown by historians, but little information is available about the users of archival business collections.

Archival institutions in Canada and the United States have developed out of different archival traditions. Early archival theorists in America argued that government repositories should only receive records created by their sponsoring body and should leave the collection of other records to cultural agencies such as university libraries and historical societies. In Canada, on the other hand, public archival institutions were established to act both as government repositories and cultural agencies, receiving government records and collecting other records of cultural importance. Archivists in the United States began collecting business records in earnest at a much earlier date than did their Canadian counterparts, but in both countries

archivists discovered soon after they had begun to acquire business records that methodical collection of corporate records would be beyond the scope of their institutions' resources. In spite of dissimilar archival traditions, Canadian and American archivists who desire to preserve business records share a common problem because their respective countries have both witnessed the rise of integrated corporations to dominant positions within the national economies. Archivists in both countries have focussed their efforts on impressing upon businessmen the need for corporations to take responsibility for preserving their own records by establishing corporate archives.

Are corporate archives the only practical route for archivists to follow to document Canada's economic activity? Few Canadian corporations have yet established corporate archives, and existing programs of Canadian repositories to collect business records have not been evaluated in any detail, so it is difficult to compare the merits of these approaches to preserving business records. An examination of existing acquisitions policies, and of the characteristics of business records that have been collected by Canadian archival institutions should give some idea of how successful repositories have been at preserving business records, and of whether public archival repositories have a continuing role to play alongside corporate archives. The value of the business records that have been preserved by repositories can also be examined by analysing the use to which business records collections have been put by historians.

The findings of these two avenues of investigation indicate that

archival repositories in Canada have not been too successful at preserving valuable collections of business records. This might be taken as an argument for supporting archivists' contention that corporate archives are the way of the future. Archivists cannot, however, shift all responsibility for preserving business records from public repositories to the business community. The volume of business records created annually by Canadian companies may be overwhelming in comparison with the resources archival institutions in this country can commit to their preservation, but the importance of business records as a measure of the economic activity of our society is too important for their preservation to be left solely in the hands of businessmen who, being concerned with present and future profits, may have little sense of history and little commitment to supporting corporate archives in lean as well as prosperous years. Archivists need to work out strategies for preserving records from all sectors of the business world, such as the light manufacturing and service industries which are to be found in all regions of Canada, but whose records are neglected by archivist and historian alike.

## CHAPTER 1

## WHAT'S PAST IS PROLOGUE\*

The deliberate collection of business records by North American archivists was initially spurred by the development of large horizontally and vertically integrated corporations, which created a demand for trained business administrators. In the early twentieth century, American business administration schools collected business records to be used as tools for training these managers. By the 1930s some American historians who recognized the contributions made to society by integrated corporations began studying business history as a discipline in its own right, and American archivists discerned a need to collect business records for wider purposes than the training of business administrators.

Canadian business administration schools did not use business records as teaching tools, and it was not until the 1960s that a growth of interest in business history spurred Canadian archivists to consider collecting business records in a methodical fashion. In spite of the differing circumstances in which American and Canadian archivists commenced acquiring business records, archivists in the United States and Canada who have collected business records have faced similar problems and devised similar solutions. The historical development

---

\*William Shakespeare, The Tempest II, i, 261.

of the practice of collecting business records in North America provides the context for examining the business records that contemporary Canadian archival institutions have acquired, and for investigating the manner in which the repositories' business records collections have been used.

Government records are acquired by the archival institution established by a particular government to preserve its archives. Generally a repository is responsible for the archives of only one level of government, though an archival institution may have responsibility for the archives of a second level of government that does not have its own repository. A provincial archival institution, for instance, may make arrangements to receive municipal government records when a municipality has no repository of its own.

The disposition of non-governmental records and personal papers is a less straightforward matter than is the disposition of governmental records. Private organizations such as companies, associations and churches often lack a sense of responsibility towards their records. While a private organization may keep its records for as long as they are of use in the conduct of its affairs, seldom is it prepared to preserve records for cultural reasons, for the benefit of researchers and others not associated with the organization. If the records of companies, societies, and other private organizations are to be preserved for cultural reasons, then in most cases these records will have to be collected by institutions unconnected with the originating organization.

In the United States most government archival institutions restrict themselves to receiving records of their respective governments, and the collection of personal papers and the records of private organizations such as companies is largely undertaken by manuscript repositories located in libraries and historical societies. Canadian public archival institutions have broader mandates than most of their American counterparts. Public archival institutions in Canada not only receive the records of their respective governments, but also acquire personal papers and the records of private organizations:

From their inception the federal and provincial archives have played a dual role: preserving the official records of their governments and seeking to preserve all records relevant to the history of their region.<sup>1</sup>

Manitoba's Act Respecting the Legislative Library provides an example of the wide mandate enjoyed by provincial repositories in Canada.

Section 11 (1) of this Act states:

The archivist may acquire by gift, bequest, loan, or purchase; and place in the branch, any document, photograph or map having any bearing upon the history of Manitoba. . . .<sup>2</sup>

The School of Business Administration at Harvard University initiated the collection of business records in North America. In 1908 Harvard University established a School of Business Administration, and the

systematic collection and preservation of business records on a large scale began in the United States of America, in the

Widener and Baker Libraries at Harvard in the years between 1910 and 1930.<sup>3</sup>

The Business Historical Society, formed in 1925, entered into a contract with Harvard University to help collect the books and papers of companies. These were subsequently deposited in the Baker Library at Harvard when it opened in 1927. The School of Business Administration developed the "case method" of studying businesses. The collections of business records which Harvard acquired through its own efforts and those of the Business Historical Society were intended to provide the laboratory in which students of business administration could study the development of business firms through an analysis of their records.

Other American universities, and some historical societies, soon followed Harvard's lead. The University of Illinois in 1936 began collecting business records with the object of having "immediately accessible specific information relating to the policies and practices of present-day firms which can be used as illustrative material in the classroom."<sup>4</sup> Similarly, the New York State School of Industrial and Labour Relations at Cornell University in 1952 set up a Labour Management Documentation Center to collect the business records necessary for undergraduate students' research projects.<sup>5</sup> In 1945 Arthur H. Cole of the Baker Library estimated that there were about 140 libraries and historical associations in the United States collecting economic and business manuscripts.<sup>6</sup>

University schools of business administration were established in the United States in the early twentieth century to meet a need for

trained business administrators. This need arose because the nature of North American business changed during the last decades of the nineteenth century as "the large enterprise administered by salaried managers replaced the small traditional family firm as the primary instrument for managing production and distribution"<sup>7</sup> in many sectors of the economy. By the 1870s the American railroad system facilitated the distribution of large volumes of goods, and the telegraph network permitted rapid communication over great distances, giving rise to horizontally integrated mass marketing enterprises.<sup>8</sup> The development of coal-powered machinery and continuous production processes, and the concentration of the various processes for making a product within one establishment made mass production possible. Mass marketing and mass production were increasingly combined within single vertically integrated companies during the late nineteenth century.

As the new mass production industries became capital-intensive and management-intensive, the resulting increase in fixed costs and the desire to keep their machinery or workers and managerial staff fully employed created pressures on the owners and managers to control their supplies of raw or semifinished materials and to take over their own marketing and distribution.<sup>9</sup>

Horizontally and vertically integrated companies appeared in Canada during the first decade of the twentieth century as the prairie agricultural frontier opened, and as new industries such as automobile and electrical equipment manufacturing were established.<sup>10</sup> In fact, many of these new Canadian enterprises were branch plants of large American companies.

The integrated company of the late nineteenth century required a form of management quite different from that of the traditional firm.

The latter was

characterized by informal social relations, unsystematic administrative procedures, and a minimal amount of records. . . . The smallness and modest scale of activities characteristic of firms in late-nineteenth century entrepreneurial capitalism thus acquired little in the way of sophisticated organization, structure, records keeping, and administrative planning.<sup>11</sup>

The owner of the traditional firm could personally supervise the activities of his bookkeepers, clerks, and managers. An integrated company, on the other hand, employed "a set of lower, middle and top managers to administer, monitor, coordinate, and plan for the activities of its many operating units and for the enterprise as a whole."<sup>12</sup>

To manage its operations efficiently an integrated company developed a centralized bureaucracy, with "formalized procedures, hierarchical chain of command, and specialized division of labour,"<sup>13</sup> creating a need for trained business administrators.

American universities responded to the demand for business administrators by establishing business schools that required students to study the development of companies analysing their business records. Although Canadian universities have also created schools of business administration no centre for business studies similar to that at Harvard has been established in Canada.<sup>14</sup> Unlike those in the United States, Canadian business administration schools have not endeavoured to collect business records for instructional purposes.

The archivist of Ontario reported in 1903 that interest in the history of the development of Ontario business had prompted him to collect materials connected with canal and railway construction,<sup>15</sup> but few professional historians in Canada or the United States were interested in business history, and hence business records, during the early twentieth century. Most historians preferred to analyse the broader issues of economic history, or study the personalities of particular entrepreneurs. The latter group of historians were influenced by the "muck rakers," journalists who were stimulated by the emphasis contemporary businessmen placed upon economic progress at the expense of social progress to single out entrepreneurs and describe "the more lurid aspects of their careers."<sup>16</sup> The muck raking journalists were joined by others eager to demonstrate the iniquities of private enterprise.<sup>17</sup> Such writers drew their material from public documents, for example the records of government investigations of businesses. Their activities reinforced the desire of companies to maintain the secrecy of their records and made companies reluctant to grant even responsible scholars access to their records.

The important contributions business made to society were emphasized during the Depression of the 1930s, which showed that when business underwent a crisis, society in general also suffered. During the 1930s American writers began commenting that the study of society was not complete without the knowledge provided by business history, and business history as opposed to "muck raking" became more respectable. Commenting upon one aspect of business activity, Fred M. Jones wrote in

1939:

Our present-day advertising reflects our culture just as much as the literature, architecture, and sculpture of the Greeks and Romans reflects the culture of their day.<sup>18</sup>

Many American writers also realized that business history written without close analysis of business records would be suspect. Studies based upon the records of court and government investigations would distort the overall view of business, since these documents were concerned primarily with companies in trouble either legally or financially. To obtain a more balanced business history would require the analysis of the business records of law-abiding, financially-sound companies that did not come to the attention of the public authorities. From the 1930s, American archival literature contains repeated calls for the collection of business records or, failing that, for companies to grant scholars access to their records, in order that impartial business histories may be written.

Not an especially strong field in the United States, business history is still less developed in Canada. Though, as John C. L. Andreasson has pointed out, the muck rakers have caused Canadian businessmen to be as cautious as their American counterparts about allowing access to their records,<sup>19</sup> it was not until the 1960s that Canadian academics became very interested in business history. Unlike Americans, Canadians were perhaps used to seeing their economy dominated by companies which were national in extent, such as the Hudson's Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway. The modern integrated

corporation seems not to have been a phenomenon as worthy of study to Canadian academics as it was to some of their American colleagues in the early twentieth century.

Early works in Canadian business history, such as Harold A. Innis' A History of the Canadian Pacific Railroad (1923) or Marjorie W. Campbell's The North West Company (1957) were detailed studies of companies involved in the trade of staple products. Such studies belonged within the mainstream of Canadian economic history, which sought to analyse how Canadian economic activity came to be subordinated to the production of staples for highly specialized manufacturing communities outside Canada. As late as 1972, Frederick Armstrong wrote that Canadian business history was "still in its infancy,"<sup>20</sup> with few professional historians having written corporate histories. A few Canadian archivists have since the mid-1960s emphasized the need to collect, or at least gain access to business records, for as John H. Archer has said: "If we are to understand and appraise the historical role of private enterprise in Canadian society, we simply must have access to business records."<sup>21</sup> However, even as they argued that knowledge of society would be incomplete without the study of business enterprises, those Canadian and American archivists who advocated the collection of business records realized that their repositories could not cope with the masses of records created by modern integrated corporations.

The traditional firm created relatively few records apart from its bookkeeping records, for most of its activities could be organized

and coordinated "in a personal daily conversation" between the owner/manager and his employees.<sup>22</sup> The managers of integrated corporations, on the other hand, developed accounting and statistical control systems to help them organize, coordinate, and evaluate the work of subordinates with whom they had little personal contact. Furthermore, integrated companies created staff offices such as the personnel office and accounting department to gather, process, and store "data on production, costs, personnel, and internal communications."<sup>23</sup>

Archivists interested in acquiring business records soon realized they had neither the manpower nor the space necessary to handle the vast amounts of records created by integrated companies. Oliver W. Holmes in 1938 and Arthur H. Cole in 1945 both remarked that American libraries and historical societies interested in collecting business records concentrated on records created before 1890,<sup>24</sup> in other words on the records of traditional non-integrated firms. The Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, echoing sentiments expressed by North American archivists since the 1930s, stated in 1980: "realistically the public and university archives are not capable of carrying the full potential burden" of preserving business records.<sup>25</sup>

To address the problems posed by the sheer bulk of modern business records and the reluctance of businessmen to give their records to public institutions, the Society of American Archivists in 1938 created a Business Archives Committee to "promote the preservation of business records and the establishment of corporate archival

repositories."<sup>26</sup> The efforts of this committee met with little success and it was disbanded during the 1960s. Interest in corporate archives revived during the 1970s, so the Business Archives Committee was reinstated. Recognizing the difficulty of processing and storing the enormous volume of records created by integrated corporations, both the report of the Commission on Canadian Studies in 1975 and the report of the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives in 1980 recommended that Canadian archival institutions encourage and aid companies to set up corporate archives,<sup>27</sup> and the Association of Canadian Archivists established a business archives committee for this purpose. Archivists have attempted to raise the historical consciousness of businessmen and have emphasized the economic benefits of corporate archives, which provide companies with research material to help solve current problems, documents that can be used as legal evidence, and material which can be used in public relations and advertising. Efforts to persuade Canadian companies to establish corporate archives have not yet been very successful. The 1980 edition of the Society of American Archivists' Directory of Business Archives in the United States and Canada lists only twenty-one Canadian corporate archives programs.<sup>28</sup>

Preoccupied with the idea of corporate archives and the solution for preserving the voluminous records of contemporary corporations, archival literature has paid little attention to the issue of acquiring and preserving the records of the wide range of small, non-integrated businesses which still constitute a substantial part of the contemporary business world. Nor have archivists interested in business records

discussed the preservation of the records of companies that cease to operate. To consider these issues archivists need to know what types of business records Canadian repositories have preserved, and the use to which business records holdings have been put. Examining the acquisitions policies of archival institutions and the business records they have acquired will aid in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the holdings of business records in Canadian repositories. Reviewing the use of these collections of business records should indicate whether Canadian archivists have preserved records that are frequently consulted or largely neglected. Armed with this information, archivists can develop effective strategies for preserving business records of value to academic researchers and other users.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives (Ottawa: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1980), p. 63.

<sup>2</sup>An Act Respecting the Legislative Library, Chapter L120 Section 11 (1) Revised Statutes of Manitoba, 1970.

<sup>3</sup>David S. MacMillan, "Business Archives--A Survey of Developments in Great Britain, the United States of America, and in Australia," Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson, ed. Albert J. Hollaendar (Chicester: Moore and Taylor Ltd., 1962), p. 108.

<sup>4</sup>Fred M. Jones, "The Collection of Business Records at the University of Illinois," Bulletin of the Business Historical Society 13 (1939):95.

<sup>5</sup>Leone Eckert, "The Anatomy of Industrial Records," AA 26 (1963):186.

<sup>6</sup>Arthur H. Cole, "Business Manuscripts: A Pressing Problem," Journal of Economic History 5 (1945):46.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur Chandler, The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 1.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 207.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 282.

<sup>10</sup>Graham S. Lowe, "'The Enormous File': The Evolution of the Modern Office in Early Twentieth-Century Canada," Archivaria 19 (Winter 1984/85):141.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>12</sup>Chandler, p. 315.

<sup>13</sup>Lowe, p. 138.

<sup>14</sup>Frederick H. Armstrong, "Canadian Business History: Approaches and Publications to 1970," Canadian Business History, ed. David S. MacMillan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1972), p. 264.

<sup>15</sup>John Hall Archer, "Business Records: The Canadian Scene," AA 32 (1969):251 citing First Report of the Bureau of Archives for the

Province of Ontario, 1903, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup>Harold F. Williamson, "The Professors Discover American Business," Readings in United States Economic and Business History, ed. James L. Pate and Ross M. Robertson (Boston: Houghton Mifflin and Co., 1966), p. 27.

<sup>17</sup>Ray Allen Billington, ed. Allan Nevins on History (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975), p. 73.

<sup>18</sup>Jones, p. 95.

<sup>19</sup>J. L. Andreasson, "Records of the Canadian National Railway," Canadian Archivist 1, #4 (1966):9.

<sup>20</sup>Armstrong, p. 282.

<sup>21</sup>Archer, p. 253.

<sup>22</sup>Chandler, p. 37.

<sup>23</sup>Lowe, p. 138.

<sup>24</sup>Cole, p. 47; Oliver W. Holmes, "The Evaluation and Preservation of Business Archives," AA 1 (1938):176.

<sup>25</sup>Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, p. 92.

<sup>26</sup>Eddie Hedlin, Business Archives: An Introduction (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1978), p. 5.

<sup>27</sup>T. H. B. Symons, To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies (Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975), p. 79; Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, p. 92.

<sup>28</sup>Douglas Bakken, "Corporate Archives Today," AA 45 (1982): 279-86.

## CHAPTER II

## COMPANIES AND PUBLIC ARCHIVES: A SORRY BUSINESS?

What business records do Canadian archival institutions hold? Have archivists been quietly acquiring and preserving the records of defunct firms and of small and medium sized companies whilst advocating the establishment of corporate archives by large corporations? Or have archivists neglected business records as a field of archival endeavour? An examination of the state of Canada's archival holdings of business records, and of the manner in which Canadian repositories acquire such records should indicate whether archival institutions are preserving an adequate record of the economic activities of Canadian society.

Canadian archival literature contains only a handful of articles pertaining to the acquisition of business records. These articles document the historical neglect of business records in Canada and the few fitful attempts, such as the Business Archives Council (1968-1973), that have been undertaken to preserve business records in a methodical fashion. One writer concludes that "few Canadian archives, including the most senior, adequately maintain, let alone actively solicit, business or commercial records."<sup>1</sup> Canadian archival literature suggests that repositories in the country have not drawn up acquisition policies with particular regard to business records, and have not implemented strategies to obtain business records, even though the federal and provincial repositories seek "to preserve all records

relevant to the history of their region."<sup>2</sup>

Since the archivist of Ontario announced in 1903 that he had begun "a collection of papers, maps, pamphlets, reports, surveys, etc. in connection with the promotion and construction of railways and canals in Ontario,"<sup>3</sup> the collection of Canadian business records has proceeded in piecemeal fashion. In the early twentieth century Canadian archival institutions that collected private archives and personal papers inevitably collected business records since prominent public figures were often also businessmen, and their personal papers sometimes included their business records.<sup>4</sup> According to John Archer:

every public archival institution at one time or another collected or were given the records of businessmen and the reports of business firms. But at no time was there any effort made to get more. Business records did not fit easily into the pattern of archival institutions developed in Canada.<sup>5</sup>

Archivists have not examined in detail the character of the business records held in Canadian repositories. Two studies indicate that the holdings of business records in Canadian repositories probably consist largely of small collections of records of defunct companies. John Archer in 1968 published the results of an analysis he made of the Union List of Manuscripts. He found that Canadian repositories had reported 255 collections of business records, of which only fifty-five were significant collections. Of these fifty-five collections, eighteen dated from the pre-Confederation period, thirty-six from the years 1890-1925, and one collection contained records created after 1929. Archer judged the significance of a collection "primarily on the basis

of size" but did not indicate what size of collection he felt to be significant.<sup>6</sup>

Nicholas Burckel in 1978 sent out a questionnaire to sixty-five American and Canadian university archives and discovered that more than half of these repositories held some business records. Burckel found that university archives particularly collected the records of small firms located within the geographic area of the university but no longer in operation. Furthermore, most of the business records collected by university archives predated the 1970s.<sup>7</sup>

Archer made no analysis of the acquisition policies of the repositories whose Union List of Manuscripts entries he examined. Burckel reported that most of the university archives that collected business records "began their collections of business records when a collection was offered, rather than after first developing a specific policy on acquiring business records."<sup>8</sup> However, as Burckel's study was concerned only with university archives, mostly located in the United States, it sheds little light on the acquisition policies of Canadian archival institutions.

A questionnaire (see Appendix A) was sent out to thirty repositories across Canada in November 1985 to obtain information on the acquisition policies and strategies adopted by Canadian repositories that collect business records, and to determine the nature of the business records collected by Canadian archival institutions. The questionnaire was accompanied by a list of definitions to avoid varying interpretations of the terms used in the questions. Part one of the

questionnaire consisted of general questions about the financial and manpower resources of repositories. The second section of the questionnaire was designed to provide a picture of the policies and strategies adopted by repositories to acquire business records. To simplify the task of completing the questionnaire, and to obtain some standardization of terminology, most of the questions in the second section were closed questions consisting of checklists. The third part of the questionnaire asked respondents to describe their holdings of business records in terms of physical extent and the type of economic activity undertaken by the businesses that created the records. The last two questions were made optional due to concern that the information requested would not be readily available at some repositories and would therefore require the respondent to spend an inordinate amount of time sifting through his repository's holdings, possibly resulting in a decision not to bother with the questionnaire at all.

The information gathered by the third part of the questionnaire has been supplemented by a more detailed study of collections of business records at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the Special Collections Division of the University of British Columbia Library. Close analysis of the inventories of these four repositories was undertaken to obtain, in greater detail than the respondents to the questionnaire could reasonably be expected to provide, a picture of the state of archival holdings of business records at the national level and within one province.

