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## ArchiNews / ArchiNouvelles

### Carberry Plains Archives



Photo by Penny Shaw

#### Storage Area – Carberry Plains Archives

On April 14, 1988, a forward-thinking group of Councilors of the town of Carberry and the Rural Municipality of North Cypress passed By-Law 2064 to create the Carberry Plains Archives, complete with its own Board of Directors and the power to hire their own staff and conduct their own business. Carberry Plains Archives thus became, along with the Boissevain Archives, one of the two oldest rural archives in Manitoba.

The need for an archives arose from the successful operation of the Carberry Plains Museum, which had been established in 1974. Over the years, the Museum had frequently received donations of articles which didn't really fit its criteria, but which were more truly items of an archival collection. As the accumulation of records grew, it was apparent that such valuable material must not be lost, and equally apparent that the museum was simply not equipped to care for it properly. The need for a true archives became imperative, and the Museum Board conveyed this need to the local councilors of the town and RM.

Establishment of the Archives was not easy, and could not have been accomplished without the forethought of the Town and RM's councilors, the labour of dedicated volunteers and the help of Diane Haglund of the AMA.

Useful grants and information flowed into the archives. Once the Archives became solidly established, Gail Wiebe, one of the hardworking volunteers, became its first paid Archivist. Gail oversaw the uploading of all of the Archives fonds to the CAIN network (making Carberry's Archives one of the first rural archives to do so), and retired in 2004 after sixteen years of meticulous work..

The stated mandate of the Carberry Plains Archives is "to acquire, preserve and document archival material which illustrates the growth and development of the Town of Carberry and the Rural Municipality of North Cypress both before and after incorporation or the immediate surrounding areas relating to the above." The collections of the Archives provide a vivid picture of the growth, development and activities of the people of the area.

Since 1988, the Carberry Plains Archives has been a busy place. To date, their accessions number close to 1200, and our citizens are active in bringing material for safekeeping in "their" archives. The Archives has been involved in many community activities, including collecting and documenting all of the photographs of the local newspaper, staging a Strawberry Social, and a Memories Fashion Show, helping families write their family histories for the Town and RM's 125<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration History Book, and most recently, helping to research the approximately twenty-nine heritage buildings which comprise the Town of Carberry's proposed Main Street Heritage Conservation District. The Archivist also writes an occasional column on timely topics or interesting archival features for the local newspaper.

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#### Mark your calendar!

**Sept. 28<sup>th</sup> 2006 AMA general meeting**

**Sept. 29<sup>th</sup> 2006 Made in Manitoba conference**

## Chair's message to AMA members

One of the important mandates of a professional association is to offer and/or foster professional development or continuing education. The AMA has over the years been very active in this field, offering courses, workshops, seminars and granting funds for travelling expenses related to professional development. Another important activity has been to recognize the achievements of students completing their Masters in Archival Studies at the University of Manitoba. This has been done by offering an award to a graduating student who was judged to have written the best thesis in a given year or, for the past two years, to students obtaining a 'pass with distinction' grade upon defending their thesis. At a meeting of some board members with Dr. Thomas Nesmith, consideration was given to establishing another form of recognition which would celebrate all graduates of the University of Manitoba Masters' programme. This suggestion will be further debated at committee meetings and the next board meeting.

Archival funding from any source, be it public, foundation grants, fee for service or others, is still very much a pressing concern. When one considers that less than 0.5% of the provincial budget targets the heritage sector, one need not ask how much archives receive in public funding in Manitoba. Definite progress needs to occur on this front if the association and institutions are to thrive in the future. If archives are the collective memory, what is the difference between the lack of public funding for archives and a lobotomy? Much is asked of

archival institutions, such as putting up exhibits, facilitating access and increasing statistics, producing school curriculum kits, etc. Given the public funding awarded to archives, it is tantamount to ask archives to volunteer their resources. In effect, with one of the smallest portions of public funding, producing education kits is to some extent asking archives to help fund education (and education receives a significant percentage of public funding). In an era of better business practices, archives cannot continue to operate this way. How can one not understand archival expectations for increased revenues? If this increase in revenues does not come from public sources, it will have to come from somewhere else or archives will close and archives will be lost for future generations. This is a societal problem. If society as a whole does not perceive the archival functions as important to its development, no additional income will be forthcoming, be it from public sources, foundations, users or others. This remains an important challenge for the AMA and the issue will be on the agenda at the next meeting planned with representatives of the Department of Culture, Heritage and Tourism.

