Access to Archival Records:
A Review of Current Issues:
A RAMP Study

General Information Programme and UNISIST

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ACCESS TO ARCHIVAL RECORDS:

A REVIEW OF CURRENT ISSUES:

A RAMP STUDY

prepared by

Gabrielle Blais

General Information Programme and UNISIST
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

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PREFACE

In order to better meet the needs of Member States, developing countries in particular, in the areas of archives administration and records management, the Division of the General Information Programme (PGI) has developed its RECORDS AND ARCHIVES MANAGEMENT PROGRAMME (RAMP).

The basic themes of RAMP reflect and contribute to the overall objectives of PGI. RAMP therefore includes projects, studies and other activities intended:

> to create awareness and promote understanding, among and within governments of Member States, of the value and usefulness of records and archives as basic information resources;

> to assist countries, upon request, in the organization and development of records and archives management systems and services necessary for the full and effective utilization of these basic information resources;

> to promote and assist in the advancement and dissemination of knowledge through the training of professionals in the field of archives and records management as the basis for solid archival policies and development.

RAMP activities concentrate on infrastructure development, development of strategies for archival training, assistance in the development of standard setting instruments, protection of the archival heritage, promotion of the development and application of modern information technologies and research in archival theory and practice.

This study, prepared by Gabrielle Blais under contract with the International Council on Archives (ICA), presents the complex problem of access to archives in a changing environment. Archives are confronted with three main challenges which affect their access: the renewed relationship between archives and their creator and user communities; the prominence of electronic media in records creation and administration process; the need to adopt efficient descriptive strategies.

Comments and suggestions regarding the study are welcome and should be addressed to UNESCO, Division of the General Information Programme (PGI), 7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 PARIS, France.

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INTRODUCTION

Archives have always been concerned with memory and the present. Although archival records are evidence of past occurrences and transactions, they remain a living instrument of today's society. As a witness to human thoughts and actions, and a compendium of the underpinnings of societal rules and mores, they provide reference points for our daily lives and enrich our collective memory. This has been evident in recent years as archival information has been used to bridge the previously severed historical continuum of many nations.[1] Never before have archives been so sought for evidence of past wrongs against indigenous or aboriginal peoples, ethnic minorities, and wartime victims. Never before have they so helped citizens face an uncertain future where technology and increasing deterritorialization question the traditional foundations of community life and values.[2]

Technological advances also challenge our traditional archival practices and provide opportunities for improved archival service. The future of archives will be determined, in many ways, by the extent to which they are able to display their expertise in interacting with both information providers and users within a technologically driven "information society."

This RAMP study will focus on the need for archives to review their approaches and practices in the provision of researcher access services. It will address the social and technological changes that are prompting a transformation in archival work, and propose strategies for the delivery of access programme that render records more readily available, usable, and understandable.

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[1] The most well-known example is the former Soviet Union where history was rewritten to serve political purposes. Marxist ideology also seriously affected Soviet archival traditions. For more on this topic from a North American perspective, admittedly, see Patricia Kennedy Grimsted, Intellectual Access and Descriptive Standards for Post-soviet Archives: What is to be Done?, Princeton, N. J.: International Research Exchange Board (IREX), Preliminary Preprint Version, March 1992. Vladimir Petrovich Kozlov also provides a good overview of the situation in "The Opening of Russian Archives as an Indicator of Social Change. Problems and Perspectives," in Janus 1 (1993): 11-17.

[2] The concept of deterritorialization was examined by Ramon A. Guatiérrez at the 1992 Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists in a paper entitled "From Global Process to Local Knowledge." Briefly, deterritorialization relates to the massive movement of people, money, technology, and ideas - and its impact on societies - between and among the various hemispheres.

1. Factors influencing the consultation and dissemination of archival information

Democratization of archives

1.1 The 1980s witnessed radical transformations in the governing systems of many countries. With the emergence of new democracies, whole political systems were replaced, most often with hybrids which combined local visions of governance and models from other countries. Among many factors for change, these events reflect the long evolution of the concept of the citizen's right-to-know which, aided by technological advances that have broken down communication barriers, has redefined principles of governance.

1.2 In North American and Western European countries, the citizen's right-to-know had earlier been formalized in legislation proclaiming the individual's right of access to information created and held by government bodies. The United States' *Freedom of Information Act,* first passed in 1966, inspired many countries to adopt similar laws.[3] Where access rights were not legislated, regulations were often liberalized to limit the span of possible exemptions to access and as well as the period set for full disclosure.

1.3 This approach was later complemented by the notion of accountability. Governments are now expected to accept responsibility for their actions and for their interventions in the lives of citizens, and to be able to demonstrate (by recourse to accurate records) that they have fulfilled their legislated and legal obligations.[4] This principle has two major philosophical underpinnings: decision-making has to be marked by a clear

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[3] The Freedom of Information Act, amended 1974-75: 5 U.S. Code 552. Norway, Sweden, Finland, France, Australia, and Canada are examples of countries who have proceeded with comparable access legislation.

[4] It is interesting to note that in certain cases these principles have been used to judge past decisions and actions. In Canada, for instance, public pressure forced the Canadian government to apologize to Japanese Canadians who were interned during the Second World War and to offer financial compensation.

trail of evidence and government actions have to be executed in an unbiased, efficient manner.[5]

1.4 These two factors have had an impact on the way in which the decision-making process is documented and how this documentation is managed. Information management practices have been considerably revised to address this new environment. The concept of corporate memory, which relates to information needed by institutions at a given time to do their job, requires the implementation of proper information management practices.[6] The goal is to ensure that only relevant information is created and kept, and that systems are developed to manage that information so that it is easily accessible. Sceptics have claimed that access legislation and regulations have had an opposite, "chilling effect, " on record creation, and that in fact the record is less candid than it should be.[7]

Privacy concerns

1.5 An unexpected consequence of increasing access rights has been the emerging conflict between principles of open access to information and the protection of personal privacy.[8] Often, rights of access imply intrusions into the personal lives of individuals. This is most common where personal and other information has not been segregated by record creators.[9] These two principles must be balanced to ensure that

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[5] For more on this topic, see Archival Documents. Providing Accountability Through Recordkeeping, edited by Sue McKemmish & Frank Upward, Melbourne: Ancora Press, 1993.

[6] The concept of corporate memory has been recently rearticulated by the Information Management and Standards Division of the National Archives of Canada.

[7] For more, see Robert J. Hayward, "Federal Access and Privacy Legislation and the Public Archives of Canada," Archivaria 18 (Summer 1986): 47-57.

[8] The major work, although controversial, on this topic is Heather McNeil, Without Consent. The Ethics of Disclosing Personal Information in Public Archives, Methuchen, N.J. and London: The Society of American Archivists and The Scarecrow Press, 1992. See also Wayne Madsen, Handbook of Personal Data Protection, New York: Stockton Press and Basingstoke Hants, England: Macmillan Publishers Ltd., 1992.

[9] An example of this in Canada are the records relating to the development of Northern Canada. These subject files were compiled by federal government officials overseeing the administration of various programme in northern communities. The records are rife with references to native inhabitants. The sporadic nature of this information did not merit the

individuals are not unjustly harmed by disclosure of information and that their rights to privacy are maintained.[10]

1.6 In recent years, this issue has become prominent as records containing extensive personal information have been made public. In many cases, the existence of these records was never intended to be known since they were never meant to be released. A notable example of this is the records of the Stasi, the German Democratic Republic's secret police. Over many years, this agency maintained extensive records on its own citizens. Information about individuals - often provided by friends and family - was collected. The records were then used to monitor the activities of perceived enemies of the government.[11] When the regime collapsed, the records were made available to the individuals who were the subjects of such files. As a result, some East Germans learned first hand about the state's intrusions into their lives, as well as about the role played by some family members and close friends. This situation caused much personal turmoil for the individuals who were the subject of the files, as well as for those who had provided information at a time when such an action was condoned and even encouraged by governing authorities.

1.7 A complicating factor to the upholding of privacy rights are the possibilities for intrusion into individuals' private lives made possible by the manipulation of technology. Capabilities for data-matching in automated systems have resulted in the development, in some countries, of regulations to protect the use and dissemination of personal information

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creation of separate, individual, case files; yet, the presence of such, scattered, sensitive, personal information linked to identifiable individual in subject files and the subsequent risk of disclosure pose great access problems.

[10] Privacy rights have been defined as a "claim or right of individuals to noninterference, articulated concisely as the right to be left alone. Furthermore, privacy has been characterized as "the extent to which we are the subject of others' attention; and the extent to which others have physical access to us. " This definition was provided by Ruth Gavison, as quoted in MacNeil, Without Consent, p.27.

[11] This practice is common in many countries. Wayne Madsen has identified numerous countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Middle East that are currently using large computer systems to track and repress dissidents. See Wayne Madsen, Handbood of Personal Data Protection. Chapter seven is of particular interest on this topic. For information on the recent Russian experience, see Rudolf Pikhoya, "The Discovery of Archives in Russia, " Janus 1 (1993): 8-10.

and, especially, common personal identifiers or numbers. The European Community has made major strides in this field with the planned adoption of a Directive on Data Protection. These guidelines are intended to provide a common level of data protection among members of the European Community. Given the Community's influence internationally, the guidelines are expected to have a significant impact on the evolution of privacy policies worldwide.

