

BUSINESS ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

From the Editor.....	1
Features	
Dialogue, by Claudette John.....	1
Proposed DoD Voluntary Program for Preservation of Selected Contractor Records, by Alfred Goldberg.....	3
Business Archives in the News.....	4
Section News	
1988 Annual Business Archives Section Report.....	6
Business Archives Workshop Follow-up Questionnaire.....	7
Guidelines for Business Archives Consultants.....	8
Archival Certification: Questions and Answers.....	9
Announcements.....	9
Publications.....	11

FROM THE EDITOR

The Business Archives Newsletter has a new institutional home, and the editor has a new name. Henceforth, direct all correspondence to Colleen Wickey Mason, Smithsonian Institution, National Air and Space Museum, Room 3551, Washington, DC 20560.

The deadline for the next Newsletter is Friday, June 2, 1989.

FEATURES

Dialogue

by Claudette John, CIGNA Corporation

Oral History as Part of A Corporate Archives Program:

The Interview

It may seem odd to write about the oral history interview after having discussed transcription and editing in a previous column. However, decisions about how those elements will be handled are part of the planning stages of a project, and are normally made well before the interviewing begins.

Once the interview subjects have been selected, three things must be done prior to the first interview. First, an appointment must be made with the interviewee. I prefer to initiate the contact unless there is a letter of introduction or a referral. I write a short letter and follow that with a phone call. This procedure gives me an opportunity to answer questions, to tell the potential interviewee what he or she can expect, and to put the person at ease. Although many of the larger oral history programs schedule a pre-interview meeting, I find that neither the interviewer nor most of the interviewees have that much time.

Choose an interview site that offers the fewest possible distractions. Most of my interviews are done in one of the company locations in an office or a small conference room. When I use the conference room, I know that it will be quiet and that interruptions are unlikely. Unfortunately, I must sometimes conduct interviews in the employee's office, a practice which almost always produces interruptions. While it requires a bit more concentration, some of my best interviews have been done under those circumstances.

Two, careful preparatory research is essential. Most of the archivists I know do their own research or select material for a hired interviewer to review. At this stage I am careful to note gaps in our documentation, so that I can ask specific questions. That knowledge also makes it possible for me to request that records be sent to the Archives if it appears that the interviewee may have access to what we need.

Occasionally, I write some interview questions, especially if I want to pose the same core questions to several interviewees. Usually, I simply organize brief notes which will prompt questions calculated to produce the kinds of information we want. Highly structured interviews, which require thorough research, may be more comfortable for some interviewees. Although I always go into an interview with some structure in mind, I don't interfere if the interviewee has his or her own organization or if the interview seems to flow naturally. Interviewers who choose to structure the interview must guard against rigidity, or a great deal of spontaneity--and information--may be lost.

On the other hand, I did a series of interviews in which the interviewee himself at first imposed a rigid structure. After we talked about how we might do future interviews, we continued to use his basically chronological approach but modified it somewhat. The interviews became easier for him, and, I think, far more informative. Certainly, they will be more interesting to researchers, and certainly his personality is more readily apparent. In this particular case, I judged that to be especially important, because his likability and people-centered approach to business was a major factor in his success.

Finally, I recommend that you check your equipment before you leave the office and again just before the interview. I always arrive for the appointment a little early so that I can test the microphones and tape one more time.

I find it helpful to review the project and its purpose briefly before starting the interview. This helps to put the interviewee at ease. Even people who are quite accustomed to public life and the media can be nervous about doing an oral history interview. I also say a few words about the equipment while I am asking the interviewee to clip on the mike.

I had planned to complete the "Dialogue" on oral history in this issue, but I have decided to continue it into next year. I want to give you examples of mistakes and missed opportunities, of victories and discoveries. And I want to make suggestions about how to get information without being combative.

Daniel Barringer, the archivist for the State Farm Insurance Companies in Bloomington, IL, wrote to me after the last "Dialogue" on oral history (December 1987). He told me that they have begun an oral history program there and included a brochure produced by the Oral History Office of the Sangamon State University which he has found very helpful. The brochure is available by writing the Oral History Office, Brookens 377, Sangamon State University, Springfield, IL 62708.

**Proposed Department of Defense Voluntary Program
for Preservation of Selected Contractor Records**

By Alfred Goldberg, Historian
Office of the Secretary of Defense, Washington, DC

Many firms which do contract work for the Department of Defense create classified and unclassified records of enduring historical value and utility. These records constitute an important part of the institutional memory and of the documentation for Defense programs. Many of these documents are often lost to future use by either industry or government because of failure to treat them as a valuable commodity.

