

“YOU MUST HAVE TO GET OUT OF BED VERY EARLY TO DO THAT!”  
ARCHIVAL ENTERPRISE IN THE UNITED STATES

By

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Mina-san, Konnichi-wa! And Howdy! from Texas.

INTRODUCTION

Professor Takano, Colleague Ando, and friends of archives all, I thank you deeply for the extraordinary opportunity of addressing you on the occasion of the opening this very year of the first graduate program in archival education in Japan. Your achievement is one which archivists around the world applaud and offer their congratulations. Moreover as education for careers in archival enterprise continues to develop and elaborate around the world, your experience here will add immeasurably to the fund of knowledge on which we all draw as we work to strengthen our own programs in archival education. Thank you, then, for giving me the opportunity to share with you knowledge of the American experience in archival enterprise and in education for careers in archival enterprise that I have acquired during the forty-nine years since I took my first job in an archives. Thank you, too, for giving me

the opportunity to observe and learn from your experience in creating the educational program you are initiating.

## OPENING

One afternoon while an archivist colleague of mine and his new next-door neighbor were talking, the neighbor asked my colleague what he did for a living. “I am an archivist,” my colleague replied with his usual lilt in his voice. We American archivists have learned to watch the reaction of the person who just learned that he or she is talking with *an archivist*. If the person knows what archives are, the person usually smiles and tells us proudly of some encounter the person has had with archives. If, on the other hand, the person has little notion of what archives are or what archivists do, then the eyes squint, the mouth narrows, and the person usually rocks back a little bit fearing a long or technical answer.

The neighbor with whom my colleague was talking fell in between these two responses. Seeming to have a vague idea of the work archivists do and thus the invigoration we find in it, but unclear just what archival work involves or means, the neighbor replied cautiously, but enthusiastically, “You must have to get out of bed very early to do that!”

## NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF ARCHIVES

However little the neighbor perceived of the tasks archivists perform and why our job is essential to his ability to live the life he lives and wants to live, he did have a point. We do relish doing archival work. The reason is this: *the work archivists do is fundamental to the existence of modern society.*

“Archival enterprise,” I call our work. By archival enterprise I mean *the dynamic delivery of the archival service to society.* The *archival service* consists of maintaining, enlarging, securing, and facilitating use of the inexhaustible well of records information that constitutes the foundation of society’s memory. *Records information* is simply information generated in the conduct of affairs and captured in records—in documents—for the purpose of carrying out and/or documenting those affairs. Inexhaustible it is, because each generation, facing its particular problems and concerns, consults the well of records information to fashion that generation’s unique resolutions of its problems and concerns. For some, this memory is knowledge of historical developments. For increasing numbers of others, this memory provides a historical context for informed decisions in the administration of affairs. At a deeper level, it undergirds continuity in society from generation

to generation. The genealogists researching their ancestors and the times in which they lived, who constitute the most numerous single group of users of American archival repositories, attest to this. Modern society cannot function without archives and the archival service.

Transactions in modern society require the assurance of validity in information. Validity is rooted in the continuing, unadulterated connection between documents and the affairs in the conduct of which the documents came into existence. Beyond the simplest matters, we are uncomfortable, and should be uncomfortable with relying on one person's memory for the truth of matters.

Records created in the conduct of events document those events such that two realities basic to modern democratic societies obtain. The first is that the rights to which individuals and organizations are entitled have a basis in fact. This is especially true of the rights and entitlements based on longevity that require proof of eligibility. The second is that individuals and governments can be held accountable for their actions, even though achieving that accountability may take years or decades.

Finally, modern society is, as all of us individually are, the product of its and our history. Appreciation of the course of history, including purposely

choosing to disregard it, is fundamental in charting a course forward.

Archives form the bedrock from which solid history is fashioned. Certainly different historians draw different understandings and meanings from events, and thus cast history in different lights. But no history is trustworthy that fails to go back to the bedrock of archives.

All of this being true—that records are fundamental to the existence of modern society, that essential to the role of records in society is maintaining the authenticity of their relationship to the actions that brought them into existence, and that archives are the bedrock of history, understanding of which is essential to making decisions that affect our social condition—all of this being true, the mission and purpose of archivists working with archives is:

1. to maintain and ensure the existence and availability of information valid in relation to the events in the conduct of which the records were created, and
2. to secure for use the bedrock on which our understanding of historical events must be based.

