

BUSINESS ARCHIVES NEWSLETTER

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Contents

Forthcoming Book (1)
History Factory (1)
Glassmaking and LOF (2)
Election Results (2)
Business and the National Archives(3)
Model Study in Wisconsin (4)
Ballot (5)

Forthcoming Book on Business Archives

Dr. Arnita Jones and Phillip Cantelon are producing a book of readings (some new and some reprinted) in corporate archives to be available in late 1991. Dr. Jones gave an overview of the book at a breakfast talk in a Business Archives Workshop in May.

She defined four ways in which corporations may find archives useful: public relations function; marketing function; organizational management function(for employees); and corporate planning and policy analysis. True historian that she is, she said the last was the most important but also the most difficult to get at.

The Public Relations function includes: annual reports; speech writing; proprietary information; anniversaries. Jones feels most institutions have a lot of mythology about their past and accurate speech-writing would be "a very good function of archival usage." As for celebrations, the public is more sophisticated today and needs more than boosterism. It needs good archival information.

The Marketing function would be, for example, a video of 100 years of advertising used by Coca Cola in its museum. Jones feels a corporate museum is "a very subtle kind of marketing because people flock to your museum just to look at your old ads!"

She also mentioned the letter of Clyde Barrows from jail to Henry Ford on how great the Model T was as a getaway. (See *SAA Journal* for 1982)

For the Organizational Management function, Jones points to the Walt Disney Corporation's Tradition's I course which all new employees, through Senior management, must attend.

Finally, for Corporate Planning and Policy Analysis, she cites Citibank's study of past strategies over time and Procter and Gamble's use of oral history to study the research department.

Time is of the essence when a corporation is dealing with management problems: Texas Instruments has integrated its archives into management as a result.

If you have gaps in your corporate history, Jones suggests Oral History as a great way to create documents dealing with such gaps. She also said the most typical disaster affecting archives is not flood or fire but "the slow destruction of materials."

In response to the query, to whom should an archivist report in the organization, Jones replies, "the higher the better."

The History Factory featured in *Forbes*

Check the May 13th issue of *Forbes Magazine* for a full-page feature on the History Factory, a business run out of Washington D.C. charging \$700 for each linear foot of archival space organized and catalogued. The average bill is \$70,000. Estimated History Factory revenues this year are \$2.1 million, netting profits of \$300,000. As *Forbes* notes, this is not bad when the average academic historian makes \$45,000. (Not to mention what the average archivist makes.)



WINDOWLESS SCHOOLS and the Libbey-Owens-Ford Glass Co.

by April S. Dougal

Exhibitions of business archives often depict company history in a narrative or chronological way. Utilizing an interdisciplinary approach, a recent exhibit at the Ward M. Canady Center for Special Collections at the University of Toledo uses themes as an organizing principle. One of these themes is the role of glassmaking in education which on the surface seem to be two very disparate topics.

The Libbey-Owens-Ford Company (LOF) moved from New England to Toledo, Ohio in 1888, developed the mechanical process for production of glass bottles and flat glass, and produced the glass for the Empire State building in the 1930s. By the 1950s, the company's primary product was automotive glass but the company still had a vested interest in opposing the movement around the country the toward windowless schools.

Proponents of such schools were concerned with problems associated with large expenses of glass, stressing the threat posed by tornadoes and the expense of heating and cooling schools with an abundance of glass. Windowless schools appealed to some teachers who preferred the high degree of environmental control this afforded and the elimination of external distractions.

LOF sales executives emphasized the positive aspects of windows, providing emergency exits and ventilation in case of fire and alternate sources of light in cases of power outage. LOF issued a press release and photo depicting charred remains of a school building where broken windows had been the only means of escape for 40 students. LOF also noted windows have aesthetic values, provide higher levels of illumination, and give students an awareness of the outside world.

Newspaper articles in the LOF collection document this debate. Two center on an Ithaca, New York, high school constructed with LOF glass. Educators also debated the issue in the *National Education Association Journal*.

