

BUSINESS ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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DIALOGUE

Oral History as Part of a Corporate Archives Program: Interview Questions

Claudette John, CIGNA Corporation

In the June issue of the Newsletter, I promised that I would close the "Dialogue" on corporate oral history by featuring examples of successful interview questions. Obviously, many good questions are so specific to one interview or series of interviews that it would not be helpful to quote them here. Others may not qualify as proper questions at all, emerging as they do directly from conversation. And, of course, some of the best questions are the brief follow-ups: "When?" "Who did that?" "Why?" "Where?"

Three archivists responded to my request for their "best" questions: Elizabeth Adkins of Kraft, James Fogerty of the Minnesota Historical Society and Harry Keiner of CIGNA, Hartford. Some of their questions are included below; the rest are selected from my old standbys.

"Will you tell me a little about yourself -- where you were born and raised, where you went to school, and how you got started at Kraft?" "Why did you choose to work for Kraft?" (Adkins) All four of us usually begin with similar questions.

"What are your views on the current relationship between government and industry?" "In what areas can government help industry?" "What can industry do to reduce friction with government?" (Fogerty) Harry Keiner tries, when appropriate, to have the people he interviews put the information they give him into an industry-wide context.

Elizabeth Adkins asks salesmen: "Do you remember your first sales call?" "What was it like?" "Will you describe to me a typical work day?" I use variants of these questions for interviewees who have spent some time in sales. Both Elizabeth and I use the latter question for anyone whose daily routine may be of interest to researchers. And I must admit that I have used it when I was too ignorant of certain aspects of someone's career to ask anything more specific.

Harry Keiner, recalling past interviews for a history of Pratt and Whitney Aircraft, noted that project work for engineers is a team effort, so it was always important to ask who else was involved. He learned a great deal about how consultants were used by the company (something he had not been aware of) by asking that question.

I almost always ask, "What two or three people within the company were most instrumental in helping you in your career?" A variant for officers is "What two or three people were most instrumental in helping you build the kind of program (or company) you wanted to build?" Sometimes I ask: "Who was the most gifted or talented person you worked with?" "The most difficult?" "The most ruthless?" Or I may mention some of the interviewee's most influential contemporaries and ask him or her to talk about those people.

I have found that my "best of times, worst of times" duo elicits interesting and revealing responses: "What was your best year (or business experience) with the company?" "What was the worst?" Elizabeth Adkins asks, "Looking back on your years at Kraft, of what accomplishments are you the most proud?"

Jim Fogerty and I both interview top executives. He interviews as an outsider and talks to executives from many different companies. Among his favorites are "What are your views on foreign competition for American industry?" or variations on that theme: "Is foreign competition a problem for your firm?" "What can American industry -- especially your part of it -- do to compete with foreign firms more effectively?" Finally, he inquires about the interviewee's views on corporate

Excerpts from the "Preliminary Report of the SAA Task Force on Records Management"

II. Recommendations for an SAA/ARMA Relationship

1. SAA and ARMA should establish a temporary joint committee for three years. This committee would serve as a liaison between the two organizations and provide overall coordination for programs and activities. After three years a determination can be made as to whether this committee should be made permanent.

2. The annual meetings of SAA and ARMA should be more closely coordinated. Formal coordination would ensure a regular cross-presence at meetings, draw in individuals who have not previously attended, and provide each organization with a dependable forum to raise issues and concerns for joint discussion.

a. SAA should regularly include at least one ARMA sponsored session of interest to archivists at its annual meeting, and vice versa.

b. Efforts should be made by both organizations to generally provide program sessions that will attract reciprocal audiences and provide for cross-fertilization of ideas between the professions.

c. SAA should continue to offer workshops, seminars, and program sessions dealing with records management topics from an archival perspective, and should encourage ARMA to include more sessions dealing with archival topics from the records management perspective.

d. Appropriate SAA sections, committees and task forces should involve ARMA representatives at their annual meetings.

d. Insofar as possible, the two annual meetings should be scheduled so it is not difficult to attend both.

e. SAA and ARMA should plan for a joint meeting, perhaps in 1994 on the 60th anniversary of the founding of the National Archives.

