**Book Proposal Prospectus**

**Writings of John Fleckner, with Commentaries by Younger Archivists**

**Submitted by Randall C. Jimerson**

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**Theme, purpose and scope of the publication:**

This proposed book will present ten of the most important writings of John Fleckner covering a span of more than forty years, with critical evaluation commentaries on each article regarding the changing landscape of archival theory and practice written by a younger generation of archivists. The purpose is to establish an inter-generational conversation regarding the evolution of archival thinking regarding critical issues facing the profession. This proposed compilation of articles with commentaries follows the example shown in *“All Shook Up”: The Archival Legacy of Terry Cook*, edited by Tom Nesmith, Greg Bak, and Joan M. Schwartz (published in 2020 by SAA and ACA), which introduced each of 13 essays by Cook with commentaries by prominent archivists (including Randall Jimerson).

As an SAA Fellow (since 1982) and Past President (1989-1990), John Fleckner has been a prominent figure in shaping archival theory and practice. His writings have appeared in numerous publications, which make locating these essays difficult. This proposal would present a unified compilation of his major writings, published and unpublished, with brief commentaries by a diverse group of younger generation archivists. Fleckner’s distinguished writings will provoke renewed discussions about topics ranging from archival theory to practical applications to archival practice. In 1977 Fleckner wrote one of the first SAA manuals series monographs, with his focus on archival surveys. His 1984 manual *Native American Archives: An Introduction* represented one of the first scholarly publications regarding the importance of Native American archives. His SAA Presidential address in 1990, “Dear Many Jane,” has long been one of the most influential essays regarding the humanistic and cultural importance of archival documentation. For many years it was the first essay I assigned for archival graduate students to read in order to understand the value and importance of archives. This list could go on further, but these examples show the impact and significance of Fleckner’s writings over nearly 45 years. It is time to make these writings readily available—including several unpublished essays prepared for conference lectures.

**Estimated format and length of the publication**

The proposed book will include ten articles written by John Fleckner, with commentaries by six to ten contributors (some contributors may combine two Fleckner essays in their commentary). The Fleckner writings average about 15 pages. With 10 page commentaries, plus an introduction by the editor, the expected length would be just over 250 pages. This is a maximum estimate—and a preliminary guess, so the length could be less than 250 pages.

**Whether the topic and approach are better suited to print or online format**

This proposed book could be presented in either print or online.

**Annotated outline or table of contents**

The essays by Fleckner listed here might be rearranged, and would be paired with commentaries by contributors. If the project is approved by the SAA Publications Board we will quickly identify potential commentators/contributors and match them with Fleckner’s writings. This is thus a preliminary outline:

Introduction, by Rand Jimerson (will outline John Fleckner’s career and archival contributions, and explain the format and presentations of the book’s contents. (The list of Fleckner’s publications here includes some of his comments about the articles.)

The Archives Profession

“Dear Mary Jane: Some Reflections on Being an Archivist,” SAA, AA, 1990 (3,543 words)

A reflection in epistolary form on my archival career and on the archives profession.

“Myths of the Archives Profession: A Common Practice?” SAA, 1983 (16 pages)

The sense of a common mission is a powerful integrating and unifying force for our profession. If the role of an institutional archives is as much to document values and beliefs as to preserve a record of institutional activities, then institutional archivists share a common purpose with all the profession.

“The Paradox of Change and Continuity,” Rutgers University Special Collections and University Archives Dedication, 1994 (10 pages)

For all the changes – indeed the transformation of the historical record and how we use and care for it – in dedicating a new Special Collections space we accept the burden of stewardship passed along to us by our predecessors and we assert our confidence in the enduring value of preserving the historical record.

“Enduring Values Within Glass Houses: Reflections on the Archival Enterprise in the Year 2000,” New England Archivists, NEA Newsletter, 2000 (14 pages)

A reflection on the experience of dramatic change over a professional career and the enduring values that will see us through future decades. We are a humanistic profession; a thinking, inquiring, learning profession; an ethical profession; a collaborative profession.

“Talkin’ ‘bout a Revolution: Rethinking Archival Practice,” Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, 2003 and *Journal of Archival Organization* (10 pages; 2,916 words)

New information and communications technologies have so increased access to archives (and changed archival methods) that our entire enterprise has been transformed. Demand for use of archives has grown enormously while, at the same time, in a painful irony, public support for archival work is under attack. The democracy studies movement suggests ways of thinking about archives their role in civil society. It is more urgent than ever for us to make the case for archives in the larger civic life of our society. Archives are not expendable.

“F. Gerald Ham: Jeremiah to the Profession,” SAA, AA, 2013 (18 pages; 6,707 words)

For three decades F. Gerald Ham was a forceful, incisive, and energizing presence within the profession. Ham urged us to set aside our outdated custodial mindset, take more seriously our role in selecting an archival record for the future, implement strategies of planning and coordination, overcome our isolation and proprietary habits, and above all think critically and make the difficult decisions necessary in a new archival era. This paper traces Ham’s career and reviews his writings for insights into a critical era in our recent professional past and into his contributions to the profession and the ways his ideas remain relevant today.

Archival Practice

“Reaching Out: the Place of Records Surveys in Archival Practice,” SAA/NEH Conference on Priorities for the Preservation and Use of Historical Records; *Midwestern Archivist* 1977 (10 pages)

The resurgent interest in surveys reflects not only the inclinations of today’s grant givers, but importantly, on basic changes in the professional outlook of American archivists. Many archivists now acknowledge that they must adopt a vigorous role in consciously choosing papers and records for archival preservation. This acknowledgement reflects their growing sense of professional identity and confidence. Discusses three types of records surveys, suggests how surveys fit into contemporary archival thinking, and offers suggestions for making surveys successful.