With this issue, I wish all and every member of the association a very good summer.

Gilles Lesage

### **The Committee on Archives and History of The United Church of Canada recently published *Archives & Recordkeeping: A How-to Guide for Congregations and Conferences.***

The Guide includes chapters on creating good records, maintaining records, developing a file classification plan, guidelines for closing and amalgamating congregations, privacy legislation, electronic records and historic sites and artifacts. The Guide is available for a cost of \$8.00 plus postage and handling from United Church Resource Distribution at [ucrd@united-church.ca](mailto:ucrd@united-church.ca) or by contacting the Conference of Manitoba & Northwestern Ontario/All Native Circle Conference Archives at [d.haglund@uwinnipeg.ca](mailto:d.haglund@uwinnipeg.ca)

The Guide is intended as a core tool. More detail and additional regional samples are available online at [www.united-church.ca/archives](http://www.united-church.ca/archives)

The Committee on Archives and History is accountable to the General Council for the coordination and promotion of archival and historical activity in and for The United Church of Canada and all its Conferences and for policies affecting the same. It encourages the return of United Church records held by non-church repositories to United Church Archives and educates others about the importance of the Church retaining its own record.

Comprised of 11 archival repositories located across the country, The United Church of Canada Archives Network collectively forms Canada's largest religious archives.

*Carberry Plains Archives continued*

The importance of a rural archives in preserving the history and memories of the people in its geographical area cannot be overemphasized. In Carberry, the citizens are aware of the Archives' presence in the basement of the library, and willingly donate their valued family documents to be preserved within their own community. As one donor put it recently: "I like to know they'll be close to home."

The Carberry Plains Archives is open Wednesday and Thursday afternoons, from 1 to 5 pm.



Photo by Penny Shaw

**Public Reading room**

### IOC Web Project

Information and Outreach Committee (IOC) is in the process of producing a virtual and physical exhibit to showcase Archives in Manitoba. As we all have encountered, there are still people who do not know what archives are or what an archivist is. The exhibit will help educate the general public about archives. The archival community in Manitoba might be small but we are **STRONG!**

This Fall, all institutional archives will be mailed a survey asking general information about their archives: name, type of archives, location, contact information, points of interest/thematic areas you want to showcase, and a brief history. We will also be looking for photos that best represent your archives.

Carole Pelchat  
Chair IOC

## European Conference on Archives

From May 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup>, 550 delegates attended the European conference on Archives in Warsaw, Poland. As the Secretary General of the Bureau of Canadian Archivists, I had the privilege to attend this conference, as I was in Warsaw for a meeting of the International Council on Archives' steering committee of the Section on Professional Associations (SPA). The European conference only meets once every four years, so this indeed was a rare privilege to be able to attend. The theme of the conference was "Archivist: Profession of the Future in Europe." An interesting opening remark was: "if the archivist did not exist, it would have to be invented." While remarkably there was still the odd archivist arguing over whether archival science was a true science or not (does it really matter when there are hundreds of thousands of professionals around the world studying and performing archival duties?), for the most part discussion centered around competencies, accreditation and certification.

While in general it would seem that because of the wide range of dissimilar educational offerings in Europe and the opportunities for archivists to work in other countries because of the European Union, there is a greater need to establish common competencies. This is a growing trend around the world. In our SPA meetings, the steering committee determined that it is interested in developing a competency model for the international community to employ as it needs. I brought up Canada's ALARM report on competencies for librarians, archivists and records managers.

