

## *Archival Excursions*

by GORDON DODDS

**The Archival Imagination: Essays in Honour of Hugh A. Taylor.** BARBARA CRAIG, ed. Ottawa: Association of Canadian Archivists, 1992. 263 p. ISBN 1-895382-06-8.

Barbara Craig has fashioned a crisp, heels-together salute to Hugh Taylor. *The Archival Imagination* is handsomely typeset and wrapped in a designer jacket strewn with recording symbols and, incongruously, displaying two male images. Each of its contributors was invited to prepare an essay on a topic of her or his own choosing. Although, as the editor readily admits, the eleven essays are “eclectic in subject and style,” they are not of course untypical of this type of *festschrift*. The editor has foresworn an extended assessment of the place of Hugh Taylor in the world of archives, rather allowing his influence to become apparent through allusion and citation, and relying on a “common themes” overview of his published writings prepared by James Burrows and Mary Ann Pylpchuk.

Hugh Taylor spent fourteen years in England as an archivist in three local governments — the cities of Leeds and Liverpool, and county of his native Northumberland — and at the University of Newcastle-upon-Tyne. In 1965 he arrived in Alberta as that province’s first Provincial Archivist. During the following twenty-seven years — throughout two more Provincial Archivist positions in New Brunswick (1967-1971) and Nova Scotia (1978-1982), and intervening directorship of the Archives Branch at the then Public Archives of Canada, and afterwards in a retirement of sorts — Hugh Taylor’s distinctive voice has engaged and stimulated those who cared to listen. His powers of observation remain unabated, as those attending the millennial visionary sessions at the Society of American Archivists 1992 Annual Conference can testify. Barbara Craig and Terry Cook, no mean archival scholars themselves, have rightly drawn regular attention to the luminous and imaginative quality of Hugh Taylor’s thought and prose.

*The Archival Imagination* is a tangible expression of his colleagues’ acknowledgement of the impact of his ideas and interests on their work. In some respects, an edited selection of Hugh Taylor’s own writing preceded by an evaluative introduction would have more appropriately conveyed the dimensions of his thought, the sources of his inspiration, and the fecundity of his imagination. The vocabulary and phrasing of a Taylor article in full flight, on a dose (say) of Barrington Nevitt, is a cerebral delight, to be savoured

a dozen times over an earnest pedantic analysis. Though the connections between one line of thinking and another might sometimes over-exercise the imagination, it is precisely this ability to look forward, to suggest linkages and relationships, to draw on the thought of others, which has fuelled the beacon of archival light in Canada that is associated with Hugh Taylor. One does not have to agree with Hugh Taylor, or elevate him to the status of guru, but one ignores the phenomenon at some peril. He has demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt, during a rich career, that he deserves to be heard.

What then has been served in honour of this man? If we bear in mind “information ecology,” “paper archaeology,” “sea changes,” “dust to ashes,” “cloistered archivists,” “transformation of the archivist,” “media of the record,” “totemic universe,” “the conjuring text,” “Clio in the raw” and a myriad of other Taylorisms, we would anticipate perhaps one or two animated, radical, futurist pieces. What could be achieved by mass conversion of archival holdings to compact storage and retrieval formats? Should archival space become principally electronic? How feasible is David Bearman’s advice to archivists to give up custody and go for control? Will archival resources become interactive? What will be the impact of digital imaging manipulation on archival photographs? Is archival conservation effective? Can archives find enough resources to survive? What is beyond the “archival edge”? For the most part, however, this hypothetical element is missing from the volume and that is a pity. While almost all of the essays are pretty well-written and thoughtful excursions into archival endeavour, and by no means to be ignored, they do not quite have that sparkle and rich allusion which would justify the book’s corporate title. Only two of the contributions, both on appraisal as it happens — one by Terry Eastwood, the other by Terry Cook — come close to catching what Cook has fittingly staked out as “mind over matter” — an explicit intellectual fuel driving the archives machine.