1.8 Currently, many nations are attempting to provide maximum protection of personal information through various initiatives. The concept of the individual's right of ownership over his/her own personal information - wherever it is located - is gaining prominence. The extent to which this principle will be respected, however, is hard to predict. In some countries, for instance, studies have been undertaken to develop electronic "smart cards" containing personal data which would be held by individuals and made available to governments only when transactions occur. [12] Such an instrument would impose greater limitations on the use of personal information by governments as, it is estimated, there would only be one major personal database to which officials could gain access - but under strict controls. Concurrently, if kept, this database would provide a valuable archival record of government-citizen interaction.

Non-traditional forms of records

1.9 Current initiatives in the field of privacy are just one example of society's uneasiness in the face of technological change. In the case of archives, not only is the "shape" of information being redefined, so are the approaches adopted to manipulate it. The invention of other physical formats for records has provided new ways of creating, controlling, disseminating, and gaining access to information.

1.10 It has taken many decades for archives to confront the problems associated with the widening media field. For years, evolution within that field was relatively slow and predictable. Since textual paper records remained the dominant archival artifact, archives did little to accommodate other media such as documentary art, maps, photographs,

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[12] "Smart cards are embedded with a computer chip enabling them to store data and communicate with computers. They can store an individual's medical or other personal history, and can facilitate health care, financial, communications or transportation transactions." Privacy Times (19 May 1993): 4.

and films. Description of records usually focused on textual paper records, with vague mentions of other media. In instances where other forms of records were voluminous, segregation and subsequent description using methods borrowed from other disciplines, such as museology and librarianship, were the norm. Providing effective access to these records was an even lesser concern, which may explain why to this day these records are still predominantly used to illustrate research rather than nourish it.

1.11 Yet, non-textual records had been acquired by archives for decades. During the 1950s, the advent of television and refinements to the printing process which reduced the cost of publishing photographs, increased the use of visual material. Non-textual non-paper archival collections, consequently, grew in size and importance within archives. But it was not until these records started being requested by large groups of researchers that archives had to face the challenges associated with conserving and diffusing non-traditional formats.

1.12 With non-paper records, access is as much a question of technology as of context and content. In the case of audio-visual records, for instance, the variety of available formats requires that archives housing such records provide the specialized equipment to permit access to the information, or continually migrate their holdings forward to the most recent storage formats and technology readers/interpreters. This equipment is not only specialized, but also transitory, as new formats are introduced and the technology is rapidly transformed. The same can be said for photographs and electronically generated information. As a consequence, archives must constantly re-format information, upgrade technology, and sometimes even maintain museums of artifactual equipment. Few archives have the resources to do so.

1.13 Intellectual retrieval practices must also be refined. It has been argued that researchers interested in artistic, photographic, and audio-visual records are item-driven. The focus of their search is a particular event, site, or person. They may also be interested in the record-creating process or history of the medium. For as long as these user groups remained relatively small, it was possible for archives to undertake extensive research to locate the items of interest. In many places, this is no longer possible, however, as other researchers have shown an interest in non-textual archives as key evidential records for the modern era.

The impact of technology

1.14 Recent technological developments will complicate this state of affairs. In the last few decades, the conjecture of technology and information has given birth to new types of documents that are solely in electronic form. Avra Michelson and Jeff Rothenberg have used the term "information technology" to describe the "computing and communications technology used to obtain, store, organize, manipulate, and exchange information. " [13] At an earlier time this information would have been recorded on one of the many other physical, paper-based, formats familiar to archives. But given the great flexibility of information technology, creators are steadily moving to an electronic environment.

1.15 The proliferation of this technology has caused an "electronic information revolution" which is transforming the way people do their work and, as David Bearman has stated, is leading to new "practices of communication and to new forms of records. "[14] Like the telephone had done earlier in the century, it is redefining the nature of human interaction and imposing new forms of "orality" to social exchanges.[15] Above all, information technology enables the free flow of information between individuals, organizations, countries, and continents.

1.16 These developments have forced archivists to revisit basic principles and practices. Probably the greatest challenge relating to electronic records is the fact that they rarely attain a finite state, as they can constantly be updated, unless archives intervene. The information can also be merged, manipulated, and transformed. Often, electronic records provide evidence of the process more than of the actual transaction.

1.17 Because electronic information is so easily transportable and exchangeable, it has been difficult to incorporate it into existing record-

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[13] Michelson, Avra and Jeff Rothenberg, "Scholarly Communication and Information Technology: Exploring the Impact of Changes in the Research Process on Archives, " American Archivist 55 (Spring 1992): 239.

[14] Bearman, David, "Management of Electronic Records in Europe and America," American Archivist 55 (Winter 1992): 169.

[15] Hugh Taylor has written extensively on this topic. See, for instance, "Transformation in the archives: Technological Adjustment or Paradigm Shift, " Archivaria 25 (Winter 1987-88): 12-28.

keeping systems that were developed for permanent, textual, paper records. Indeed, electronic records in organizations often are placed under the custody of automation professionals while paper records remain with records managers. If this electronic information is to be permanently preserved, archives will have to adopt new strategies that focus more on timely interaction with records creators and possibly the sharing of custodial responsibilities.

1.18 In its current manifestation, electronic information in many ways reassembles the oral transaction. It may be argued that archives are entering a period of "neo-orality" where much of the transaction loses its preciseness and becomes more symbolic of the interaction. [16] It consequently will be even more important for archives to determine the criteria by which records ought to be kept. They will also have to place information in context so that researchers understand the information to which they are gaining access. Furthermore, given the plethora of records available to the technology literate, archives have to be able to guide users in the best use of available sources.

1.19 This situation will be compounded as drastic changes occur in the media base of archives. Increasingly, records that were traditionally on various media will be created electronically. Furthermore, some copying devices such as optical discs will allow for the merging of textual and other records. Already "compound" (i.e. multimedia) documents challenge the traditional descriptive practices of archives and force a more global, generic, and contextual approach to the creation of reference tools.

1.20 Technology is also transforming the way in which research is conducted. During the 1960s and 1970s, researchers limited their "computing" work to the preparation of indexes and similar retrieval tools, the conversion of textual material to machine-readable form, as well as the writing and editing of text. Such "end-user computing" was transformed radically with the introduction of personal computers and the greater accessibility to easily manipulated software packages. [17] Added to this are the

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[16] Hugh Taylor used this term in his wrap-up of the Vision 2020 sessions at the 1992 Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Montreal, Canada.

[17] Avra Michelson and Jeff Rothenberg have described the end-user as "someone who physically uses a computer - the person who touches the keyboard and reads the screen. " "Scholarly Communication, " American Archivist 55 (Spring 1992): 245.

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possibilities presented by hypermedia tools which enable access to records that used to reside on various physical formats.

1.21 Researchers are now able to devise their own search strategies, manipulate information in new ways, and study issues which previously would have been diffilcult to address due to the quantity and structure of the data. They expect off-site access to a variety of sources which they can manipulate, share, and discuss with colleagues from all over the globe, and transfer to other colleagues who may manipulate that same information for their own research purposes. In doing so, researchers are of course also creating their own records.

1.22 Archives are also confronted by new research approaches. On-line access to bibliographic databases has increased the scope of information-gathering processes. Archives will be pressured to complement this with on-line access to the information itself - an objective that may be impossible to reach for some years. This will require that a careful selection be made of what will be offered through electronic document delivery systems. As a participant in the process, archives will have to be knowledgeable of the permutations of research, which will increasingly be based on electronic information networking.[18] Concurrently, transitory or "legacy" systems will have to be maintained for those users who either cannot use technological tools or do not have access to them.

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[18] The use of Internet by academics in North America is a good example of one such permutation.

2. THE CHANGING NATURE OF ACCES AND USE

2.1 Principles of access to archives have evolved over time. As Michel Duchein explained in his RAMP study on obstacles to the access, use, and transfer of information from archives, before the nineteenth century, access to archives was strictly controlled and limited.[19] Since archives existed primarily to serve the legal needs of records creators, their use was limited to the bureaucracies that controlled them. The only exceptions were those countries influenced by democratic movements and in which access rules were somewhat relaxed. To this day, creators of records have remained an important user group in archives, as the collective memory of organizations is consulted for a variety of reasons - from documenting past decisions to developing a sense of corporate identity.

2.2 The nineteenth century witnessed a gradual and cumulative opening of public archives to historians in European countries. Over time, this situation nourished an intimate relationship between historians and the custodians of archival records. Indeed, both professions came to be trained within the same discipline: academic history. This reality has continued to this day in some countries. In others, and particularly in North America, archival graduate education programme began to be established in the 1980s and have come to be seen as the future ideal for training new archivists.[20]

2.3 It is undoubtedly true that historians and their students remain valuable clients of archives, for two key reasons.[21] On the one hand, they are

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[19] I have been brief with the historical background to this topic as Michel Duchein covered it extensively in his own RAMP study, Obstacles to the Access. Use and Transfer of Information from Archives: A RAMP Study, Paris: UNESCO, 1983. Readers should also consult Hugh Taylor, Archival services and the concept of the user: a RAMP study, Paris: UNESCO, 1984.

