

Society of American Archivists
ARCHIVAL HISTORY ROUNDTABLE
NEWSLETTER

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ROUNDTABLE MEETING IN NEW ORLEANS

The Archival History Roundtable will hold its annual meeting on Friday, September 3, from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. The primary focus of the Roundtable meeting this year will be a discussion of publication projects in which the Roundtable may be involved.

Followers of the Archives Listserv no doubt remember the suggestions in the spring that SAA sponsor the publication of an archival classics series. The purpose of this series would be to make available archival literature that has gone out of print, that is widely scattered in various periodicals and publications, or that has never been translated into English. Such a series would obviously be of use to archival educators, but I suspect it would also help stimulate further interest in archival history by making more readily available the theoretical and practical writings that have undergirded archival development over the centuries. Luciana Duranti of the University of British Columbia has spearheaded this effort and drafted a proposal for the SAA Publications Committee. She expects to attend the meeting of our Roundtable in New Orleans and will, I am sure, be eager to hear suggestions and offers of help from our members.

One area in which the Archival History Roundtable might be directly involved, it seems to me, is the compilation of a volume of sources for American archival history. Among the works that such an anthology might include are: Richard Bartlett's Remarks and Documents Relating to the Preservation and Keeping of the Public Archives (1837), Waldo G. Leland's "American Archival Problems," (1909), various Congressional reports on the state of public records; "Address of Rev. Charles Burroughs on the Preservation of Documents, as the Materials of History," (1850); extracts from J. C. Fitzpatrick's Notes on the Care, Cataloguing, Calendaring and Arranging of Manuscripts; and various selections from the work of the Public Archives Commission and the Conference of Archivists. The collective expertise of the Archival History Roundtable should be able to produce a volume that would help provide a vivid chronicle of the evolution of archival thought in the United States.

The prospect of an encyclopedia of archives that will include biographies of deceased archivists is also still alive. Bill Joyce hopes to attend the Roundtable to share his thoughts on this project and how we can help contribute to it.

ARCHIVAL HISTORY AND THE M.A.S. GUIDELINES

The draft of Guidelines for the Development of a Curriculum for a Master of Archival Studies has been published for review and comment by the SAA membership. The history of archives figures as one of the components within the Archival Knowledge section of the Guidelines. Specifically the Guidelines state:

"Archival education programs should teach the historical development of records making and keeping systems and of archives in various civilizations, from the ancient world to our times. This should include the structure of the archival network in the Western world in general, and North America in particular; types of archival repositories and programs in existence in the United States, and their policies and procedures; and the legislation and regulations governing archives and impinging upon archival work in the United States. Instruction should also address the historical development of the archival profession: its missions, roles, and values over time in the Western world; the professional code of ethics; and the profession's contemporary concerns.

Written comments on the Guidelines should be sent to Frank Boles, Clarke Historical Library, Central Michigan University, Mount Pleasant, MI 48859. Written comments must be received by August 31, 1993.

1992 ROUNDTABLE MEETING IN MONTREAL

Approximately twenty people attended the meeting of the Archival History Roundtable at the SAA annual meeting in Montreal in September 1992. Beth Sandager, then the field archivist for the human genome project at the Beckman Center for the History of Chemistry and now archivist at the Peabody Museum at Harvard, presented a paper on "The Alienated Archivist: T. R. Schellenberg's Ventures Overseas, 1954-1965." The paper reported on work in progress in collaboration with Philip Alexander of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and is based on research in Schellenberg's papers at the Kansas State Historical Society. Here is a brief report of her paper:

From about 1954 to 1965, the last years of Schellenberg's career at the National Archives, he became increasingly alienated from his professional colleagues. He began to seek new outlets for professional activity and consequently turned to lecturing and consulting overseas--in Australia, New Zealand, the Caribbean, and South America. Schellenberg's sense of alienation may have had its roots in the persecution he felt growing up as a German-American in Kansas during World War I. Later as a new archivist for the federal government in the 1930s, he came under suspicion of expressing pro-Nazi sentiments.

Schellenberg's work at the National Archives was exemplary, but he was not universally liked by his colleagues and for unspecified reasons his superiors sought to limit his authority. The result was a climate of tension in the workplace. It was to escape this environment in part that Schellenberg began his jaunts abroad.

As a Fulbright lecturer in Australia in 1954 he prepared the first of his two great works, Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques. His most intensive work abroad, however, was in the West Indies and Latin America. In 1956 he joined the Working Group on Inter-American Cultural Cooperation sponsored by the State Department. In 1957 the Rockefeller Foundation supported a survey and report on archives in Trinidad and Tobago. In 1960 the Rockefeller Foundation again was

the sponsor of a three-month lecture tour in South America. Here he promoted archival principles and techniques and also an upcoming Inter-American Archival Seminar which convened in October 1961 and led to the establishment of an Inter-American Council on Archives.

Schellenberg's activities abroad did little to endear him to the powers at the National Archives. It was felt by some that he was neglecting his duties at the Archives. Archivist Robert Bahmer chastised him for involving himself in outside activities without seeking permission. Shortly thereafter an embittered Schellenberg retired from the National Archives. He remained active in archival circles until his death in 1970. For example, he was one of the key speakers at the First Caribbean Archives Conference, held in Jamaica in 1965.

Despite the fact that he seemed relieved to be out of the National Archives when he was working overseas, Schellenberg did not entirely lose his somewhat prickly personality. His Anglophobia, for example, caused him to deride Sir Hilary Jenkinson in Australia, no doubt much to the discomfort of some of his listeners. His style seems to have opened up some unpleasant nationalistic tensions. Some of the comments in his private correspondence could even be interpreted as racial slurs. His recommendation of a white British expatriate and amateur historian to head the national archives program in Trinidad and Tobago is suggestive of his cultural biases. Much as Schellenberg's "work overseas was productive and helpful, it was inevitably impeded to some extent by frustrations that he was never able to deal with successfully or to rise above--frustrations generated by a complex range of personal, political, cultural, and professional influences in his life. Ironically, had these frustrations not helped drive him overseas to begin with, the Australians, West Indians, and Latin Americans would have derived fewer benefits from his archival expertise."

ARCHIVAL HISTORY AT THE 1993 SAA MEETING

Program offerings which have a direct relevance to archival history are few and far between at the New Orleans meeting. Session #26SF, Thursday September 2, 3:45-4:45 "Wishing You Were Here for 100 Years: The Centennial of the American Picture Postcard" will include a discussion of the history of the picture postcard now celebrating its centennial year. On Saturday, September 4, 9:00-10:00 a.m., Session #48SF, "The Archival Profession in Mexico: Education and Opportunities" will touch on the historical development of the profession in Latin America.

It is never too early to think about sessions for 1994. The paucity of archival history sessions this year can be rectified next year if the Roundtable can help shepherd a session or two (or three) through the program committee. Alexandra Gressitt of the Indiana Historical Society, a member of the 1994 Program Committee, will speak briefly to the Roundtable in New Orleans about assisting us in getting archival history topics onto next year's program.

NEWSLETTER CONTRIBUTIONS

Your chair and newsletter editor is, as always, eager to receive contributions, long and short, for the Newsletter. These might include abstracts of current research projects, citations to elusive publications on archival history, news of documents or collections relevant to archival history, or opinionated pieces on what archival historians should be doing. Contributions will help facilitate a more frequent publication of the Newsletter and help enliven the life of the Roundtable. Send them to me: Phil Eppard, School of Information Science and Policy, University at Albany, State University of New York, Albany, NY 12222.