3. SAA and ARMA should promote better communication and cooperation at the local and regional level. ARMA has a strong chapter structure and both organizations have an interest in seeing ideas, activities and initiatives generated from this level.

a. SAA members should offer workshops and presentations to ARMA chapters.

b. SAA should play a leadership role in encouraging regional archival groups to work more closely with ARMA chapters, particularly in developing education offerings.

c. SAA and ARMA representatives should work together, in conjunction with NAGARA, to promote effective state and local government initiatives relating to archival and records management issues.

4. SAA and ARMA should cooperate in the area of training and

certification. Not only can SAA draw on the expertise of ARMA, which has been involved in a certification process for a number of years, but both organizations have an interest in ensuring that certified records managers and archivists have a necessary minimum familiarity with the other profession.

a. To ensure this basic knowledge by all records professionals, the Academy of Certified Archivists, and the Institute of Certified Records Managers, should work together in the development of the certification examinations.

b. Each organization should provide input and review to the other's training efforts to ensure that information provided by each profession about the other is accurate and current.

c. SAA and ARMA should exchange information about training opportunities and workshops so those members interested in more advanced cross-training will know how to proceed.

d. SAA should explore with ARMA ways and means of promoting records management internship opportunities within the context of archival education programs.

5. SAA and ARMA should cooperate in the area of publications. By drawing on the resources of the sister organization, SAA and ARMA can each increase the reach and effectiveness of their own program.

a. SAA and ARMA should become familiar with the other's publications, provide lists to their membership, and make arrangements to sell these publications and to make them easily available at the annual meetings.

b. SAA should include as a semi-regular feature in its newsletter information supplied by ARMA, as well as related organizations, about records management developments and activities.

c. SAA and ARMA should explore the production of joint publications, particularly in areas relating to identifying permanent records and the management and preservation of electronic records.

d. In conjunction with the publication program, SAA and ARMA should develop joint working groups on specific topics of mutual interest, particularly in the area of standards development.

e. SAA should encourage its members to submit articles to the ARMA quarterly, and should actively solicit appropriate records management related articles for its own journal.

III. Recommendations for Specific Training and Publications Initiatives.

As the first step in providing records management information and training to its membership, and to ensure that archival concepts are understood by records managers, the Task Force recommends the following four inter-related projects. These projects should provide substantive information, but be tailored to the needs and interests of the specific audience,

since it makes no sense for SAA (or ARMA for that matter) to duplicate training or publications available from other sources. These publications and training material should emphasize archival and records management efforts as a joint venture, should include information on the problems raised by special media records, and should provide information on where to go for additional help, such as appropriate organizations, publications, and clearinghouses. These projects will need the approval and close involvement of SAA's Committee on Education and Professional Development, as well as SAA's Editorial Board.

1. SAA should produce a series of two publications: records management basics for archivists, and archival basics for records managers. Ideally, this series would be published jointly with ARMA.

2. In conjunction with doing this publication, and particularly as a means of getting specific input and feedback on what kinds and level of information archivists need about records management, SAA should develop an evolving workshop on records management, aimed at an archival audience. It should be given at the annual meeting and at selected additional sites and times.

3. Based on this workshop, SAA should develop a curriculum packet in records management for an archival audience to be used by regional organizations and individual institutions. This package could usefully include a videotape as an effective training tool.

4. SAA should produce and keep updated, again ideally in conjunction with ARMA, a select bibliography on records management for use by archivists.

NEEDED: PHOTOGRAPHS FOR ADVOCACY BROCHURE

Linda Edgerly has agreed to take over the writing of the Section's advocacy brochure on business archives, which is to be published by SAA in 1990, using funds donated by Kraft, Inc. Linda would like information and descriptions of, as well as xerographic copies of, photographs which might be of use in the brochure. Although some color photography will be used in the brochure, the majority, to keep costs down, will be black and white. While SAA will be able to include credit lines for photos, they will not be able to pay use fees.

Representative illustrations which fall into the following categories are sought:

1. archivists, archival operations, and archives facilities
2. the variety of records and record formats which

business archives hold (correspondence, minute books, research notebooks, patents or legal documents, maps, deeds, engineering drawings, paper, microfilm, video, computer disks and tapes, printed material, photography, artifacts, etc.)

3. use of material by executives, researchers, publications, etc.
4. an important, widely recognizable event or business-related piece of documentation.