[20] Even now, however, the majority of archivists continue to be educated in history, and this poses a subtle problem concerning access to archives. Archivists too often see the academic historian as the "ideal user, " or at least the only important one.

[21] Michael Roper has even caimed that at the Public Record office in England, "even though amateurs probably just outnumber the professionals (and by this he refers to professional historians and their assistants and students), . . . the professionals still appear to consult more documents per head. " "Antiquarianism or Information Service, the Viewpoint of a Professional Archivist, " Janus 2 (1992): 112.

responsible for providing leadership in the area of historical research. This implies that the profession is expected to use archives to delve into those issues that are central to a society's collective memory. On the other hand, their work provides, sometimes inadvertently, the intellectual fabric from which historical knowledge is expressed or "trickled down" to more general audiences through occasional best-sellers by historians themselves, and more often by the work of others through school textbooks, popular or journalistic history, films, plays, television, and even opera. In doing so, historians provide learned interpretation - and consequently increased worth -of the documentary heritage. In recent years, historians have been joined by colleagues from other academic disciplines in these endeavors.

2.4   In the last few decades, however, other types of researchers have joined academics in their use of archives, and archivists, because of their natural bias to historians, have sometimes been slow to acknowledge this change. The place of archives in society has consequently changed. As Bernhard Vogel has so well stated, "Les archives ne sent plus la "mémoire" de l'administration, elles tendant (sic) de plus en plus à devenir une entreprise de services pour le citoyen."[22] Among these "citizen-users," the most important group consists of family historians. For those countries populated as part of the great human migrations of the last few centuries, family history is being used to recreate the historical continuum. In this context, family history - or genealogy - differs considerably from the traditional search for "pedigree. "[23] In recent years, interest in family history has expanded from looking for family roots to exploring the related social and economic environment in which the family lived. The link between family and local history, consequently, is close. And since every citizen is a potential family historian, the prospect for growth among this researcher group is great.

2.5 Interest in family history is not prominent in all countries. In Russia, for instance, the genealogical tradition is more scholarly than popular, with an emphasis on the study of heraldry and the search for aristocratic roots. Nonetheless, there is a strong tradition of keeping vital statistics of an official nature from which much genealogical information may be obtained. The Australians have never had a sizeable genealogical

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[22] "Archives, Musées de papier ou Centres d'information?" Janus 2 (1992): 108.

[23] Such as those who undertake genealogical research to confirm ties with the nobility.

community, in part, some say, because of the desire to hide or obscure the linkage of many citizens to convict settlers. As for China, genealogical information in private possession was destroyed during the Cultural Revolution, either by the Red Guard, or by the frightened families themselves.[24] In certain countries, archival records do not lend themselves well to such research; in other cases, records of interest to genealogists are not permanently preserved.

2.6   Archives are also increasingly consulted by "professional" researchers who seek answers to specific questions. They include lawyers, publishers, journalists, environmentalists, criminal investigators, etc. In all of these cases, these individuals have little interest in the research process *per se.* They turn to archives to resolve specific issues or to locate specific pieces of factual information; in most cases, they will never be repeat visitors.

2.7   There is another, less homogeneous group, which Paul Conway has described as "avocational" researchers. These individuals are willing to "pursue their interests in greater depth over a longer period of time than more focused personal researchers. "[25] Their research queries vary and include subjects such as prominent historical events, for instance the American Civil War, and other topics such as shipwrecks, military events and related artifacts, unidentified flying objects, railway lore, and abandoned gold mines. Indeed, the interests of avocational researchers are as diversified as the holdings themselves. Avocational researchers are motivated by personal curiosity; archival information is only one step in the process they choose to gain understanding of an issue. This research community may increase radically in the coming years as communication technologies facilitate electronic grazing from home facilities.

2.8   Finally, a significant percentage of archives users consist of archives staff who need to consult records on a regular basis to perform their custodial and reference work. It is difficult to gauge the impact of this user group as most archives do not monitor access to holdings by their own staff.

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[24] See Xu Yuqing, "Differences and Similarities in Chinese and American Approaches to Archives, " American Archivist 54 (Spring 1991): 206-215.

[25] Conway, Paul, Partners in Research. Towards Enhanced Access to the National Archives, Technical Information Paper No. 11, Washington, D. C.: National Archives and Records Administration, 1992: 4.

Furthermore, access policies and procedures for staff are often unclear or unexistent.

2.9　Traditional assumptions concerning archival research started changing in the 1980s when systematic reviews of the use made of archival information, and of the users themselves, were undertaken. The motives for initiating such "user studies" were both administrative and operational.　For one, archives were starting to be affected by the resource implications resulting from providing access to a multiplicity of records for increasingly diverse user communities.　In line with this growth and diversity, researcher expectations in the area of reference services were starting to shift, thus forcing archives to review their own acquisition, control, and access practices.

2.10 American archivists were the first to show an interest in conducting user studies. Influenced by seminal works written by Bruce Dearstyne, Paul Conway, Elsie Freeman, Mary Jo Pugh, and Lawrence Dowler, many embarked on systematic studies of their research clientèles and research uses of their holdings.[26]　The first major user study was undertaken by the National Archives of Canada in 1984 as part of its programme evaluation cycle.[27]　This study, probably the most extensive ever conducted in the international archival community, led to an important

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[26] Elsie Freeman, "Buying Quarter Inch Holes: Public Support Through Results," The Midwestern Archivist X(No.2):1985: 89-97 and "In the Eyes of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View, " American Archivist 47(Spring 1984): 11-23; Bruce Dearstyne, "What Is the *Use* of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession, " American Archivist 50(Winter 1987): 76-87; Mary Jo Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and The Reference Archivist, " American Archivist 45 (Winter 1982): 33-44; Lawrence Dowler,　"The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Resea rch Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records, " American Archivist 51 (Spring/Winter 1988): 74-86; and Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying the Users of Archives, " American Archivist 49(Fall 1986): 393-407. A controversial piece was written by Randall C. Jimerson, "Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society, " American Archivist 52(Summer 1989): 332-340.

[27] Programme evaluation in the Canadian federal government was adopted in 1977. Briefly, it consists of regular reviews of departmental programme, generally on a five year cycle. A programme is defined as a major departmental activity.

restructuring of the institution where reference activities were centralized .[28]

2.11   User studies can be structured to answer a variety of questions. Bruce Dearstyne's framework addresses six areas: tracking and studying research use, interpreting and reporting on the significance of that use, promoting increased use, emphasizing use as a means of garnering programme support, reaching out to the researcher community as a partner in dealing with difficult archival problems, and expanding the concept of reference service to a broader notion of researcher service, or public service.[29]   Paul Conway offers a model that assesses three elements of reference services: quality - how well archivists understand and meet the information needs of their users, integrity - how well archivists balance their obligations to preserve materials against their obligations to make them available, and value - the effects of use on individuals, groups, and society as a whole.[30]

2.12 Other user studies can focus on specific questions. David Bearman conducted a study of "user presentation language" in which all types of inquiries from patrons and staff were recorded in a number of American institutions on a given day. The objective was to address two problems identified in previous studies: that "they ignored the large number of questions that are posed by staff, and they (other studies) recorded profiles of users, but not the contents of their questions, thus leaving us with some knowledge of who users are, but only prejudice about what each category of user might want. "[31] Ann D. Gordon, on the other hand, conducted a study to "find out how historical researchers gain

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[28] Public Archives of Canada, The Detailed Findings of the Researcher Assistance and Public Service Program Evaluation Study, Ottawa: 1985. A comparable study was undertaken for the National Archives and Records Administration of the United States by Paul Conway, Partners in Research. Toward Enhanced Access to the National Archives, Washington: National Archives and Records Administration, Technical Paper No. 11, 1992.

[29] Dearstyne, Bruce, "What Is the Use of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession, " p.78.

[30] Conway, Paul, "Facts and Frameworks, " p.394,

[31] Bearman, David, "User Presentation Language in Archives, " Archives and Museum Informatics 3, (no.4) (Winter 1989-90): 3-7.

access to sources and what obstacles they encounter."[32] In all cases, these works were intended to make archives reflect on the effectiveness of their own practices as these affect researchers.

2.13 User studies to date have tended to confirm archivists' assumptions concerning their users. For one, academic researchers make up only a small percentage of an institution's clientele. Furthermore, scholars depend to a great extent on the "academic grapevine" to identify sources of interest.[33] Finally, a significant proportion of scholarly work is done altogether without consulting primary sources.[34]

2.14 In most cases, it was reported that the proportion of clients whose background or research purposes cannot be easily identified continues to grow. They are the avocational researchers to whom Paul Conway has referred. Many are attracted to archives because of the inherent possibilities for research that their holdings present. Others are curious about what services archives can provide. Unfortunately, archives have yet to assess their own services in light of these user needs. And by upholding traditional access practices, they impose greater research obstacles for these users.