The survey population was selected by identifying those repositories which indicated in their entries in the Directory of Canadian Archives (1978) that they collect business records. The thirty institutions to which questionnaires were sent consisted of the Public Archives of Canada, the provincial and territorial archives, excluding the French-language Archives Nationales du Québec, seven municipal repositories, ten university repositories, and the Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives (see Appendix B).

Twenty-six of the thirty questionnaires were completed and returned, by the Public Archives of Canada [PAC], nine provincial and territorial repositories, six municipal archives, eight university repositories, the Glenbow Institute, and one unidentified repository (see Appendix B). A separate return was received from the Hudson's Bay Archives Division of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba. The Hudson's Bay Archives Division is in effect a corporate archives, housed within a public institution but having its own staff and budget. The Hudson's Bay Archives Division is therefore omitted from the discussion and calculations contained in this chapter.

Four of the twenty-six institutions which returned questionnaires, namely the City of Toronto Archives, Simon Fraser University Archives, the University of Manitoba Archives, and the University of Toronto Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, reported they do not collect business records. The Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library commented that although it does not collect business archives, some of its collections may contain information helpful to business historians. The University

of Manitoba Archives said that it almost certainly will be acquiring some business records from the private agricultural sector within the next year. However, since these four institutions are not presently collecting business records they are omitted from this study.

Seventeen of the twenty-two institutions which reported they collect business records provided the amount of their current annual budget. As Table I indicates, fourteen of the seventeen repositories have annual budgets in excess of \$100,000. The Yukon Archives and the City of Ottawa Archives, two of the five institutions that did not report their annual budget, probably also have budgets of over \$100,000 a year since each employs three archivists.

TABLE I  
ANNUAL BUDGET OF CANADIAN REPOSITORIES, 1985

| <u>Annual Budget</u> | <u>Federal</u> | <u>Provin-<br/>cial</u> | <u>Muni-<br/>cipal</u> | <u>Univer-<br/>sity</u> | <u>Insti-<br/>tute</u> | <u>Uniden-<br/>tified</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------|--------------|
| +\$1,000,000         | 1              | 3                       |                        |                         |                        |                           | 4            |
| + 500,000            |                | 1                       |                        |                         |                        |                           | 1            |
| + 100,000            |                | 4                       | 2                      | 2                       | 1                      |                           | 9            |
| + 50,000             |                |                         | 1                      |                         |                        | 1                         | 2            |
| < 50,000             |                |                         | 1                      |                         |                        |                           | 1            |
| Unknown              |                | 1                       | 1                      | 3                       |                        |                           | 5            |

Canadian Archives: The Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, using annual budget figures for 1978, divided Canadian archival institutions into three groups: Budget Group 1 comprising those repositories, excluding the Public Archives of Canada, with budgets

exceeding \$75,000, Budget Group 2 consisting of repositories with annual budgets of between \$20,000 and \$75,000, and Budget Group 3 containing repositories having budgets of less than \$20,000. Budget Group 1 comprised 21 per cent of repositories and accounted for 82.5 per cent of the expenditures of Canadian archival institutions.<sup>9</sup> When inflation since 1978 is taken into account thirteen or, if the Yukon Archives and the City of Ottawa Archives are included, fifteen repositories out of the twenty-two respondents that collect business records fall within Budget Group 1. Add the Public Archives of Canada to this group and it is apparent that almost three-quarters of the archival institutions that reported collecting business records belong to a small group of repositories which receives over 90 per cent of all archival funding in Canada.

The Public Archives of Canada has by far the largest annual budget at \$42,000,000, and it also holds the largest volume of business records. Other than that, Table II indicates there is no direct relationship between the size of a repository, as represented by its annual budget, and the volume of business records it has acquired. The Archives of Ontario, for instance, has an annual budget of \$1,700,000 and holds 200 metres of business records, whereas the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick holds 1,021.8 metres of business records but has an annual budget of only \$360,000.

Eighteen repositories gave figures for their annual acquisitions budget, as indicated in Table III. However, only seven repositories reported that they have purchased business records or, in the case of

TABLE II

## REPOSITORIES RANKED BY ANNUAL BUDGET AND BY VOLUME OF BUSINESS RECORDS HOLDINGS, 1985

| <u>Rank</u> | <u>Repository</u> | <u>Budget</u> | <u>Rank</u> | <u>Repository</u> | <u>*Linear<br/>Metres</u> | <u>Microfilm<br/>Reels</u> | <u>*Microfilm<br/>in Linear<br/>Metres</u> | <u>Total<br/>Metres</u> |
|-------------|-------------------|---------------|-------------|-------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|--|-------------------------|
| 1           | P.A.C.            | \$42,000,000  | 1           | P.A.C.            | 1,356.6                   | 412                        | 187.3                                      | 1,552.9                 |
| 2           | Ontario           | 1,734,500     | 2           | Dalhousie         | 1,000.0                   | 100                        | 45.5                                       | 1,045.5                 |
| 3           | Manitoba          | 1,127,800     | 3           | New Brunswick     | 1,000.0                   | 48                         | 21.8                                       | 1,021.8                 |
| 4           | Saskatchewan      | 1,035,600     | 4           | Newfoundland      | 600.0                     | 30                         | 13.6                                       | 613.6                   |
| 5           | Alberta           | 923,454       | 5           | Glenbow           | 568.0                     | 19                         | 8.6  | 576.6                   |
| 6           | Vancouver         | 423,000       | 6           | U.B.C.            | 303.0                     | 264                        | 120.0                                      | 423.0                   |
| 7           | New Brunswick     | 360,000       | 7           | Alberta           | 336.4                     | 106                        | 48.2                                       | 384.6                   |
| 8           | Nova Scotia       | 300,000       | 8           | Ontario           | 200.0                     | 0                          | 0.0  | 200.0                   |
| 9           | Newfoundland      | 300,000       | 9           | P.E.I.            | 184.0                     | 9                          | 4.0  | 188.0                   |
| 10          | Glenbow           | 290,916       | 10          | Queen's           | 147.0                     | 7                          | 3.2  | 150.2                   |
| 11          | Queen's           | 250,000       | 11          | Nova Scotia       | 109.0                     | 0                          | 0.0  | 109.0                   |
| 12          | McGill            | 200,000       | 12          | McGill            | 107.31                    | 0                          | 0.0  | 107.31                  |
| 13          | Edmonton          | 176,000       | 13          | Unidentified      | 102.0                     | 5                          | 2.3  | 104.3                   |
| 14          | P.E.I.            | 118,900       | 14          | Vancouver         | 94.0                      | 2                          | 1.0  | 95.0                    |
| 15          | Victoria          | 78,000        | 15          | Manitoba          | 89.0                      | 1                          | 0.5  | 89.5                    |
| 16          | Unidentified      | 55,000        | 16          | Mount Allison     | 75.0                      | 0                          | 0.0  | 75.0                    |
| 17          | Peterborough      | 600           | 17          | Yukon             | 26.55                     | 17                         | 7.7  | 34.25                   |
|             | Yukon             | Unknown       | 18          | Ottawa            | 9.7                       | 0                          | 0.0  | 9.7                     |
|             | Ottawa            | Unknown       | 19          | Victoria          | 4.0                       | 0                          | 0.0  | 4.0                     |
|             | U.B.C.            | Unknown       | 20          | Peterborough      | 2.5                       | 0                          | 0.0  | 2.5                     |
|             | Mount Allison     | Unknown       |             | Saskatchewan      | Unknown                   |                            |  |                         |
|             | Dalhousie         | Unknown       |             | Edmonton          | Unknown                   |                            |  |                         |

\*Due to differences in the units of measure used by repositories to report the volume of their holdings, the figures and ranking are approximate. Linear metres of records on microfilm is calculated using the figure of 1.5 linear feet of documents per roll of film (obtained from Precision Micrographics Ltd., Vancouver), and converting the result to linear metres.

TABLE III

## ANNUAL ACQUISITIONS BUDGETS OF CANADIAN REPOSITORIES, 1985

| <u>Acquisitions<br/>Budget</u> | <u>Federal</u> | <u>Provincial</u> | <u>Municipal</u> | <u>University</u> | <u>Institute</u> | <u>Unidentified</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| \$100,000                      | 1              |                   |                  |                   |                  |                     | 1            |
| +50,000                        |                |                   |                  |                   |                  |                     | 0            |
| +10,000                        |                | 5                 |                  | 1                 |                  |                     | 6            |
| +1,000                         |                |                   | 1                | 1                 |                  |                     | 2            |
| <1,000                         |                | 1                 |                  |                   | 1                |                     | 2            |
| Nil                            |                | 1                 | 4                | 2                 |                  |                     | 7            |
| Unknown                        |                | 2                 |                  | 1                 |                  | 1                   | 4            |

TABLE IV

## ANNUAL ACQUISITIONS BUDGETS OF PURCHASERS OF BUSINESS RECORDS, 1985

| <u>Acquisitions<br/>Budget</u> | <u>Federal</u> | <u>Provincial</u> | <u>Municipal</u> | <u>University</u> | <u>Institute</u> | <u>Unidentified</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|--------------------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------|-------------------|------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| \$100,000                      |                |                   |                  |                   |                  |                     | 0            |
| +50,000                        |                |                   |                  |                   |                  |                     | 0            |
| +10,000                        |                | 2                 |                  |                   |                  |                     | 2            |
| +1,000                         |                |                   |                  | 1                 |                  |                     | 1            |
| <1,000                         |                | 1                 |                  |                   | 1                |                     | 2            |
| Unknown                        |                |                   |                  | 1                 |                  | 1                   | 2            |

the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, are prepared to do so (see Table IV). The seven repositories which purchase or are prepared to purchase business records, namely Dalhousie University Archives, the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland, the Glenbow Institute, the University of British Columbia Special Collections, the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, and the unidentified institution, hold approximately 57 per cent of the total volume of business records reported but between them account for only 13.7 per cent of the money reported to be available for acquisitions. Although none of the seven repositories listed above is likely to spend its entire acquisitions budget on business records, the fact that they have collected 57 per cent of the reported volume of business records held by Canadian repositories indicates they have made particular efforts to acquire business records.

Budgetary and volume figures reveal that Canadian archival institutions acquiring business records are predominantly the wealthier repositories, and that over half of the business records held by repositories have been collected by a few archival institutions prepared to pay for acquisitions. To understand more fully the place of the records of businesses in the "Canadian Scene," to paraphrase John Archer, the policies and strategies adopted by Canadian repositories must be examined. Eleven of the repositories responding to the questionnaire provided copies or descriptions of their acquisition policies, and four institutions provided copies or cited from legislation governing their activities. None of the archival

institutions surveyed has a separate written acquisitions policy for business records, but the acquisitions policies of six repositories make specific reference to the records of businesses, or to records that document economic or industrial development (see Table V).

The provincial and Yukon repositories have broad legislative authority or acquisitions policies for the collection of non-governmental records, the only limitations being that the materials they acquire should have some relevance to the province or territory in question. The legislation governing the Saskatchewan Archives Board, for example, states:

The Saskatchewan Archives Board may acquire by gift, devise or in any other manner and place in the archives printed documents, manuscripts, records, private papers, and any other material, to whomsoever belonging, having a bearing on the history of Saskatchewan.<sup>10</sup>

Acting under an Archives Ordinance, the Yukon Archives acquires documents pertaining to the history of the Yukon, but also collects records of northern British Columbian and Alaskan communities due to their shared history with the Yukon. Similarly, the acquisition policy of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia states that it acquires material produced by or about Nova Scotia and Nova Scotians. The Archives of Ontario and the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick have somewhat more elaborate acquisitions policies than the other provincial repositories, for their policies state that archival materials primarily of local interest should not be acquired by the provincial repository if these materials can be kept and preserved by local repositories or

organizations.

TABLE V

REPOSITORIES FROM WHICH COPIES OR DESCRIPTIONS OF  
ACQUISITION POLICIES OR LEGISLATION WERE RECEIVED

|                           |                        |                                 |           |
|---------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Alberta <sup>1</sup>      | Vancouver <sup>2</sup> | U.B.C. <sup>2</sup>             | Glenbow   |
| Saskatchewan <sup>1</sup> | Ottawa <sup>2</sup>    | Queen's University <sup>2</sup> | Alberta   |
| Manitoba <sup>1</sup>     |                        | McGill University <sup>2</sup>  | Institute |
| Ontario <sup>2</sup>      |                        | Mount Allison University        |           |
| New Brunswick             |                        |                                 |           |
| Prince Edward Island      |                        |                                 |           |
| Nova Scotia               |                        |                                 |           |
| Yukon <sup>1</sup>        |                        |                                 |           |

---

<sup>1</sup>Provided a copy or description of Legislation

<sup>2</sup>Acquisition policy makes specific mention of business or economic records.

The acquisitions policies of the municipal repositories of Ottawa and Vancouver are similar to the legislation and policies of the provincial institutions, in that the municipal repositories are also restricted to collecting archival materials of significance to the region governed by their sponsoring bodies. However, the policies of these municipal archives are more detailed because they specify that the municipal repositories acquire the personal records of elected civic officials and the records of individuals and organized bodies that have made an impact on the municipality.

Each of the four universities that provided a copy of its acquisitions policy confines its collecting activities to the region in which the university is situated. "Region" is defined as the entire

province of British Columbia in the case of the University of British Columbia, but merely as Kingston and its surrounding area by Queen's University. The Glenbow Alberta Institute Archives has a vague acquisitions policy which requires the Institute to "build on the strengths of its collections" and "provide a context for areas of strength" in its holdings.<sup>11</sup>

The acquisitions policies of provincial and municipal repositories restrain these institutions from collecting anything other than archival materials having provincial or municipal significance. The policies of university repositories also impose geographical limitations on these institutions' collecting activities. The acquisition policies of only six repositories mention particular subjects that should be documented, and it is these same policies which make references to collecting business records (see Table V). The policy of the Archives of Ontario, for instance, is to acquire records "that have value for research on any aspect of Ontario's political, social, economic or industrial development."<sup>12</sup> Queen's University Archives "acquires material related to the present research strengths in Canadian public affairs, business, literature, art . . ."<sup>13</sup> and the City of Vancouver Archives collects "records of organizations and businesses that reflect the social, cultural, and commercial life of Vancouver."<sup>14</sup>

The fact that an institution's acquisitions policy specifically mentions business records as a field of collecting activity is not an indication that the institution is an important collector of business

records. The six repositories having such acquisition policies represent 40 per cent of the fifteen repositories that provided copies of their policies or governing legislation, but between them hold only 985.21 metres of business record or 28.4 per cent of the volume of business records reported by the fifteen repositories. The Provincial Archives of New Brunswick has more business records (1,021.8 metres) than do the archives of Ontario, Vancouver, Ottawa, Queen's, McGill and the University of British Columbia combined, though the acquisitions policy of the New Brunswick archives makes no mention of business records. Furthermore, although the six repositories represent thirty per cent of the twenty institutions that reported the size of their holdings, they account for only 14.5 per cent of the total volume of business records held by the twenty repositories.

The existence of a business records acquisition program at an archival institution is an indication that the institution is an important collector of business records. Eleven repositories across Canada stated they have established programs to acquire business records. (See Table VI.) These eleven repositories represent fifty-five per cent of the twenty repositories which reported the extent of their holdings and account for 74.6 per cent of the total volume of business records held. Moreover, the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of Newfoundland, and the Dalhousie University, University of British Columbia, and Glenbow Institute archives are ranked first, second, and fourth to sixth in terms of the amount of business records they have acquired, and hold sixty-two per cent of the total volume of business

TABLE VI  
REPOSITORIES WITH BUSINESS RECORDS PROGRAMS

| <u>Rank Order by<br/>Volume of Holdings</u> | <u>Repository</u>         | <u>Volume of Holdings<br/>in Linear Metres</u> | <u>Percent of<br/>Total Volume</u> | <u>Date Program<br/>Established</u> |
|---|---------------------------|--|------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| 1   | P.A.C.                    | 1,552.9  | 22.9%                              | 1972                                |
| 2   | Dalhousie                 | 1,045.5  | 15.4%                              | 1970                                |
| 4   | Newfoundland              | 613.6  | 9.0%                               | 1958                                |
| 5   | Glenbow                   | 576.6  | 8.5%                               | 1955                                |
| 6   | U.B.C.                    | 423.0  | 6.2%                               | 1960s                               |
| 7   | Alberta                   | 384.6  | 5.7%                               | Unknown                             |
| 8   | Ontario                   | 200.0  | 2.9%                               | Unknown                             |
| 13  | Unidentified              | 104.3  | 1.5%                               | 1970                                |
| 15  | Manitoba                  | 89.5   | 1.3%                               | 1984                                |
| 16  | Mount Allison<br>Edmonton | 75.0   | 1.1%                               | Unknown                             |
|   |                           | <u>Unknown</u><br>5,065.0                      | <u>Unknown</u><br>74.6%            | Unknown                             |

records reported. Of the eleven repositories that have established business records acquisition programs only one, University of British Columbia, has an acquisitions policy which specifically mentions the records of businesses.

Of the repositories that do not have programs to acquire the records of business, Queen's University Archives reported that it acquires business records only upon the request of the university's teaching and research staff. McGill University Archives, reflecting a view commonly held amongst North American archivists that companies should shoulder the burden of caring for their own archives, encourages businesses to establish corporate archives and records management programs. The Public Archives of Prince Edward Island reported that its staff does not have the time to establish and implement a business records program. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia stated that it lacks the space to engage in such a program and has found business records to be a relatively low priority in terms of demand by researchers.

All of the repositories which reported that they hold business records have acquired the records of defunct companies, and all but the archives of Prince Edward Island, the City of Vancouver, the City of Victoria, and Mount Allison University have acquired records of active companies. The questionnaire asked archival institutions to indicate what methods and strategies they used to acquire records of defunct and active companies. The responses to these questions are shown in Tables VII to XI. While these tables do not show the frequency with which

TABLE VII

## SOURCES OF RECORDS OF ACTIVE BUSINESSES

| <u>Source</u>   | <u>Repositories<br/>Receiving<br/>from this<br/>Source</u> | <u>% of<br/>Repositories (18)<br/>Which Acquire<br/>Records of Active<br/>Businesses</u> |
|---|--|--|
| From company as a single accession  | 15   | 83.0%  |
| From company under an agreement to<br>receive accessions on a periodic<br>basis | 10   | 55.5%  |
| From individuals who took records<br>when they retired or left<br>the company   | 6  | 33.3%  |
| Other   | 5  | 27.7%  |

TABLE VIII

## STRATEGIES USED TO ACQUIRE RECORDS OF ACTIVE BUSINESSES

| <u>Strategy</u>  | <u>Repositories<br/>Using<br/>this<br/>Strategy</u> | <u>% of<br/>Repositories (18)<br/>Which Acquire<br/>Records of Active<br/>Businesses</u> |
|--|---|--|
| Contacting the company or individual                     | 16  | 88.8%  |
| Responding to approaches by<br>the company or individual | 15  | 83.0%  |
| Advertising  | 2   | 11.1%  |
| Other  | 6   | 33.3%  |

TABLE IX  
SOURCES OF RECORDS OF DEFUNCT BUSINESSES

| <u>Source</u>   | <u>Repositories<br/>Receiving<br/>from this<br/>Source</u> | <u>% of<br/>Repositories (22)<br/>Which Acquire<br/>Records of Defunct<br/>Businesses</u> |
|---|--|---|
| From the liquidator of a company<br>From individuals or their heirs<br>who kept records when a company<br>ceased operations | 15   | 68.0%   |
| Other   | 22   | 100.0%  |
|   | 10   | 45.5%   |

TABLE X  
STRATEGIES USED TO ACQUIRE RECORDS OF DEFUNCT BUSINESSES

| <u>Strategy</u>   | <u>Repositories<br/>using this<br/>Strategy</u> | <u>% of<br/>Repositories (22)<br/>Which Acquire<br/>Records of Defunct<br/>Businesses</u> |
|---|---|---|
| Contacting the liquidator<br>or individual                  | 17  | 77.0%   |
| Responding to approaches by<br>the liquidator or individual | 17  | 77.0%   |
| Advertising   | 1   | 4.5%  |
| Other   | 6   | 27.2%   |

TABLE XI  
METHODS OF ACQUISITION OF BUSINESS RECORDS\*

| <u>Method of Acquisition</u> | <u>Number of<br/>Repositories<br/>using<br/>this Method</u> | <u>% of<br/>Repositories (21)<br/>Which Acquire<br/>Business Records</u> |
|------------------------------|---|--|
| Purchase                     | 6   | 28.6%  |
| Donation                     | 20  | 95.2%  |
| Donation for tax credit      | 17  | 80.9%  |
| Other                        | 3   | 18.0%  |

\*City of Edmonton Archives did not answer this question.

archival institutions use these various methods and strategies, they do indicate the means by which Canadian repositories acquire business records. It is interesting to note that despite the view repeatedly expressed in North American archival literature that repositories cannot possibly cope with the massive amounts of records generated by modern companies, 55 per cent of the repositories which acquire the records of active companies have engaged in agreements to receive accessions on a periodic basis. Although it was beyond the scope of the questionnaire used for this study, it would be interesting to find out the number of companies involved in such agreements with Canadian archival institutions, and discover whether such companies are large integrated corporations or small, non-integrated firms.

Several repositories described "other" methods and strategies for acquiring the records of active or defunct companies. The University of British Columbia Special Collections Division has purchased the records of both active and defunct businesses from manuscript dealers. The Yukon Archives has received collections of records of active and defunct companies from historical societies and museums. The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland looks for announcements of company anniversaries in newspapers and often approaches firms that are celebrating a fiftieth or hundredth anniversary. The Public Archives of Canada receives corporate records from departments of the federal government that have dealings with companies. In passing, it should be noted that the records of government departments, such as departments of trade or industry, are themselves important sources of

information on companies.