The Department of Defense is exploring with a small number of interested contractors the usefulness, desirability, and feasibility of a mutually acceptable trial program for identifying and preserving contractor records of historical significance. Whether a company participates, and to what extent, would be entirely its own decision. The proposed program concerns records that are not deliverable under contract but are related to Defense contracts; proprietary and technical data may, of course, be excluded by contractors.

If instituted, the program would be voluntary, concentrating on a relatively small number of items of high historical significance and immediate and future reference value that contractors would be willing to retire to U.S. government records centers. Such records would be helpful in many ways: documenting administration, concepts, policies, doctrines, operations, research and development, procurement, and production; reflecting significant decisions or events in development, regulation, and management; describing origins, organization procedures, and functions of major programs; and providing background on significant policy and operational studies. Records might include concept papers, critiques, correspondence, internal studies and reports, diaries and logs, minutes of meetings, interview transcripts, photographs, statistical data, and personal papers. It is estimated that only a small percentage of contractors--perhaps one percent--and an even smaller percentage of contracts would be involved.

The Department of Defense would accept contractor records for storage, under its auspices, in the Federal Records Centers of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). On request, representatives of Defense and NARA would help review the records selected by the contractor for retirement and NARA would accept delivery for storage. The retired materials would become the property of the Department of Defense and eventually of NARA, but contractors would have guaranteed access to them.

The proposed trial program will be undertaken only if a significant number (as yet undetermined) of contractors signify a willingness to participate. It is likely that the results of such a program would not become evident for some time--perhaps several years. If the outcome of the trial program warrants, the program could be expanded to include additional interested contractors.

BUSINESS ARCHIVES IN THE NEWS

We know that business archives play a significant role in advertising and marketing, but they also make contributions in entertainment and the world of popular culture. Consider these examples:

The Coca-Cola Company is reviving Coke's vintage 6 1/2-ounce "Christmas bottle," which last appeared on store shelves 51 years ago, as a holiday novelty item. Coke archivist Phil Mooney provided background on the Christmas bottle by explaining the occurrence of the bottle's December 25, 1923 patent marking, a fluke which made the bottle a collector's item. In the Twenties, according to Mooney, the U.S. Patent Office issued patents on

Tuesdays; by chance, Christmas of 1923 fell on a Tuesday, hence the unique marking. Commented Mooney, "From an archival perspective, it is an example of how historical data can be used in a contemporary marketing program." [Taken from The Marietta Daily Journal (Ga.), November 12, 1988; USA Today, November 11, 1988; and memo from Phil Mooney, November 16, 1988.]

Film director John Sayles consulted United Technologies archivist Anne Millbrooke while producing the film "Eight Men Out," the story of the infamous Chicago "Black Sox" baseball team which was released last August. Millbrook's contribution, though it wasn't mentioned in the movie's credits, was a unique one: she scanned file illustrations from Otis Elevator, one of United Technologies' companies, to produce an accurate description of an elevator in a luxury hotel in 1919, the period of the movie. Millbrooke was cited for her efforts in a United-News Journal article (August 1988, p. 6), which also described the United Technologies archival operation which she manages.

Mickey Mouse celebrated his 60th birthday on November 18, 1988. The public was made aware of this historic occasion thanks to David R. Smith, archivist of the Walt Disney Company. Smith heads an 8,000-square-foot archives department at the Disney Studio in Burbank, CA. According to Smith, he is the person who established the date of Mickey's birth, by locating a program prepared for the first public showing of a Mickey Mouse film: "Steamboat Willie," at the Colony Theater in New York in 1928. [Taken from a New York Times article by Lawrence Van Gelder, November 18, 1988.]

* * * * *

What other roles do business archives play that may benefit a company? Are archives becoming more common in the corporate world or are they on the way out? Do we even need to ask these questions? Answers, pro and con, continue to appear. Here is a sample:

An article by Frederick Rose which appeared in the Wall Street Journal one year ago (12/21/87) claimed that "a recent, promising corporate interest in archives and history is rapidly abating," due to cost cuts and restructuring. Rose cites examples of two recent corporate archival casualties--J. Walter Thompson and N. W. Ayer--to back his claim. In similar fashion, says Rose, companies may lose their corporate "memories" when employees leave unless they have established an oral history program. The perceived movement away from corporate archival retention was deplored by Harold P. Anderson of Wells Fargo, who noted that archival materials can serve as "management education" tools, and by George David Smith of the Winthrop Group, who com-

mented that archives are necessary because "in business, turnover is swift and memory is short."