2.15 User studies have also pointed to some important weaknesses in the tools archives have used to make information available. Current descriptive and access practices can only support research environments in which archivists actively mediate the request-response scenario. Finding aids, which are often records-specific, do not provide enough contextual introduction to the records to enable independent research. Furthermore,

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[32] Ann D. Gordon, Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage: The Report of the Historical Documents Study, Supported by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission in cooperation with the American Council of Learned Societies, Washington, 1992.

[33] See Paul Conway, "Research in Presidential Libraries: A User Survey, " Midwestern Archivist 11 (1986): 46.

[34] For discussions of the relative importance of primary sources in scholarly work see Clyve Jones, Michael Champman, and Pamela Carr Woods, "The Characteristics of the Literature Used by Historians, " Journal of Librarianship) 4(1971): 137-56; Mary Ellen Soper, "The Relationship between Personal Collections and the Selection of Cited References, " Ph.D. dissertation (University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 1972); and Margaret F. Stieg, "The Information Needs of Historians, " College and Research Libraries 42 (1981): 549-60.

archives' fractured approach to description has lead to fractured approaches to research.   This is an environment with an in-built assumption of low use and even lesser quality of service. It has even been argued that archivists prepare finding aids in such a fashion that an archivist's intervention is always necessary .[35]

2.16   User studies have also confirmed the changing patterns of archival research. Increased costs in travel and the proliferation of communication tools have decreased on-site visits to repositories.   Increasingly, researchers prefer to consult holdings in their home locations. In some cases, telecommunication tools must be used; in others, traditional technology such as microform can effectively satisfy these needs. At the very least, researchers expect to be able to limit their stay at a repository to a minimum by being able to prepare for their visits in advance.

2.17 Some users are less interested in consulting actual documents than in having access to the information they contain. In such cases, archives are called upon to manipulate information to suit client needs. Expectations that archives can provide the same services as photographic stock-shot operations, where a particular image and caption can be provided within hours, is an example of such expectations. These services, when offered, are cost and labour intensive and lend themselves to user fees.

2.18   Given the results of user studies conducted to date, it has become imperative for archives to take time to examine the makeup and needs of their potential and existing user groups, and compare them with the services they currently provide.   These services must be adjusted regularly so that users are provided with the tools necessary to exploit successfully available resources.   Finally, as a member of the greater information community, archives must participate filly in the development of communication technologies that will eventually "carry" the information they hold to the world beyond their institutional doors.

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[35] The author would like to thank Tim Ericson for his useful suggestions on this topic.

3.   ENHANCING AWARENESS OF ARCHIVAL HOLDINGS

3.1 Over the years, archives have been severely criticized for their inactivity in the field of self-promotion and education. They have failed to foster, among the population at large, an appreciation for the importance of archives in society and for their relevance in individuals' daily lives. In too many cases, archives do not even anticipate interest in their holdings and services, preferring instead to wait for users to find them. This situation must change if archives are to play a greater social role, let alone maintain their resource levels in severe economic times. Three thrusts can help them achieve this objective: image-building, awareness, and education programme.[36]

Image-building

3.2 The concept of image-building is the archival form of marketing.[37] At the corporate level, institutional image is a vital part of ensuring that archives obtain sufficient resources to do the job they have been mandated to do. For cultural institutions that have not been accustomed to self-promotion, the challenge is to develop strategies that promote an image of archives as dynamic and vibrant organizations worthy of support and able to fulfil the informational and cultural needs of both sponsors and the general public. The goal is to make resource allocators conscious of the institution's worth to the collectivity by increasing knowledge and appreciation of archival activities in general, and of the institution in particular.[38]   Such initiatives, however, must be supported by solid awareness, education, and access programme that can fulfil the raised expectations of the target public.

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[36] The concepts summarized in this section were described at length in Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in the Management of Archives, " Archivaria [31] (Winter 1990-91): 101-113.

[37] For more on marketing techniques for public institutions, see John L. Crompton and Charles W. Lamb, Jr., Marketing Government and Social Services, New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1986.

[38] In the past, archives have sporadically succeeded with such ventures. A promotion campaign at the National Archives of Canada in 1988 was very successful; the National Archives and Records Administration in the United States made effective use of the television networks to celebrate the anniversary of the American Bill of Rights. An original idea was developed by the archives of Kraft General Foods in the United States; it published Kraft Classics, a collection of popular recipes illustrated with images from its holdings.

Awareness

3.3 It is safe to assume that most citizens will never become active users of archives. In most cases, their curiosity will be limited to learning about the activities of archival institutions and of the general nature of the records they hold.   Such interest can best be satisfied by offering programme that promote knowledge of the function and mission of archives, and some basic familiarity with the material they hold. On the one hand, such awareness programme are self-serving as they seek to increase support for the institution.   On the other, they help explain and interpret archival information to the public at large.

3.4 The selection and development of awareness activities present great opportunities for imaginative uses of records.   It must be realized that certain types of records - either because of their form or content - are more easily understood by occasional users than others.   Public programmers in archives should consequently test their material with their target publics to ensure that it is properly understood and appreciated. The activities selected must also have wide public appeal. Exhibition and film series, for instance, can be highly effective tools with a general audience.[39]   As for school programme, the focus must be on providing opportunities to work with the actual records themselves, as the purpose is to initiate students to archival research and increase their understanding of the value of archival records.[40]   Finally, the celebration of anniversaries and actual participation in local events will further expand the popular reach of archives.

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[39] This is not to say that archives have shown great concern for the interests of the general public when preparing exhibitions. Nigel Yates has provided interesting comments about this in "Marketing the record office: new directions in archival public relations, " Journal of the Society of Archivists 9(2), (April 1988): 69-75. Film series consist of planned film showings based on a theme, topic, individual, etc. The series are usually accompanied by publications, lectures, or discussion groups. A great advantage of this form of event is that it enables controlled access to a very fragile medium.

[40] A unique example of, school programme was "1'Archivobus," sponsored by the Archives départementales de l'Orne and of the Bouches-du-Rhône in France.   This programme has been the subject of many articles. See, for example, Élisabeth Gautier-Desvaux, "Services éducatifs et enseignement e1émentaire. La solution 'Archivobus' aux Archives de l'Orne, "La Gazette des Archives (juin 1984): 46-58; and Madeleine Villard, "L'archivobus, Un nouveau moyen de diffusion culturelle: le cas des Archives des Bouches-du-Rhône," La Gazette des Archives (novembre 1985): 133-141.

Education

3.5 The basic familiarity with archival operations that awareness activities provide are not sufficient to enable participants to become experienced users. It is not enough to know that there may be pertinent or interesting information in archives; potential users must learn in more detail what that information is and how to retrieve it. Archives therefore have a responsibility to teach, at least in a basic way, the central principles upon which archival work is based and upon which retrieval of archival records is dependent. In so doing, archives provide researchers with the intellectual tools with which to attack their research problems.

3.6 The chief objective of archival education programme is to instruct actual and prospective users in research strategies and techniques. These can include introductory sessions or videos on archives and special "how to do archival research" seminars for advanced university students, to name just two, or may involve explanations of other archival functions, such as appraisal. Users should not only learn how to consult finding aids; they must understand the process by which records are created, organized, and find their way into a repository.

3.7 It is also crucial for users to know how to best select the information they need from among the multitude of sources available to them. Archival research must not only be inclusive but effective. After all, of what use is a CD-ROM containing a number of multi-media fends if users do not know how to identifuy and retrieve the information they require? Education programme, consequently, must be devised in such a fashion that they can feed the research process at its different stages and under different conditions. Products must not only be available to prospective users before they arrive at an archives, they must support them throughout their search in the institution and afterwards.

3.8 Image building, awareness, and educational programme, consequently, help people learn of the usefulness of archives. Often, such a level of involvement in the archival process is sufficient as it provides adequate exposure to archival information and operations. And even though not all individuals will become regular archives users, they will have acquired an understanding of the role of archives and an appreciation of how archives may be of service to them. For others, however, these forms of indirect access are but a first step towards actual use of the holdings.

4.   ENHANCING ACCESS AND USE OF ARCHIVAL HOLDINGS

4.1   Providing access to the information acquired and preserved by an institution is central to the delivery of archival programme.[41] It is only when records get used that archives can best demonstrate their usefulness to society. The aim of researcher access services, consequently, should be to lower the intellectual and psychological barriers to archives so that as many individuals as possible can read, touch, learn from, and enjoy those documents that illuminate past experience. It is not enough to know that there may be pertinent or interesting information in archives; users must be able to retrieve and consult that information, particularly in an era when information has become a valued commodity .[42]

4.2   Establishing the rules under which users may gain access to records is a main building block for any researcher access programme, as such rules set the conditions under which subsequent services will be provided. There are three main principles that should be respected when access regulations are developed.