The archives of Newfoundland, the Glenbow Institute, and the University of British Columbia have acquired business records from demolition or construction crews who discover documents in the buildings they are working on, and from new tenants who find the records of previous tenants on their property. This implies some public relations efforts on the part of these repositories to make construction workers and others aware both of the value of the documents they discover and of the existence of the archival institution. The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland reported it usually offers the construction crew foreman a sum of money for the records the crew finds. The University of British Columbia and Glenbow Institute archives place advertisements in the news media. The archives of Saskatchewan and Newfoundland undertake other public relations activities. The Saskatchewan Archives Board uses speeches to service clubs and business organizations, radio and television interviews, and newspaper stories to solicit the records of active and defunct businesses. The Provincial Archives of Newfoundland offers to do press releases on behalf of the company or individual donating material.

While advertisements and public programs such as speeches to businessmen's organizations and press releases may be designed to "encourage people to save and donate items of historic value"<sup>15</sup> it is difficult to measure their effects and some archivists feel that such public relations programs are of little benefit to their repositories. A survey of American repositories conducted in 1976 found that

archivists were generally reluctant to view public programming "as a worthwhile, much less essential, archival function,"<sup>16</sup> and in 1985 Michael Swift commented that Canadian archivists frequently overlook the need for public relations programs.<sup>17</sup> It is therefore not surprising that other Canadian repositories have not followed the archives of Saskatchewan, Newfoundland, University of British Columbia, and the Glenbow Institute in using public programs as a means of soliciting the records of businesses.

The responses to the third part of the questionnaire, which asked questions about the nature of business records holdings in Canadian repositories, support the indications found in the studies by John Archer and Nicholas Burckel that repositories in Canada have largely acquired small collections of business records, primarily of defunct companies. When the questionnaire was devised it was felt that asking respondents for too detailed an analysis of their holdings would likely result in fewer completed questionnaires. Respondents were therefore not asked to report their holdings in terms of defunct or active company records, nor to give a breakdown for collections less than one cubic metre in extent. (Respondents used figures expressed in cubic metres, linear metres, and cubic feet, so all figures were converted to linear metres for ease of comparison.) Instead, the holdings of the Public Archives of Canada and three major repositories in British Columbia were studied in greater depth, in the belief that the information thus obtained would provide an indication of the situation at other Canadian repositories.

Over three-quarters of the business records collections held by the responding repositories are less than one linear metre in extent (see Table XII). A more detailed examination of the holdings of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections Division, and supplementary information received from Queen's University Archives and McGill University Archives, revealed firstly that many business records collections consist only of a few centimetres of looseleaf paper or a couple of bound volumes of accounts and are thus fragmentary records of company activities, and secondly that the majority of the business collections in the six repositories named above are of thirty centimetres or less in extent (see Table XIII). A letter from the Provincial Archives of Manitoba stated: "The vast majority of the 122 collections in MG11 (Industry and Commerce) and the business thematic guide are small collections under 12½ cm. (5)".<sup>18</sup>

Of the 2,207 business collections reported by Canadian repositories 1,681 are less than one linear metre in extent. If, as seems likely from the situation at the Public Archives of Canada and the archives of British Columbia, Manitoba, Vancouver, University of British Columbia, Queen's University, and McGill University, over eighty per cent of these 1,681 collections are actually thirty centimetres or less in extent, then one may conclude that roughly two-thirds of the business records collections held in Canadian repositories are of thirty centimetres or less in extent, and probably comprise very incomplete

TABLE XII

## DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BUSINESS RECORDS COLLECTIONS

Number of Collections of Each Size (in Linear Metres)

| <u>Repository</u> | <u>&lt;1</u> | <u>1-9.9</u> | <u>10-99.9</u> | <u>100+</u> | <u>Microfilm</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------|--------------|--------------|----------------|-------------|------------------|--------------|
| P.A.C.            | 230          | 48           | 25             | 4           | 48               | 355          |
| Alberta           | 365          | 36           | 8              | 0           | 17               | 426          |
| Manitoba          | 114          | 6            | 2              | 0           | 0                | 122          |
| New Brunswick     | 110          | 23           | 10             | 1           | 13               | 157          |
| Newfoundland      | 130          | 10           | 10             | 1           | 0                | 151          |
| Ontario           | 41           | 100          | 9              | 0           | 0                | 150          |
| P.E.I.            | 83           | 5            | 4              | 1           | 9                | 102          |
| Yukon             | 35           | 2            | 1              | 0           | 2                | 40           |
| Edmonton          | 1            | 1            | 1              | 0           | 0                | 3            |
| Vancouver         | 72           | 15           | 3              | 0           | 1                | 91           |
| Victoria          | 2            | 0            | 1              | 0           | 0                | 3            |
| Ottawa            | 3            | 3            | 0              | 0           | 0                | 6            |
| Peterborough      | 0            | 4            | 0              | 0           | 0                | 4            |
| U.B.C.            | 40           | 8            | 3              | 2           | 3                | 56           |
| Queen's           | 71           | 15           | 2              | 0           | 2                | 90           |
| McGill            | 44           | 9            | 1              | 0           | 0                | 54           |
| Glenbow           | 337          | 33           | 11             | 0           | 0                | 381          |
| Unidentified      | <u>3</u>     | <u>8</u>     | <u>4</u>       | <u>0</u>    | <u>1</u>         | <u>16</u>    |
| TOTAL             | 1,681        | 326          | 95             | 9           | 96               | 2,207        |
| Percent           | 76.2%        | 14.8%        | 4.3%           | 0.4%        | 4.3%             | 100.0%       |

records of company activities.

TABLE XIII

PROPORTION OF BUSINESS RECORDS COLLECTIONS  
OF 30 CENTIMETRES OR LESS IN EXTENT

| <u>Repository</u> | <u>% of Holdings &lt;1m in Extent</u> | <u>% of Total Holdings</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| P.A.C.            | 88.7%                                 | 57.5%                      |
| British Columbia  | 91.5%                                 | 64.9%                      |
| Vancouver         | 91.7%                                 | 72.5%                      |
| U.B.C.            | 92.5%                                 | 66.1%                      |
| Queen's           | 80.3%                                 | 62.6%                      |
| McGill            | <u>90.9%</u>                          | <u>74.1%</u>               |
| AVERAGE           | 89.3%                                 | 66.3%                      |

As may be expected from remarks in the archival literature on the problems associated with collecting the voluminous records of contemporary businesses, and on the reluctance of businessmen to open their records to outsiders, collections of records of active companies seem to constitute a small proportion of the business records holdings of Canadian archival institutions. The majority of collections of business records held by the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections consist of the records of defunct companies. Table XIV indicates that 83.6 per cent of the business holdings of these four repositories are records of defunct businesses and only 14 per cent are records of active enterprises. If only the three British Columbian repositories are considered, 83.7 per cent of the business holdings of these three repositories are records of defunct

businesses and 14 per cent the records of active businesses. It seems likely, given the situation at the Public Archives of Canada and in the province of British Columbia, that considerably less than 20 per cent of the business records collections held by Canadian repositories consist of records of businesses currently in operation.

TABLE XIV

## STATUS OF BUSINESSES WHOSE RECORDS ARE HOUSED IN SELECTED REPOSITORIES

| <u>Repository</u> | <u>Status of Business</u> |                   |               | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------|---------------------------|-------------------|---------------|--------------|
|                   | <u>Defunct</u>            | <u>Taken Over</u> | <u>Active</u> |              |
| P.A.C.            | 296                       | 10                | 49            | 355          |
| British Columbia  | 355                       | 5                 | 38            | 398          |
| Vancouver         | 66                        | 2                 | 23            | 91           |
| U.B.C.            | <u>35</u>                 | <u>5</u>          | <u>16</u>     | <u>56</u>    |
| TOTAL             | 752                       | 22                | 126           | 900          |
| Percent           | 83.6%                     | 2.4%              | 14.0%         | 100.0%       |

The economic activities of the businesses whose records are housed in Canadian repositories are shown in Table XV. Although respondents were asked simply to indicate the number of business records collections that fell into each of the economic categories primary industry, secondary industry and tertiary industry, it should be borne in mind that a particular business and its subsidiaries, especially if it is an integrated corporation, may be involved in two or three sectors of the economy (see Appendix C). Aside from the archives of Newfoundland and the University of British Columbia, the repositories surveyed hold a preponderance of collections of records created by

TABLE XV

NUMBER OF BUSINESS RECORDS COLLECTIONS  
DOCUMENTING EACH ECONOMIC SECTOR

| <u>Repository</u> | <u>Primary</u> | <u>Secondary</u> | <u>Tertiary</u> | <u>Unknown</u> | <u>Total*</u> |
|-------------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|----------------|---------------|
| P.A.C.            | 52             | 65               | 236             | 2              | 355           |
| Alberta           | 62             | 15               | 349             |                | 426           |
| Manitoba          | 5              | 5                | 112             |                | 122           |
| New Brunswick     | 20             | 27               | 60              |                | 107           |
| Newfoundland      | 81             | 50               | 20              |                | 151           |
| Ontario           | 90             | 10               | 50              |                | 150           |
| P.E.I.            | 14             | 20               | 68              |                | 102           |
| Edmonton          | 1              | 0                | 2               |                | 3             |
| Vancouver         | 9              | 11               | 70              | 1              | 91            |
| Victoria          | 0              | 0                | 3               |                | 3             |
| Ottawa            | 0              | 1                | 5               |                | 6             |
| Peterborough      | 2              | 2                | 0               |                | 4             |
| U.B.C.            | 25             | 12               | 19              |                | 56            |
| Queen's           | 12             | 16               | 63              |                | 91            |
| McGill            | 17             | 9                | 28              |                | 54            |
| Glenbow           | 148            | 29               | 204             |                | 381           |
| Unidentified      | <u>0</u>       | <u>0</u>         | <u>16</u>       | <u>—</u>       | <u>16</u>     |
| TOTAL             | 538            | 272              | 1,305           | 3              | 2,118         |
| Percent           | 25.4%          | 12.8%            | 61.6%           | 0.1%           | 99.9%*        |

\*For some repositories, the total figures reported for the number of collections in each economic sector do not equal the total figures reported for the number of collections of each size (Table XII).

\*Does not equal 100% due to rounding of the figures.

businesses active in tertiary industries. In view of the reputation Canada has as a country of hewers of wood and drawers of water, it was somewhat surprising to discover that almost two-thirds of the reported business collections document tertiary industrial activities, while just over one-quarter of the collections document primary industrial activities. Reference to figures on Canada's gross domestic product (see Table XVI) between 1870 and 1970 confirms that tertiary industries are disproportionately represented in the business records holdings of Canadian repositories. Gross domestic product was chosen as the measure of the relative importance of each of the three industrial sectors of Canada's economy because

[it] shows the industrial origin of economic production. In effect it reveals the "value" added by each industry to the value of the country's total production. For the assembly and analysis of industrial statistics, the domestic product concept is preferable to the national product concept since it deals with production originating within the country's geographical boundaries, and also avoids the statistical problem of having to allocate net interest and dividends paid to non-residents by industrial origin.<sup>19</sup>

Canada's average gross domestic product between 1870 and 1970 is divided between the industrial sectors as follows: 27.1 per cent for primary industry, 29.3 per cent for secondary industry, and 43.6 per cent for tertiary industry. Of the business collections held by the repositories surveyed, 25.4 per cent comprised the records of businesses active in primary industries, 12.8 per cent the records of businesses engaged in secondary industries, and 61.6 per cent the records of businesses active in tertiary industries. Allowing for the fact that

some collections of business records predate 1870, when primary industries accounted for a greater proportion of Canada's economy, it is evident that in terms of their relative importance within Canada's economy secondary industries are greatly under-represented and tertiary industries are substantially over-represented in the holdings of Canada's archival repositories.

TABLE XVI

PERCENTAGE OF CANADA'S GROSS DOMESTIC PRODUCT  
PRODUCED BY EACH INDUSTRIAL SECTOR

|                  | <u>Year</u> | <u>Primary</u> | <u>Secondary</u> | <u>Tertiary</u> |
|------------------|-------------|----------------|------------------|-----------------|
|                  | 1870        | 46.2%          | 22.6%            | 31.2%           |
|                  | 1880        | 44.2%          | 23.0%            | 32.8%           |
|                  | 1890        | 36.6%          | 28.1%            | 35.2%           |
| Average, 19th C. |             | 42.3%          | 24.6%            | 33.1%           |
|                  | 1900        | 36.7%          | 25.1%            | 38.2%           |
|                  | 1910        | 30.3%          | 27.8%            | 41.9%           |
|                  | 1920        | 27.2%          | 30.2%            | 42.6%           |
|                  | 1930        | 17.8%          | 29.3%            | 52.9%           |
|                  | 1940        | 21.2%          | 32.5%            | 46.3%           |
|                  | 1950        | 17.6%          | 36.8%            | 45.6%           |
|                  | 1960        | 11.2%          | 34.7%            | 54.0%           |
|                  | 1970        | 8.9%           | 31.9%            | 59.1%           |
| Average, 20th C. |             | 21.4%          | 31.0%            | 47.6%           |
| TOTAL AVERAGE    |             | 27.1%          | 29.3%            | 43.6%           |

Source: M. C. Urquart, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, Series E 214-244, p. 141; F. H. Leacy, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, 2nd ed., Series F 56-75.

The information obtained through the questionnaire used in

this study does not cover all Canadian archives. For instance, the Saskatchewan Archives Board did not provide figures on the extent and nature of its holdings of business records, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia failed to respond to the questionnaire, and the Archives Nationales du Québec was not included in the survey. Nevertheless, the questionnaire results do provide a reasonably comprehensive view of the means by which Canadian repositories acquire business records and of the kind of business collections they hold.

Canadian archival literature suggests that archival institutions in this country have not adopted specific acquisitions policies for acquiring business records. None of the repositories surveyed has a separate policy for acquiring business records. Acquisitions policies of Canadian repositories are worded broadly enough to include business records within their scope, but the acquisitions policies of only six repositories make mention of business or economic records. Since the six repositories hold only 14.5 per cent of the total reported volume of business records it is evident that the mention of business records in its acquisitions policy is not an indication of a repository's importance as a collector of business records. Rather than alter their acquisitions policies to define more specifically the kinds of records they collect, Canadian repositories interested in acquiring business records have tended to develop business records acquisition programs. The eleven repositories which have implemented such programs hold 74.6 per cent of the total reported volume of business records. Generally speaking, the repositories in Canada which regularly acquire business

records belong to a small group of institutions that are all in the category identified by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives as Budget Group 1, which receives the lion's share of archival funding.

Most of the repositories surveyed use the traditional means of acquiring archival materials by donation after having contacted or responded to approaches from the possessor of the materials. As may be expected from the reluctance of some archivists to undertake public programming, only four repositories reported they engage in public relations efforts as a means of obtaining business records. Greater use of public programming by Canadian repositories could facilitate the acquisition of business records by making the possessor of such records aware of an archival institution before he is contacted by one of its staff. More extensive use of public programming could also encourage people to reconsider the value of dirty old papers stashed in attics and basements and prompt them to contact a repository.

Considering the concern expressed in North American archival literature that repositories cannot cope with the volume of records of modern companies, a surprising finding is that 78 per cent of the repositories surveyed have acquired material from active businesses. Even more unexpected, over half of the repositories that acquire records of active businesses do so under agreements to receive accessions on a periodic basis. In light of recommendations made by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives<sup>20</sup> and other archivists that the archival profession concentrate its effort on aiding companies to establish corporate archives, it would be interesting to find out what sorts of

enterprises enter into agreements to donate their records to repositories, and how the repositories cope with the inflow of materials resulting from such agreements.

The questionnaire results, supplemented by an examination of the holdings of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, and the archives of the City of Vancouver, the University of British Columbia, Queen's University, and McGill University, confirm the findings of John Archer and Nicholas Burckel that Canadian repositories largely acquire small collections of business records. Over three quarters of the reported collections are less than one linear metre in extent. Collections under one linear metre in extent would be of little use to a researcher wishing to understand the history of a particular company. It is even more doubtful that a broad picture of economic development in an industry or a region could be obtained from such a fragmentary record. As will be shown in Chapter 4, the business records holdings of Canadian repositories have not to date been heavily used by business or economic historians.

Canadian archivists, it seems, have concentrated on acquiring the records of tertiary industries. This may have occurred because primary industries such as forestry and mining have usually been located at a distance from urban areas in which archival institutions are situated, and because secondary industries are more conscious than are other industries of a need to preserve the industrial secrets upon which their competitiveness is based. Whether or not the records of businesses involved in tertiary industries are easier to acquire than

those of the other sectors of the economy, archivists ought to make a greater effort to ensure the preservation, in corporate archives or public repositories, of the records of primary and secondary industries. By so doing, archivists will achieve a more balanced documentation of Canada's economy.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Roger Hall, "Minding our own Business," Archivaria, 3 (Winter 1976/77), 78.

<sup>2</sup>Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives (Ottawa: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1980), p. 63.

<sup>3</sup>John Hall Archer, "Business Records: The Canadian Scene," AA, 32 (1969), 251, citing First Report of the Bureau of Archives for the Province of Ontario, 1903, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 251.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 251-52.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., pp. 254-55.

<sup>7</sup>Nicholas G. Burckel, "Business Archives in a University Setting: Status and Prospect," College and Research Libraries, 41 (1980), 231.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 229.

<sup>9</sup>Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, p. 47.

<sup>10</sup>An Act Respecting the Archives of Saskatchewan, Chapter A-26, section 12, 1983.

<sup>11</sup>Questionnaire return, Glenbow-Alberta Institute, November 14, 1985.

<sup>12</sup>Questionnaire return, Archives of Ontario, January 6, 1986.

<sup>13</sup>Questionnaire return, Queen's University Archives, January 1986.

<sup>14</sup>Questionnaire return, City of Vancouver Archives, November 13, 1985.

<sup>15</sup>Ann E. Pedersen and Gail Farr Casterline. Archives and Manuscripts: Public Programs (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1982), p. 9.

<sup>16</sup>Ann E. Pedersen, "Archival Outreach: SAA's 1976 Survey,"

AA, 41 (1978), 160.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Swift, "Management Techniques and Technical Resources in the Archives of the 1980s," Archivaria, 20 (Summer 1985), 99.

<sup>18</sup>Questionnaire return, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, November 15, 1985.

<sup>19</sup>F. H. Leacy, ed., Historical Statistics of Canada, 2nd ed. (Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1983), 56-75.

<sup>20</sup>Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives, p. 92.

## CHAPTER 3

## THE CONTENTS OF BUSINESS RECORDS COLLECTIONS

The questionnaire solicited limited information on the characteristics of business records collections held in Canadian archival institutions. As already noted, the returns indicate that the majority of business collections housed in Canadian repositories are less than one linear metre in extent, but they fail to show the types of series or much about their content and value. Rather than request more detailed information from respondents and risk lowering the response ratio to the questionnaire, the business records holdings of four repositories representative of the various types of archival institutions in Canada were examined in detail to characterize the quality of business records holdings.\* In this chapter the contents of business collections of one linear metre or more in extent are examined and compared with the records archivists have indicated should be preserved to determine whether Canadian archival institutions have succeeded in acquiring documentation of at least some businesses' activities in a comprehensive fashion.

Archivists have often taken a straightforward approach to appraisal of business records by simply listing the types of records

---

\*The Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections Division.

usually or likely to be of permanent or research value.<sup>1</sup> One writer's list of valuable records includes

boards of directors' minutes, committee reports, annual reports, budget breakdowns, internal and external correspondence, policy and procedure manuals, strategic planning statements, and organization charts.<sup>2</sup>

To this list may be added such records as stock ledgers and stock transfer books. When discussing appraisal guidelines for business records, archivists have tended to focus their attention on prose records rather than on financial records,<sup>3</sup> and have neglected pictorial records. American archivist Oliver Holmes stated that samples of routine records documenting the daily operations of a business should also be kept:

For instance, if we wanted future generations to know just how trains were operated, we might film the dispatcher's orders for a week, the trainman's records for a week, and whatever else might be necessary to complete the picture.<sup>4</sup>

While the appraisal of prose business records appears from the literature to be a fairly straightforward matter, the development of appraisal guidelines for financial records has been more difficult. According to the American archivist, Dennis Meissner, appraisal recommendations "pertaining to accounting records tended to make specific retention prescriptions without providing any rationale for so doing. Furthermore, not all writers agree on what particular records should be preserved."<sup>5</sup> In summarizing the literature Meissner outlines several principles that govern the appraisal of financial

records. Firstly:

a sufficient combination of accounting records should be kept so as to document completely the revenues, expenses, and net financial picture of the business at any point in its existence, and also to document the accounting methods used by the business . . .<sup>6</sup>

This combination of records should "encompass the broadest range of the company's activities and the longest time span possible," and should comprise the most complete or compact form of financial records.<sup>7</sup>

Meissner describes two further principles that are peculiar to the appraisal of financial records. Financial records of a pre-1880 firm are usually small in extent "and can generally be preserved in their entirety."<sup>8</sup> The other principle is that "businesses routinely modify (accounting) record types, as well as certain procedures, to suit their own unique situation and record requirements."<sup>9</sup> Therefore similar financial records of different businesses may vary in content and function.