An interdisciplinary re-examination of the LOF collection, getting away from the usual chronological narrative has thus opened up new avenues for research and promotion of the LOF Company Records.

[Dougal is manuscript processor at the Canady Center with an M.A. in Public History from Bowling Green State University.]



Election Results

In the last newsletter we announced the election for Steering Committee. The results were as follows:

- 1 year term—Jean Toll of General Mills
- 2 year term—Steve Gletschier of Sporting News
- 3 year term—Joan Gosnell of J.C. Penney

The terms begin at this year's S.A.A. meeting in Philadelphia. Thanks to all the people who volunteered to run for the Steering Committee.

History More or Less Bunk?

Henry Ford never said "History is bunk" according to Leo Brennan, Jr., head of the Ford Motor Company Fund and speaker at the Public History Conference in Toledo in May.

Ford was misquoted from an article in the *Chicago Tribune* in 1916 when he actually said, "I don't care what Napoleon did. What we are doing today is history." So Brennan calls for a correction to read that Ford only said history was "more or less bunk."

By the way, more people visit Greenfield Village in Michigan than visit Williamsburg says Brennan. And that's not bunk!

Business and the National Archives

Don Wilson, archivist of the U.S., reported to the convention of Public Historians in Toledo in May on the experience working with Philip Morris Corporation sponsoring the "Bill of Rights" campaign. Over three million copies of the Bill of Rights were requested by the American public as a result of these informational TV ads with the corporate logo appearing at the end of the ad.

But in the course of this campaign, a major issue was raised about corporate funding and the National Archives. A Congressional Committee decided the National Archives was accepting funding from a "bad" corporation which was using the issue of the Bill of Rights to subtly campaign for smokers' rights—a smokescreen as it were for the real issue. This committee requested the FCC stop the National Archives ad campaign for the Bill of Rights. But the FCC decided nothing was wrong and permitted the campaign to go forward.

For the upcoming celebrations of World War II events, Wilson wonders if the National Archives should accept funding from the Department of Defense? From Japanese Corporations? From German ones?

Wilson believes as long as Congress funds the National Archives mostly as a preservationist agency, then any proactive role it assumes must be funded outside the government. Over 24 corporations were approached by the Archives about the Bill of Rights before Philip Morris was chosen.

The bottom line to Wilson is that acceptance by the National Archives of a gift "does not and can not be an approval of products." Nor can an exclusive license be given to the sponsoring corporation (e.g. Philip Morris initially wanted such a license to the Bill of Rights) Wilson points out these National Archives documents are in the public domain.

All the controversy is related to the National Archives assumption of a more active role in public education since 1985. While a million people a year visit the agency in Washington, few understand the concept of archives. Wilson himself has been introduced around the country as the "Alchemist of the U.S.," the "Anarchist of the U.S.," and even (yes!) as the "Archbishop of the U.S."

Business Archives Better than Newspaper's Library

A striking example of the importance of business archives is the *Cleveland Press* Collection at Cleveland State University placed there after the demise of that newspaper in the early 1980s. Recently the only large newspaper left in Cleveland, the *Plain Dealer*, issued a 1991 calendar celebrating its 150th anniversary. There was a photo for each month. But a close examination of the sources of these 12 photos shows ten came from the archives of the rival, now-defunct, *Cleveland Press*!

Postcard Business and Archives

The Curt Telch Company of Chicago (1898-74) produced 400,000 postcard images. The company, according to an item in *Public History News* forwarded to the editor of this newsletter by Phil Mooney, was the "world's largest volume printer of view and advertising postcards." The materials are computer indexed by date, subject, and location. Business archivists can contact the Lake County Museum, Lakewood Forest Preserve, Wauconda, IL 60084 (708-526-8638) to ascertain if there are postcards about their business or corporation or area of the country. Mooney plans to contact them to learn about their cataloging system: 320,000 items have been catalogued.