One essay nevertheless verges on the apocalyptic. This is the offering from Frank Burke, which speculates on an upcoming, if not already present, “archival chaos” wrought by a non-hierarchical, idiosyncratic flow of information. First, Burke provides a succinct review of how information has been historically communicated — visual (semaphoric) to acoustic (Morse’s telegraphic “clicks,” the telephone, the dictaphone) to digital (the electric impulse of the computer). Using JoAnne Yates’s illuminating study, *Control Through Communication: The Rise of System in American Management*, Burke describes how technological progress after 1850 fashioned the business office environment and created work practices which were essentially hierarchical. Then, turning to Alvin Toffler’s *Powershift*, he shows how the computer is disrupting “the traditional channels of information and the chain of command.” He continues, “Those who do not have access to the latest information are bypassed by those who want it.” Finally, he looks at the impact this has had on storage and retrieval of information. In light of the breakdown of nineteenth-century bureaucratic structure and the fracturing of traditional channels for managing the creation and flow of records, Burke opines that records management “as we know it ... is losing its operatives, and therefore its viability.” Archivists are no better off because, despite the 1980s urgings of Ham, Taylor and Kesner to get out at the front of the information-creating process, most are unsure as to how to do this and are usually unable in the customary “acquisition” mind-set physically to preserve the electronic record in any case. There, as it were, Frank Burke leaves us in apparent dismay — “the era of Jenkinson, Schellenberg, Posner, Holmes, Norton, Jones, Peder-son, Maedke, Robek, and Brown rapidly drawing to a close.” His phoenix rising from

these ashes is a new breed of archivist drawn from pre-appointment graduate programmes sensitive to the evolving processes of communication. Of David Bearman, Charles Dollar, Margaret Hedstrom, John McDonald and others who have already articulated a less desperate but more demanding future — not a word.

Tom Nesmith knows about the new archivist whom he wants to see, if not the new records manager. From a mid-1980s Canadian debate about the supremacy of history as a discipline for archival scholarship, Nesmith sensibly developed the archivist as historian of the record and records-keeping. He emphasized the need to understand why and how information has been recorded and to apply this understanding of context to appraisal and to description. Now, as a teacher of archivists in the new archival studies programme at the University of Manitoba, Nesmith has established a major course examining the nature of communication and the resultant formation of records. In an analysis of what he calls “Hugh Taylor’s Contextual Idea for Archives” (perhaps a trifle proprietorially, though Taylor certainly gave published articulation to the concept), Nesmith explains how the history of records communication course “explores the relationships between societal conditions, changes in the means of recorded communication, and developments in public and private institutions that have affected information gathering and record-keeping.”

Nesmith, following in the wake of Terry Cook, also gives special rein to the study of intellectual history. He observes most properly that “philosophical ideas, disciplines, and popular attitudes shape profoundly the functions performed by individuals and institutions, and the function, form, and content of the records they create.” Thus, the archivist must understand what has influenced the context of records-keeping in a given societal jurisdiction. It is impossible to do anything but agree with Nesmith, since it is difficult to see how archival functions can be successfully carried out unless the archivist is knowledgeable about the records-creating environment in its broadest sense. Hugh Taylor’s now famous series of lectures on “Society and the Documentary Record,” given in 1986 to students in the University of British Columbia’s MAS programme, vividly reflect this developing trend, at least in archival teaching. Naturally enough, two years of this sort of graduate thinking precludes the old professional school approach where students were instructed in how to undertake tasks on the job rather than confront theoretical issues. Though Nesmith seems a mite uncertain about delivering an exclusive curriculum, from which much “technical” and “practical” training detail is deliberately omitted, he makes a pretty solid case for graduating people who can think on their feet. Nonetheless, what is still needed in Canadian archival education is something of the hard-headed, risk-taking initiative with which William Cameron rattled library education from his University of Western Ontario base in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Frank Burke’s observations on the communications phenomenon in American business offices, and Tom Nesmith’s advocacy for teaching the context of records creation, are both mirrored in a meticulously researched piece by Barbara Craig on the arrival of copying machines in the British Civil Service. Craig looks at the first signs of technology “docking” (her term) with records and communications. Characteristically, she makes no daring leaps or extravagant assertions, but writes as a historian investigating the evidence of the record within a precise period (1877-1889). Her findings that the letterpress, stencil duplicators, and the typewriter had a particular impact on records-making and keeping, especially in large bureaucracies, are not surprising. But this is not Craig’s purpose. What she does is to explore the process of mechanization and to