My archivist colleague, and I too, get out of bed with a spring in our step looking forward to devoting another day to archives. We are invigorated by our work ensuring that, however little our neighbors know of or appreciate

the bedrock that the archival service to society provides in empowering them to live the life they want to live, that the archival service is there sustaining society in general and each of them—each of you—in particular.

In one way or another, archivists always have had this responsibility of maintaining a societal bedrock, especially in the West.

The Greeks, who about 2,500 years ago formulated the word from which the English word “archives” is derived, saw a repository for records—an archives—as serving two needs of the community. First, it held documentation of activity of the community, such as reports of the work of government officials and achievements in sporting contests. Second, it provided a place in which documents generated in the pursuit of relationships between individuals, which the individuals wanted to make public—such as a marriage—could be deposited. Public notice achieved the purpose of having all members of the community conduct themselves appropriately in regard to the documented relationship.

The Romans adopted the Greek concepts and added one—that of official registration. The imperial government wanted private organizations to submit documentation of their existence so as to know both what

organizations existed and what they were doing. The organizations appreciated this as conferring official sanction on their existence.

The leaders of the French Revolution more than a millennium later at the end of the eighteenth century brought the next great change in the nature and meaning of archives and laid the foundation for what we now mean when we talk about the archival service to society. The revolutionaries established for the first time the principle that the records in the archival repository would be open to inspection by the public, not reserved solely for government use. In addition, they created the first National Archives agency to manage the records and become a center point of national historical consciousness and patriotism. In doing these things, the French discovered a fundamental truth of records. Documents maintained with an integrity that confers an unquestioned validity on their content have power. One power is to entitle (for example, entitle peasants to land). Another power is to absolve (to reveal authoritatively that individuals who had been forced against their will to do things that, under normal circumstances, they never would have done—that these individuals were not the persons whom knowledge of their actions alone portrayed them as being). This value in records was most forcefully seen in

the struggle of the Germans with the records of the secret police after the fall of the East German government.

The contribution of the French to the meaning and purpose of archives did not stop there. They also introduced our distinction between historical archives and contemporary archives. As a result of the Revolution, the French had records like none ever known before. These were records that could not be used in the conduct of the affairs of the organization that created them, because the government in the activity of which they had been created—the monarchy—no longer existed. Records of great age had been called archives before, it is true, but the records of the destroyed monarchy were historical archives, because the principal use that could be made of them was in studying and writing history.

## THE AMERICAN EXPERIENCE

When and under what circumstances archival enterprise began in America is a fascinating question to answer, because the answer differs according to what a person considers the essence of archival enterprise to be.

One could say that archival enterprise in America began with records—the first making and keeping of records created in the conduct of government.



This would be archives on the Roman model. Much of the documentation is records of the European companies and countries that funded and oversaw the colonial establishments. In the files are many letters in which colonial governors expressed frustration over missing records—those that predecessor colonial officers took home with them when their terms ended. Indeed, government authorities were so lax in managing the records for which they were responsible while in office that a French traveler in early nineteenth-century America expressed his opinion that Americans paid so little attention to government records that after a few decades it would be easier to write the history of Medieval Europe than of America. Archival enterprise in colonial America is primarily a story of individual action or inaction in systematically keeping archives.

One could say that archival enterprise in America began with erection of a building designed specifically to house and protect archives. This was the Public Records Office in Williamsburg, Virginia, built in 1748 following a fire in the capitol building that almost consumed quantities of records. To reduce the likelihood of such a loss, the government not only put up the Public Records Office building, but also required that all records stored in it be placed in “sturdy wooden boxes” so that, in the event of a fire in the

building, someone could easily grab up the boxes and throw them outside without doing serious harm to the records. Fortunately, no fire ever ignited. Those who contend that archival enterprise in America began with erection of the Public Records Office building argue that the heart of archival work is simply storage—safe storage to be sure—but simply storage nonetheless.