Note from the Editor

Editor of this newsletter is Ellen N. Lawson Ph.D., archivist at National City Corporation, Cleveland. Please send items/ ideas /short articles to home address, 2005 Chestnut Hill Drive, Cleveland Heights Oh 44106. Tel. 216-229-9602. (I hope to meet you at the meeting in Philadelphia.)

Computerizing Business History in Wisconsin

Ted Friedlander, retired businessman and head of the Founding Industries of Wisconsin, is spearheading an effort to capture historical information about Wisconsin companies, in danger of being lost or destroyed. The aim is to collect and computerize information on all companies ever headquartered in the state. The Milwaukee County Historical Society is acting as fiscal agent for the project and the Milwaukee Public Library, State Historical Society, and various branches of the University of Wisconsin are also cooperating. College students are gathering the data.

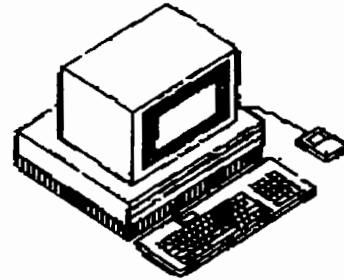
Materials collected will be stored at the State or local historical societies. Computerized summaries will be available at public libraries, university libraries, and historical societies. The computer data base will be available to scholars through the Wisconsin Historical Society Area Research Centers.

Friedlander hopes the Wisconsin study will be a model for other states and is willing to share his Data Base information form with others. The questionnaires used to generate this information are also available as a model. Besides coding the types of materials collected and the counties where the businesses are located, the data base also includes codes for the reason a family terminates ownership e.g. to diversify, no family left to manage business, family member qualified to run business, family lost interest, family disagreement, family wants higher income, family offered an attractive buyout, done to settle founder's estate, company unprofitable, company moved out of state to remain competitive, taxation problems, labor problems (high wages, inflexibility, trained labor unavailable), foreign competition, severe loss of market share, product quality lapse, product or service obsolete or unfashionable, distribution channel changes (loss of customers), legal problems, to raise capital, etc.

Coding for methods sold includes the following categories: bankrupt, stock issue-lost control, liquidation, moved from state, sale, merged, leveraged buyout,

employee stock option.

For more information, write Friedlander at 111 E. Wisconsin Avenue, Suite 1359, Milwaukee 53202 or phone 1-414-272-0383.



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Section Members to Choose New Chair-Elect

In this newsletter is a ballot for the position of chair-elect of the Business Archives Section. Candidates are Hal Kelner of the CIGNA Archives and Sharon Bishop Laist of the Ford Foundation.

Both candidates have expressed a keen interest in the future role of the Business Archives Section in SAA affairs according to Elizabeth W. Adkins, Archives Manager at Kraft General Foods.

Ballots are being sent with this newsletter to assure participation of all members, whether or not they can make it to the meeting in Philadelphia. Please be sure to vote! Ballots must be received by September 18, 1991. Winner will be announced at the annual meeting in Philadelphia.

Notes from the Chair

This year has been a quiet one for the SAA Business Section and I'm not happy it worked out that way. Job demands have restricted my ability to push forward with new initiatives for the Section. This situation confirmed my belief in the value of a Steering Committee to assist in getting some things accomplished. I am proud that we have been able to establish a Steering Committee. The results of this election are announced elsewhere in this newsletter.

I am also optimistic about our future given the energy and enthusiasm of Elizabeth Adkins (Kraft General Foods), our next Chair. She has been active in a number of archival organizations and will bring a fresh perspective to the Section. Welcome Elizabeth!

At this year's Section meeting in Philadelphia we will review Section business and hope to have a special presentation at the meeting by a business historian.

Finally, I hope to arrange an informal social time for us to get together and share ideas and renew acquaintances. I look forward to seeing you in Philadelphia.

Ed Rider
