

BUSINESS ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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FROM THE EDITOR

You will notice that this issue is somewhat abbreviated. This brevity is not due to lack of interesting news items (quite the contrary), but to my resignation from the Beckman Center for History of Chemistry, effective May 27, and upcoming move to the Washington, DC area. In the press of last minute business, it became necessary to put together a fairly hasty newsletter. Apologies (and thanks) to the contributors. Look for your items in an upcoming issue.

It is not yet clear where the Newsletter will find a new home. Several options are under consideration, one of which calls for me to continue editing once I am re-established in Washington. The important thing is that Phil Mooney and I are in consultation on this matter, and it will be resolved well in advance of the deadline for the December 1988 issue. I hope to see you in Atlanta.

FEATURES

Dialogue

by Claudette John, CIGNA Corporation

[Because my deadline for this issue has been moved up, I am postponing the column on oral history interviewing until the winter issue. Instead I have decided to share a few paragraphs that I wrote early in 1982. The subject is the INA Corporate Archives (INA is one of two predecessors to CIGNA), and I was addressing the head of corporate administrative services.]

Briefing for a New Boss

We agreed in our meeting of 18 February that I would prepare

an introduction to the Archives. I have given the following brief report considerable thought and would be pleased to answer any questions you might have concerning it. Thank you for your interest.

The INA Archives contains manuscripts, documents, files and unpublished, printed materials dating from 1792, as well as photographs, microfilm, tape recordings, and three-dimensional objects which were originated by the Company. The Archives staff selects, preserves, and references the permanently valuable, non-current records of the parent company and its affiliates.

In order to continue providing these services, the archivist needs the cooperation of officers and employees who are able to contribute important records and knowledge about them. INA records of continuing value should be housed in the Archives. Such records meet government retention requirements and document corporate organization, programs, policies and decision-making processes.

Specifically, the Archives seeks minutes, correspondence, reports, speeches, manuals, and summary data that reflect policy decisions and major changes in the structure of a company, department or line of business. Records illustrating the impact of this business upon the world-wide community that the INA Companies serve are valuable, as are those concerning employee relations and educational programs. Archives should automatically receive copies of most printed material generated by the Corporation and its major subsidiaries.

We are, of necessity, concerned with the whole cycle of records creation and disposal. To this end, in 1980, I contacted E. A. [names have been changed] requesting input to the corporate mandated records retention program and was invited to participate in the development of guidelines for records retention and vital records schedules. My goal is archival review of retention schedules on a continuing basis. Transfer of designated records to the Archives will free space for departmental files still in use and provide for retrieval when necessary. The records may then be used by researchers from other departments and divisions under staff supervision. Security is strictly observed, and the originating department may limit access to documents which it sends to the Archives.

In addition to acquiring, arranging, referencing and providing secure storage of company records, the archivists are trained in conservation administration, that is, in the evaluation and treatment of archival records which will lead to optimum conditions of preservation with reasonable expenditure of money. Except for very old documents and valuable memorabilia, our goal is to preserve information rather than original paper. Only occasionally do we send an item to a professional conservator for repair.

Acquisition of complete series of important records, once

they are no longer used by the creating or collecting office, will benefit both the Company and the academic world. Methodically kept records, properly referenced, are an important source of comprehensive information to top management and a time-saving device as well. Most requests for information come from within the Company. Sometimes a question can be answered by briefly checking the sources available to us. At other times a considerable amount of research is required and a report is written.

All of our historical records are open to the public. We reply to simple questions by phone or letter and invite researchers with more complicated requests to make an appointment to come to the Archives and do their research. We are currently providing information and assistance to professionals associated with the Franklin Institute, the Smithsonian Institution, and the Princeton Center for Advanced Studies.

According to the Directory of Business Archives in the United States and Canada (Chicago: SAA, 1981), the INA Archives is the oldest company archives in North America. It was established by the board of directors in 1881 as a research base for our first company history, published four years later. In addition to preserving our old records and making them available to researchers, we must continue to collect records that reflect the life of the corporate organism. Information, including the perspective granted by a knowledge of our past, is vital to the decision-making process. Finally, the contribution of business to the growth of our nation has not yet been fully and fairly evaluated by students of society, partly because scholars have not had access to the extensive documentation which is necessary for that analysis. In the future, comprehensive business archives could help to balance the historical record.

* * *

Do any of you have brief overviews of your own program that you would like to share with your colleagues? If so, please contact the author of this article (CIGNA Corporation, Archives; 1600 Arch St.; Phila., PA; 19103), and we shall continue this dialogue in the Spring 1990 issue.

SECTION NEWS

1988 Candidates For Vice Chair of the SAA Business Archives Section

Jean Toll. Jean is currently the Corporate Archivist at General Mills, Inc. in Minneapolis. She received her education from the University of Minnesota, graduating in 1983 with a degree in communications and business archives administration. Jean was responsible for establishing the Archives program at General Mills, Inc. in 1982. This entailed developing the Archives focus, direction and collection scope, including planning and implementing an arrangement and description process as well as an oral history program; directing publicity efforts

via displays and in-house publications and participating in the development of a company-wide records management program that included educational workshops and on-site visits for identifying and appraising records for their continuing value to the company. The archives staff includes five part-time contract workers who are also former General Mills employees. Jean is a member of the Twin Cities Archives Roundtable, the Oral History Association of Minnesota, the Midwest Archives Conference, and the Society of American Archivists.

Greg Hunter. Greg is the Manager of Corporate Records and Headquarters Services at the ITT Corporation in New York. Greg received his education from New York University, where he is currently a candidate for a Ph.D in American history (expected in September 1988), with a concentration in nineteenth century business history. Greg has been with ITT since January 1978. In his present position he is responsible for a complete, in-house, source document microfilming operation; for the preservation and storage of over 20,000 cubic feet of original records; for the identification and preservation of archival materials; for headquarters telecommunications, telephone, and mail services; and for a corporate-wide vital records program. Greg received credentials to become a Certified Records Manager from the Institute of Certified Records Managers in January 1988. He is a member of the Society of American Archivists, the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, and the Archivists Round Table of Metropolitan New York.

B A L L O T

Please vote for one candidate and mail your ballot by August 12 to Ed Rider, Proctor & Gamble Co., Box 599, Cincinnati, OH 45201.

Jean Toll _____

Greg Hunter _____

Write-in _____

Finding Aids Fair for Atlanta Meeting

The Description Section is again sponsoring a Finding Aids Fair at the annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists. The fair, a display of finding aids from all types of repositories, is an informal way to exchange information about descriptive practices. Many archivists appreciate the opportunity to examine the products of descriptive work from other institutions. The fair can only be successful if a large number of guides, registers, inventories and other items are

displayed. Please make it a point to contribute to the fair this year. Finding aids for the fair can be brought to the SAA Annual Meeting in Atlanta and delivered to the FAF exhibit location, or they may be sent well ahead of the annual meeting dates to Steve Engerrand, SAA Finding Aids Fair, Georgia Department of Archives and History, 330 Capitol Avenue S.E., Atlanta, GA 30334. Contributors who wish to retrieve their samples should mark them "To Be Returned" and pick them up from the exhibit table prior to the conclusion of the meeting. Direct questions about the fair to Penelope Krosch, University of Minnesota Archives, 10 Walter Library, 117 Pleasant St. S.E., Minneapolis, MN 55455, (612) 624-0562.

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