One could propose that archival enterprise began when the first administration to assemble archives from private Americans was fashioned. In 1791, only a decade after the final battle of the American Revolution, and while the French Revolution was progressing, a group of men formed the Massachusetts Historical Society for the specific purpose of collecting archives from private individuals who had played prominent roles in the greatest historical event of the country—the American Revolution that led to the founding of the United States of America. Documenting a historical period—assembling archives for the purpose of writing history—motivated these men. What they created was something never known before. They created both an administration and a repository for collecting the archives of people outside of the organization (in this case not members of the Massachusetts Historical Society) deemed to have played a role in history, whose actions should be memorialized not simply by statues but more

genuinely by collecting for study documents they produced while doing their deeds—documents that not just recounted their deeds, but also expressed their philosophies of life. What the founders of the Massachusetts Historical Society created was a collecting archives—a collecting archival repository. Their organization had no connection to government or the church or a business venture—the organizations that up to then had maintained archives. They saw themselves as collecting the raw record that would be the bedrock from which history would be written.

As settlers moved west and formed new states in the American Midwest during the following century, they in turn adopted the Massachusetts model and created historical societies of their own to collect historical documents, most from private individuals, some from local governments, to document the experience of both the American Revolution and the Westward Expansion. If assembling the raw material from which to write history be the beginning of archival enterprise in the United States, then that began in a uniquely American fashion with the founding of the Massachusetts Historical Society and its active collecting of papers of private individuals.

Defining archival enterprise by the principles the archivist follows in managing the archival documentation would cause one to suggest yet another

beginning point of archival enterprise in the United States. That would be with the arrival of modern archival theory and practice that had developed in Europe following the French Revolution. The archival experience of the French and subsequently the Prussians resulted in formulation of the two most fundamental concepts in the practice of our contemporary archival enterprise. The first is the principle of *Respect des Fonds*: maintaining the documentation created in the conduct of affairs of any administration—any individual or any organization—separate from the documentation of every other one. The French government instituted this principle in 1841. The second is the Principle of Original Order: maintaining the records of one fonds as closely as possible to the filing arrangement the administration—or the creator, as we call it—formulated to organize and facilitate use of its records in the conduct of the creator’s affairs. The purpose of both principles is to secure the context within which the documentation was created and thereby to preserve the integrity, validity, and authenticity of the documentation as having been part of the activity in which the records were created.

Though American record keepers did commonly follow the principle of *respect des fonds*, even though they had no knowledge of the French formulation of it, they did not develop a native version of the principle of

original order. Instead, they preferred to rearrange archives in chronological order, document by document. The European principles of respect des fonds and original order arrived most forcefully when Waldo Gifford Leland introduced them in a speech at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association in 1909. Enthusiastic, American archivists organized their first professional association—the Conference of Archivists—and labored to prepare a manual of practice incorporating the new concepts. But World War I so diverted their attention that the proposed manual never materialized.

If the establishment of a country's national archives be the benchmark, then the beginning of archival enterprise in the United States occurred only in 1934-1935, a century and a half after the country was founded. After experimenting with methodology, the archivists of the U.S. National Archives firmly adopted those two fundamental European principles. But the principle of respect des fonds, which was formulated in a period of records generated in small quantities, had to be modified to accommodate the American situation of records generated in large quantities resulting from administering a large country during extraordinary historical times of World War I and then the Great Depression. In this environment, the American archivists formulated the concept of the *Record Group*. The Americans began with what the

English archival theorist, Sir Hilary Jenkinson, had formulated as the Archive Group. The Archive Group encompassed all records of the highest level of independent action within government. But the American government was so large and complex, its quantity of records already numbering in the millions of cubic feet, that the Jenkinsonian formulation was both physically and intellectually unmanageable. The concept of the record group applied Jenkinson's independent action more flexibly by taking into account both the physical amount and the organizational complexity of the records at hand.

In addition to developing appropriate application of principles, the American government archivists faced the common problem of determining what records belonged in the national archives. They answered with two concepts unique to the American experience and subsequently adopted well beyond the American environment. First, they formalized in their definition of "archives" the French and later German concepts of archives being historical records. Then they developed means of judging whether records had historical value. They considered, for example, the age of records, how fully the records documented the matters in the conduct of which they had been created, and how concentrated the information in the records was in relation to the mass of records in which the information was contained. For

this process of determining historical value they used the term *appraisal*. Though the appraisal decision still rested on the judgment of the appraisal archivist, arriving at that judgment engaged specific considerations and thus applied a methodology where none so thoughtfully formulated had existed previously.