The issue of accreditation of schools which provide archival education is currently being studied here in Canada, so this too was a topical issue for me. And finally, although certification has not been popular in Canada because of the strength and relative homogeneity of our educational programs, certification is really a tool to ensure that educated archivists maintain their professional status by being involved in the archival community, by participating on committees, attending conferences, writing articles and books, speaking at events, and so on. Certification is not for entry-level archivists with differing backgrounds to enter the profession as, if we followed the American model presented by the Academy of Certified Archivists, certification is achieved once one has obtained a degree and a certain number of years of experience.

The conclusion of the conference was that competencies, accreditation and certification were all important components of the further professionalization of the archival field. All in all, this conference was very stimulating and timely.

Shelley Sweeney,  
Secretary General,  
Bureau of Canadian Archivists

## Electronic Records Workshop

On February 20, 2006 the Archives Association of British Columbia hosted the workshop "Managing Electronic Records in an Archives: A Hands-on Approach" presented by Jim Suderman, Coordinator of the Electronic Records Program at the Archives of Ontario (AO). Jim's work at the AO has focused on integrating the electronic medium into the existing policies and procedures of that institution. Jim is also a member of the research team of the InterPARES 2 Project. Jim began with a succinct assessment of the circumstances for most archives – that we do not have the luxury of fully staffed IT departments with the resources to devote to research and development of systems and processes to deal with electronic records. For all of us who find ourselves in this crowded boat he passed on a piece of advice from Doug Taylor Monroe, author of *Machine Readable Archives: 2 Steps* "...get a computer, get some data..." - in other words, jump in and start swimming.

"Managing Electronic Records" moved away from a preoccupation with technological issues towards creating awareness among participants that solutions to the problem of electronic records in archives are institution specific. Each archives, whether large or small and regardless of their collecting mandate must identify their own concerns around electronic records. Dealing with these materials in an effective way requires thinking about the big questions of archival management - an examination of what we are keeping and why. These are questions that apply regardless of whether we are acquiring electronic or paper records.

By way of introduction to the topic, Jim described two of the best known strategies for dealing with electronic records in archives. 'Encapsulation' is the method used by Australia's State of Victoria Archives. It requires the 'encapsulation' of the document, the context and the authentication/metadata in one object/record at the time of creation. This approach requires a tight integration between the creator and the archivist and a records management system that is more controlled than most of us are able or willing to entertain.

The 'Normalisation' strategy, such as that employed by the National Archives of Australia, involves the migration of all records to a non-proprietary preservation format. The XENA format (yes...as in Warrior Princess) was created by the NAA so that they would not be reliant on any commercial software platform.

Workshop participants didn't need Jim to point out that both of these strategies require huge inputs of manpower and resources that are beyond the pale for most archives. The high costs associated with these strategies have fuelled the search for an alternative such as an

Open Archival Information System similar to the philosophy behind Open Office ([www.openoffice.org/](http://www.openoffice.org/)), an open source suite of office software that will open in most applications.

Jim made a strong case, if one still needed to be made, for the archivist to be consulted in the management of the record throughout its entire life cycle. Among other things this may help to insure the record survives to come into the archives – by no means a certain thing. The recognition of the archives as a stakeholder in the records creation process can only lower processing costs later on. However, it requires that archivists be more proactive in the appraisal process and that appraisal be applied earlier in the life cycle of the record; an idea that not everyone is comfortable with.

The workshop title promised a 'hands-on approach' and Jim came through with some practical suggestions for applying archival practises to dealing with electronic records. In choosing a strategy for our own archives, it is important to keep in mind the same considerations which are applied to all records – Appraisal criteria, issues for Acquisition and Transfer, factors affecting Arrangement and Description, Preservation concerns, and providing Access – while adapting them for materials created electronically.

Jim ended his presentation with an outline for creating policies and procedures which incorporated the foregoing considerations. A lot of information was packed into a one day workshop, but, true to his promise Jim provided the attendees with some practical tools to jump into electronic records and start swimming.

Linda White

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