“What Is a Tribal Archives?” and “Tribal Archives: some Basic Archival Ideas,” Chapters One and Two, *Native American Archives: An Introduction*, publication, SAA, (Waldo Gifford Leland Award) 1984 (12 pages printed)

Chapter one describes the fundamental characteristics and benefits of an archives using tribal archives examples. Chapter two discusses the place of an archives within tribal government and considers three critical tribal archives issues: access to the archives; preservation and security; and “keeping order and control of holdings in the archives.”

*In non-specialist language, these chapters place basic archival concepts in the context of Native American communities. The chapters also present Native American perspectives and experiences on archival matters.*

“Access: Opportunities We Could Never Have Imagined, Issues We Can Never Resolve,” SAA, *AA*, 2011 (15 pages; 4,053 words) (Could also be under Archives Profession)

The notion of “access” has evolved over the course of our professional history: a core value or belief; a privilege or right which archivists administer through policies; and activities by which archivists make records known. The paper considers the expansion of public records laws and the idea of equal access to archival documents along with the effect of social movements on the growth of interest in access to archives. It gives equal weight to these outside societal forces and efforts by SAA groups to affect the mission of the profession in the United States. Concludes with thoughts about the place of intellectual access in shaping how we inform our users what sources are available to them and calls for development of another dimension of access: archival literacy.

Archives and Museums

“Archives and Museums,” Midwest Archives Conference, 1989; *Midwestern Archivist*, 1990 (17 pages)

Despite striking differences in methods and techniques, archives and museums—especially history museums—share much in common. Recent, parallel developments in both fields are increasing the areas of common concern including ethics, standards, information sharing, and collections documentation (in its several meanings). Discusses institutional standards and accreditation in both fields. Using examples, suggests that collaboration between archivists and museum professionals can produce a richer, more useful documentary record.

**Intended audience and the potential market**

The intended audience could include a variety of perspectives. Seasoned professionals would be able to evaluate Fleckner’s contributions to archival literature in light of commentaries by a younger generation of practitioners. Archivists in early or mid-career would be able to consider archival concerns over a period of more than forty years, from the dual perspectives of one of the profession’s senior leaders and of their own contemporaries. This book would be a useful text for graduate archives classes, and for both new and seasoned archival practitioners.

**The prospective value to the archival profession**

As described above, this volume would provide easy access to a wide ranging compilation of writings by Fleckner, one of the profession’s most thoughtful and compelling authors. It will demonstrate—as the tribute volume to Terry Cook does—the wide range of issues, both theoretical and pragmatic, that leading scholars in the archival profession have contributed to our collective understanding of the archival mission. Fleckner’s writings provide insights and challenges to those of us wrestling with critical issues facing us as archivists. In such essays as “Dear Mary Ann” and “F. Gerald Ham: Jeremiah to the Profession” Fleckner inspires us to ponder the philosophical, cultural, and moral perspectives that emphasize why we do our work, not just how we do so.

**Relationship of the proposed publication to the literature in the field**

As described above, this publication will provide both inspiration and challenges to archivists at all stages of their careers. Following somewhat similar approaches to the Terry Cook volume of essays and commentaries, this proposed book will enable readers to see the range of a single author covering many aspects of archival theory and practice. By incorporating critical voices from a younger generation, the volume will enhance conversations and analysis of the impact of archival concepts on the profession, showing what aspects of Fleckner’s writings have remained significant, proved prophetic, or require reconsideration from a more contemporary perspective. It will thus be the first publication bringing together the voices of a seasoned professional and of members of a younger generation of archivists.

**Possibility of co-sponsorship with another organization**

The Association of Canadian Archivists, the American Association of Museums, and the Smithsonian Institution might be approached regarding co-sponsorship.

**Possibility of outside financial support**

I do not know of any options for outside financial support, unless one or more of the potential co-sponsors would be interested.

**Graphics and illustrations the publication might use**

This book would not need or rely on graphics and institutions, although some photographs and images from *Native American Archives* might be useful and appropriate.

**Co-authors or contributors**

Rand Jimerson will serve as editor, compiler, and coach to all contributors. I will solicit suggestions for commentary contributors from members of the SAA Publications Board, as well as leaders of SAA sections such as Archives and Archivists of Color, Native American Archives, Museum Archives, and Archival Educators. I have not yet approached anyone about contributing to this project, but I do have several possible commentators in mind, including: Jennifer O’Neal (Grand Ronde tribe member who could comment on *Native American Archives* chapters), Bergis Jules (an articulate archivist of color), J. Gordon Daines (Brigham Young University), Josh Zimmerman (religious archivists in Seattle), Ricky Punzalan (University of Michigan professor), and Ted Lee (PhD candidate at University of British Columbia).

Randall C. Jimerson, editor of this proposed book of essays and commentaries, is a SAA Fellow (since 2001) and Past President (2004-2005). In addition to dozens of published essays and research articles, he is editor of *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice* (SAA, 2000), which for many years served as a valuable compilation of articles for graduate courses in archives, and author of *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice* (SAA, 2009), which has reached an international audience throughout the English-speaking world—and which was fully translated into Korean several years ago. He has also published a book analyzing sectional identity during the American Civil War (1988), a memoir of growing up amidst the Civil Rights Movement in Alabama (2014), and a biography of a white civil rights activist who worked in both Alabama and Southern Rhodesia (forthcoming 2022).

**Anticipated schedule for preparation of the publication**

Once the SAA Publications Board agrees to publish this book, either in print or on-line, it will take several months to identify and secure commitments from contributors/commentators, Based on my own experience as an author/contributor to several similar projects, it would likely take two or more years to complete the commentary essays, review and revise them, and prepare for publication.