Second, out of the work of formulating the techniques of appraisal, the archivists of the fledgling U.S. National Archives developed an entirely new field of labor with regard to records—the field of Records Management. To save the archivists from having to inspect each body of records individually to determine its enduring value, they formulated the technique of “scheduling” records. In this they described the records in terms of their content, purpose, legal basis, and period of use for completing the work in the conduct of which the records were created. Then when the archivists found in one agency a body of records similar to a body they had scheduled already in another agency, they could apply the same appraisal decision without having to go and study the new cache of records. Archivists quickly found that this scheduling could be done not only after records had fulfilled the purpose for which they were created, but also while they were fulfilling their purpose. In developing other techniques for controlling the proliferation of records that

were still in use, they created the new field of records management, and came themselves to be called records managers. In short, records managers worked with records in their first life, distinguishing themselves from archivists, who worked with records in their second life, after the records had served the purpose for which they had been created.

Over the succeeding years, records managers developed the four emphases that records management continues to have:

1. Managing massive volumes of records being created and used in the conduct of contemporary affairs so as to ensure as much as possible that only records continuing to be needed are kept,
2. Having records at the worker's desk when needed and then moved to less costly storage thereafter until, after they have fulfilled their initial purpose, the records are placed in the archives or destroyed,
3. Protecting the integrity and the rights of all documented in the records, both the government and the citizens, and
4. Managing the records as an economic asset, which they are by virtue of the cost incurred in creating them, and the even greater expense that in the event of their loss would be required to recreate them.



The professionalizing of archival enterprise when the community of archivists joined into a professional association in which to discuss and refine their practices offers a further point to consider for the beginning of archival enterprise in the United States. Though the Conference of Archivists provided this beginning, it has been the Society of American Archivists, established in 1936, the year after the National Archives opened, that has fulfilled this role principally by providing both for regular meetings in which to discuss common issues and a publishing operation to spread knowledge of theoretical and practical answers to matters.

#### ARCHIVAL EDUCATION IN THE UNITED STATES

If one were to argue that codifying and systematizing, and thus overseeing the knowledge needed to perform professional duties mark the beginning point of a profession, then the teaching of the first university-level courses could be established as one further point of the beginning of archival enterprise in the United States. Not surprisingly, the initial academic course was offered after American archivists had joined in establishing their profession by founding the Society of American Archivists. It was first taught in 1938 in the School of Library Service at Columbia University in

New York City. Prior to inauguration of the course, those who went into archival work had been trained as historians, and they considered the high point of archival work to be the history work of publishing calendars.

“Calendar” is the name for publications of series of documents printed in chronological—thus calendar—order and often provided with editorial commentary. In summarizing and codifying archival experience, the Columbia course concentrated less on the work archivists did in producing history and more on their enterprise in managing archival repositories and bodies of archives.

Professors of History in the Society of American Archivists proposed that, rather than expand this Columbia curriculum, the American archival community should adopt the European form of archival education which had arisen independently in several European countries following the founding of the Ecole des Chartes in Paris in 1829. Students in the Ecole were trained in History, languages, and diplomatics. The study of the structure of documents, diplomatics had been developed in the seventeenth century for the systematic inspection of ancient documents to determine their authenticity based on how fully they conformed to the structure and style of contemporary documents produced in the office in which the documents in question were purported to

have been written. In short, this was the work of historians identifying documents, not archival work in managing them.

The structure that the proponents of American archival education in the European style recommended instituting consisted of three degrees:

1. a baccalaureate degree to prepare graduates to perform the basic work with documents,
2. a master's degree to prepare managers to oversee the internal work of the repository, and finally
3. a doctorate for those who aspired to become directors of major archival institutions.

Nothing of the European structure and curriculum was adopted, because it did not fit the American situation. Archival enterprise in America was not developing as simply an auxiliary function of history for which this degree progression would be appropriate. The problems American archivists confronted in handling the most ancient documents in their repositories were not ones for which a knowledge of diplomatics was essential. And excepting the National Archives, precious few archival repositories enjoyed a staff and administrative structure large and complex enough to warrant the three-degree arrangement.