Members of the Section should also respond if any of them has a spectacular, archives-related color photo which might be appropriate for the cover.

At this point, it is necessary to send only xerographic copies of photos, along with descriptions or identifications. Unless specifically requested, copies will not be returned. Please be sure to

1. indicate clearly whether the photo is black and white or color
2. write directly on the copy the name of the corporation and any record group or series citation necessary to aid in its retrieval.

Linda would appreciate having the copies in hand no later than January 31, 1990. Please send them to her at 370 Central Park West, No. 104, New York, NY 10025.

AEROSPACE INDUSTRY HISTORY CONFERENCE AT THE SMITHSONIAN

A conference, "Preserving the History of the Aerospace Industry," was held November 13-15, 1989 at the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC. The conference was sponsored by the Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project for Research in Space History of the National Air and Space Museum; the Aerospace Industries Association; the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics; and the Eisenhower World Affairs Institute. The basic purpose of the conference was to encourage preservation of aerospace corporate records on the history of the space program.

The community of archivists and historians was well represented by participation from Jeffrey L. Sturchio, Merck & Co., Inc.; Anne Millbrooke, United Technologies; Ed Galvin, The Aerospace Corporation; Phil Mooney, The Coca-Cola Company; Alfred Goldberg, Historian's Office, Office of the Secretary of Defense; David Baldwin, MITRE Corporation; David Allison, Smithsonian Institution; Helen Samuels, Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Bruce Bruemmer, Charles Babbage Institute; and Dennis Meissner, Minnesota Historical Society. Speakers from the corporate and legal worlds included William Benedon, Lockheed

Corporation, Dave Olson, Boeing Corporation, and Daniel Byrnes, Pepperdine University.

Three sessions explored three facets of corporate archives and preservation: an opening session designed to examine issues which arise in implementing an archives and offer general guidelines from the professional archival community; a session devoted to issues that significantly affect the industry in preserving historical records (for example, contract, security, and legal requirements); and a final session which focused on guidelines developed by archivists for making records retention and disposal decisions, with special attention to their application for high-technology corporations.

Presentations were well received by the approximately sixty-five attendees, and discussion was lively. The conference provided a critical beginning point for aerospace archives by identifying important questions and issues, advancing tentative approaches for their resolution, and establishing a sense of community.

The staff of the Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project plans to take the steps listed below in beginning to follow up on the work begun at the conference:

1. Prepare a position paper for corporations on options for organizing and implementing a systematic preservation effort.
2. Send a progress letter to CEOs of major companies, including those not represented at the conference, regarding the conference and its followups.
3. Prepare and distribute conference proceedings.
4. Meet with individual companies.

Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project Staff welcome comments, suggestions, and inquiries from archivists, historians, corporate personnel, and other interested parties. For additional information about the conference, copies of the conference program, the list of participants, or the conference proceedings, contact Colleen Mason, Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project Archivist, or Martin J. Collins, Glennan-Webb-Seamans Project Co-Director, at the National Air and Space Museum, Department of Space History, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC 20560, (202) 357-2828.

EUROPEAN BUSINESS ARCHIVES

Dr. Horst A. Wessel is the keeper of the membership list of the Vereinigung deutscher Wirtschaftsarchivare. Dr. Wessel's address is Mannesmann-Archiv, Mannesmann AG, Mannesmannufer 2,

Postfach 5501, D-4000 Dusseldorf 1, Federal Republic of Germany.

* * *

The Times (London) of August 1, 1989 printed an article entitled "Keeping a Tidy View of the Past." The article describes the activities of British archivists in working with government and business records, and also describes the role played by the Society of Archivists and, in particular, the Business Archives Council (BAC).

Like their American counterparts, British corporations rely on archives for corporate memory, as well as for commercial and legal purposes. The BAC provides several needed services for its 500 members, among them conferences, newsletters, journals, and an advisory service.

The BAC is often approached by companies who have enormous backlogs of records and who have no idea what to do with them. BAC archivists either take on the job themselves or hire archivists on a contracting basis if the job is especially large. The BAC also provides intensive short courses for corporate employees responsible for company records in cases where an company is hesitant to employ an archivist. And finally, the BAC rescues and rehouses archives when a company goes into liquidation or is taken over. In addition to administrative and secretarial staff, the BAC is run by a management committee of twenty from the business archive world.