4.3   First, archives must be committed to equal terms of access. As the joint statement on access issued by the American Library Association and the Society of American Archivists states, "A repository should not deny access to materials to any researcher, nor grant privileged or exclusive use of materials to any researcher, nor conceal the existence of any body of material from any researcher, unless required to do so by statutory authority, institutional mandate, or donor or purchase stipulations. "[43] In other words, archives must do away with policies that differentiate between categories of researchers or research. Equality of access, however, should not be confused with equality of service. Clearly,

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[41] For more guidance on the reference process, readers should consult Mary Jo Pugh, Providing Reference Services for Archives, Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992.

[42] The importance of effective access programmes is in line with the value being currently placed on information in general.   From 1988 to 1992, for instance, the world market for information grew four hundred per cent and the telecommunications market in 1991 was worth $412.8 billion. (These statistics were provided by Jean-Louis Roy in his inaugural address to the XIIth International Congress of Archives, Montréal, 1992, "La profession d'archiviste à l'ère de l'information, " p.7).

[43] Society of American Archivists, "ALA-SAA Joint Statement on Access to Original Materials in Libraries, Archives, and Manuscript Repositories, " Archival Outlook (July 1993): 15.

different user groups must be served in the fashion that most effectively meets their needs.

4.4   Secondly, access conditions must be as precise as possible. When these are not governed by strict legal frameworks, such as access to information legislation, they must be clear to all concerned. And when special discretionary access is granted (for example, to personal information provided it is used only for statistical purposes), the conditions set have to be enforceable. Otherwise, it will be impossible for archives to apply a cohesive access policy.

4.5   Traditionally, adequate passage of time has been the approach most used by archives when setting exemptions. The rationale has been that, as time passes, information becomes less sensitive. This principle also has the advantage that it is easy to administer and has a finite date. Currently, periods of thirty and fifty years are common. This approach has had its detractors in recent years, however, who have argued that it results in some unsensitive information being upheld for no reason other than it is not sufficiently old.

4.6   This approach has also been put into question as a result of recent changes in the governing cultures of certain countries. Emerging democracies have supported the disclosure of older records containing information of a highly sensitive nature.   In some cases, for instance, liberalized access rules have provided never-before glimpses into a documentary heritage that had been the purview of a privileged few for many years.   Institutions have to, and will for some time to come, provide for the orderly disclosure of such information. In the case of classified information already held in repositories, massive efforts are being made to review, with the purpose of making available, records relating to diplomatic, intelligence, military, and related issues. In some cases, new laws redefining state secrets will have to be written before records are declassified and disclosed.[44]

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[44] The United States, for instance, has already initiated the review of its classification policy in light of the end of the Cold War era. For more, see "Clinton Launches Declassification Project, Vows to Curb Govt. Secrecy, " Privacy Times 13:8 (6 May 1993).

4.7 Thirdly, the rights to privacy of citizens should be strictly enforced.[45] Concerns about the protection of information about recognizable individuals and access to that information by third parties are currently gaining prominence. In some circles, this is resulting in demands for destruction of personal information of a highly sensitive nature. Archives, through proper and effective access policies, must provide a better alternative.

4.8 Above all, access frameworks must reflect the values and mores of the collectivities concerned. To be respected and administered effectively, legal frameworks must be couched in the beliefs and values of the people they govern. This should then be articulated by institutional policies and guidelines concerning the control and availability of information. Related guidelines should control the actual manipulation of records -an issue that is gaining importance as the copying of archival information on alternate formats becomes more prevalent.

4.9 Access rules in private archives of course operate under different, and usually more restrictive, principles than those in public institutions and sponsored by national, state, city, or university governments. Private repositories such as businesses, unions, and churches must support the work of their immediate sponsors. As Elizabeth Adkins has stated, corporate archives exist to "serve the company in its ongoing efforts to produce a profit. Archivists working for a corporation must understand, accept and support this principle, or their programs will not long survive."[46] This reality usually results in practices whereby use of the information released to staff or external clients is controlled by the corporation.

4.10 Once the "rules of access" layer has been removed, users must penetrate the "intellectual access" layer. This is usually initiated by a question - for instance, What do you have on the Second World War? or Do you have a photograph of Winston Churchill? - for which direction in locating suitable information is sought. An archives' approach in responding to such initial queries will determine the extent to which clients find the

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[45] Peter Ketelaar provides a good description of the current climate in "Archives of the People, By the People, For the People, " S.A. Argiefblad - S.A. Archives Journal 34 (1992): 5-15.

[46] Adkins, Elizabeth, "Access to Corporate Archives: Whose Business Is It?, " paper delivered to the Annual Meeting of the Society of American Archivists, Montreal, 1992, p.5.

information required, the richness of the contextual background and related cross-referenced information, and the time they require to do so. Concurrently, it will determine the amount of resources archives have to devote to the reference function.

4.11 Two important weaknesses in the reference delivery systems of archives need to be corrected. First, archives must develop access tools that will enable independent research as much as it is possible. Face-to-face interaction in the research process, where archivists actually try to find in the holdings the answers to the questions they are asked, must be reduced as it is highly inefficient and time and space dependent. This approach must be replaced by research tools that are sufficiently inclusive and accessible to permit independent browsing of an institution's services and holdings, on-site and increasingly, at a distance over computer networks. Secondly, archives must devise strategies to respond efficiently to ever-increasing demands. They must refocus their efforts, which are based on the traditional assumption of "low-use," so that users can be served, on and off-site, simultaneously.

4.12 In such a changing environment, the archivist-researcher dialogue needs to be updated from the traditional question-answer scenario. Traditional researcher services have relied on the expertise of archivists to provide researchers with personalized advice and assistance in gaining access to pertinent documents held by repositories. Supplementing the "omniscient archivist" have been numerous finding aids and descriptive tools of varying usefulness.[47] This method of operating is no longer feasible, however, as it seriously erodes all other archival functions in a repository. If maintained at such a personal level, it could be anticipated that in a short period of time archivists would devote the greater part of their time to responding to queries at the expense of the appraisal, acquisition, arrangement, and description of records.

4.13 The spheres of activity of archivists and researchers must consequently be redefined. The prime responsibility of archives in the area of access is to provide the descriptive and educational aids that will enable intellectual and physical access to the holdings. In other words, archives must describe and explain the content and contexts of their holdings in

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[47] For more on the "omniscient archivist, " see Mary Jo Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and the Reference Archivist, " American Archivist 45(Winter 1982): 33-44.

such a way that users themselves may navigate within the access framework of the institution.

4.14 This scenario does not necessarily imply that archivists and researchers must operate in totally exclusive environments. It is the nature of the interventions that must differ. Archivists, instead of leading the research process, must act as specialists to be consulted when a search is initiated or when the investigative trails have dried. The focus must be on assisting users in making choices from among the vast quantity of information available.[48]

4.15 Archival access programme must also separate the research process from physical access to the records. Users should be able to obtain a holistic view of the records available in a particular institution through the various research tools made available to them. From that "high-level" or "top-down" view, they should then be able to assess the information value of the records and consequently select those that appear to contain the best answers to their questions. The multi-level approach to archival description (fends, sous-fends, series, etc.) is an ideal mechanism for reorienting research from item-based to such a general-to-specific navigation.[49] In such an environment, familiarity with a medium or ease of access will no longer foil the research process as it currently does in most repositories.

4.16 Because archives have been weak at systematically describing their holdings, they have discouraged users fro-m building their own research products.[50] Too often bridges are not built between the finding aids that

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[48]   This would support John Naisbitt's key assumption in his 1982 best-seller, Megatrends, that "The emphasis of the whole information society shifts, then, from supply to *selection.* " This burden has long been recognized, but not altogether dealt with, by European archives which, as Jean Favier has stated, have been characterized by "le poids des siècles." ("Introduction," American Archivists 55 (Winter 1992): 8.

[49] On this topic, see Terry Cook, "The Concept of the Archival Fends: Theory, Description, and Provenance in the Post-Custodial Era, " in The Archival Fends: from Theorv to Practice, edited by Terry Eastwood, Ottawa: Bureau of Canadian Archivists, 1992, pp.31-85.

[50] This refers again to archivists' too common tendency to respond to inquiries - much like a tourist information service - rather than provide the instruments that will enable users to find the answer.

have been inherited, the tools developed to maintain physical control over holdings, and those required to conduct adequate research. In numerous cases, archives simply make available those finding aids that were provided by the creators of the records. These reflect the latters' strengths or weaknesses at organizing and retrieving information. In other cases, physical control tools or outdated finding aids are used for public access, thus requiring constant mediation by archivists.

4.17   Archives must correct this situation.   First, it is imperative that institutions provide users with an overview of the records they hold. The intent is to introduce them properly to the nature and extent of the holdings, to the activities and functions of the record creators they document, and to the fashion in which they are organized and consequently can be retrieved. Much of this information should be based on research conducted at the time of appraisal. Indeed, what is learned at that time should be migrated into archival descriptive systems. This body of knowledge must include information about the function *per se,* but also about methods used to manage and retrieve that information. Essential information resulting from the appraisal process must be made clear to researchers in descriptive tools. For example, series of case files may all look the same for a particular programme. But, the archivist may have chosen several series for quite different and incompatible reasons: a statistically valid sample of the whole population, a geographical or ethnically-based selection, appeal cases, or a blind example. Without knowing the appraisal decision-making rationales, the researcher may misuse the information.