The need more greatly felt in the 1940s and for years thereafter than single university courses was for short-term, basic training available to those working in, or wanting to work in archives. The Modern Archives Institute was established by the National Archives in 1945 to provide it. An intensive, four-week program, the Modern Archives Institute continues to sell out its now-two-week offerings that introduce the students to archival enterprise broadly, but in the classroom only, without any practicum experience. With the Modern Archives Institute continuing to have a waiting list for every session, two regional organizations—the societies of archivists of Georgia and California—run archival institutes much along the line of the Modern Archives Institute.

As the archival profession matured, archivists increasingly felt the need to provide a means by which professional archivists could distinguish themselves from anyone claiming without foundation to be an archivist. The distinction of course lay in the knowledge they possessed of standard archival practice. In 1989 archivists in the United States created the Academy of Certified Archivists to administer a test of basic knowledge in seven broad domains of: Selection, Appraisal and Acquisition; Arrangement and Description; Reference Services and Access; Preservation and Protection;

Outreach, Advocacy, and Promotion; Managing Archival Programs; and finally, Professional, Ethical, and Legal Responsibilities.

Those passing the test and successfully completing one year of fulltime work in an archives may call themselves not just archivists, but certified archivists. The Academy continues to grow and now numbers nearly 900 members. To maintain certification, the certified archivist must demonstrate every five years that the archivist has kept up to date his or her knowledge of the fast changing archival scene.

Training obtained in one of the archival institutes or on the job was the route into archival work when I came into the field in 1959 and continued to provide the pathway through the 1960s. In the 1980s, major universities as mine with strong library and information science departments, and a few with strong History departments, began hiring archivists as fulltime faculty members to develop curricula with a breadth and depth sufficient for students to specialize in archival enterprise. Consequently, since the 1980s most aspiring archivists have entered the field through graduate archival education programs similar to the one you are instituting here.

I joined this first wave of fulltime archival educators in 1986 after teaching my university's then single archives course for six years while

working as the State Archivist of Texas. I was hired for the fulltime position after a generous donor gave the university \$100,000 to create a professorship, that is to establish an endowment the proceeds of which would be designated for the use of a senior faculty member. The recipient is given the title of the endowment—hence my title as the Governor Bill Daniel Professor in Archival Enterprise.

In the 1990s, several of these universities, again including mine, hired second and third instructors, significantly broadening the offerings. The second fulltime archival enterprise instructor at Texas specializes in electronic and digital records. Other instructors—some fulltime, some hired for the course in question—teach courses in records management, film archives, and preservation of book, paper, and audio objects.

Before the millennium, master's degrees in archival enterprise had become the principal and uniform ticket into the profession.

The Society of American Archivists has played a strong role in promoting this change. The committee on education developed a comprehensive structure of topics pertinent in construction of a curriculum in archival enterprise (<http://www.archivists.org/prof->

education/ed\_guidelines.asp). The topics are grouped in the two principal categories of Core Knowledge and Interdisciplinary Knowledge.

**Core knowledge** consists of three components:

**Knowledge of Archival Functions** (that is, the theory and methodology associated with specific areas of archival work). Specific topics included here are the basic archival functions of Appraisal and Acquisition, Arrangement and Description, Preservation, and Reference and Access. Added to them are management of repositories and a focus specifically on Outreach and Advocacy (or as I use the term, Marketing of Archives)—that is, preparing the student to speak forcefully and effectively in explaining to audiences of all sorts the importance to that audience, in terms meaningful to it, of archives and archival enterprise.

**Knowledge of the Profession** (that is, the history of the profession and the evolution of archival practice both in the United States and internationally). This includes the socially important topic of Values and Ethics of the archivist and the archival profession.

The third component of Core Knowledge is **Contextual Knowledge** (that is, the contexts within which records are created, managed, and kept). Social and cultural contexts on the one hand, and legal and financial systems

within which records are created, used, and preserved on the other hand are the two emphases in this broad topic. No graduate of programs as ours is fully prepared without a good working knowledge of Records and Information Management and of the special field of managing electronic and digital objects, which round out the components of Contextual Knowledge.