Postgrad archival studies in the UK are run by the University Colleges of London, Wales, North Wales, Dublin and Liverpool University.

J. WALTER THOMPSON COMPANY ARCHIVES

The J. Walter Thompson Company Archives is now housed in the Manuscript Department of the William R. Perkins Library at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina. Ellen G. Gartrell is the managing archivist. The Library has prepared a brochure which contains information about the company, the archives, and access to the archives. Copies of this brochure, or more information about the archives, can be obtained by writing or calling Ellen G. Gartrell, William R. Perkins Library, Manuscript Department, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina 27706, (919) 684-3372.

CHICAGO-AREA BUSINESS ARCHIVISTS ORGANIZE

A group of business archivists in the Chicago area has formed an informal organization, which as yet is unnamed. The group had its first meeting at the Motorola Museum on June 23, with an attendance of twelve. Archivists, librarians and records coordinators from Motorola Corporation, Kraft General Foods, Wm. Wrigley Jr. Company, Arthur Andersen & Co., Playboy Enterprises, Inc., The Quaker Oats Company, the Chicago Mercantile Exchange and McDonald's Corporation met and shared lunch, common problems, and ideas. The group decided to continue meeting on a quarterly basis, with no formal agenda other than forming a network to share experiences and information about working in a corporate archives.

The group had its second meeting on September 25 at Kraft General Foods, where eleven people attended and toured the KGF Archives. The next meeting will be in January (exact date to be announced) at Arthur Andersen & Co.

Anyone interested in joining this organization is welcome. You may contact either Sharon Darling at the Motorola Museum, 1261 Wiley Road, Unit L, Schaumburg, IL 60173, (312) 576-6566; or Elizabeth Adkins at Kraft General Foods (6350 Kirk Street, Morton Grove, IL 60053, (312) 998-2982).

BENTLEY LIBRARY AWARDS RESEARCH FELLOWSHIP

The Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, awarded one of its research fellowships for the study of modern archives to Cynthia Swank. Her topic is the role of corporate culture in the creation, survival, and use of post-World War II corporate records. As part of the project, she expects to contact corporate archivists and curators of business records to determine whether her generalizations derived from a case study of J. Walter Thompson Company apply in other corporate environments.

CHANGES

Anne Van Camp, formerly the archivist at Chase Manhattan Archives in New York, is now at the Hoover Institution, Stanford University, Stanford, California.

* * *

Patrick B. Nolan is the new Executive Administrator, Center for the History of Business, Technology, and Society, Hagley

Museum and Library, Wilmington, Delaware. Nolan was formerly at Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio, where he taught history and directed the Center for the Study of Early Flight and the library's archives and special collections.

* * *

Send any changes of address, location or duties to the Business Archives Newsletter editor.

CONSULTANTS

As of August 1989, Cynthia Swank has joined the ranks of consultants in archival management and records management (see previously published list of consultants, vol. 4, no. 2, December 1987, p. 4). She also recently passed the exam to become a Certified Records Manager. Swank was formerly with J. Walter Thompson Company and Unisys Corporation.

PUBLICATIONS

Campbell-Kelly, Martin, ed. The Works of Charles Babbage. New York: New York University Press, 1989.

Consulting editors of this eleven volume set are Professor I. Bernard Cohen, Dr. Maxine Berg, Dr. Allan Bromley, and Dr. J. M. Dubbey. Contains Babbage's two most well-known papers: An essay on the calculus of functions, and On the economy of machine manufactures. Contact New York University Press, Elmer Holmes Bobst Library, 70 Washington Square South, New York, NY 10012, (212) 998-2575. Price: \$995.00. Forty percent discount available (\$597.00) if order is placed by January 31, 1990.

Mooney, Philip F. "Business Records." Researcher's Guide to Archives and Regional History Sources, John C. Larsen, ed. Hamden, CT: The Shoe String Press, Inc., 1988, pp. 65-73; 146-149.

**SOCIETY OF AMERICAN ARCHIVISTS
BUSINESS ARCHIVES SECTION
OCTOBER 26, 1989
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI**

MINUTES

Jane Nokes, the Section Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. in the Clark East Room of the Clarion Hotel, St. Louis, Missouri. 50 members were present. Greg Hunter was Recording Secretary.