4.18   In determining points of entry and access, archives must, therefore, respect the need to provide context to records.[51] Users must understand the purpose for which the information was created, the special reasons (if any) for which it was acquired, the conditions under which it was created, and the way in which it was manipulated and managed. This may be done by focusing on the creators of the records, the functions being documented, and the records themselves. Hierarchical and inherent relationships between these three should also be maintained and

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[51] Terry Cook stresses the importance of research into the conceptual context of records creation in "Mind over Matter: Towards a New Theory of Archival Appraisal, " The Archival Imagination. Essays in Honour of Hugh Taylor, Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992: 38-70. As for visual documents, James M. Turner in "Subject Access to Pictures: Considerations in the Subrogation and Indexing of Visual Documents for Storage and Retrieval, " (visual Resources IX (1993): 241-271) provides an interesting survey.

explained .[52]   With these, researchers will be able to go from level to level, or within a level, using the descriptive information as a guide.[53]

4.19 Overall, efficient access systems rely on the implementation of consistent descriptive standards. Holdings must be described in a coherent fashion if they are to be selected, used, and understood by myriad user groups with varying degrees of research experience.   Systematic descriptive practices also enable the sharing and dissemination of information in electronic systems. That archives have come to recognize the importance of descriptive standards in making information available is demonstrated by the work currently being accomplished throughout the world.[54]

4.20 An important aspect of descriptive standards is the development of authority controls that manage the holdings vocabulary and, increasingly, may store substantial contextual information about creators, rather than just "see also" cross-reference synonyms.[55] The terms used to describe creators, functions, and any other related key elements of information

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[52] It should be stressed here that hierarchical relationships should not guide the intellectual access process.   For more on this issue, particularly as it relates to the record group concept, see Max J. Evans, "Authority Control: An Alternative to the Record Group Concept," American Archivist 49 (Summer 1986): 249-261.

[53] For some institutions, the adoption of such a system would require that existing practices be severely altered. In Russia, for instance, item-level description and registration in *opisi* is the current practice. Also, in most countries, descriptive practices with non-textual records have focussed on the item, a reflection of the close relationship between audio-visual archivists, librarians, and documentalists.

[54] Michael Cook reported that work on descriptive standards was proceeding in Britain, Canada, China, Federal Germany, the ICA, IFLA, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Senegal, Sweden, and the United States. ("Standards for Archival Description and for Data Exchanges, " Janus 2 (1992): 153). See also International Council on Archives, "Statement of Principles Regarding Archival Description, " First Version Revised, adopted by the Ad Hoc Commission on Descriptive Standards, Madrid, Spain, January 1992, Ottawa: February 1992. A "General International Standard Archival Description" drafted by the ICA under funding of UNESCO is expected to be published in 1994.

[55] Key articles in recent years have addressed this issue. See, Avra Michelson, "Description and Reference in the Age of Automtion, " American Archivist 50 (Spring 1987): 192-208; David Bearman, "Authority Control Issues and Prospects, " American Archivist 52 (Summer 1989): 286-299; and Jackie M. Dooley, "Subject Indexing in Context," American Archivist 55 (Spring 1992): 344-354.

must be consistent if cross-referencing is to work effectively.[56] Yet, it is only when the inter-relationship between records, their creators, and their functions is demonstrated that coherent paths through the many series of records can be built.[57]   This is particularly essential for electronic records as they are often the product of numerous creators and will have been submitted to many uses in their active period.

4.21   This "contextual" approach implies a rejection of item-level as the principal and unique access point. Archives have often justified their use of item-level access by claiming that they are merely responding to user expectations.   It has been stated, for instance, that many users of photographs are only interested in obtaining a single item (for instance, a portrait of Winston Churchill) and consequently will not spend time selecting the photograph that best meets their needs. This may be the case in instances when users are confronted with masses of records for which there appears to be no logical access scheme. If archives succeed in adopting universal general-to-specific descriptive methods, they will permit users to make individual choices in a coherent and effective fashion. (This could result, for instance, in selecting a photograph of Winston Churchill from among the official portraits, the military records, political papers, etc.) Until then, however, the temptation to target items will be impossible to control.

4.22 This is not to say that item-level access is incompatible with archival records. This approach works best with series of records that contain identical information and for which there are specific and limited uses. For instance, when working with immigration records, it maybe possible to develop standard access points for names of ship, ports of entry, nationalities, dates, and like information. Researchers may then target the

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[56] It may be argued that the access system advocated here cannot work effectively unless it is automated. While it is true that an automated environment will enhance this approach, it is not essential. In the 1960s, for instance, some institutions used extensive manual systems to achieve basically the same results.

[57] It has also been argued that form of material should be added to creator and function as a key access point.   For instance, genealogists know that birth certificates and like information will provide information of interest. For more on this, see David Bearman and J. Peter Sigmond, "Explorations of the Use of Form of Material and Authority Files by Dutch Archivists, " American Archivist (1987), pp. 249-53, and Helena Zinkham, Patricia D. Cloud, and Hope Mayo, "Providing Access by Form of Material, Genre, and Physical Characteristics: Benefits and Techniques, " American Archivist 52 (Summer 1989): 300-319.

information they require to identify a particular individual. The creation of such specialized reference tools, however, has to be balanced against reference needs and available resources since not all records can be given such item-level treatment.

4.23   With non-paper records, access may also be as much a question of technology as of content. For instance, with audio-visual records, access implies more than retrieval from storage areas. In the case of films, special conservation and security measures must be followed to gain access to some formats, such as nitrate film. Specialized equipment must also be acquired to view the information.

4.24   In some ways, the creation of the videocassette has revolutionized access practices as they relate to audio-visual material.[58] This product has enabled the copying, for consultation purposes, of material held on fragile supports. It has also facilitated the wide diffusion of such materials. As for other visual records, CD-ROM and like technologies now permit the copying of images, again for reference purposes; they also enable the matching of images and descriptive text, thus providing access to the documents and to descriptive (i.e. what it is) and contextual (i.e. what it is about) information.

4.25   Much like audio-visual materials, access services for electronic records is technology and machine dependent.[59]   Without the appropriate hardware and software, the magnetic tape or floppy diskette storing an archival electronic record is unreadable.   Because of this, and the hundreds of combinations of hardware and software used by records creators, archivists attempted until recently to acquire only "flat files, " that is, electronic records stripped of their software codes and readable through several popular statistical manipulation packages. With the flat file came related (and essential) documentation, consisting of a code book explaining the values of each data element, a record layout detailing the

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[58] This has been argued by William T. Murphy in "Access to Moving Images and sound Documents," in <u>Documents that Move and Speak. Audiovisual Archives in the New Information Age</u>, Proceedings of a symposium organized for the International Council of Archives by the National Archives of Canada, Munchen, London, New York, Paris: K.G. Saur, 1992, p.245.

[59] This section originally appeared in Gabrielle Blais, David Enns, arid Don Richan, "Out of the Ivory Tower: Public Programming in Canadian Archives, " in <u>Canadian Archives in 1992</u>, Ottawa: Canadian Council of Archives, 1992, pp. 135-156.

physical configuration of the data on the tape or diskette, a data dictionary, and so on. Reference service for electronic records consisted merely of giving the researcher a version of the flat file (sometimes made anonymous by removing personal identifiers) copied onto a blank magnetic tape, along with copies of the associated documentation. The researcher then was left to attempt to run the records through the appropriate software at an outside computer facility. In effect, archival reference service amounted to little more than performing as a records centre where data files were treated like library books.

4.26 This early approach has changed for two reasons. First, the kinds of electronic records being acquired no longer are simple survey and statistical records amenable to flat file reformatting. Relational databases and office systems, to say nothing of geographical information systems and hypertext formats, are software dependent and cannot be handed over to a researcher to be used without archival intervention. Secondly, with the personal computer revolution, researchers are interested in data manipulation at their desks and access to archival holdings through telecommunication linkages and networks. Archives have had to adapt to this changing environment. One way they have done so is by providing accessible data extracts (on diskette, for example) from huge data holdings for researcher manipulation on standard, readily available software. Through in-house archival database management systems, archivists can also help researchers recreate the relational connections between entities in data files acquired from database environments, thus enabling researchers to recover the evidence of the decision-making processes of the original data users in the records-creating institution. In these ways archivists are moving from the library approaches to data to a records one which not only makes the medium come alive for researchers, but also enhances its rich contextual and provenancial potential.

4.27 Recent technological processes that can be applied to all forms of records have provided opportunities for improved access to holdings. The National Archives of Canada, for instance, has developed a CD-ROM product entitled <u>ArchiVIA CD-ROM 1992</u>. This reference tool permits direct access to selected information describing National Archives holdings. Specialized products focussing on native claims, transportation, and Prime Ministers, and combining sources from different media will also be developed. The American International Research & Exchange Board (IREX) has sponsored the preparation of a database listing all archives and manuscript repositories throughout Russia, together with a

brief identification of their holdings, and other vital information for researchers. Spain has developed the National Archives Information System which includes a database currently storing information from 30,000 archives services in thirty of the fifty Spanish provinces. This database is accessible through a national information network.[60] These technological tools have two great advantages. First, they enable quick and much more comprehensive research than their traditional paper counterparts; secondly, access to them is not space - or even time - specific.