Bearing these principles in mind, Meissner describes five accounting records that should be preserved. These are the journal, the voucher register, the general ledger, the balance sheet, and the annual accounting record and audit.<sup>10</sup> The first three are detailed records, and the fourth and fifth are summary financial records. Meissner writes that the daily records of business transactions, such as daybooks, vouchers, invoices, cancelled cheques, and receipts, can be discarded when they are synchronous with these accounting records, since the information they contain will be recorded in the accounting records

in a much more compact form. When the contents of vouchers, invoices, freight bills and the like are not recorded in extant accounting records such as journals or ledgers, the difficulty of extracting information from daily records of business transactions is a factor to be considered. According to Meissner, the daily records of business transactions may be retained if the relevant accounting records are missing,<sup>11</sup> but Robert Lovett of the Baker Library states that such records as "cancelled cheques, bills of lading, proxies, and express receipts, may be discarded almost at once, for useful information could be obtained from them only at great expense."<sup>12</sup>

Pictorial records are an important form of documentation of business activities which are seldom discussed by archivists writing about business records and, according to American historian of technology Eugene Ferguson, have not always been considered worthy of preservation.<sup>13</sup> Catalogues, mechanical drawings, and advertisements provide information on the products or services offered by the business. Photographs or drawings of buildings and machinery, training films, and maps and blueprints showing the location and layout of a factory illustrate production processes. Such pictorial records may contain information or serve as evidence of a particular function that is not revealed in prose records or financial data. In some cases invoices which would otherwise be discarded because the financial information they contain is recorded in journals and voucher registers should be preserved as pictorial records. Many invoices of the nineteenth and early twentieth century are imprinted with a drawing of the factory or office of the firm

issuing the invoice. A file of such invoices may contain images of buildings that have since been altered or no longer stand, and could therefore be a valuable record of the architectural heritage of a town or region.

In an article published in 1979,<sup>14</sup> Francis X Blouin Jr. suggests that records may have a functional value, which can only be adequately determined if the appraiser has a thorough idea of the structure of the business which created the records. The functional records described by Blouin, such as cost accounting sheets given by a subordinate to a manager on a regular basis or memoranda sent from one office to another about routine matters, may "contain no descriptive information of either evidential or informational value. Rather, the record would indicate a functional relationship between one branch and another, or the record itself would indicate the requirement for a certain kind of information."<sup>15</sup> Such records may contain information of little value but the function served by the record itself is a piece of important information justifying its preservation.

This functional value proposed by Blouin falls within the definition of evidential value provided by T. R. Schellenberg in Modern Archives (1956). Schellenberg defines evidential value as "a value that depends on the importance of the matter evidenced, i.e. the organization and functioning of the agency that produced the records."<sup>16</sup> The significant point of Blouin's article is his identification of a category of records that by their existence document the organization and functioning of a company, but whose evidential value may not be

recognized by archivists who concentrate on preserving records containing descriptive information.

Blouin suggests that functional records, because they are routine records, be liberally sampled. Sampling modern business records as a means of reducing their bulk seems first to have been mentioned by Ralph M. Hower, who wrote in 1937 that routine records should be sampled "to yield a cross-section of the work . . . of a particular job or process."<sup>17</sup> A year later Holmes echoed Hower when he advocated sampling "administrative control records and operating records," such as train dispatchers' orders, at "significant intervals."<sup>18</sup> Holmes' suggestion that samples of routine business records be selected at important points in a company's history was refined by Robert Lovett, who wrote in 1952 that archivists should sample routine business records series using "a sampling based perhaps on the high and low points of the business cycle,"<sup>19</sup> or upon "uniform periods (such as a ten-year interval or selected points in the business cycle)"<sup>20</sup> The sampling proposed by Hower, Holmes, and, in the first instance, Lovett is qualitative sampling, requiring the archivist to concentrate on the significant points in a firm's history at the expense of records documenting the years of normal operation. Taking systematic samples of routine business records at ten year intervals as suggested by Lovett, or at other monthly or yearly intervals, avoids the subjectivity inherent in qualitative sampling and perhaps better reflects a firm's normal operations.

Archivists Francis X. Blouin Jr. and Larry Steck have suggested

that even important financial records of a business, such as the ledgers and journals identified by Meissner, may be too voluminous for a repository to preserve in their entirety. Blouin and Steck systematically sampled series of accounting records of a lumber company by census years and decade years as a means of reducing the volume of the collection.<sup>21</sup> Although information is lost when such action is taken, it may be better for archivists to follow the example of Blouin and Steck when presented with the opportunity of preserving a bulky collection of business records rather than plead lack of space and consign all the records to the garbage dump.

Oliver Holmes in 1938 suggested the microfilm camera be used as a tool for sampling records, and in 1976 Blouin and Steck used micro-filming as another method of reducing the bulk of the lumber company records they were preserving.<sup>22</sup> Canadian repositories do not seem to have used microfilming either to sample or to reduce the volume of business records they acquire. The results of the questionnaire described in Table XII of Chapter II indicate that only 19.6 per cent of the business records collections reported by Canadian repositories are one linear metre or more in extent, but do not take into account the size of collections of business records on microfilm. When the micro-filmed collections of business records at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections are converted into linear measurements (using the figure of 1.5 linear feet of documents per roll of film), 18.6 per cent of the business records

holdings of these four repositories are of one linear metre or more in extent (see Table XVII).

TABLE XVII

DIMENSIONAL CHARACTERISTICS OF BUSINESS RECORDS COLLECTIONS  
AT SELECTED REPOSITORIES, AFTER MICROFILM COLLECTIONS  
HAVE BEEN CONVERTED TO LINEAR METRES

Percentage of Collections of Each Size (in Linear Metres)

| <u>Repository</u> | <u>1m</u> | <u>1-9.9 m</u> | <u>10-99.9 m</u> | <u>100+ m</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|-------------------|-----------|----------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| PAC               | 264       | 54             | 33               | 4             | 355          |
| PABC              | 355       | 33             | 10               | 0             | 398          |
| Vancouver         | 72        | 17             | 2                | 0             | 91           |
| UBC               | 41        | 10             | 3                | 2             | 56           |
| Total             | 732       | 114            | 48               | 6             | 901          |
| Percent           | 81.2%     | 12.6%          | 5.3%             | 0.7%          | 99.8%*       |

\*Does not equal 100% due to rounding of the figures.

From the similarity of the proportion of business records collections one metre or more in extent reported nationally (19.6 per cent) and calculated for the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections (18.6 per cent), it appears that the four repositories, and Canadian archival institutions in general, have not been using microfilm as a technique for dealing with bulky business records. Rather, it seems microfilming has been used by Canadian repositories as a means of acquiring copies of small collections of business records held by other archival institutions or by the owners of the records, be they firms or individuals.

It also seems apparent from examination of the holdings of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections that a comprehensive collection of the records worthy of preservation of a business that was in operation for more than a decade or two would exceed one linear metre in extent. While the records worthy of preservation of a nineteenth century firm or a small twentieth century business may not surpass one linear metre if the business operated for only a few years, examination of the holdings of the four repositories named above indicate that this figure might be useful as a benchmark in determining the research potential of a collection of business records. Even the partial records of a small business may exceed one linear metre in extent, as is shown by the J. B. M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. collection held at the Public Archives of Canada.

J. B. M. St-Laurent et Fils ran a general store in rural Quebec. The company was a family business that operated for ninety seven years. Of 10.4 metres of material received by the repository, 2.08 metres were kept and the rest, consisting of duplicates, invoices, receipts, and cheque stubs, was destroyed. As can be seen from the inventory (Appendix D) the collection only partially documents the activities of the firm. The journals, which are "the principle accounting record of original entry"<sup>23</sup> and permit a chronological examination of the company's transactions, exist for only twenty-seven of the firm's ninety-seven years of existence. The ledgers, "the principal record of

final entry for all financial transactions" which permit the examination of the firm's activities "by way of the type of transaction involved,"<sup>24</sup> exist for only twenty years. Similarly, the collection contains correspondence for only twenty-five years.

J. B. M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. had a simple organizational structure, never expanding beyond a two-man operation, yet the incomplete records of the firm's affairs exceed one linear metre in extent. From this example one may conclude that an archival collection documenting in full, or even in a substantial fashion, the activities of a business which operated for more than a couple of decades would be greater than one linear metre in extent. The results of the questionnaire reported in Table XII of Chapter II indicate that over eighty percent of the business records collections in Canadian repositories are less than one linear metre in extent. Given the likelihood that over eighty percent of business records collections in Canadian archival institutions only partially document business activities, the contents of business collections of one metre or more in extent held at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections were examined to see to what extent such larger collections document the activities of Canadian businesses.

Table XVIII lists the major types of business records that archivists and others have described as being worthy of preservation, and for each repository indicates the percentage of collections of one linear metre or more in extent which contain each type of record. The

business records most commonly found in such collections at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections are detailed financial records of original or final entry (journals and ledgers), minutes of board of directors' meetings, and operational correspondence and reports. While minutes of board of directors' meetings contained in a collection are usually complete or nearly so, journals, ledgers, and correspondence are almost always present as incomplete runs, as may be seen, for example, from the inventory to the J. B. M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. collection (Appendix D). In light of the comment by American historian of technology Eugene Ferguson that repositories often do not preserve pictorial records, it is interesting to note that at these four repositories the proportion of business collections containing drawings, plans, maps, or photographs is on average similar to the proportion of collections containing such records as balance sheets, executive correspondence, or annual reports.

A particular business would not necessarily have created all of the types of records listed in Table XVIII during the course of its operations. J. B. M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg., for instance, did not create minutes of shareholders' meeting minutes or annual reports. Aside from journals, ledgers, and operational correspondence one would not expect all of the business collections within a repository to contain a particular type of record. Nevertheless, Table XVIII indicates that the majority of the business collections acquired by the

TABLE XVIII

TYPES OF RECORDS CONTAINED IN BUSINESS COLLECTIONS >1M:  
 PERCENTAGE OF COLLECTIONS HAVING EACH TYPE OF RECORD, BY REPOSITORY

|                                  | <u>U.B.C.</u> | <u>Vancouver</u> | <u>P.A.B.C.</u> | <u>P.A.C.</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|----------------------------------|---------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|--------------|
|                                  | <u>%</u>      | <u>%</u>         | <u>%</u>        | <u>%</u>      | <u>%</u>     |
| Journal                          | 53.3          | 47.4             | 27.9            | 29.7          | 33.3         |
| Voucher Register                 | 13.3          | 5.3              | 2.3             | 3.3           | 4.2          |
| Ledger                           | 53.3          | 47.4             | 34.9            | 32.9          | 36.9         |
| Balance Sheets                   | 20.0          | 21.1             | 9.3             | 7.7           | 10.7         |
| Audit/Annual Accounting<br>Sheet | 13.3          | 10.5             | 9.3             | 10.9          | 10.7         |
| Articles of Incorporation        | 6.6           | 5.3              | 9.3             | 6.6           | 7.1          |
| Liquidation Papers               | 6.6           | 0.0              | 0.0             | 0.0           | 0.6          |
| Constitution                     | 6.6           | 0.0              | 2.3             | 1.1           | 1.8          |
| Bylaws                           | 6.6           | 0.0              | 2.3             | 6.6           | 4.8          |
| Stock ledger/list                | 6.6           | 10.5             | 13.9            | 14.3          | 13.1         |
| Stock transfer ledger            | 0.0           | 5.3              | 0.0             | 1.1           | 1.2          |
| Board of Directors' Minutes      | 20.0          | 42.1             | 18.6            | 25.3          | 25.0         |
| Shareholders' Minutes            | 0.0           | 0.0              | 6.9             | 7.7           | 5.9          |
| Committee Minutes                | 6.6           | 5.3              | 2.3             | 1.1           | 2.4          |
| Departmental Minutes             | 6.6           | 5.3              | 0.0             | 0.0           | 1.2          |
| Policy/Procedure Manuals         | 0.0           | 0.0              | 2.3             | 2.2           | 1.8          |
| Annual Reports                   | 20.0          | 15.8             | 6.9             | 13.2          | 12.5         |
| Operational Reports              | 53.3          | 21.1             | 23.3            | 30.8          | 29.8         |
| Executive Correspondence         | 6.5           | 36.8             | 11.6            | 7.7           | 11.9         |
| Operational Correspondence       | 86.6          | 52.6             | 65.1            | 78.0          | 72.6         |
| Drawings/Plans                   | 26.6          | 21.1             | 9.3             | 12.1          | 13.4         |
| Photos                           | 20.0          | 21.1             | 4.7             | 21.9          | 17.3         |
| Maps                             | 26.6          | 10.5             | 2.3             | 6.6           | 7.7          |
| Catalogues                       | 6.5           | 15.8             | 0.0             | 4.4           | 4.8          |

four repositories are not comprehensive collections of business records, especially since such records as journals and ledgers, when present in a collection, are seldom present in complete runs.

Besides the business records listed in Table XVIII that archivists have singled out as generally being worthy of preservation, the business collections of one linear metre or more examined at the four repositories contain a wide variety of other records, including businessmen's personal records which are sometimes more voluminous than the business records they accompany (see Table XIX). The personal records of businessmen and their families are of value as they complement the records of the enterprises with which they were involved. Such records may shed light on the personalities behind the business activities documented by business records, and on the motives for particular actions undertaken by businessmen.

The business records listed under Business Records: Column 1 in Table XIX are mostly operational and housekeeping records, although diaries, company publications, personnel records, labour contracts, and other contracts may contain information on company policies or procedures, and records such as budgets and tenders for contracts may indicate the priorities of a firm and the plans it had for future endeavours. The records listed under Business Records: Column 1 in Table XIX may complement the documentation of a business that is provided by the records listed in Table XVIII, so the archivist appraising the types of records in Business Records: Column 1 has to decide to what level of detail he wishes to document the activities of a firm.

TABLE XIX

## FURTHER TYPES OF BUSINESS RECORDS PRESERVED BY REPOSITORIES

| <u>Personal Records</u>       | <u>Business Records</u>                    |                    |
|-------------------------------|--|--------------------|
|                               | Column 1                                   | Column 2           |
| correspondence                | personnel records                          | day books          |
| diaries                       | labour contracts                           | waste books        |
| wills                         | contracts                                  | daily sales sheets |
| articles (press<br>clippings) | tenders                                    | receipt books      |
| speeches                      | specifications                             | invoices           |
| bank books                    | budgets                                    | orders             |
| household accounts            | inventories                                | cancelled cheques  |
|                               | deeds                                      | freight bills      |
|                               | mortgages                                  | customer lists     |
|                               | leases                                     | price lists        |
|                               | licenses                                   |                    |
|                               | insurance policies                         |                    |
|                               | diaries, daily logs and<br>field notebooks |                    |
|                               | scrapbooks                                 |                    |
|                               | company publications                       |                    |
|                               | housekeeping correspondence                |                    |
|                               | housekeeping reports                       |                    |

Business Records: Column 2 of Table XIX lists records whose contents may be duplicated or summarized in a more compact form. Day books, customer lists, freight bills and other papers whose contents are recorded in accounting records of original or final entry need not be preserved. However, there are often gaps in runs of journals and ledgers, and as Table XVIII indicates, for many business collections accounting records of original or final entry do not exist. When journals and ledgers exist only in incomplete runs or are non-existent, an archivist appraising a body of business records must decide whether the amount of information that can be extracted from day books, freight

TABLE XX

TYPES OF RECORDS CONTAINED IN BUSINESS COLLECTIONS >1M;  
 PERCENTAGE OF COLLECTIONS HAVING EACH TYPE OF RECORD,  
 BY STATUS OF CREATOR

|                               | <u>Defunct Firms*</u> | <u>Active Firms</u> |
|-------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Journal                       | 33.6%                 | 32.7%               |
| Voucher Register              | 5.3                   | 1.8                 |
| Ledger                        | 37.2                  | 36.4                |
| Balance Sheets                | 9.7                   | 12.7                |
| Audit/Annual Accounting Sheet | 11.5                  | 9.1                 |
| Articles of Incorporation     | 7.1                   | 7.3                 |
| Liquidation Papers            | 0.9                   | 0.0                 |
| Constitution                  | 0.0                   | 5.5                 |
| Bylaws                        | 2.7                   | 9.1                 |
| Stock ledger/list             | 11.5                  | 16.4                |
| Stock transfer ledger         | 1.8                   | 0.0                 |
| Board of Directors' Minutes   | 23.0                  | 29.1                |
| Shareholders' Minutes         | 2.7                   | 12.7                |
| Committee Minutes             | 0.0                   | 7.3                 |
| Departmental Minutes          | 0.9                   | 1.8                 |
| Policy/Procedure Manuals      | 0.0                   | 5.5                 |
| Annual Reports                | 9.7                   | 18.2                |
| Operational Reports           | 28.3                  | 32.7                |
| Executive Correspondence      | 11.5                  | 12.7                |
| Operational Correspondence    | 76.9                  | 63.6                |
| Drawings/Plans                | 12.4                  | 16.4                |
| Photos                        | 13.3                  | 25.5                |
| Maps                          | 5.3                   | 12.7                |
| Catalogues                    | 4.4                   | 5.5                 |

---

\*Of a total number of 168 Business Collections at U.B.C., Vancouver, P.A.B.C. and P.A.C., 113 collections were the records of defunct firms, and 55 the records of active firms.

bills, invoices and the like justifies sampling or preserving in their entirety such bulky records.

Table XVIII indicates that the majority of business collections of one linear metre or more in extent held at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections only partially document business activities. To determine whether this may be due to the poor survival rate of business records of defunct firms or to an unwillingness on the part of firms to give their records to a public archival institution, the total number of business collections of one linear metre or more in extent held by the four repositories was divided into two categories, collections of records of defunct firms and of active firms, and the contents of these collections were analysed, as shown in Table XX.

A greater percentage of business records collections of active firms contain Shareholders' Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and photographs. Similarly, more collections of records of defunct firms contain operational correspondence. However, the difference between the number of collections of active and defunct firms containing these four types of records is only in the order of ten per cent, and for the other types of records is even smaller. From Table XX one may conclude that the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections have generally been unsuccessful in acquiring comprehensive collections of records of both defunct and active firms.

Table XVIII to XX further indicate that the business records collections acquired by the four repositories tend to document the operational aspects of business rather than executive and policy making activities.

As reported in Chapter II, over three quarters of the collections in Canadian repositories reported in the questionnaire returns are less than one linear metre in extent. It seems many of these smaller business collections, and especially those collections less than thirty centimetres in extent, do not provide much evidence on how individual businesses operate. A fragmentary collection consisting of a single ledger or a day book, or a couple of centimetres of correspondence sheds little light on a firm's affairs. Such a collection merely serves as an indication that the firm existed. The study of the holdings of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections indicates that most collections of one linear metre or more in extent are also incomplete records of business activities. If one extrapolates from the situation at these four repositories, it would appear that the majority of business records collections held in Canadian repositories only partially document the activities of the firms whose records they contain.

Rather than acquiring fragmentary business collections from a donor here and a donor there, archival institutions need to develop strategies to preserve comprehensive collections of business records which show how businesses function. Since the 1930s, however, archivists in North America have realized that repositories cannot cope

with the volume of records produced by modern integrated corporations, and have advocated the establishment of corporate archives by businesses themselves. The most recent person to express this view is Christopher Hives:

Given the tremendous volume of corporate material produced annually, publicly-sponsored institutions are ill-equipped to carry out the massive collection programmes necessary to achieve this objective. The obvious alternative involves the establishment of in-house archival programmes, particularly within the larger corporations.<sup>25</sup>

Unfortunately, many businesses, and especially small firms, do not have the wherewithal, space, or staff to establish corporate archives programs. While continuing their efforts to persuade larger corporations to set up corporate archives, archivists might consider collecting the records of contemporary small businesses, such as farmers, corner grocery stores, plumbers, and small manufacturing companies to ensure that each segment of Canada's economy is documented.

Given the multiplicity of types of small businesses, archival institutions will be faced with the problem of deciding which firms' records should be preserved. In 1952 Robert Lovett proposed that archival institutions should seek out the records of companies "best typifying the industries representative of [their] region"<sup>26</sup> as a means of addressing the problem of the enormous volume of modern business records being created. Nicholas Burckel repeated this suggestion in 1980, adding that the selection process should include the types of businesses "which have been most significant in the development

of the community."<sup>27</sup> If Canadian archival institutions were to adopt the suggestions of Lovett and Burckel as selection criteria for small business, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, for instance, might focus its efforts on acquiring the records of contract logging firms or tree planting companies.

What of the corner grocers, the restaurateurs, the electricians, and the dentists, who are not special to one region but are found in communities across the country? It would be impossible for a city, university, or provincial archives, or even for the Public Archives of Canada, to collect records of every type of storekeeper, tradesman, or professional, yet these small businessmen make an important contribution to Canada's economy. Acquiring a sample of the records of such small businessmen would be difficult. Businessmen are often reluctant to part with their "dead records" for fear of tarnishing their public image, attracting the attention of government to possible misdoings, or making information available to competitors, so many businessmen would be unwilling to give these records to a repository.

Whatever methods are developed for determining which types of small businesses should have their records preserved in archival repositories, the archivists concerned will have to be activists, as they cannot expect firms to hand over their records unbidden. Archivists must publicize their desire to obtain business records, and approach the firms whose records they wish to acquire. Where possible, agreements with firms giving records to a repository should provide for further accessions of records on a regular basis. To allay fears of injudicious

public disclosure of a firm's affairs, an archivist may have to accept fairly onerous restrictions on access, provided he can secure the agreement of the businessman or firm for the removal of these restrictions after a certain period of time.