Guest Speaker:

In recognition of the 150th anniversary of Photography and of the issues which do (and should) concern Business Archivists in charge of photo collections, the Section Chair invited Joan Schwartz, Acting Chief, Photography, Acquisition and Research Section, Documentary Art and Photography Division, National Archives of Canada to be the guest speaker at the meeting. Ms. Schwartz used slides to illustrate the importance of photographs as archival records and the controversy regarding public exhibition of business advertising photography. Copies of the poster produced by the National Archives of Canada to commemorate the Sesquicentennial of Photography are available from Ms. Schwartz.

Editorial Projects:

Directory of Business Archives

The Directory was submitted to SAA Editorial Board by Jane Nokes. The Editorial Board, at its October 25, 1989 meeting, agreed to publish it as part of the SAA "Occasional Papers" series. This will permit easier updates in the future and can be produced in-house at SAA's Chicago Office. Guidelines of "Occasional Papers" were approved by the Editorial Board and forwarded to Council.

Business Archives Bibliography

Karen Benedict reported that the Bibliography will be produced soon (there is a March, 1990 deadline for submission of the MSS to the SAA). June, 1989 is the closing date for bibliographic entries.

Consultant's Manual:

The Editorial Board agreed to await the report of the SAA Task Force on Consultants (Chair: Phil Mason) and to review any publications proposal or recommendations in the Report before proceeding.

Kraft Advocacy Brochure:

Linda Edgerly has agreed to take over the writing of the advocacy brochure on business archives. Generous funding from Kraft will underwrite publication of the brochure. Linda plans to finish the text by the end of January. Jane Nokes thanked Linda on behalf of the Section for seeing her way clear to managing this project.

Planning:

Section Three-Year Plan

Jane Nokes reported that the SAA-required three-year plan for the Section will flow from the Section's mission statement. Phil Mooney has agreed to work on the plan, which has a submission deadline of the end of November.

1990 SAA Program:

Jane Nokes presented three draft proposals for review by the Section. These are to be finalized and submitted to Brenda Banks, Chair, 1990 Program Committee before the November 10, 1989 deadline.

Elizabeth Adkins, a member of the Program Committee, urged Section members to develop proposals and informed the Section that she has prepared a session proposal on mergers and takeovers. The Chair requested a copy for Section records. Harry Keiner (CIGNA) informed Section members that he has submitted a proposal and will send a copy to the Chair. The analysis of sessions that work/don't work over the years, prepared for SAA by Tim Ericson, was discussed.

Business Archives Workshops:

Linda Edgerly reported that the effort to send a questionnaire to all previous attendees of the workshops has stalled due to Tim Ericson's departure from the SAA office.

International Council on Archives:

Anne Van Camp reported on recent ICA activities and the changing status of the ICA Business Archives Committee (it now is a Section, a much broader category and has attracted 70 new members). The next ICA Congress will be held in 1992 in Montreal. The theme of the conference is "Archivists in the Information Age."

Jane Nokes is a member of the Finance Committee for the 1992 Congress. She reported that the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Association des Archivistes de Quebec and SAA intend to hold their annual conferences in Montreal immediately after the Congress.

Harvard Business Review:

Phil Mooney reported that he had been contacted by an editor at the Harvard Business Review who was interested in articles about business archives. Interested individuals should contact Phil.

Task Force on Records Management:

Jean Toll reported on the one-year SAA Task Force on Records Management. The interim report of the task force already has led to positive contacts between SAA and the Association of Records Managers and Administrators. Both the ARMA President and Executive Director attended the recent meeting of SAA's Council.

Announcements:

Jane Nokes made the following announcements:

- Anne Van Camp is now the Archivist for The Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace in Stanford.
- David Horn, Boston Edison, will make available to interested Section members complete copies of the Article on his company's records program, summarized in the Section's June, 1989 Newsletter.
- The Bank of America Archives survived the San Francisco earthquake.

Election of Vice Chair:

Ed Rider was unanimously elected Vice Chair of the Section.

[Note: Greg Hunter's resignation the following day as Section Chair, due to his election as first President of the Academy of Certified Archivists, led to Ed's immediate assumption of the office of Section Chair.]

Jane adjourned the meeting at 3:00 p.m.