4.28 It is now apparent that technology may be harnessed to service the dissemination objectives of information professionals. But technology is also prone to reengineering, from one generation to another. This reality must be addressed by archives as they plan their delivery systems. In the case of software-dependent documents, Avra Michelson and Jeff Rothenberg have provided two general approaches: "Either (the documents) must be transformed in some way that makes them independent of the software that created them, or they must be saved along with some kind of description of their associated software that is sufficient to allow accessing them as originally intended."[61] Before migrating information, however, institutions should carefully assess the cost and work required against the value of the information. In the case of the equipment itself, institutions should choose products that are manufacturer independent and that abide by recognized standards, whether these are actual or de facto.

4.29 Finally, archives must be prepared for the time when they may not be able to house all information of permanent value falling under their mandate. Reasons of cost, technology, long-term operational needs, high reference rates, and statutory provisions are already impeding the acquisition of some records, and some archives are turning it into a positive strategy rather than a negative obstacle.[62] In these situations,

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[60] Vasquesz de Parga, Margarita, and Pedro Gonzalez, "Changing Technologies in European Archives", American Archivist 55 (Winter 1992): 159.

[61] Michelson, Avra, and Jeff Rothenberg, Scholarly Communication. Information Technology. and Archives, p.75.

[62] An example of this in Canada is the acquisition or collection records maintained by the various national museums. While these have obvious archival value, they are needed by the custodial staff on a regular basis. Another is cumulative or longitudinal records such as

archives have to consider sharing custodial responsibilities with the creators. What must be negotiated is the extent to which repositories will preserve and control the designated information in creating institutions, the levels of description, conservation, and access to be provided by the creating institution to records declared to be archival, and the nature of the "information broker" role to be played by the archives.

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scientific and environmental electronic records keeping systems. For more, see National Archives of Canada, "Leaving Archival Electronic Records in Institutions. Policy and Monitoring Arrangements," November 1993. The Australian Archives has adopted a similar approach to "archiving" electronic records.

5. COSTING OF HOLDINGS AND SERVICES

5.1 Once rights of access have been established and enforced, and delivery mechanisms implemented, archives may consider attributing monetary value to some of their services. Such decisions will be motivated by two factors. First, user fees can provide financial support to institutions and, in some instances, ensure that the provision of greater public access is not done at the detriment of other archival functions. Secondly, the costing of services may serve as a moderating factor, ensuring that there is an actual need for the services requested. In the first case, the fees assessed may include a profit factor while in the latter they will be below the real cost of the service, as revenue generation is not the intent of the exercise.

5.2 The temptation of operating archives on a free-market system may be appealing to some and seem necessary to others. Russian archives, for instance, faced with critical resource shortages since 1990 have had to implement user fees to ensure their survival. In certain cases, these have been extended not only to services, but to the release of documents themselves.   As is evident with the disclosures concerning the final destiny of the Romanov family, certain archival holdings have incredible financial value.   Some American archives faced with enormous information requests - some from profitable commercial enterprises - have adopted pricing policies that enable them to recover the costs of providing such services and support some of the other operations of the institution.

5.3 Before considering the implementation of user fees, archives must ensure that established rights of access are preserved. Not only must archival information be available, it must also be accessible by all. If holdings require manipulation before they can be consulted, such as census records in electronic form, it is the responsibility of the archives to make the information available. What may be costed, then, are the additional or "enhanced" services provided to users.   This principle poses enormous challenges for non-textual archivists who, in addition to having to overcome the often exorbitant costs of making information available, have to face increasing and divergent research interests.

5.4 As a second principle, users must not be penalized for professional inadequacies in the area of archival description. After all, why should users pay for extensive searches when accurate descriptions of the records should have been prepared in the first place?

5.5 Various social and economic factors will influence costing decisions. These usually transcend the more obvious request-response scenario that we associate with user fees. In Canada, for instance, the National Archives has had to consider the interventionist role that the federal government has played in the development of the country. In some cases, it would not be appropriate to pass on the true cost of providing access as it would force the disappearance of some vibrant - but poor - research communities that have been credited with enriching the Canadian sense of identity.

5.6 Another factor would be off-site access. If archives decide to fully recover costs for the inter-institutional loan of microform or the copying of records, for instance, they immediately reduce access opportunities for researchers who live some distance away from the institution. This may be acceptable when travel costs for client communities are minimal but will be hard to defend when an institution is mandated to serve a large geographical territory.

5.7 In the case of public archives, the legal frameworks must be carefully examined to ensure that the implementation of user fees is permissible. As the corporate memory of a collectivity, public archives benefit from funding from the citizens whose history they document. Consequently, they have a responsibility to support the information needs of those citizens. User fees should not become a hidden form of double taxation.[63] Prices must also be fair; archives should be careful not to determine prices exclusively according to the information value or commercial potential of the documents concerned.

5.8 This issue is particularly sensitive in the audio-visual sector as decisions are increasingly being made at a political level, with commercial value in mind. The audio-visual policies of nations, it has been argued, "are currently based on profit, market share, competition, economies of scale and rationalization."[64] Even though archives are a minor player in this

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[63] Indeed it has been arued that no archive in the public sector could ever be self financing. (See Simon Fowler, "The Root of All Evil: income generation by the PRO and local authority archive services, " Journal of the Society of Archivists 14, (No. 3), (1993): 142.

[64] Burgelman, Jean-Claude and Caroline Pauwels, "Audiovisual policy and cultural identity in small European states: the challenge of a unified market, " Media. Culture. and Society 14 (No.2), (April 1992): 169-183. A good example of this phenomenon is the

environment, they should assume responsibility for defending the educational and cultural needs of their users.

5.9 Once these issues have been resolved, archives can assess the cost of making archival information available. It **is** quite reasonable, for instance, to charge for the cost of reproducing or photocopying information. In some institutions, users are asked to provide the diskette, cassette, or videocassette on which the information will be copied. Others include the cost of this material in the copying costs. Information about the holdings, such as general reference guides and regular finding aids, however, should be accessible to all. Criteria to be used to determine whether or not user fees should be assigned to a particular service are a public good versus a special benefit, demand, value to user, impact of fee on user, importance of activity to an institution's mandate, user profile, and administrative feasibility.[65]

5.10 Intrinsic to all of this is the concept of service standards. Users must clearly know what is available at no cost and what has an "added-on" value. In such standards, the relationship of the client to the provider of the service must be clearly spelled out and there must be an explanation of what are reasonable expectations. User fees also imply good service, speed, convenience, and accuracy - concepts that are often foreign to archives. Finally, before introducing fees for a service that was previously free, users must be advised and, if possible, consulted as the fee structure is being prepared.

5.11 In drafting the actual user fee strategy, it would be best not to include a profit factor but aim to recover the costs associated with providing the service. Researchers should not be responsible for filling the gaps in the normal resource allocation process of a repository. If the purpose of the exercise is to moderate use, the fees can be inferior to the services provided as making money is not the point or aim of the exercise. The services for which there will be fees also have to be assessed. It would be useful to develop a financial infrastructure for services that will never be purchased.

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assessment, in various nations, of the value of public television networks against commercial criteria.

[65] National Archives of Canada, User Fee Implementation Plan, 23 March 1993: 7.

5.12   It is obvious that when audio-visual and electronic records are concerned, issues surrounding user fees and revenue generation are both extensive and complicated.   For one, conservation and copying work often has to be performed before consultation can occur. This adds a cost dimension to the concept of universal rights of access. Decisions must also be made about who, if anybody, should pay for this essential work. Some public archives place this burden on the back of the first user of the record. Is this fair? In time, will this result in a decrease in demand for new records as users will only request the material already conserved and copied? Also, does this penalize those researchers who have to conduct in-depth (and consequently time-consuming) research into our holdings?

5.13   Archives, then, enjoy a certain amount of latitude in developing user fee policies and frameworks.   The challenge in doing so, however, is to maintain a balance between the institution's resource requirements, its corporate responsibilites, and its public access mission.   In such an environment, creators, donors, and user needs and expectations must be respected so that the ultimate purpose of archives - that is to preserve records of permanent value so that they can be made available - is justly served.

6.   NETWORKING

6.1 One of the unexpected results of the democratization of archives has been the increased cooperation between repositories in the provision of services to users. Starting with dissemination efforts such as travelling exhibitions and inter-library loan of microfilm, archives have progressed in their search for efficient ways to make information available to users in their home localities.   The goal has been to make archival research as convenient and inexpensive as possible.[66]

6.2 In launching these initiatives, archives were quick to realize the advantages of working together in sharing and disseminating information about related holdings.   In some cases, archives turned to other institutions to make copies of their own records available through the latters' reference facilities.   In other cases, repositories formed partnerships to produce comprehensive lists of holdings to be found in a number of institutions so that researchers could better focus their holdings.   The concept of union lists of holdings organized by constituency, theme, or medium evolved from this tradition. The Union List of Manuscripts and the Guide to Canadian photographic archives in Canada, the National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections in the United States, and the Repertoire sommaire des fends manuscripts conservés clans les bibliothèques et archives de Suisse are but a few examples of these efforts.