The business records collections held at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia Special Collections consist mostly of operational and housekeeping records. While over a third of the collections at these repositories contain journals and ledgers, these and other accounting records such as balance sheets are rarely to be found in complete runs. It seems, therefore, that these four repositories have been unable to adhere to Dennis Meissner's principle of preserving "a sufficient combination of accounting records . . . to document completely the revenues, expenses, and net financial picture of the business at any point in its existence."<sup>28</sup> The appraisal of pictorial records of businesses is seldom discussed in archival literature but the situation at the four repositories with regard to the preservation of pictorial business records seems not as bad as that painted by the American historian Eugene Ferguson (see Table XVIII). Little evidence of sampling of routine operational records as advocated by Oliver Holmes and Robert Lovett was found when looking at the business records holdings of the four repositories.

Examination of the business records collections held at the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and University of British Columbia

Special Collections indicates that business collections under one linear metre in extent, and especially those of thirty centimetres or less, are fragmentary, and even collections of one linear metre or more in extent tend to be incomplete records of businesses' activities. There is no significant difference in the comprehensiveness of the collections of defunct or active firms. In the case of defunct companies, the four repositories have probably acquired the business records after the records have already suffered some years of neglect and destruction. Active companies, on the other hand, are generally unwilling to part with all their records because they still require some of them in order to conduct business, and because they are often fearful of the consequences of making their records publicly available.

It appears that the characteristics of business collections held by the four repositories are similar to those of business records collections held by other Canadian archival institutions. Furthermore, three other institutions, Queen's University Archives, McGill University Archives, and the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, reported in their questionnaire returns (see Chapter II) that the majority of their business records holdings consist of collections of thirty centimetres or less in extent. It would seem, therefore, that not only the four repositories discussed in this chapter, but also Canadian archival institutions in general, tend to acquire fragmentary or at best incomplete collections of business records.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Edie Hedlin, Business Archives: An Introduction (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1978), p. 16; Ralph M. Hower, "The Preservation of Business Records," Bulletin of the Business Historical Society, 11 (1937), 39, 49; Robert W. Lovett, "The Appraisal of Older Business Records," AA, 15 (1952), 233-34.

<sup>2</sup>Hedlin, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup>Dennis E. Meissner, "The Evaluation of Modern Business Accounting Records," The Midwestern Archivist, 5, no. 2 (1981), 75.

<sup>4</sup>Oliver W. Holmes, "The Evaluation and Preservation of Business Records," AA, 1 (1938), 183.

<sup>5</sup>Meissner, p. 75.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 75-76.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 77.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 76.

<sup>10</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 77-98.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 98.

<sup>12</sup>Lovett, p. 234.

<sup>13</sup>Laurence J. Kipp, ed., Source Materials for Business and Economic History (Boston: Baker Library Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967), 14.

<sup>14</sup>Francis X. Blouin, Jr., "A New Perspective on the Appraisal of Business Records: A Review," AA, 42 (1979), 312-20.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 320.

<sup>16</sup>T. R. Schellenberg, Modern Archives Principles and Techniques (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975 [1956]), 139.

<sup>17</sup>Ralph M. Hower, "The Preservation of Business Records," Bulletin of the Business Historical Society, 11 (1937), 53-54.

<sup>18</sup>Holmes, p. 183.

<sup>19</sup>Lovett, p. 233.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 234.

<sup>21</sup>Larry Steck and Francis X. Blouin, Jr., "Hannah Lay and Company: Sampling the Records of a Century of Lumbering in Michigan," AA, 39 (1976), 17-18.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 19; Holmes, p. 183.

<sup>23</sup>Meissner, p. 77.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>25</sup>Christopher L. Hives, "Business Archives: Historical Developments and Future Prospects," (M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985), p. 121.

<sup>26</sup>Lovett, p. 233.

<sup>27</sup>Nicholas G. Burckel, "Business Archives in a University Setting: Status and Prospect," College and Research Libraries, 41 (1980), 232.

<sup>28</sup>Meissner, pp. 75-76.

## CHAPTER IV

## ARCHIVES: THE SOURCE OF BUSINESS HISTORY IN CANADA?

It is surprising that in Canada, a country which owes more than most to private enterprise and initiative, there should have been a comparative neglect of business and entrepreneurial history.<sup>1</sup>

This statement was made in 1972, but there is still some truth in it. Canadian historians became interested in the activities of business enterprises at a later date than did their American colleagues. The historical study of business activity in Canada was begun by political economists during the first decades of the twentieth century. Much Canadian business history has been written by political economists to support either the staples thesis or the Laurentian thesis of Canadian economic development, though increasingly historians are conducting regional studies of business activities, are analysing the social backgrounds of businessmen and labourers, and are writing detailed biographies and corporate histories. Analysis of the sources used by these historians reveals a dependence upon secondary sources. Some historians of Canadian business base their studies almost exclusively upon primary sources, but the majority rely heavily upon published monographs, journal articles, and newspapers.

Business history has been widely defined by historians. In its narrowest sense the term applies to studies or biographies of individual firms or entrepreneurs. More broadly speaking, business history

includes studies of particular activities such as marketing or manufacturing, or of "quantitative statistical surveys of the growth of particular trades and industries."<sup>2</sup> Business history may also be concerned with "the interrelationships between business on the one hand and economic development, governmental policy, and social change on the other."<sup>3</sup> Business history, therefore, is linked to economic history, economics, political history, and social history, and historians studying those fields have contributed to our knowledge of Canadian business.<sup>4</sup>

The first scholars to apply an historical approach to the study of Canada's economy and business system were political economists. Adam Shortt and Harold Innis believed that the contemporary Canadian economy could only be understood by studying its historical development. Harold Innis established the staples thesis as the dominant approach to Canadian economic history. Essentially, this thesis states that Canadian economic activity has tended to focus on the production of staples for a highly specialized external manufacturing community. Colonial and post-Confederation Canada sold staple products (fish, fur, timber, wheat, and minerals) to external metropolitan centres in France, Great Britain, and the United States of America and bought manufactured goods from these centres. The Laurentian thesis, which developed from the staples thesis, posited that the commercial and transportation network established to exploit staple resources determined Canada's economic and political development.

Until the 1960s the staples and Laurentian theses dominated

Canadian economic and business history. The fur trade and, to a lesser extent, the railway industry, received the greatest attention from historians, whereas Canada's manufacturing industries were neglected. The Hudson's Bay Company was the object of more studies than any other Canadian corporation,<sup>5</sup> a fact lamented by Hugh Aitken in 1964:

One could wish that one-tenth of the energies that have been lavished on the arcane details of the Canadian fur trade had been diverted to other sectors of the economy. Where, for example is our history of trade and shipping on the Great Lakes? Where are our studies of nineteenth-century Canadian government finance? The history of the Canadian canal system is still to be written; the beginnings of secondary manufacturing in Canada are shrouded in obscurity; our ideas of the nineteenth-century Canadian business cycle remain vague and impressionistic; and our statistics of price and output movements are spotty and vague.<sup>6</sup>

In the early 1970s historiographers echoed the complaints of Hugh Aitken that not enough research was being done on the development of Canadian shipping, financial institutions, and business methods, however the fur trade and railways still retained the interest of many historians.<sup>7</sup> David S. MacMillan called for "more detailed biographical studies of business leaders--their background, motivation, operating methods, and their relations with each other."<sup>8</sup> During the 1970s a large number of studies of Canadian businessmen, businesses, and industries were produced, and historians interested in labour, social, and political history also shed light on the development of business activity,<sup>9</sup> so that by 1984 Tom Traves was able to state that "over the last ten years our knowledge of the Canadian business system has increased enormously."<sup>10</sup> However, Traves and Frederick Armstrong

have complained that the paucity of sources of business records has hindered the study of business activity in Canada.<sup>11</sup>

Do historians Armstrong and Traves have a valid complaint? Several archival repositories in Canada include business records in their acquisition policies and some repositories have established programs to acquire business records (see Chapter II), but others have not taken special steps to preserve business records. The Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, for example, in reply to the questionnaire discussed in Chapter II, explained that its lack of interest in acquiring business records was due to restrictions of space and the "comparatively lower priority of the (business) manuscript group, in terms of demand."<sup>13</sup> On the one hand then, there are historians unhappy about the small number of business records available to them, and on the other there are at least some archivists who make no particular effort to acquire business records because they feel historians are not especially interested in using business records as sources for their research. In light of these opposing views, an analysis was made of the sources used by historians publishing articles and monographs between 1975 and 1984 on Canadian business history in the broad sense of the term, to see whether historians make use of the business records collections that are available to them in Canadian archival repositories.

Seven journals were selected as being likely to contain articles on Canadian business history: Business History Review, Journal of Economic History, Explorations in Economic History, Canadian Historical

Review, Canadian Historical Association Historical Papers, Journal of Canadian Studies, and BC Studies. For the years 1975 to 1984 these seven journals contain eighty-one articles that discuss particular businesses, businessmen, or the "interrelationships between business on the one hand and economic development, governmental policy, and social change on the other."<sup>14</sup> Articles in journals often represent the leading edge of research in a field, but are not always of sufficient length to present a detailed analysis of a subject. For this reason, sources referred to in twenty-seven monographs reviewed in the Business History Review and the Canadian Historical Review between 1975 and 1984 were also analysed to complement the findings obtained from the study of the journal articles.

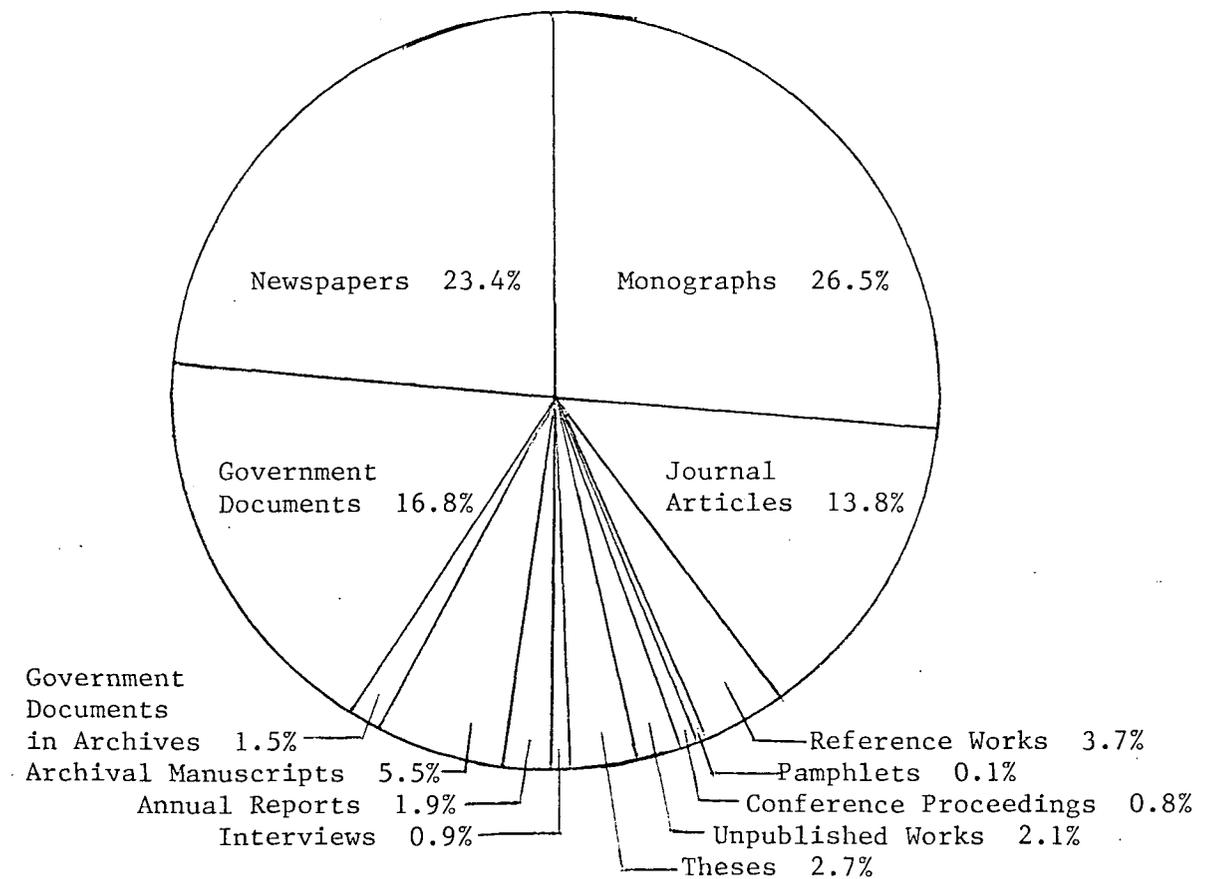
Rather than count every single citation, considerations of time dictated that each specific item cited in an article or monograph would be counted as one reference. If an author cited the same journal article twice, the two citations were counted as one reference. Similarly, if the author cited various files within an archival collection, all citations to that archival collection were counted as one reference. Newspapers, magazines, reference books such as city directories, and annual reports of companies posed a problem, since they are published daily, monthly, or annually. The category "newspapers" includes magazines, and the category "annual reports" includes other corporate publications, such as prospectuses and reports published and distributed to the public, that constituted too small a group of sources to merit a separate classification. In the analysis of the sources used for

journal articles, the newspapers, magazines, reference books and annual reports used as sources were counted as separate references each time a separate issue was cited. Two citations within an article to the Vancouver Sun of April 2, 1980, for example, counted as one reference whereas citations in an article to the Vancouver Sun of April 2, 1980 and June 4, 1980, counted as two references. This method proved impractical for analysing the sources used by authors of monographs, so all citations in monographs to a particular source were counted as one reference regardless of the date of issue. Consequently the percentages of references in monographs to newspapers and magazines, reference books, and annual reports depicted in Figures 4 to 6 are lower than they would be if the same method of counting references as that used for journal articles had been adopted.

The method adopted of counting references to sources rather than citations is unsatisfactory in that it provides little indication of the value to an author of a particular type of source. Tom Naylor, for instance, in the second volume of The History of Canadian Business 1897-1914 (1975)<sup>15</sup> refers to four archival collections but bases his work largely on 220 monographs and 102 government documents. David Alexander, on the other hand, in The Decay of the Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade 1935-1965 (1977)<sup>16</sup> refers to only thirteen monographs and twenty-two government documents, and bases much of his book upon the records of one company, Newfoundland Fish Exporters Limited. The reference analysis presented in this chapter does not make qualitative judgements about the varying amounts

FIGURE 1

REFERENCE SOURCES IN ALL TYPES OF  
BUSINESS HISTORY JOURNAL ARTICLES★



\* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding of the numbers.

FIGURE 2

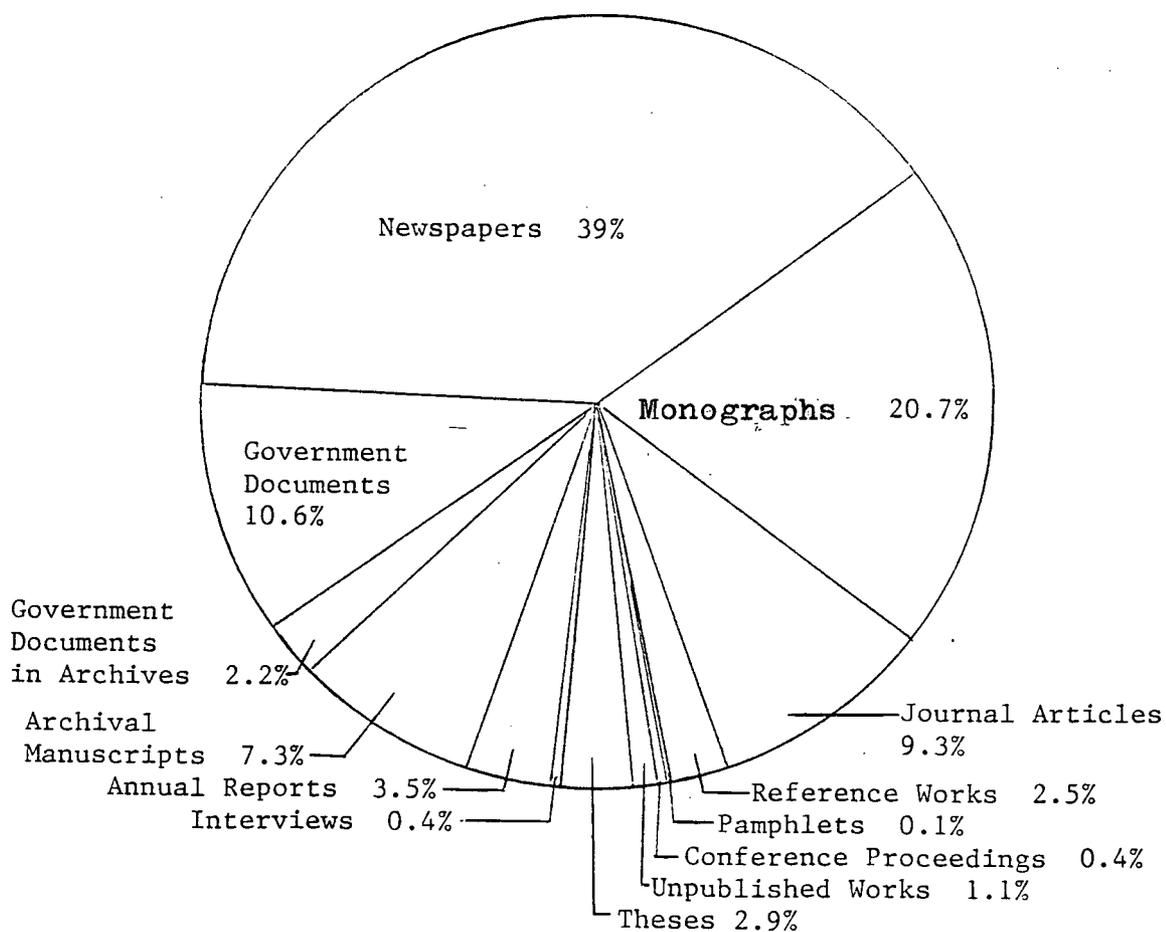
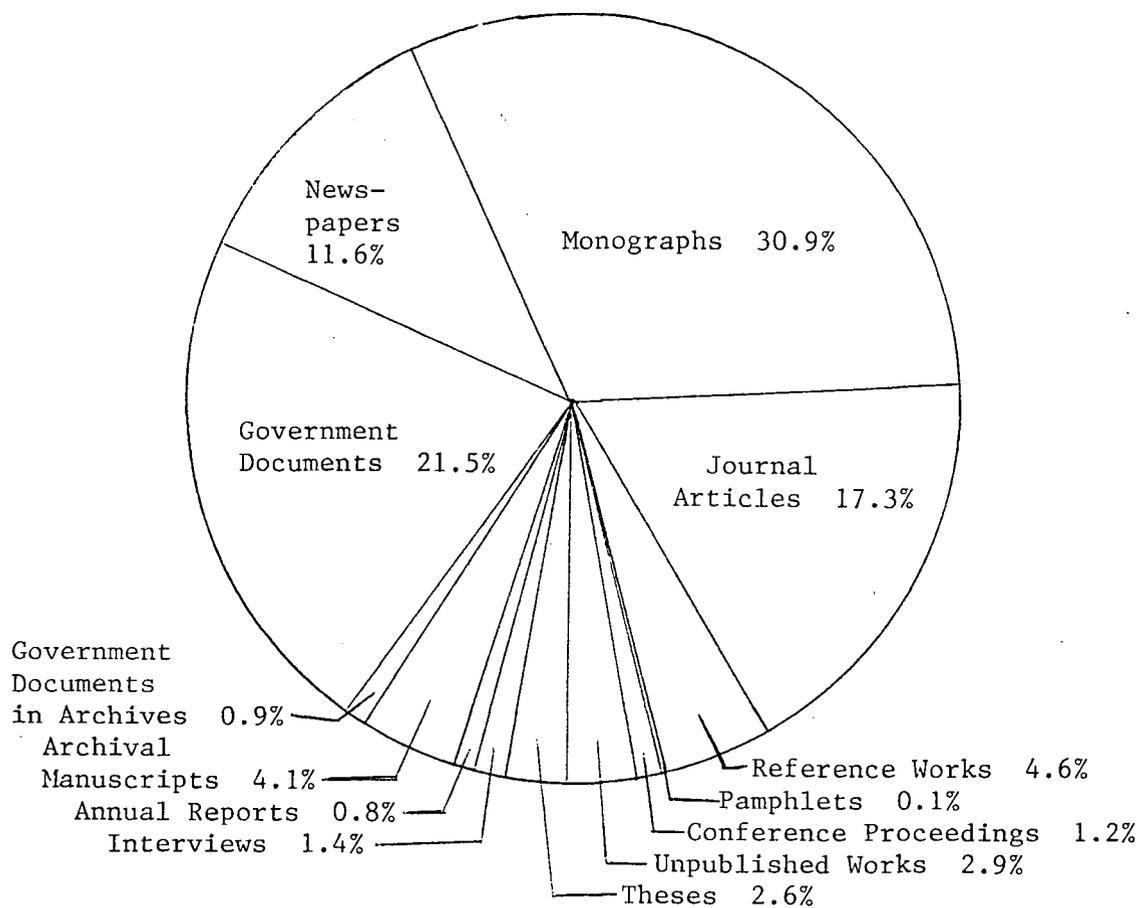
REFERENCE SOURCES IN JOURNAL ARTICLES:  
BIOGRAPHIES AND CORPORATE HISTORIES

FIGURE 3

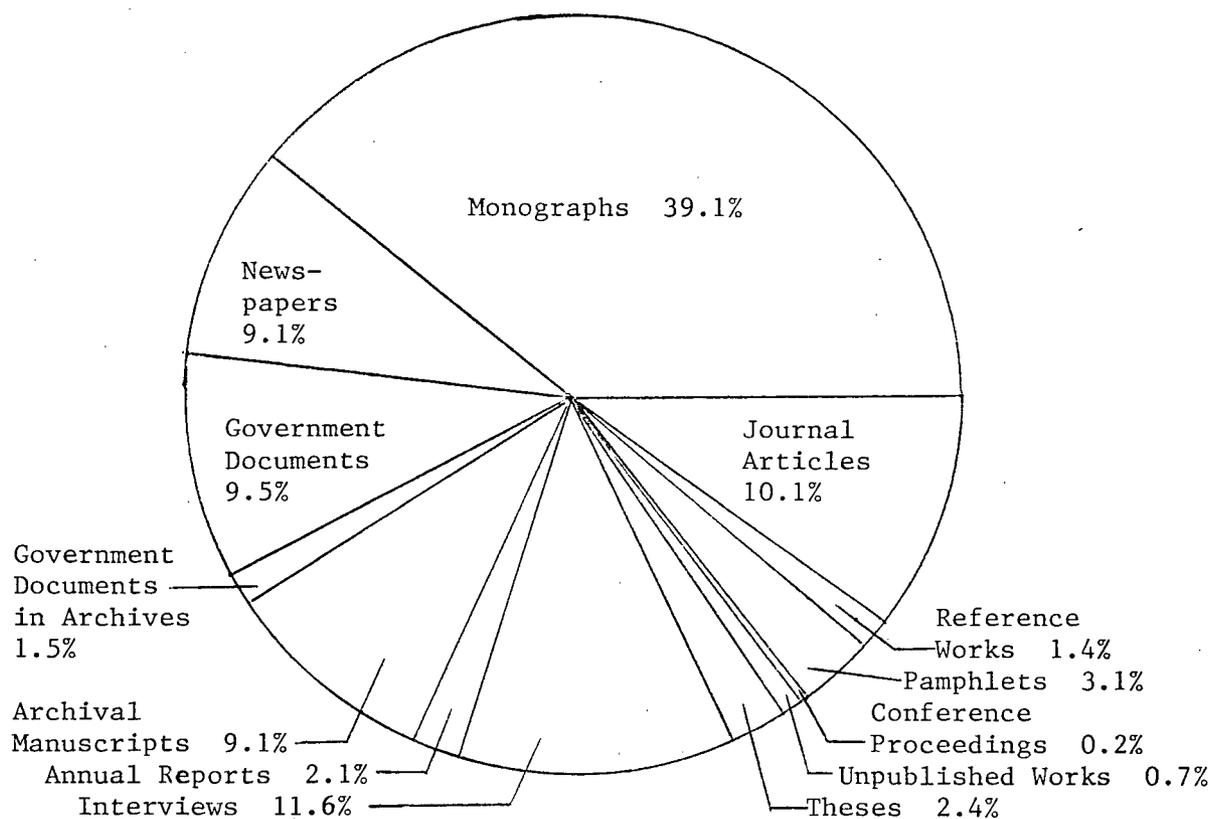
REFERENCE SOURCES IN JOURNAL ARTICLES:  
GENERAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC HISTORY\*



\* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding of the numbers.