In concert with Core Knowledge is **Interdisciplinary Knowledge**, which brings to the student the importance of knowledge of fields on which archivists draw. These include the conservation (object treatment) component of preservation, theories of the management and behavior of organizations, the theories and practice of History, and the nature of information technologies.

Though no graduate archival education program has shaped its courses strictly mirroring these graduate education guidelines, we all have incorporated them to ensure that our curricula in archival enterprise are appropriately comprehensive and thorough.

In addition to teaching, the other great contribution of full educational programs in archival enterprise is research and study of matters affecting the practice of our field. Through studies conducted by students and faculty, we American archivists have both learned a great deal about the perception of



archival enterprise in society at large and formulated insights into, if not solutions for problems that are of a nature that cannot be tackled effectively by practitioners who lack time to carry out the necessary research.

In summary, the backbone of education for careers in archival enterprise in the United States in 2008 is approximately a dozen universities as mine that offer a breadth and depth of courses built within the context of the Guidelines for Graduate Archival Education. These university programs incorporate specific archival topics and related subjects sufficient for students to earn master's and doctoral degrees. The master's degree prepares the graduate for a career working in an archival repository. The doctorate, a research degree, prepares the graduate for a career teaching archival enterprise, or further prepares the graduate for working in an archival repository, especially one on a university campus.

In 2008, the archival education establishment in the United States is graduating archivists in numbers sufficient to meet the demand of archival repositories. But all is not well. The dark cloud on our horizon is that too few individuals are seeking doctoral degrees so as to position themselves to teach archival enterprise. Most who are pursuing the doctorate want to work in archival repositories. Universities as mine will not hire a person without a

doctoral degree for a fulltime faculty position. Consequently, as the first generation of archival educators is retiring, the profession is lacking men and women positioned to replace us. The effect on archival enterprise in the United States will be dire if, now that the entry to archival careers is through graduate education, we end up with an insufficiency of archival educators to prepare the next generation of archivists.

#### GREAT ISSUES OF THE ARCHIVAL SERVICE TO SOCIETY

Archival education programs as yours and mine must prepare graduates not just to perform the basic archival functions, but more importantly to confront the great issues of and challenges to the archival service to society. Mastering all of the facets of the electronic document from creating systems for securing it to maintaining its integrity and accessibility many consider to be the principal challenge of the present generation. As critical as is developing strategies and technical capabilities for ensuring capture and preservation of the archival portion of all the documents in electronic form, three matters of policy that have challenged archivists and society at large since long before electronic records became a reality are greater, in my

opinion, because we can expect to continue to face them for as long as archives and democratic societies last.

#### 1. ASSIGNING THE POWER TO DEFINE “THE RECORD”

For administrative archivists—those working in archival repositories the purpose of which is to manage the records of the parent organization of the archives—being able to designate any document or body of documents as having archival value is fundamental. In all too many situations this power is reserved to higher authorities.

Several elements are essential to defining what is and what is not a record appropriate for archival preservation. These include: the form and medium of the item (for example, maps, minutes, correspondence, and the like), the action in which the material was created (in the conduct of the business of the organization), the agent (who created it), the purpose for which it was created (to carry out the organization’s or person’s business), and the final authority (in the hands of what individual or group the final decision rests).

Experience has shown that the higher authorities rarely come to the work with the neutrality that is a central component of the ethics of the archivist. If we do not attend more effectively to this matter, the archival

record that our generation leaves may be more voluminous but less honest than that left to us.

## 2. DETERMINING THE DOCUMENTATION APPROPRIATE FOR ARCHIVAL PRESERVATION

Many argue with good reason that through the work of appraisal and selection for archival preservation archivists have their greatest effect on society. Appraisal is the activity of determining what portions of the entire documentary record of civilization have enduring value and are appropriate for preserving for use in archival repositories. Whatever archivists do not select will never be available. Recognizing that we have no crystal ball telling us which portions of the documentary record will be useful into the future, in the best of all worlds, archivists would exert as light a touch as possible in making such life or death decisions. But the quantity of records created in the twentieth century and continuing to be created, matched with inadequate space in which to store the records and staff to manage them (as well as to ensure their integrity), have forced the need for selection. That being true, archivists have sought to structure their conduct of appraisal in as formulaic a manner as possible in order to minimize the likelihood of personal preference pressuring professional judgment. For a century, ever

since the volume of records produced in conducting the affairs of governments, businesses, and then individuals vaulted into the hundreds of thousands, then millions of cubic feet per year, archival theorists have proposed methodologies for identifying the archival wheat among the records chaff. Theories have ranged from eliminating nothing other than duplicates to selecting records wholesale without ever inspecting them, but based entirely on the role in affairs played by the office that created them.