On the positive side, an article by Jeffrey Krasner which appeared in the Boston Herald nearly three months later (March 13, 1988) stated that the evidence shows that "business archives, long undervalued and little-understood, are increasing in popularity." Krasner's article, which featured Bob Alter, Polaroid Corporation archivist, focused on the benefits of corporate archives: they can improve a company's record-keeping practices, thereby saving large sums of money; they house documents which can provide critical evidence in lawsuits; and, finally, archives provide an intangible benefit, admittedly hard to measure, by helping a company understand itself.

William Vollmer, Anheuser-Busch archivist, underscored these points in a PC Week article written by Marilyn Stoll (January 5, 1988, p. 39). Stoll's article described Vollmer's ambitious undertaking in creating an indexed photo database of the company's artifacts and other recorded material. At Anheuser-Busch, corporate history has always been tied to family history. And, said Vollmer, as the company grows, the "mass of history" in the archives provides newcomers with a vital perspective that they would not be able to acquire any other way. The archive keeps the corporate memory alive and well.

Finally, and certainly not least, a corporate archive can provide people with solid and much-needed information. Texas Instruments began to set up an archive in 1983, after 58 years in business. At that time many of their records were scattered in far-flung locations, while others were piling up in warehouses. Now, according to Michael Rice, vice president for corporate communications, employees can "get the facts," whereas before they had to rely on memory, a sometimes risky practice. Besides providing a ready source of information, the archive paid for itself in two years with improved records, management storage and employee organization. [From "The Fine Art of Managing Corporate Memories" by John Dimsdale, New York Times, May 29, 1988.]

SECTION NEWS

1988 Annual Report of the Business Archives Section

submitted to SAA by Phil Mooney

Listed below are reports on the current status of several activities and projects that the Section has under development.

1. Directory of Business Archives update. This committee, headed by Steve Wheeler of the New York Stock Exchange, has completed its work. The manuscript is ready for submission to SAA for publication.
2. Kraft-funded "Advocacy Brochure." Laurie Cadigan has been working on this project and will have a draft available for preliminary review by late June. A completed manuscript should be ready for publication by late fall.
3. "Choosing the Right Repository" brochure. Cynthia Swank has completed her work on this project and has submitted a manuscript to SAA for additional review and comment. Similar in format to the MARAC brochure, "Selecting an Archivist," this piece was projected as a companion publication to the Cadigan brochure. The Swank manuscript has been reviewed by other Section heads and has had good response.
4. National Council on Public History grant application. While not a Section project in the strictest definition, several members of the Section have been involved in an advisory capacity on this project. NCPH has a funding request pending before NEH to prepare a comprehensive guide to business history resources in the United States. Karen Benedict is designated as the principal investigator while several other business archivists will serve as consultants to the project if funding is approved.
5. Long Range Planning Study. The Section is attempting to develop a module in conjunction with CGAP that would serve as a planning model for other sections. A proposal is under development to be presented to CGAP for consideration.
6. Wall Street Journal article. The Section, both collectively and individually, responded to a newspaper article advocating the destruction of corporate records. Portions of letters authored by Donn Neal and Gary Saretzky were published on September 25, 1987.

With the exception of the last item, all of the Section projects address issues raised in Points 1, 5 and 6. The goal of the Section for 1988-89 will be to complete tasks currently underway and to identify any new areas that remain to be developed.

Business Archives Workshop Follow-Up Questionnaire

A draft of the Business Archives Workshop Follow-Up Questionnaire has been finished and made available for comment. Using this questionnaire, the Business Archives Section wants to contact people who have registered for the SAA Business Archives workshops, to attempt to:

1) gather some basic information about what kinds of archival programs are being established in corporations as a result of "Business Archives: The Basics and Beyond;"

2) see if we can find a way to attract new members to SAA and the Business Archives Section and/or engage the attention of some who may have let membership lapse;

3) determine whether we can identify a correlation between the education provided by the workshop and the establishment of more effective archival programs; and

4) develop more ways in which the Section can offer support for those who attend the workshops and intend to return to their corporations and develop corporate archives.

For more information about the questionnaire, contact Linda Egerly, 370 Central Park West, New York, NY 10025, (212) 865-6181.

Guidelines for Business Archives Consultants

[The following guidelines are offered as a follow-up to the preliminary list of archival consultants which appeared in the December 1987 Newsletter. These guidelines were developed several years ago by the Business Archives Section. Please address comments or additions to the list to the Newsletter editor.]