FIGURE 4

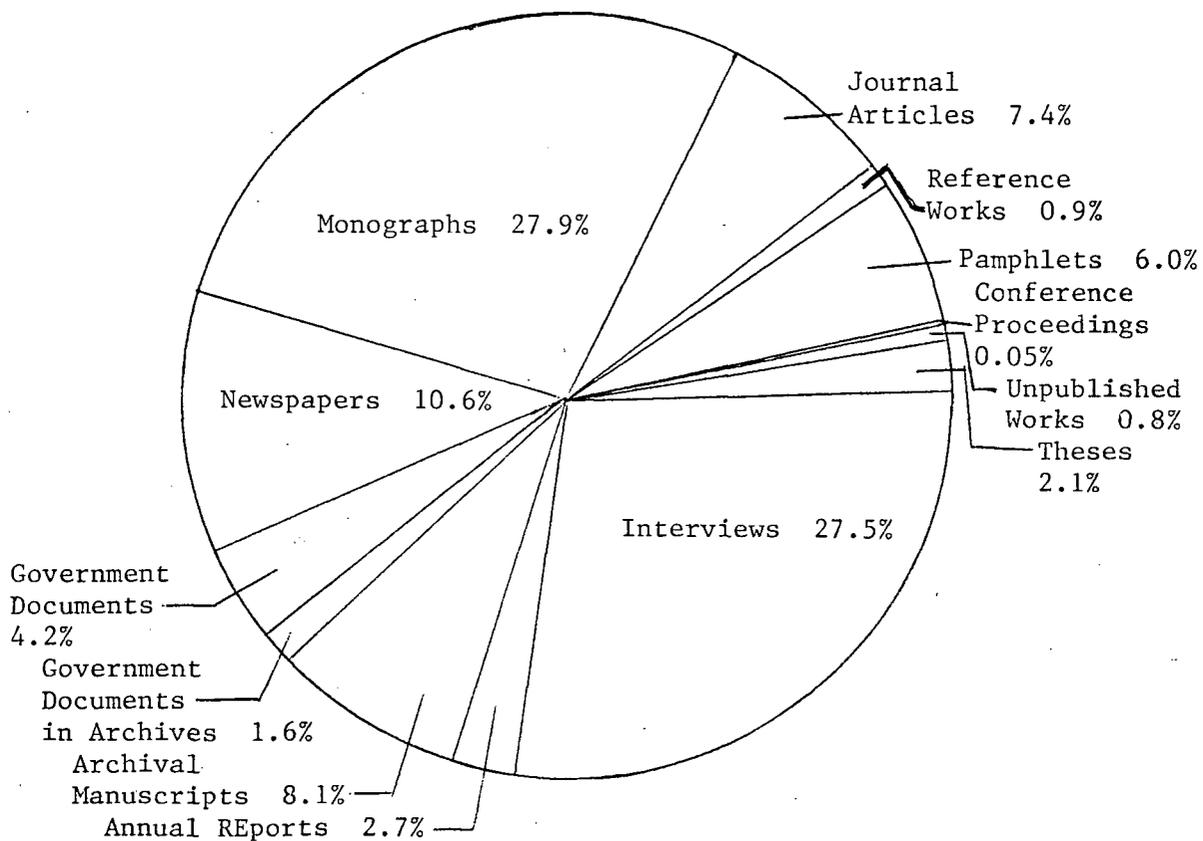
REFERENCE SOURCES IN ALL TYPES OF  
BUSINESS HISTORY MONOGRAPHS\*



\* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding of the numbers.

FIGURE 5

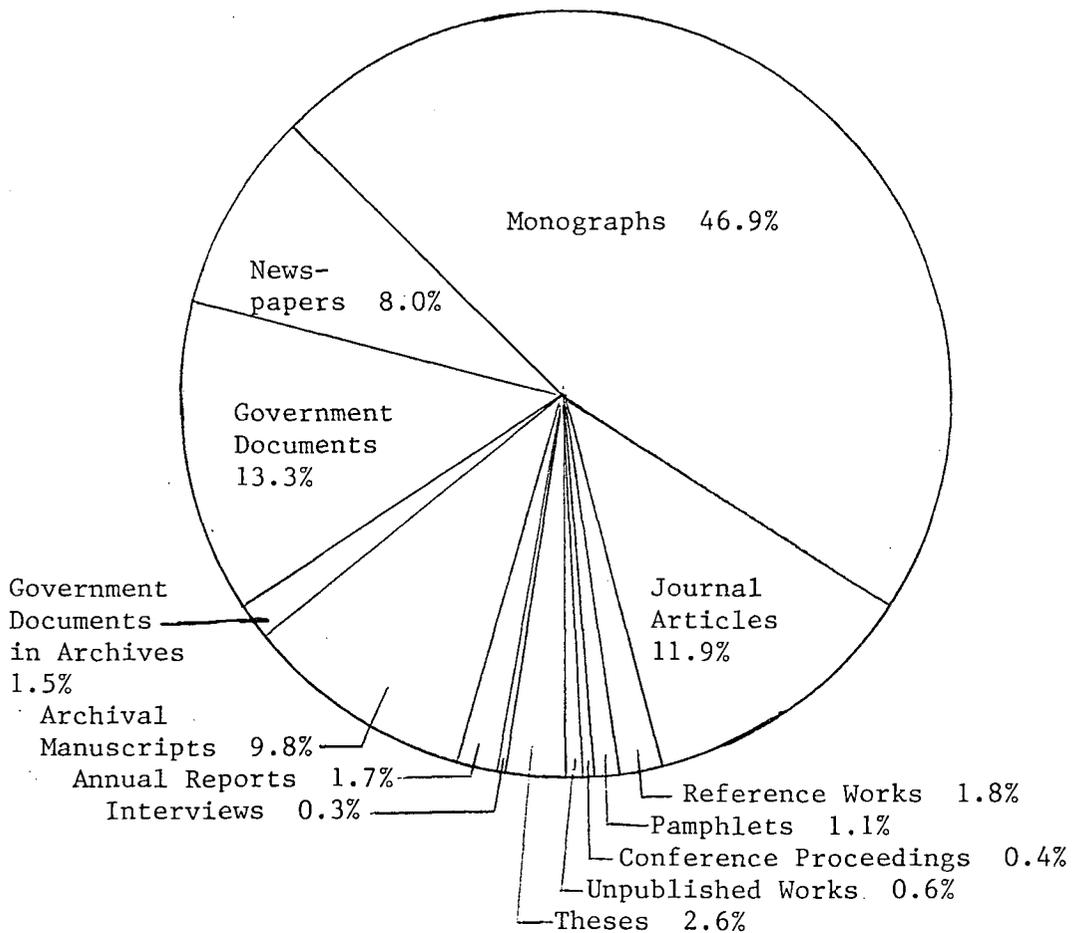
REFERENCE SOURCES IN MONOGRAPHS:  
BIOGRAPHIES AND CORPORATE HISTORIES\*



\* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding of the numbers.

FIGURE 6

REFERENCE SOURCES IN MONOGRAPHS:  
GENERAL BUSINESS AND ECONOMIC HISTORY\*



\* Percentages do not add up to 100% due to rounding of the numbers.

of use scholars make of particular types of sources. Rather it indicates the percentage of each type of source consulted by authors of monographs or articles about Canadian business history.

It is readily apparent from Figures 1 and 4 that the percentage of references to manuscript collections in journal articles or monographs on Canadian business history is low. Even fewer references pertain to business records collections. Table XXI indicates that over twelve per cent of the references to archival manuscript collections are references to the collections of papers of politicians, such as John A. Macdonald and Wilfrid Laurier. Since businessmen and business firms

TABLE XXI

REFERENCES TO MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS, DIVIDED  
ACCORDING TO THE CREATOR OF COLLECTION

|                  | <u>Comp-<br/>anies</u> | <u>Busi-<br/>ness-<br/>men</u> | <u>Politi-<br/>cians</u> | <u>Other<br/>Orga-<br/>niza-<br/>tions</u> | <u>Other<br/>Ind-<br/>ivid-<br/>uals</u> | <u>Uni-<br/>dent-<br/>ified</u> | <u>Total*</u> |
|------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Journal Articles | 35.8%                  | 26.0%                          | 12.1%                    | 5.6%                                       | 1.9%                                     | 18.6%                           | 100.0%        |
| Monographs       | 15.1%                  | 36.2%                          | 13.9%                    | 7.6%                                       | 4.4%                                     | 22.7%                           | 99.9%         |

\*Total does not equal 100% due to rounding of the figures.

may have had connections with politicians or political parties, or may have been involved in commercial transactions with the government, it is to be expected that scholars studying the affairs of a company or businessman will use politicians' papers as sources of information. Similarly, researchers delving into the private life of a businessman or the

philanthropic activities of a firm may make use of the records of non-business organizations such as hospitals, universities, and charitable organizations, and the papers of individuals unconnected with the business or political world, such as clergymen. Approximately twenty per cent of the references to manuscript collections were to the papers of individuals whose profession could not be positively determined, although it seems probable that most of these individuals were businessmen. It appears, therefore, that roughly three quarters of the references to manuscript collections are references to the papers of firms or businessmen. Keeping this in mind, it is clear from Figures 1 and 4 that even when annual reports and other corporate publications are added to the references made to manuscript collections, records documenting the activities of businessmen and firms are consulted to a far less degree than are government documents, newspapers or secondary sources.

Monographs, due to their greater length, provide more scope for detailed analysis of events, individuals, and corporate bodies than do journal articles. However, monographs do not appear to contain a substantially greater proportion of references to manuscript collections and corporate publications than do journal articles, and if references to newspapers had been counted in the same manner for monographs as they were for journal articles, it is likely that the proportion of references to manuscript collections in monographs and in journal articles would be similar.

Journal articles focussing upon a particular firm or businessman

contain double the number of references to corporate publications and manuscript collections than do articles concerned with the history of an entire industry or economy (Figures 2 and 3). This phenomenon is not nearly so marked in the case of monographs (Figures 5 and 6). Interviews with current and former managers, employees and acquaintances of businessmen were an important source for biographical and corporate history monographs (Figure 5), but were rarely used by scholars writing monographs on more general business history topics (Figure 6). An author may have had to rely on interviews because he or she was denied access to corporate or personal records.<sup>17</sup> Writers of biographies and corporate histories who had access to family papers and corporate files still made use of interviews, perhaps because interviews reveal personal information, opinions, and anecdotes that have never been recorded on paper. In light of the fact that interviews account for over a quarter of the sources referred to in biographical and corporate history monographs, archivists responsible for preserving the records of firms, and especially corporate archivists, should seriously consider oral history programs encompassing interviews with important executive officers and employees of long standing with the company as a means of enhancing the corporate record.

Over eighty per cent of the manuscript collections referred to by the authors of journal articles and monographs on Canadian business history were housed in public archival institutions (Table XXII). The manuscript collections included under the heading "Corporate Archives" include manuscript collections in corporate archives such as those

TABLE XXII

## LOCATION OF MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS REFERRED TO BY AUTHORS

|                  | <u>Public<br/>Repositories</u> | <u>Corporate<br/>Archives</u> | <u>Private<br/>Individual</u> | <u>Total</u> |
|------------------|--------------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------|
| Journal Articles | 87.8%                          | 8.0%                          | 4.2%                          | 100%         |
| Monographs       | 85.6%                          | 13.9%                         | 0.5%                          | 100%         |

of the Bank of Nova Scotia and the United Church of Canada, and records held by firms or non-business organizations that have not established corporate archives but merely preserve their old files. Manuscript collections held by private individuals include papers in the possession of descendants of businessmen, and materials collected by academics.

Figures 1 and 4 indicate that government records housed in archival repositories are rarely referred to by historians of Canadian business. The government documents most commonly referred to by these historians are published reports of commissions and investigatory bodies, sessional papers, statutes and parliamentary debates. All records housed in archival repositories, whether they are government records or the records of private individuals and firms, and whether they are housed in public or corporate archives, amount to only seven per cent of sources referred to in the journal articles examined, and to approximately ten per cent of sources referred to in the monographs used for this study. Comparing these percentages with the findings of a reference analysis of the Canadian Historical Review conducted by Tom

Nisonger (see Table XXIII), it appears that historians of Canadian business history are unusually infrequent users of archival materials.

TABLE XXIII

REFERENCES IN THE CANADIAN HISTORICAL REVIEW, 1979

| <u>Source</u>           | <u>Number</u> | <u>Percentage</u> |
|-------------------------|---------------|-------------------|
| Archival Documents      | 572           | 49.7              |
| Monographs              | 324           | 28.1              |
| Newspapers              | 108           | 9.4               |
| Serials                 | 96            | 8.3               |
| Government Documents    | 19            | 1.6               |
| Theses                  | 13            | 1.1               |
| Reference Works         | 9             | 0.8               |
| Conference Papers       | 5             | 0.4               |
| Personal Interviews     | 4             | 0.3               |
| Unpublished Manuscripts | 2             | 0.2               |
| Total                   | 1,152         | 99.9              |

Source: Tom Nisonger, "The Sources of Canadian History," Manitoba Library Association Bulletin, 11, no. 3 (June 1981), Table 1, p. 33.

Nisonger, in analysing all of the articles published in the Canadian Historical Review in 1979, found that records housed in archival repositories accounted for almost fifty per cent of all references, whereas only 1.6 per cent of sources referred to were published government documents such as statutes, reports of commissions, and parliamentary debates. While it may be imprudent to draw hard and fast conclusions from a study of articles in a single volume of a journal, the large disparity between the findings of Nisonger reported in Table XXIII and the findings recorded in Figures 1 and 4 indicates that

historians of Canadian business use archival collections, whether they are government documents or corporate records, much less than do other Canadian historians.

The examination of references contained in journal articles and monographs on Canadian business history published between 1975 and 1984 indicates that historians of Canadian business have not been consulting business records housed in archival repositories to a great extent. But is this due to a genuine lack of interest in business records on their part, or due to poor holdings of business records in repositories? The study of the holdings of the Public Archives of Canada, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia, the City of Vancouver Archives, and the University of British Columbia Special Collections reported in Chapter III indicates that the latter may be the explanation. Less than twenty per cent of the business records collections held by these four repositories may be considered to be comprehensive collections, of one linear metre or more in extent. Furthermore, many of these larger and supposedly comprehensive collections do not contain important financial and administrative records. It may be that archival collections of business records in Canadian repositories are of low priority in terms of demand by researchers because researchers have discovered that these collections often have little to offer.

American repositories began acquiring business records to provide tools for training business administration students at Harvard and other universities. Later, scholars interested in American history started using these business records collections. In Europe, the

"large-scale preservation of business history records preceded large-scale research and publication"<sup>18</sup> of business history. If Canadian archival institutions were to acquire more comprehensive collections of business records, perhaps historians of Canadian business would consult the holdings of Canadian repositories more often.

Historian Douglas McCalla has mentioned a third possible explanation for the lack of use of manuscript collections by historians of Canadian business. Although McCalla advocates the preservation of as many collections of business records as possible, preferably comprehensive collections containing data for extensive time periods, he believes historians have failed to use business records collections already housed in Canadian repositories because they do not know of the existence of these collections, and because these collections are poorly described.<sup>19</sup> McCalla criticizes the low priority given by Canadian archivists to the description and dissemination of information about business records collections:

For researchers to make use of (accounting records), it is most important to know that they exist and what they consist of in sufficient detail to be able to plan comparative research . . . Few collections anywhere give the impression that they have received high archival priority, though it is of greater importance that archivists have already ensured the preservation of as many collections as they have. Only occasionally does one meet the kind of careful and extensive inventories and finding aids that are typically given major institutional and political collections . . .<sup>20</sup>

In support of his contention that the dissemination of information about business records collections is a low priority for archivists in

Canada, McCalla describes a single two page letter written by a politician, John A. Macdonald, which has a Union List of Manuscripts entry of the same length as the entry for each of two "massive and vital sets of business accounts and correspondence."<sup>21</sup>

Previous chapters have indicated that, although some Canadian archival institutions have developed programs for acquiring business records, other repositories do not see a need to acquire business records, and that the majority of business records collections preserved in public repositories in this country are small, fragmentary collections. It is perhaps predictable to find that historians studying business activity in Canada generally make little use of manuscript collections in archival repositories. Admittedly, Canadian business history is a relatively new academic field which until recently concentrated on examining the development of the production and transportation of staple products, but this alone cannot explain the lack of use of business records collections. Even though business history is a relatively small field of scholarship in Canada, one would expect its practitioners to consult archival collections to a similar degree as do other historians of Canada, but they do not. Rather, they appear to use archival collections as sources of reference proportionately much less often than do other writers of Canadian history. The neglect of business records collections cannot therefore be ascribed solely to the fact that Canadian business history is a small field of study. Nor can it be attributed solely to a general lack of interest in archival collections on the part of business historians, for many have made use of archival

collections to some extent, and several have complained of the lack of business records collections or of the inaccessibility of business records collections due to inadequate finding aids.

The experience of European and American repositories suggests that archival institutions must make concerted efforts to preserve business records, and amass a considerable body of business records collections, before historians will make use of collections of business records in archival repositories. Archivist Gerald Ham warns of the dangers of passively following the lead of academics, arguing that an archivist who is "too closely tied to the vogue of the academic marketplace . . . will remain at best nothing more than a weathervane moved by the changing winds of historiography."<sup>22</sup> Nevertheless, as a first step in amassing an extensive body of records documenting Canada's economic activities, Canadian archivists should respond to their critics by endeavouring to preserve business records of interest to contemporary historians, whether in public or corporate institutions. Archivists can go further, and find themselves on Ham's "archival edge" rather than merely acting as weathervanes, if they take steps to preserve the records of sectors of the economy which scholars have not yet explored. Many aspects of Canadian business history have not been studied. Furthermore, most Canadian business history has focussed upon large companies or prominent businessmen. Lacking in historical interest at present, and largely ignored by archivists, contemporary small businesses constitute a vast sector of our economy which is likely to be of interest to future scholars interested in the workings of our

society. By acquiring the records of small businesses on an on-going basis under agreements with the firms concerned, archivists would ensure the comprehensiveness of such business records collections, thereby increasing the attractiveness of the collections for future users. At the moment, however, there are historians calling upon archivists to put a greater emphasis on preserving and describing Canadian business records, and archival institutions that, either expressly or through inertia, put a low priority on acquiring business records because there is little demand for such records.

Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>David S. MacMillan, "Introduction," Canadian Business History Selected Studies, 1497-1971, ed. David S. MacMillan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), p. 1.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Glenn Porter, "Recent Trends in Canadian Business and Economic History," Business History Review, 47 (1973), 141.

<sup>4</sup>Tom Traves, "Introduction," Essays in Canadian Business History, ed. Tom Traves (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1984), p. 5.