I venture to say that no perfect solution appropriate in all instances exists. That said, the search for more refined methodologies continues, as it should, to illuminate our way in making the choices we have to make both because space and resources are insufficient to house the entire volume, and because experience has demonstrated beyond question that only a small portion of the entire volume ever is consulted again after it has fulfilled the purpose for which it was created. Advancing our thinking on appraisal is critical to society and demands the best archival minds we can focus on it.

### 3. BALANCING THE ADMINISTRATIVE MISSION AND THE CULTURAL MISSION OF ARCHIVES

In the West, ever since the French Revolution introduced the concept of historical archives, as distinguished from administrative archives (records that

are fulfilling the purpose for which they were created), and in the United States ever since historians in the late nineteenth century began calling attention to the poor record-keeping practices of governments, a tension has existed in regard to the purpose for having archives at all. Those who argue that the reason for keeping any archives is to be able to research and write history in any and all of its forms, including genealogical study (which brings more users to American government archives than any other pursuit)—those who argue this are defending the cultural basis for keeping archives. That was the basis on which the value of the Texas State Archives was argued when I first went to work there in 1959.

In 2008, by contrast, the primary rationale archivists advance for keeping archives is the administrative one—that archives are evidence of actions and events essential to the functioning of governments, businesses, and individuals. Proponents of this rationale say that no one comes to archives simply to see something old. They come for information important in their lives at that moment—for information that will meet a need they have for managing some matter important in their lives. The date of the events in which the information was recorded is simply one element of the information. How fundamentally this tension can affect the provision of the archival

service to society is amply evident in the four cases that have occurred during the period of my career in which governors of four different American states—Colorado, Florida, Maine, and West Virginia—recommended in all seriousness eliminating the state archives because it was a cultural, rather than an administrative service of government. In strained economic times, the governors argued, the state could not afford the virtuous, but nonessential cultural expense.

## CONCLUSION

From whatever perspective one considers society and the role of records and archives in the existence and progress of society, one sees both how fundamental records and archives are to who we human beings are and how absolutely exciting the present moment is in which to be an archivist. Look at the history of archival enterprise, in Japan or the United States or more broadly throughout the world. Look at developments in the technology of record creation, keeping and use, most especially the advent of the totally new kind of record—the electronic record—which allows us to capture and utilize information as never before. Look at the issues facing society in

documenting the activities, rights, privileges, and even just the legal being of individuals.

In all of these, one finds that the time in which we live, without question, has greater need of the insights and expertise of the archivist than any other time in history. The need is not just to figure out how to fit greater volumes of records into ever more crowded repositories, hardcopy or digital, or how to manage the records more securely. The need is to utilize the perspective of the archivist toward solving the major problems of our age, because all of the problems—I repeat, all of the problems—have roots, explanations, and insights into their solutions documented somewhere in archives. Archives are the tangible remains of experience accumulated over generations. Building on and profiting from human experience is the foundation of civilization. Consequently, making the greatest use of the dynamic and innovative management of records information is essential to bettering society for the benefit of us all.

I envy budding archivists everywhere. They—you!—cannot help but get out of bed early to go about the work of delivering the archival service to society. The changes they will see, the contributions they will make, the careers they will have are exciting to imagine. The times now and to come



clearly are the most exhilarating ever in which to be an archivist. Society needs the best minds available to manage its irreplaceable and increasingly fragile archival resources. These are the reasons that the archival education program you are opening this year ranks among the most important contributions Gakushuin University can make—make not just to betterment of the practice of archival enterprise, but more importantly, to enhancement of life and work in Japan, and to strengthening of the human condition wherever your graduates go.

Domo Arigatoh Gozai-mashita!