I. Educational Requirements

- A. Consultants should possess an advanced subject degree in the social sciences, history, business or economics; or a library science degree with a strong archival orientation. Exceptional work experience may substitute for education in unusual circumstances.
- B. Consultants should have attended workshops, seminars and other training programs that focus on contemporary archival practice.

II. Work Experience

- A. Consultants should have a documented record of significant administrative responsibility.
- B. Consultants should have a minimum of eight years' experience in archival work. Consultants should have at least five years experience working directly with business records either in a profit-making or non-profit institution.

III. Professional Activities

- A. Consultants should hold memberships in the major professional organizations concerned with the effective documentation, preservation and management of business archives (e.g., Society of American Archivists; Association of Records Managers and Administrators).
- B. Consultants should present evidence of professional competence to their prospective employers. Major indicators of this type include professional publications, awards, speeches, and active participation in professional societies.

Archival Certification: Questions and Answers

Certification for archivists continues to be an issue of concern. In August 1988, Edie Hedlin, Chair of the Interim Board for Certification, circulated a letter to all SAA members which presented a question-and-answer discussion of some of the more frequently raised questions about certification. Forms for certification by petition were distributed at the SAA Fall Meeting in Atlanta, and the first certification exams will be given in 1989. Interested persons may obtain petition forms from the SAA Office, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60605, (312) 922-0140. Edie Hedlin is available to answer questions about certification. She can be reached at the National Archives, Washington, DC 20408, (202) 523-3203.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

On April 11, ACADEMY OF MOTION PICTURE ARTS AND SCIENCES president Robert Wise announced that the Academy will provide a new home for its library and film archive in the old Beverly Hills Waterworks, one of Beverly Hills' most historic buildings. The abandoned 60-year-old Spanish Colonial Revival-style structure was obtained through an agreement with the city after the city council had voted in February 1987 to demolish the building as structurally unsound. The new facility will include the original 28,000 square feet (rehabilitated), plus a 10,000-square-foot addition. In addition to more than 15,000 books, the Academy's holdings include five million still photographs, clipping files, the career papers of such movie moguls as George Cukor, Hal Wallis and Alfred Hitchcock, and an archive of 10,000 films. Construction is scheduled to begin in September and be completed by summer 1989.

WANTED: Photographs of business archives, archivists, and collections for a brochure to be distributed by SAA in 1989. Professional quality photographs desired, black and white or color. Please contact Laurie Cadigan Peterson, National Archives, Washington, DC 20036, (202) 523-3214, if you have any items which may be useful.

CYNTHIA SWANK, former archivist of the J. Walter Thompson Co. in New York, has accepted a position at UNISYS CORPORATION as Administrator of the Corporate Tax Library and Archives. Unisys is the product of a recent merger between Burroughs and Sperry. At Unisys, in addition to other duties, Swank will have an opportunity to implement the automation of the retrieval system.

The THIRD WORLD ARCHIVISTS ROUNDTABLE (formerly Minorities Roundtable), approved by the SAA Council in 1987, is an outgrowth of the Minorities Task Force established in 1981. The Roundtable's purpose is to: 1) identify and address the concerns of archivists of African, Asian, Hispanic, and Native American descent, 2) promote wider participation of said archivists in the archival profession, and 3) promote the preservation of archival materials that pertain to people of color. Co-chairs: Carol A. Rudisell, Reference Department, University of Delaware Library, Newark, DE 19717, (302) 451-2432; and Donna Wells, Photograph Archivist, Gallaudet University, 800 Florida Avenue NE, Washington, DC 20002, (202) 651-5231.

During 1988, the BANK OF NOVA SCOTIA completed the final report of its Arrangement and Description of the Architectural Plans Collection project. The 18-page report and the resulting catalogue of over 8,000 architectural plans was produced with the assistance of a two-year Research Tools Grant from the Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada. Copies of the report may be obtained by writing to: Jane Nokes, Corporate Archivist, The Bank of Nova Scotia Archives, 3rd Floor East, 44 King Street West, Toronto, Ontario M5H 1H1, Canada.

Lydia Ouellette, Information Resources Coordinator for THE TRAVELERS COMPANIES, reports that The Travelers' recently integrated the archives into the Information Exchange of the company's Administrative Services. This step was taken in cooperation with the company's recent cost effectiveness program. Limited research and reference services, as well as the archival collections, are available to Travelers' employees and outside correspondents working on corporate business projects. For further information, contact Lydia Ouellette at The Information Exchange 2 GS, The Travelers Companies, One Tower Square, Hartford, CT 06183, (203) 277-8953.