6.3 Over the years, union lists have had varying degrees of success. The absence of descriptive standards, inconsistent returns or input, problems with automation, and resource shortages associated with the collection and maintenance of the data eroded much of the initial enthusiasm about these tools. Also, while it may have appeared that researchers were well served by union lists, some studies have demonstrated the opposite. The Research Study on Decentralized Access undertaken at the National Archives of Canada in 1987, for instance, revealed that national union lists were the least used source of archival information.[67] It is now

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[66] The issue of travel costs must not be minimized, particularly in those countries that cover a wide geographical territory.   Ann Gordon's study of users in the United States revealed that travel surpassed all other obstacles to use of sources. (Using the Nation's Documentarv Heritage, p.39).

[67] National Archives of Canada, Research Study on Decentralized Access, Ottawa: 14 September 1987, p.III.12.

evident that these tools have been more helpful to archivists than to the public for which they were ostensibly created.

6.4 In recent years, however, the prospects for the further development - or even reconceptualization - of union lists have changed with advances in global communication technologies. Combined with increased user and creator familiarity with technological tools and the decreasing costs of automation, archives are once again considering the wider dissemination of information about their holdings, albeit in very different ways.

6.5 Currently, the challenge for archives is to develop information networks that are focused enough to be of use to researchers. In some cases, building from the foundations laid in the sixties and seventies, it may be possible to develop automated guides to repositories and holdings that are sufficiently comprehensive and easy to use that casual network "browsers" and actual users are able to identify and locate information of interest. In such systems it will be imperative that the intent - and by that we mean the content, context, and the limitations - of the networks are clear to users who access them.

6.6 While it is preferable for the archival community to develop common communication approaches for such ventures, the extent to which these have to be standardized is no longer as extensive as it used to be. Interchange standards which permit the sharing of information created on dissimilar systems, viewer technologies which allow for the retrieving and reformatting of information, and "search engines" which enable free-text searches have paved the way for the easy creation of dissemination products.

6.7 In the area of dissemination of copies of holdings, interlending remains an effective method of sharing information between repositories and users. The overall purpose, however, is less to share resources - as in the case of libraries - but to make information more readily available without having to build elaborate diffusion frameworks.[68] Once the copying of original records has been completed, interlending becomes a relatively inexpensive method of widely diffusing information.

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[68] The National Archives of Canada, for instance, through its Diffusion Program, systematically distributed copies of its holdings to provincial repositories who in turn made them available to users. The holdings diffused were of high use such as census, native, land, and immigration records.

Consequently, interlending in archives consists of more than the traditional loan scenario that libraries have developed. It may involve the placing of copies of originals in regional centres, as it is done at the National Archives and Records Administration of the United States; the selling of copies to interested libraries, clients, etc; or the establishment of cooperative ventures whereby copies of information are shared by institutions with common reference interests.[69]

6.8   Traditional technologies have proven to be long-lasting and efficient in copying paper based records for diffusion purposes. Up to now, due to its durability, existing technical expertise, and relative ease of access, microfilming has been the copying option of choice in the archival world. Microfilming provides opportunities for researchers to examine near-exact copies of documents off-site through diffusion systems that allow for the relatively inexpensive movement of records.[70] It also enables the sharing of collections of common interest between repositories. This is particularly useful in countries that were populated as a result of initiatives from other countries. The case of former British colonies is a good example.[71] Since the current legal and social structures of these countries are the result of centuries of British influence, the need to refer to British archives is considerable. The same situation exists in the former Soviet republics or parts of former French Africa. It is to be

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[69] Interest in the last two ventures may be illustrated with statistics from the National Archives of Canada. In fiscal year 1991-92, the institution circulated 13,881 reels of microfilm through the inter-institutional loan arrangement and distributed 1,452 microfilm reels, 155 microfiche copies of finding aids, 3,089 photocopies, 623 photographic reproductions, and one audio-visual segment through the diffusion program. These figures were obtained from David Enns, "Providing Access to Archival Information: Interlending and Document Supply at the National Archives of Canada," Interlending & Document Supply 21 (Number 3), (1993): 4.

[70] Again, Ann Gordon's study revealed that 77% of researchers asked obtained information from the interlibrary loan system. (Using the Nation's Documentary Heritage), p. 42).

[71] For more details on this, see James G. Parker, "Commonwealth Copying Projects," paper delivered at the XIIth International Congress on Archives, Montreal 1992. In it, he reveals that by the mid-1980s, the Canadian and Australian teams had acquired 7,000 and 8,300 reels of microfilm. (p.4) See also Bruce Wilson, "Bringing Home Canada's Archival Heritage: The London Office of the Public Archives of Canada, 1872-1986," Archivaria 21 (Winter 1985-1986): 28-42.

expected that in the coming years, extensive copying of those records relating to their own collectivities will be carried out by new republics.

6.9 In the past, much of archives' diffusion efforts focused on paper records. This was the result of research interests and the availability of copying technologies. With the development of new copying and communication technologies, the possibilities for the dissemination of non-paper records has increased considerably. There is no longer any reason why audio, visual, and electronic records cannot be copied and diffused as extensively as paper records. The tools used for such dissemination might differ but the approaches remain the same.

6.10 As a result of technological developments, there have been interesting variations on the traditional interlending and diffusion models. The National Archives of Canada, for instance, opened in 1992 a prototype "decentralized access site" in Winnipeg, some 2,200 kilometres from National Archives headquarters in Ottawa. Located in the Research Room of the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, the Winnipeg Access Site provides access to descriptive information (approximately 500,000 automated descriptive records, contained on a CD-ROM product), a video viewing area (with introductory and instructional videos), and microfilmed copies of the most popular and used National Archives holdings. Users can identify the information of interest, and then, either consult it on-site, order copies from Ottawa, or forward requests for additional information via a Fax-Modem. With technological advances in image capturing systems (whether they be optical disk, compact disk, or other formats), it is the intent of the programme to offer, to the degree possible, direct access to holdings through a series of such sites.

6.11 Efforts have also been made to transpose archival information on various electronic media for the purposes of making them widely accessible. Spain's Archivo General de Indias project, for instance, has resulted in the copying, using an optical digital image system, of 9 million pages of historical documents which are currently consulted by more than 3000 visitors every year. In addition to facilitating access to the holdings, this system reduces handling of the records, thus contributing to their conservation. Other like projects are being launched in many other countries; in all cases, the objective is no longer experimental but operational.

6.12 Finally, the possibility of diffusing the holdings themselves is once again generating interest. Given the cost of copying records, archives are

experimenting with the loan of records to other repositories and users.[72] In doing so, they borrow from established security and conservation practices which, for years, have governed the loan of originals - usually for exhibition purposes -throughout the museum and archival communities. As we migrate to an electronic environment, such "loans" will become even easier and more effective to administer. Hopefully, this will become a main building block in the development of a worldwide "web" of archival services.

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[72] Tim Ericson referred to such initiatives in the United States in a paper entitled, "This definitely is the future . . . " Or Is it?: Loaning Archival Collectionsj " presented at the Annual Meeting of the Association of Canadian Archivists in Ottawa, 26 May 1994.

CONCLUSION

Since 1990, archival thinking throughout the world has focused on the changing context in which archives operate. This has been mainly inspired by the soul-searching that is customary on the eve of anew century. From the resulting body of literature, three general areas of change have emerged as being of main concern to archives. The first relates to changes in the governing systems of countries, and of government-citizen interactions, that have resulted from globalization and the emergence of new democracies. The second relates to advances in technology, particularly as they affect information creation, administration, and dissemination. The third relates to the evolution in the nature and form of records which is the result of the first two set of changes.

As we advance towards the year 2000, archives must commit themselves to strategic shifts in both their philosophical and practical orientations. Where access to archives is concerned, the environment must change in three general areas. First, the access frameworks of institutions must reflect the renewed relationship between archives and their creator and user communities. On the one hand, archives have to develop mechanisms that enable them to be more receptive to the needs of users and they must also be willing to actually respond to these needs. On the other hand, archives must plan for the provision of access services to holdings that, in a post-custodial age, may not be under their immediate physical custody. Secondly, there must be greater archival intervention in the records creation and administration process. Given the prominence of electronic information - and its inherent particularities - archives must increase their involvement at the front-end of the information life-cycle to ensure that an understandable and useable record survives. Finally, archives must adopt descriptive strategies that proceed from the general to the specific, whatever the physical medium of the record, so that users are able to assess the information value of the records within their proper intellectual context, and then select what is most relevant to their needs. Such strategies must also enable access to the holdings from a distance and with as little case-by-case archival intervention as possible. If archives are able to adapt accordingly, they will increase their visibility with both records creators and users, and will find themselves in a strategic position in the world of information providers.

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