<sup>5</sup>Frederick H. Armstrong, "Canadian Business History: Approaches and Publications to 1970," Canadian Business History Selected Studies, 1497-1971, ed. David S. MacMillan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), p. 272.

<sup>6</sup>Hugh G. J. Aitken, "Introduction," Gilbert Norman Tucker, The Canadian Commercial Revolution 1845-1851, ed. Hugh G. J. Aitken (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1964), p. xv.

<sup>7</sup>Armstrong, pp. 274-79; MacMillan, "Introduction," p. 3; Porter, pp. 149-57.

<sup>8</sup>MacMillan, "Introduction," p. 3.

<sup>9</sup>Traves, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid.

<sup>11</sup>Armstrong, p. 282; Traves, p. 6.

<sup>12</sup>Traves, p. 5.

<sup>13</sup>Questionnaire return, Provincial Archives of Nova Scotia, November 29, 1985.

<sup>14</sup>Porter, p. 141.

<sup>15</sup>R. T. Naylor, The History of Canadian Business 1897-1914 (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, Publishers, 1975), II.

<sup>16</sup>David Alexander, The Decay of the Trade: An Economic History of the Newfoundland Saltfish Trade 1935-1965 (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1979).

<sup>17</sup>Maggie Siggins, Bassett (Toronto: James Lorimer and Company, Publishers, 1979).

<sup>18</sup>Alan Wilson, "Problems and Traditions of Business History: Past Examples and Canadian Prospects," Canadian Business History Selected Studies, 1497-1971, ed. David S. MacMillan (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972), p. 304.

<sup>19</sup>Douglas McCalla, "Accounting Records and Everyday Economic Life in Upper Canada, 1790-1850," Archivaria, 21 (Winter 1985-1986), 149-57.

<sup>20</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 156.

<sup>21</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>22</sup>Gerald F. Ham, "The Archival Edge," American Archivist, 38 (1975), 8.

## CONCLUSION

The rise of horizontally or vertically integrated corporations to positions of prominence within the North American economy initiated the systematic collection and preservation of business records in archival repositories on this continent, but subsequently discouraged archivists from acquiring business records. As archivists in the United States of America moved from preserving business records as tools with which to teach students of business administration, to collecting business records for use by a wider range of scholars, they realized that their institutions could not cope with the volume of records annually created by modern corporations. Archival repositories in Canada have not been laboratories for business administration schools, but as Canadian archivists began to take an interest in the records of businesses during the 1960s they also became aware of the inadequacy of the resources at their disposal for preserving corporate records. On both sides of the border, archivists who have written about business records seem preoccupied with the idea that for the foreseeable future, archival repositories will lack the resources to care for the records of contemporary business. Focussing their energies on discussions of ways and means by which companies can be aided and persuaded to establish in-house corporate archives, these writers neglect to discuss the fate of records of small businesses.

Canadian archival literature, and the comments of some historians, suggest that repositories in this country have not made

significant efforts to acquire and maintain business records. The findings reported in this study give substance to this impression. Only six of the repositories surveyed mention business records in their acquisitions policies. Surprisingly, reference to business records in an acquisitions policy is not an indication of a repository's importance as a collector of business records. Instead, it seems that archival institutions interested in acquiring business records develop business records acquisitions programs rather than alter their acquisitions policies to include specific mention of the records of businesses.

Of the collections of business records that have been preserved by Canadian archival institutions, three quarters were reported to be less than one metre in extent. Probably two-thirds of the business collections reported are less than thirty centimetres in extent. The value to researchers of such small and fragmentary collections is doubtful. On the whole, collections of business records over one metre in extent are not very comprehensive. The latter tend to document the daily operation and administration of businesses but not the policymaking and executive actions of businessmen. Financial records and correspondence are seldom preserved in complete runs in business collections over one metre in extent. On a more positive note, it seems archivists are aware of the value of pictorial business records even though they seldom mention photographs, blueprints and other visual records when writing on the appraisal of business records.

The paucity of comprehensive collections of Canadian business records is perhaps reflected in the results of the analysis of sources

referred to by historians of Canadian business. Unlike most other Canadian historians who rely heavily on primary sources, the majority of which are housed in archival repositories, historians of Canadian business depend largely on secondary sources, and as a group they refer to archival documents to a very limited degree. Nevertheless, there is some interest amongst business historians in the holdings of repositories. Some business historians have relied heavily on archival documents as the source material for books and articles. Others have requested that archivists put a greater emphasis upon collecting and describing business records. The experiences of European and American repositories indicate that archival institutions need to collect a substantial body of business records before historians begin to make extensive use of the business collections held by the repositories. Archivists in Canada should not assume that they do not need to acquire business records because historians seldom request to look at such records. Perhaps historians, and other researchers, do not ask to see archival collections of business records because they believe they will be presented with meagre documentation of business activities.

Several writers have discussed the steps that must be taken to ensure the preservation of business records in corporate archives, and these efforts are certainly worth pursuing. The Canadian economy, however, does not rest entirely upon large corporations such as the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Bank of Nova Scotia, and MacMillan Bloedel. Canada abounds in family businesses and small companies employing a few dozen workers, enterprises whose survival often depends

upon the skill and resources of individual businessmen. There is a danger of leaving to future generations a distorted view of our society's economic structure if archivists concentrate on promoting the establishment of corporate archives and neglect the records of small businesses. By also working to acquire, in a systematic manner, the records of small businesses, Canadian archivists will be closer to fulfilling their mandates of preserving comprehensive collections documenting the various aspects of the history of their respective regions.

Establishing a program to acquire records of small businesses involves several activities. The first step is to study the business community in the region served by the archival institution to determine what types of industries and companies are present, and to determine whether records of these industries and companies are already held by the repository. Comparing the results of its study of the business community with its holdings, a repository may discover it has documented in detail one industry but neglected other industries, or that it holds handfuls of records from many businesses, or that it has acquired extensive collections of records of defunct companies but no records from businesses currently active in the region.

Once a repository has drawn up a profile of the business community and compared this profile with its business holdings, the repository can determine what areas of the regional economy its acquisition program will cover, and devise strategies for implementing the program. Robert Lovett and Nicholas Burckel have suggested that an

archival institution should solicit the records of companies typical or significant in the development of a region. Such activity would still leave the possibility that businesses common to all regions of Canada, such as corner stores, hairdressing salons, door and window manufacturers, and sheet metal working companies, would be disregarded. Preserving a cross-section of the economic activity of a region entails collecting the records of at least a sample of such common, and often essential, businesses. Acquiring records from a sample of hairdressing salons, market gardens, and other small businesses and manufacturers found in communities across Canada could, however, be difficult, since many of the businessmen selected may not wish to give their records to a repository.

By publicizing its aims and engaging in public relations activities, such as sending a representative to speak to a Chamber of Commerce meeting on the historical value of business records, a repository may succeed in overcoming the suspicions of businessmen wary of exposing their affairs to public scrutiny and encourage firms to give their records to the institution, especially if it follows up such activities with visits to the businesses whose records it seeks to acquire. Only a few Canadian repositories reported undertaking public relations activities designed to encourage donations of records by the business community. A more widespread use of public relations programs should persuade more businessmen of the merits of offering their records for preservation in archives and thereby increase the holdings of business records of Canadian repositories.

Some businessmen may not be swayed solely by statements outlining the argument for preserving business records for posterity. An archival institution wishing to acquire the records of a particular firm may have to offer a records management service as an inducement. Such a course of action is in the repository's own interest if it wants to acquire a comprehensive rather than a fragmentary record of a firm's activity. By working with a firm to establish a records retention and disposal schedule, a repository is in effect conducting an on-site appraisal of the firm's records. Rather than wait for a business to donate its records willynilly and risk receiving unrelated bits and pieces of material, a repository which aids a business to establish a records retention and disposal schedule should be assured of acquiring in time a comprehensive collection of business records. Needless to say, any repository entering such an arrangement would protect itself with a legally binding agreement guaranteeing regular transfers of records from the firm to the archival institution. Providing records management assistance may not be feasible in every case in which a repository seeks to acquire the records of a small business, but it ought to be considered when an archival institution is attempting to acquire the records of a business that is of significance to the region served by the repository.

Canadian repositories should not be dissuaded from acquiring business records by the view of some writers that archival institutions cannot cope with the voluminous records of large integrated corporations. As Christopher Hives and the members of the Consultative

Group on Canadian Archives have pointed out, the preservation of such large bodies of records is better left to the corporations concerned, suitably aided by the archival profession. Archival institutions can improve their holdings of Canadian business records, however, by developing and implementing a program to acquire records of small businesses that encompasses the various steps outlined above. Such action by repositories across the country would result in an improvement both in the quantity and quality of archival holdings of records of small businesses, offsetting the fact that archival institutions in Canada cannot adequately house records of integrated corporations, the preservation of which is undoubtedly another but separate agenda for archivists and other interested parties.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abbey-Livingston, Diane, and David S. Abbey. Enjoying Research? A 'How-to' Manual on Needs Assessment. Toronto: Recreation Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Recreation, 1982.
- "Acquisitions Policy: Competition or Cooperation." The Canadian Archivist 2, no. 1 (1970), 21-43.
- Aitken, Hugh G. J. "Introduction" in Gilbert Norman Tucker, The Canadian Commercial Revolution 1845-1851, ed. Hugh G. J. Aitken. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1964, pp. vii-xvi.
- Allan Nevins on History, ed. Ray Allen Billington. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1975.
- Amtamn, Bernard. "An Open Letter to Canadian Archivists." The Canadian Archivist 2, no. 4 (1973), 42-47.
- Andreasson, John C. L. "Records of the Canadian National Railway." The Canadian Archivist 1, no. 4 (1966), 8-10.
- Archer, John Hall. "Business Records: The Canadian Scene." American Archivist 32 (1969), 251-59.
- Armstrong, Frederick H. "Canadian Business History: Approaches and Publications to 1970." Canadian Business History, ed. David S. MacMillan. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1972, pp. 263-87.
- Atherton, Lewis E. "Western Historical Manuscripts Collection--A Case Study of a Collecting Program." American Archivist 26 (1963), 41-49.
- Berdie, Douglas, and John F. Anderson. Questionnaires: Design and Use. Metuchen: The Scarecrow Press Inc., 1974.
- Blouin, Francis X. Jr. "A New Perspective on the Appraisal of Business Records: A Review." American Archivist 42 (1979), 312-20.
- ". "An Agenda for the Appraisal of Business Records." Archival Choices, ed. Nancy E. Peace. Toronto: D. C. Heath and Company, 1984, pp. 61-79.
- Bower, Peter. "After the Dust Settles." Archivaria 9 (Winter 1979-80), 218-29.

- Brichford, Maynard J. Archives and Manuscripts: Appraisal and Accessioning. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977.
- Brubaker, Robert L. "Clio's Midwife: Collecting Manuscripts at a State Historical Library." Illinois Libraries 47 (1965), 595-60.
- Burckel, Nicholas C. "Business Archives in a University Setting: Status and Prospect." College and Research Libraries 41 (1980), 227-34.
- Canadian Archives Report to the Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada by the Consultative Group on Canadian Archives. Ottawa: Social Sciences and Research Council of Canada, 1980.
- Cappon, Lester J. "The Archivist as Collector." American Archivist 39 (1976), 429-35.
- Chandler, Alfred J. Jr. The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977.
- Clark, Thomas. "The Archives of Small Business." American Archivist 12 (1949), 27-35.
- Cole, Arthur H. "Business Manuscripts: Collection, Handling, and Cataloging." Library Quarterly 8 (1938), 93-114.
- ". "Business Manuscripts: A Pressing Problem." Journal of Economic History 5 (1945), 43-59.
- ". "Business History and Economic History." Readings in United States Economic and Business History, ed. Ross M. Robertson and James L. Pate. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966, pp. 3-6.
- Downs, Robert B. "Collecting Manuscripts: By Libraries." Library Trends 5, no. 3 (January 1957), 337-43.
- Duckett, Kenneth W. Modern Manuscripts. Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1975.
- Eckert, Leone W. "The Anatomy of Industrial Records." American Archivist 26 (1963), 185-90.
- Edgerly, Linda. "Business Archives Guidelines." American Archivist 45 (1982), 267-72.
- Evans, Frank B., Donald F. Harrison, and Edwin A. Thompson. A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers. Reprinted from The American Archivist 37, no. 3 (July 1974).

- Ferber, Robert; Sheatsley, Paul; Turner, Anthony; and Waksberg, Joseph. What is a Survey? Washington: American Statistical Association.
- Fetherling, Doug. "Thanks for the Memories." Canadian Business 53 (October 1980), 129-33.
- Fishbein, Meyer H. "Business History Resources in the National Archives." Business History Review 38 (1964), 232-57.
- Gordon, Robert S. "The Protocol of S.N.A.P. Demarcation of Acquisition Fields." The Canadian Archivist 2, no. 4 (1973), 48-54.
- Gras, N. S. B. "Past, Present, and Future of the Business Historical Society." Bulletin of the Business Historical Society 24 (1950), 1-12.
- Hall, Kathy. "Archival Acquisitions: Legal Mandates and Methods." Archivaria 18 (Summer 1984), 58-69.
- Hall, Roger. "Minding our own Business." Archivaria 3 (Winter 1976/77), 73-78.
- Ham, F. Gerald. "The Archival Edge." American Archivist 38 (1975), 5-13.
- ". "Archival Strategies for the Post-Custodial Era." American Archivist 44 (1981), 207-16.
- Hancock, Harold B. "Materials for Company History in the National Archives." American Archivist 29 (1966), 23-32.
- Heathercock, Walter J. "Business Archives and Museum Development." American Archivist 29 (1966), 49-54.
- Hedlin, Edie. Business Archives: An Introduction. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1978.
- Hidy, Ralph L. "Business Archives: Introductory Remarks." American Archivist 19 (1966), 33-36.
- Historical Statistics of Canada, ed. M. C. Urquart and K. A. H. Buckley. Toronto: The MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1965.
- Historical Statistics of Canada. 2nd ed., ed. F. H. Leacy. Ottawa: Supply and Services Canada, 1983.
- Hives, Christopher L. "Business Archives: Historical Developments and Future Prospects." M.A. thesis, University of British Columbia, 1985.

- Holmes, Oliver W. "The Evaluation and Preservation of Business Archives." American Archivist 1 (October 1938), 171-85.
- . "Some Reflections on Business Archives in the United States." American Archivist 17 (1954), 291-304.
- Hower, Ralph M. "The Preservation of Business Records." Bulletin of the Business Historical Society Incorporated 11 (1937), 37-83.
- Jenkinson, Hilary. A Manual of Archive Administration. 2nd ed. London: Percy Lund, Humphries and Co. Ltd., 1965.
- Johnson, Arthur M. "Identification of Business Records for Permanent Preservation." American Archivist 24 (1961), 329-32.
- Jones, Fred M. "The Collection of Business Records at the University of Illinois." Bulletin of the Business Historical Society 13 (1939), 94-95.
- Kemp, Edward C. Manuscript Solicitation for Libraries, Special Collections, Museums and Archives. Littleton: Libraries Unlimited Inc., 1978.
- Kesner, Richard M. "Archival Collection Development: Building a Successful Acquisitions Program." The Midwestern Archivist 5 (1981), 101-12.
- King, Jack. "Collecting Business Records." American Archivist 27 (1964), 387-90.
- Lovett, Robert W. "The Appraisal of Older Business Records." American Archivist 15 (1952), 231-39.
- . "Some Changes in the Handling of Business Records at Baker Library." American Archivist 19 (1956), 39-44.
- . "Business Records in Libraries." American Archivist 20 (1957), 253-61.
- . "A Brief Account of the Collecting of Business Records at Harvard University." Business Archives Council of Australia Bulletin 1, no. 9 (1959), 84-86.
- Lowe, Graham S. "'The Enormous File': The Evolution of the Modern Office in Early Twentieth-Century Canada." Archivaria 19 (Winter 1984-85), 137-51.
- MacMillan, David S. "Business Archives--A Survey of Developments in Great Britain, the United States of America, and in Australia."

- Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson. ed. Albert J. Hollaender. Chichester: Moore and Tyler Ltd., 1962, pp. 108-27.
- . "Introduction." Canadian Business History Selected Studies, 1492-1971. Edited by David S. MacMillan. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972, pp. 1-3.
- Martin, Thomas P. "A Manuscripts Collecting Venture in the Middle West: Indiana, 1950-1953." American Archivist 17 (1954), 305-12.
- McCalla, Douglas. "Accounting Records and Everyday Economic Life in Upper Canada, 1790-1850." Archivaria 21 (Winter 1985-86), 149-57.
- McCree, Mary Lynn. "Good Sense and Good Judgement: Defining Collections and Collecting." Drexel Library Quarterly 11, no. 1 (January 1975), 21-33.
- Meissner, Dennis E. "The Evaluation of Modern Business Accounting Records." The Midwestern Archivist 5, no. 2 (1981), 75-100.
- Mooney, Philip E. "Commentary I." American Archivist 45 (1982), 291-93.
- Nisonger, Tom. "The Sources of Canadian History." Manitoba Library Association Bulletin 2, no. 3 (June 1981), 33-35.
- Norton on Archives: The Writings of Margaret Cross Norton on Archival and Records Management, ed. Thornton W. Mitchell. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975.
- Porter, Glenn. "Recent Trends in Canadian Business and Economic History." Business History Review 47 (1973), 141-57.
- Rider, Peter E. "Business Archives Notes." Archivaria 1 (Winter 1975/76), 93-94.
- Schellenberg, T. R. Modern Archives Principles and Techniques. Midway reprint, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975.
- Smith, David R. "An Historical Look at Business Archives." American Archivist 45 (1982), 273-77.
- Source Materials for Business and Economic History, ed. Lauren J. Kipp. Boston: Baker Library Graduate School of Business Administration, Harvard University, 1967.
- Steck, Larry, and Francis X. Blouin Jr. "Hannah Lay and Company: Sampling the Records of a Century of Lumbering in Michigan." American Archivist 39 (1976), 15-20.

- Symons, T. H. B. To Know Ourselves: The Report of the Commission on Canadian Studies. Ottawa: Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada, 1975.
- Traves, Tom. "Introduction." Essays in Canadian Business History. Edited by Tom Traves. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1984, pp. 5-11.
- Weilbrenner, Bernard. "Sources for Economic History in the Public Archives of Canada." The Canadian Archivist 2, no. 3 (1972), 9-14.
- Wik, Reynold M. "Adventures in Business Records: The Vanishing Archives." American Archivist 14 (1951), 195-200.
- Williamson, Harold E. "The Professors Discover American Business." Readings in United States Economic and Business History, ed. Ross M. Robertson and James L. Pate. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1966, pp. 25-34.
- Wilson, Alan. "Problems and Traditions of Business History: Past Examples and Canadian Prospects." Canadian Business History, ed. David S. MacMillan. Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1972, pp. 303-16.

APPENDIX A  
QUESTIONNAIRE

Part I General

1. How many archivists work in your institution? \_\_\_\_\_
2. How is responsibility for business records assigned amongst the archivists of your institution?

---



---

3. What is the total annual budget for your institution? \$ \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is your institution's annual budget for acquisitions? \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Part II Acquisitions

5. Please include a copy of your institution's general acquisitions policy, or outline the policy on a separate sheet of paper.
6. Does your institution have a written acquisitions policy for business records?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Please include a copy of your written policy with this questionnaire.

No \_\_\_\_\_

7. Does your institution have a program to acquire business records?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Date of establishment of program \_\_\_\_\_

No \_\_\_\_\_ Please state the reasons \_\_\_\_\_

---



---

8. What is your institution's policy regarding access restrictions on business records it wishes to acquire?

---



---



---



---



---

9. Does your institution acquire the records of active companies?

No \_\_\_\_\_ Please go to question 12.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Please answer questions 10 to 11.

10. Have records of active companies been acquired

a) as a single accession \_\_\_\_\_

b) under an agreement to receive further accessions on a periodic basis \_\_\_\_\_

c) From individuals who took business records with them when they retired \_\_\_\_\_

d) other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

---

11. Which of the following acquisition strategies have been used to solicit the records of active companies?

a) contacting the company/ individual in person \_\_\_\_\_

b) responding to approaches from the company/individual \_\_\_\_\_

c) placing advertisements in newspapers, etc. \_\_\_\_\_

d) other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

---

12. Does your institution acquire the records of defunct companies?

No \_\_\_\_\_ Please go to question 15.

Yes \_\_\_\_\_ Please answer questions 13 and 14.

13. Have records of defunct companies been acquired
- from the liquidator of the company \_\_\_\_\_
  - from individuals (or their heirs) who kept the business records when the company ceased operations \_\_\_\_\_
  - other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Which of the following strategies have been used to solicit the records of defunct companies?
- contacting the liquidator/individual in person \_\_\_\_\_
  - responding to approaches from the liquidator/individual \_\_\_\_\_
  - placing advertisements in newspapers, etc. \_\_\_\_\_
  - other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
15. Which of the following methods has your institution used when acquiring business records?
- purchase \_\_\_\_\_
  - donation \_\_\_\_\_
  - donation for tax credit \_\_\_\_\_
  - other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### Part III Extent of Collections

16. What is the total number of collections of business records held by your institution?
17. What is the total volume of these records in cubic metres? \_\_\_\_\_ m<sup>3</sup>

If a list giving the names and extent of the collections held by your institution is readily available or easily compiled, could you please include this list with the questionnaire. If not, the following questions are optional, though it would be appreciated if you could take the time to respond.

Optional Questions

18. Please indicate the number of collections of business records that fall into each of the following size categories.

- a) less than 1 metre<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
- b) 1 to 9.9 metres<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
- c) 10 to 99.9 metres<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
- d) 100+ metres<sup>3</sup> \_\_\_\_\_
- e) microfilm \_\_\_\_\_ Total number of reels  
of microfilm \_\_\_\_\_

19. Please indicate the number of collections of business records that fall into each of the following economic categories.