Under the direction of Corporate Historian Necah Furman, the SANDIA NATIONAL LABORATORIES' HISTORY PROJECT has, in three years, been enlarged to encompass a permanent archive and oral history collection. In celebration, the project recently moved into new facilities and acquired an automated archival management system. Sandia, one of the nation's three nuclear weapons laboratories and a prime contractor for the Department of Energy, is operated on a no-profit, no-fee basis by AT&T Technologies, Inc. Sandia will celebrate its 40th anniversary as a corporation under the AT&T umbrella in November 1989. To mark the occasion, the first volume of the Laboratories' history, covering the years 1945-1955, will be published.

The Smithsonian Institution's NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM has embarked on a project to study the history of the U.S. space program. Named for three NASA administrators, the Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project for Research in Space History has initiated activity in research, oral history and archival preservation. The first archival effort is a survey of Washington-area space resources, a project which was launched in July. A second phase of the archival project will focus on the records of aerospace corporations. A descriptive pamphlet about the GWS Project is available. Project director Martin Collins and archivist Colleen Wickey Mason welcome information about aerospace industry records and record-keeping practices. Direct comments or queries to Colleen Wickey Mason, Smithsonian Institution, National Air and Space Museum, Room 3551, Washington, DC 20560.

PUBLICATIONS

"Toward a National Collecting Policy for Business History: The View From Baker Library," by Florence Bartoshesky Lathrop. In Business History Review, Vol. 62, No. 1 (Spring 1988), pp. 134-143. In this essay Lathrop, the curator of manuscripts and archives at the Harvard Business School's Baker Library, "discusses the opportunities and difficulties confronting present-day archivists as they seek to establish rational collecting policies for their repositories"--from the abstract.

"The International Records of Corporations," by Anne Van Camp. In Business and Economic History, Second Series, Vol. 16, Jeremy Atack, ed. Papers presented at the thirty-third annual meeting of the Business History Conference, March 12-14, 1987, Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, DE.

The Business History Bulletin is published by the Center for the History of Business, Technology, & Society, Hagley Museum & Library, Wilmington, Delaware. Vol. 1, No. 1 (Fall 1987) contained articles by Alfred D. Chandler, Jr. (Harvard Business School), Edward G. Jefferson and David Hounshell (Du Pont Company), Robert G. Lewis (AT&T), and Harold P. Anderson (Wells Fargo). Contributors to Vol. 2, No. 2 (Fall 1988) include George David Smith, (New York University and the Winthrop Group), Philip F. Mooney (Coca-Cola Co.), August Giebelhaus (Georgia Institute of Technology), and Sandra Lowman (Seagram Museum). For more information about the Business History Bulletin, contact Elizabeth Gray Kogen, editor, Hagley Museum and Library, P.O. Box 3630, Wilmington, DE 19807.

Three new titles are available in Gower Publishing Company's Business History Series. They are:

A Bibliography of British Business Histories, by Francis Goodall. Avebury, 0 566 05307 1, 1987, 638 pp., \$95.50.

A Guide to Tracing the History of A Business, by John Orbell (Business Archives Council). Gower, 0 566 05591 0, 1987, 116 pp., \$33.50.

Company Archives: The Survey of the Records of 1000 of the First Registered Companies in England and Wales, by Lesley Richmond and Bridget Stockford. Gower, 0 566 03547 2, 1986, 593 pp., \$94.50.

Contact Gower Publishing Co., Old Post Road, Brookfield, VT 05036, (802) 276-3162 for more information.

The Georgia Historical Quarterly, Vol. LXXI, No. 1 (Spring 1987), features "First Atlanta and Then the World: A Century of Coca-Cola," by F. N. Boney (pp. 91-105).

We have established information exchanges with two overseas publications. They are:

Arqueologia Industrial (ISSN 0870-8355), in Portuguese, which appears twice yearly and is edited by Jose Lopes Cordeiro, Unidade de Arqueologia, Universidade do Minho, Av. Central, 39, P-4700 Braga, Portugal; and

Business Archives Special Interest Group Newsletter (Australia), edited by Lyn Milton, c/o Westpac Archives, P.O. Box 14, Pyrmont 2009, Australia.

We have also received a copy of "Survey of Business Records," by Colleen Pritchard, which summarized a 1986 records survey of Australian companies. The article appeared in Archives and Manuscripts (November 1987), p. 139-148. Information is available from Lyn Milton.