- a) primary industry \_\_\_\_\_
- b) secondary industry \_\_\_\_\_
- c) tertiary industry \_\_\_\_\_

N.B. Primary industries extract natural resources, i.e. agriculture, mining, forestry.

Secondary industries manufacture products, i.e. automobiles, furniture, processed foods.

Tertiary industries provide services, i.e. wholesale or retail merchandising, banking, transportation.

### Definitions

For the purposes of this questionnaire the following terms are defined.

Business records Business records are defined as all recorded information, regardless of media or characteristics, made or received and maintained by a company in pursuance of its legal obligations or in the transaction of its business.

Collection A collection is a body of manuscripts or papers, including associated printed or near print materials and audiovisual materials, having a common source. The business records of one company therefore constitute a collection.

Company A company is an organization established to engage in commercial or industrial activity. For the purposes of this study a company may comprise an organization employing hundreds of people, such as General Motors or the Bank of Montreal, or a one man operation such as a corner store or a blacksmith's forge, but not a crown corporation. Crown corporations are excluded from this study because they are quasi-governmental bodies, and the disposition of their records may be regulated by government.

These definitions are adapted from Frank B. Evans et al., A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers.

## APPENDIX B

Repositories that received questionnaires

Public Archives of Canada

Provincial Archives of  
British Columbia

Provincial Archives of  
Alberta

Saskatchewan Archives Board

Provincial Archives of  
Manitoba

Archives of Ontario

Provincial Archives of  
New Brunswick

Public Archives of Prince  
Edward Island

Public Archives of Nova  
Scotia

Provincial Archives of  
Newfoundland

Yukon Archives and Records  
Service

Archives of the Northwest  
Territories

Victoria City Archives

City of Vancouver Archives

City of Edmonton Archives

Hamilton Public Library,  
Special Collections

City of Toronto Archives

Peterborough Centennial  
Museum and Archives

City of Ottawa Archives

University of British  
Columbia Library,  
Special Collections

Simon Fraser University  
Archives

University of Manitoba,  
Department of Archives and  
Special Collections,  
Elizabeth Dafoe Library

Repositories that returned questionnaires

Public Archives of Canada

Provincial Archives of  
Alberta

Saskatchewan Archives Board

Provincial Archives of  
Manitoba

Archives of Ontario

Provincial Archives of  
New Brunswick

Public Archives of Prince  
Edward Island

Public Archives of Nova  
Scotia

Provincial Archives of  
Newfoundland

Yukon Archives and Records  
Service

Victoria City Archives

City of Vancouver Archives

City of Edmonton Archives

City of Toronto Archives

Peterborough Centennial  
Museum and Archives

City of Ottawa Archives

University of British  
Columbia Library,  
Special Collections

Simon Fraser University  
Archives

University of Manitoba,  
Department of Archives and  
Special Collections,  
Elizabeth Dafoe Library

Repositories that received  
questionnaires

Brock University Library,  
Decew Campus  
York University Archives  
University of Toronto,  
Thomas Fisher Rare  
Book Library  
Queen's University Archives  
McGill University Archives  
Mount Allison University  
Archives  
Dalhousie University Archives  
  
Glenbow Alberta Institute  
Archives

Repositories that returned  
questionnaires

University of Toronto,  
Thomas Fisher Rare  
Book Library  
Queen's University Archives  
McGill University Archives  
Mount Allison University  
Archives  
Dalhousie University Archives  
  
Glenbow Alberta Institute  
Archives  
  
Unidentified

MG 28  
III 26

BRONSON COMPANY

(page 1)

Originals, n.d., 1809-1974. 69.025 m. Finding Aid No. 186

The founder of the Bronson Company was Henry Franklin Bronson, a New Englander, who along with his business partner John J. Harris set up the Harris and Bronson Company in Ottawa during the 1850's. By the turn of the century, the company had undergone three reorganizations which transferred complete control to the Bronson Family. In 1867 the company changed its name to the Bronsons and Weston Company, in 1888 to the Bronsons and Weston Lumber Company and in 1899 to the Bronson Company. Erskine Henry Bronson and Walter Goodman-Bronson carried on the family business after the death of their father in 1899. Frederick Erskine Bronson ran the Bronson Company after the death of Walter Goodman Bronson in 1932. In the sixties, Frederic Bronson donated a large portion of the Bronson Company's land holdings to the National Capital Commission. A few years later, the National Capital Commission expropriated the rest of the company.

The Bronson family also had an interest in several other business concerns including the Ottawa Power Company Limited which they owned outright. Separate series have been created for the records of these companies and a brief historical sketch is found at the beginning of each series description.

In 1966, the National Capital Commission transferred the Bronson Papers to the Public Archives of Canada from the Company's head office on Victoria Island. In 1976, A.M. Laidlaw, President of the Company and executor for the Bronson Estate transferred additional company and family records. These records were withdrawn from the company's main office in order to prepare for the expropriation negotiations. In 1979, Genevieve Laidlaw transferred some miscellaneous company and family records including family photographs.

Finding Aid No. 186 is a file list. Books, maps, plans, photographs and trade catalogues have been transferred to the appropriate divisions.

#### 1966 Accession

The Bronson Company and its predecessors, Ottawa, n.d., 1857-1950. 27.525m (Vols. 1-385).

Journals, 1857-1889. 1.1 m (Vols. 1-17).

Harris, Bronson and Company, 1857-1867. 5 cm (Vol. 1).

Bronsons and Weston Company, 1867-1888. 60 cm  
(Vols. 2-10).  
Bronsons and Weston Lumber Company, 1888-1901.  
45 cm (Vols. 11-17).

Ledgers, 1864-1900. 60 cm (Vols. 18-28).  
Harris and Bronson Company, 1864-1866. 7.5 cm  
(Vol. 18).  
Bronsons and Weston Company, 1867-1888. 52.5 cm  
(Vols. 19-24).  
Bronsons and Weston Lumber Company, 1888-1901.  
30 cm (Vols. 25-28).

Cash books, 1888-1934. 60 cm (Vols. 29-38).  
Bronsons and Weston Lumber Company, 1888-1904.  
30 cm (Vols. 29-32).  
Bronson Company, 1904-1934. 30 cm (Vols. 33-38).

Miscellaneous Records, 1871-1943. 1.5 m (Vols. 39-90).

Letterbooks, 1857-1900. 3.325 m (Vols. 91-152).  
Harris and Bronson Company, 1857-1864. 2.5 cm  
(Vol. 91).  
Bronsons and Weston Company, 1864-1888. 75 cm  
(Vols. 92-111).  
Bronsons and Weston Lumber Company, 1888-1900.  
1.35 m (Vols. 112-132).  
Bronson Company, 1900-1938. 1.2 m (Vols. 133-152).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1853-1950. 20.1 m  
(Vols. 153-385).

The Little River Redwood Company, California, 1874-1933.  
9.5 m (Vols. 386-490).

This company owned extensive stands of Redwood timber  
in California where it carried on its lumbering operations.  
The Bronson operations in Redwood lumbering began in 1887  
when the Bronsons and Weston Company acquired 3500 acres  
of redwood timber in Heimbolt County in California. In  
1893 the Company was incorporated under the laws of the  
State of New York with members of the Bronson family  
owning 6400 of the 9600 shares.

Minutes of Annual Meetings, Stock Ledgers, 1893-1931.  
70 cm (Vols. 386-397).

Ledgers, Journals, and Cash books, 1893-1931. 2.5 m  
(Vols. 398-428).

Letterbooks, 1904-1932. 20 cm (Vols. 429-432).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1874-1933. 6.1 m  
(Vols. 433-490).

The Adirondack Match Company, Ogdensburg, 1892-1903.  
67.5 cm (Vols. 491-504).

This company operated a match factory at Ogdensburg, New York. W.G. Bronson was prominent in the formation and ownership of the company, which was sold to the Union Match Company in 1900.

Minutes and Records of Stock holder's Meetings, 1893-1899. 5 cm (Vols. 491-493).

Journals, Cash books and Ledgers, 1893-1899. 15 cm (Vols. 494-498).

Letterbooks, 1893-1900. 7.5 cm (Vols. 499-500).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1892-1903. 40 cm (Vols. 501-504).

The Eclipse Manufacturing Company, Ottawa, 1893-1920.  
55 cm (Vols. 505-518).

This company was originally called the Eclipse Office Furniture Company, but changed its name to the Eclipse Manufacturing Company. Frank Pierce and W.G. Bronson were directors and important shareholders. The Company secured disappointingly few orders for office equipment from Dominion government, but it did get numerous orders from provincial governments. In 1913 the Company was bought out by the Steel Equipment Company of Canada.

Minutes and Records of Shareholders Meetings, 1893-1913.  
15 cm (Vols. 505-509).

Journals, Cash books and Ledgers, 1903-1913. 30 cm (Vols. 510-517).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1908-1920. 10 cm (Vol. 518).

The Ottawa Carbide Company, 1899-1911. 8.8 m (Vols. 519-631).  
Formed to manufacture calcium carbide for Lighting after an explosion destroyed the Dominion Carbide Company in Ottawa in 1899, E.H. Bronson was the President of the company. The company was sold to the Canada Carbide Company of Montreal in 1911.

Journals, Cash books and Ledgers, 1899-1911. 90 cm (Vols. 519-545).

Letterbooks, 1899-1911. 60 cm (Vols. 546-554).

Memoranda and Correspondence, 1899-1911. 7.3 m (Vols. 555-631).

The People's Gas Company, 1902-1908. 1.55 m (Vols. 632-651).  
Operated a manufacturing and sales plant in Ottawa  
for various types of gas lamps, burners and other  
supplies for gas systems.

Letterbooks, 1902-1907. 15 cm (Vols. 632-634).

Memoranda and Correspondence, 1902-1908. 1.4 m  
(Vols. 635-651).

The General Illuminating Company Limited, 1904-21. 30 cm (Vols. 652-658).  
Incorporated in 1904 to supply gas to the Ottawa area,  
it was dissolved in 1921 after its assets were distributed  
among the shareholders.

Minutes of Shareholders Meetings, 1904-1921. 7.5 cm  
(Vols. 652-653).

Journals, Ledgers, Cash books, 1904-1910. 10 cm  
(Vols. 654-656).

Letterbook, 1904-1910. 5 cm (Vol. 657).

Correspondence A-E, 1907. 7.5 cm (Vol. 658).

The Ottawa Power Company Limited, 1888-1952. 52.5 cm  
(Vols. 659-669).

This company was the result of amalgamations of earlier  
electric and gas companies. E.H. Bronson was President  
of the Company and W.G. Bronson Vice-President.

Journals, Cash books, Ledgers, 1899-1920. 12.5 cm  
(Vols. 659-664).

Letterbooks, 1901-1920. 10 cm (Vols. 665-666).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1888-1952. 30 cm (Vols.  
667-669).

The Quinze and Blanche River Railway Company, 1902-1923.  
25 cm (Vols. 670-673A).

Incorporated in 1907 to build railways in Northern  
Quebec and also to build dams for electrical power.

Journals and Ledgers, 1907-1918. 5 cm (Vols. 670-671).

Letterbooks, 1907-1923. 2.5 cm (Vol. 672).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1902-1914. 17.5 cm  
(Vols. 673-673A).

The Otter-Blanche Creek Improvement Company, 1912-1922.  
5 cm (Vols. 674-675).

Formed in 1912 to maintain dams and slides to facilitate the movement of timber down Otter Creek to Lake Nipissing.

Stock Ledgers, 1912-1922. 5 cm (Vols. 674-675).

The Burley Gold Mining Company, 1897-1901. 5 cm (Vol. 676).  
This company was formed to mine gold under water in the Lake of the Woods near Rat Portage. Levi Crennell was President of the Company.

Letterbook, 1897-1901. 5 cm (Vol. 676).

The Ottawa Gold Milling and Mining Company, 1901-1929. 12.5 cm (Vols. 677-679).

This company mined gold in the Yukon and British Columbia.

Cash Journal, 1901-1912. 1.5 cm (Vol. 677).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1908-1929. 11 cm (Vols. 678-679).

The Bronson Fibre Corporation Limited, 1940-1949. 1.2 m (Vols. 680-692).

This Company operated a wood pulp plant in Ottawa. The plant was closed in 1943 due to lack of wood and the charter of the company was surrendered in 1949.

Journals and Cash books, 1940-1946. 10 cm (Vols. 680-681).

Letterbooks, 1941-1949. 7.5 cm (Vol. 682).

Correspondence and Memoranda, 1940-1946. 1.025 m (Vols. 683-692).

The Bronson Family Papers, 1833-1952. 6 m (Vols. 693-764).  
These papers cover the public affairs of various members of the Bronson Family. They consist of Letterbooks, correspondence, and legal papers. Some of the subjects covered include E.H. Bronson's activities as an Ontario Cabinet Minister in the Hardy and Mowat governments; Mrs. E.H. Bronson's term as President of the Ottawa Maternity Hospital; Levi Crennell's career in Ottawa municipal politics and F.E. Bronson's work as chairman of the Federal District Commission.

1976 Accession

The Bronson Company and its Predecessors, Ottawa, n.d.,  
1809-1974. 7.965 m (Vols. 765-824).

Minutebooks and Annual Financial Statements, n.d.,  
1877, 1885-1968. 60 cm (Vols. 765-767).

This material includes the Company's official  
minutebooks, documents pertaining to incorporation  
and an incomplete run of annual balance sheets.

Journals, 1870-1872, 1901-1974. 60 cm (Vols. 768-775).  
Bronsons and Weston Company, 1870-1872. 7.5 cm  
(Vol. 768).

Bronson Company, 1901-1974. 52.5 cm (Vols. 769-775).

Ledgers, 1901-1974. 30 cm (Vols. 776-779).  
Bronson Company, 1901-1974. 30 cm (Vols. 776-779).

Cash books, 1934-1961. 22.5 cm (Vols. 780-782).  
Bronson Company, 1934-1961. 22.5 cm (Vols. 780-782).

Miscellaneous Records, n.d., 1884-1970. 152.5 cm  
(Vols. 783-797).

Primarily records of the Bronson Company. Of note  
are the Time Books which contain data on wage rates  
and Telegram Book for the Bronsons and Weston Company  
and the Bronsons and Weston Lumber Company.

Letterbooks, 1938-1954. 15 cm (Vols. 798-799).  
Bronson Company, 1938-1954. 15 cm (Vols. 798-799).

Correspondence and Memoranda, n.d., 1864-1968. 2.375 m  
(Vols. 800-813).

Primarily business correspondence for the Bronson  
Company and Predecessor companies. Some important  
files are those relating to the activities of the  
Owners and Leases of hydraulic power at the Chaudiere,  
the Upper Ottawa Improvement Company, the Schyan  
River Improvement Company and the National Capital  
Commission Expropriation.

Legal Files, n.d., 1908-1969. 2.2 m (Vols. 814-824).  
The Legal files were arranged using the alpha-numeric  
system employed by the Company. Some of the original  
legal files are missing. The Bronson Company's  
secret code used in their business transaction is  
found in Volume 817 file C 120.

The Ottawa Power Company Limited, 1889-1921. 50 cm  
(Vols. 825-830).

Minutebook and Annual Financial Statements, 1889-1921.  
15 cm (Vols. 825-826).

This material includes the company's official  
minutebook, some incorporation papers and annual  
financial statements.

Miscellaneous Records, 1899-1915. 15 cm (Vols. 827-829).

The company's stock certificates, stock register  
and transfer book.

Legal Files, 1899-1921. 20 cm (Vol. 830).

The legal files were arranged using the alpha-  
numeric system employed by the company.

The Quinze and Blanche River Railway Company, 1907-1908.  
5 cm (Vol. 831).

Ledger, 1907-1908. 5 cm (Vol. 831).

The Bronson Fibre Corporation Limited, 1941-1946. 5 cm (Vol. 832).

Stock Certificates, 1941-1946. 5 cm (Vol. 832).

The Bronson Family Papers, n.d., 1870-1963. 2.925 m (Vols. 833-  
866).

These papers contain additional information on the public  
affairs of various family members. They consist of a  
letterbook, correspondence, legal papers and estate ledgers.  
Most significant is an E.H. Bronson letterbook and a series  
of correspondence arranged chronologically covering his  
political career. Included is correspondence from  
prominent provincial and federal liberals such as Oliver  
Mowat and Sir Wilfrid Laurier and many of Bronson's  
cabinet colleagues. Some of the subjects mentioned in  
the files of other family members include the Upper Ottawa  
Improvement Company and the Ottawa River Forest Protective  
Association Limited.

#### 1979 Accession

The Bronson Company and its Predecessors, n.d., 1850-1909.  
15 cm (Vol. 867).

Correspondence, timber surveys and trade circulars.  
Of note are documents and plans relating to the  
boundary between Quebec and Ontario.

The Ottawa Carbide Company, n.d., 1892-1902. 1 cm (Vol. 867).

Patents and miscellaneous material.

The Ottawa Electric Company, n.d., 1908, 1909. 1 cm  
(Vol. 867).

Correspondence and memoranda.

The Ottawa Electric Street Railway Company, 1892, 1894.  
1 cm (Vol. 867).

Legal documents.

Miscellaneous Legal Papers, 1898, 1900. 2 cm (Vol. 867).

The Bronson Family Papers, 1896-1963. 26 cm (Vols. 868-869)

Correspondence, trade brochures and newspaper clippings  
primarily of F.E. Bronson and on subjects such as  
St. Andrew's Church, Ottawa and the Ottawa Women's  
Canadian Club.

1980 Accession

The Bronson Family Papers, n.d., 1927-1929, 1931. 2.5 cm  
(Vol. 870).

Correspondence, legal documents and newspaper clippings  
concerning the Federal District Commission of which  
Frederick Bronson was chairman.

Appendix D

MG 28  
III 103

ST-LAURENT, J.B.M., et Fils Enrg. (1878-1969). General Store.

Originals, 1872-1969. 2.08 m. Finding Aid No. 1578.

Jean-Baptiste Moise St-Laurent (1839-1915) father of Louis S. St-Laurent, opened a haberdashery in Sherbrooke in 1872. He moved to Compton, P.Q., in 1878 and established himself as a general merchant. After Jean-Baptiste Moise's death his son J.B. Maurice ran the general store. By 1945 J.B. Maurice was running the store with the help of his son J.B. Marc, under the name J.B.M. St-Laurent et Fils Enrg. In 1956 J.B. Marc began receiving a salary plus one half of the profits of the store. J.B. Maurice and J.B. Marc were also insurance agents, and J.B. Marc was the agent for several bus companies and for the Bell Telephone Company.

J.B. Maurice died in 1967. His brother Louis S. St-Laurent assumed responsibility for paying all bills outstanding at the time of J.B. Maurice's death. In 1969 J.B. Marc closed the store, which was operating at a loss. In 1971 Louis S. St-Laurent and his sister Lora St-Laurent, acting as trustees for the estate of their mother, Mary Ann Broderick, sold the store and house in Compton to the Royal Trust Company.

Messrs. Weyland and Chester ran a general store and blacksmith shop in Marbleton, P.Q., during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Chilton M. Weyland was the manufacturer of Weyland's Hoof Ointment.

Papers pertaining to the personal affairs of members of the St-Laurent family were transferred to MG 26 L, The Right Honourable Louis Stephen St-Laurent.

One map of Saskatoon, 1907, was transferred to the National Map Collection. Trade catalogues were transferred to the Public Archives Library.

Finding Aid No. 1578 is a file list.

Financial Records, 1872-1969. 1.5 m (volumes 1-18).

Ledgers, 1872-1881, 1908-1910, 1957-1963. Journal, 1941-1967. Day books, 1872-1924 not inclusive. Daily sales report sheets, 1957-1969. Cash books, 1907-1909. Income tax returns for J.B. Maurice and J.B. Marc St-Laurent, 1945, 1948-1962. Price lists. Invoices, 1927-1928.

Correspondence, 1945-1969. 3 cm (volume 18).

Ingoing and outgoing correspondence with suppliers, filed alphabetically.

Agency records, 1880-1969. 40 cm (volumes 19-20).

Insurance company advertising blotters. Insurance policies and correspondence, 1955-1969. Stanstead and Sherbrooke Mutual Fire Insurance Company: application registers, 1880-1927, receipt book,

MG 28  
III 103

ST-LAURENT, J.B.M., et Fils Enrg. (1878-1969). General Store.

1904, 1907, policy of Fred Gill, 1922. Bell Telephone Company bank books, 1952-1969, working advance disbursement reports, 1956, guide à l'usage des agents, instructions to agents, 1956, samples of remittance lists, 1956, 1967. Autobus Laramée Ltée: laissez-passer annuel de l'agent, vers 1959, sample of ticket reports, 1960-1962. Provincial Transport Company: agency bulletin, 1949, weekly ticket sales reports, 1958-1959.

Weyland and Chester, 1895-1912. 11 cm (volume 21).

Business records of Messrs. Weyland and Chester. Invoices and advertising broadsheets of Chilton M. Weyland. Invoices of W. Chester. The Standard Paint Company of Canada Limited, Ruberoid flooring and roofing samples, circa 1910.

Miscellaneous, 1897-1898, 1902, 1962-1968. 4 cm (volumes 21-22).

Advertising blotters. Agreements with suppliers. Asbestos Corporation Limited, annual report, 1966. Rosmar Corporation (Québec) Ltée, financial report, 1966. A.C. Nielsen Company of Canada, food index report, 1968, which includes a chart of the general store's average weekly sales, 1965-1968. Lennoxville Hotel guest register, 1897-1898.