determine precisely what caused people, machines and methods to interact in the business of gathering, recording, distributing and using information in the offices of national government. Ironically, in nice juxtaposition to Frank Burke's cry that records management is dead in the 1990s, she shows why the management of records and the determinant of archives administration became compelling 100 years ago: "Officials were worried also about the capacity of offices to accommodate conveniently the fast-growing accumulation of newly created records. The concerns for fragility, for volume and for information combined to foster a new sense of awareness of the necessity to identify what was needed for the future to ensure that it would survive, and of equal importance, to ensure that regular weeding and destruction took place so that offices were not swamped by records."

Barbara Craig's work is an exemplar for the "new" archivist conceived by Burke and Nesmith, because she adheres to the principle — expressed eloquently on a number of recent occasions — that the record is everything. Understand why the record is what it is and you have investigated the society which it reflects, the way in which it was made, and the function which it performed. For Craig this is no antiquarian, back-room pursuit, and is as relevant in today's "wired world" as it was in the relatively Dickensian offices of Victorian London. This is the stuff of archival research, identified by Tom Nesmith in his "historian of the record" characterization of the archivist. For Hugh Taylor, it will conjure memories of what might today be called the "archival praxis" — the blend of knowing and doing which is quintessential Taylor — and remind him of the splendid exhibitions of this happy state which he mounted in the "ops. room" of the Northumberland County Archives in Melton Park almost thirty years ago.

Nearly 300 miles to the south, in London, the Public Record Office of England (PRO) is the subject of Michael Roper's doffing of the cap to Hugh Taylor. Roper wryly sketches the ups and downs of records arrangement and description at the PRO since it was established in 1838. He modestly concludes that the on-line Public Record Office *Current Guide* represents a marriage of convenience between intellectual and physical discrepancies which have plagued the Office over the years. To a degree, the principles of provenance and respect for original order have been resolved in a pragmatic way, even though the PRO was not able to follow the Australian practice of committing radical surgery on record groups in favour of series — an excision already undertaken some years ago in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba and soon to be embraced by the National Archives of Canada. Michael Roper's succinct description of how this came about through layer of starts and false-starts — some inherited from subject classification schemes started in previous records repositories before the PRO began in the days of Francis Palgrave, others engaged along with massive accretions of records from government departments — makes entertaining and instructive reading. For those of us who are borne too far aloft on flights of imagination or who lose sense of purpose amid the intricacies of self-imposed rules of practice, Sir Hilary Jenkinson's phlegmatic utterance in the 1949 *Guide to the Public Records* bears more than a moment's reflection: "for, being *ex hypothesi* natural accumulations, [archives] will, if left in or restored to their natural order, supply themselves an arrangement which will be incomparably better than anything that could be artificially devised."

A brand of Canadian archival history is offered by Carman Carroll, Hugh Taylor's successor-but-one in his last appointment in Nova Scotia and a former colleague at the then Public Archives of Canada. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia can claim the

distinction of having Canada's first (and perhaps only) Commissioner of Public Records, Thomas Beamish Akins in 1857, and certainly the nation's first archival legislation in 1861. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia nevertheless did not open its doors until 1931, following passage of a refreshed *Archives Act* in 1929 and after a period of now notorious turmoil involving the Public Archives of Canada. In his straightforward way, Carroll briskly chronicles and explains how Canada's first custom-designed provincial archives building (another Nova Scotian first) came to pass on the Dalhousie University campus. He retells the "thievery" stories of the Dominion Archivist (the ever-redoubtable Doughty) and his Maritime agent (the ever-assiduous Milner) with some relish, but shows equally how their interference, along with the urgings of the Nova Scotia Historical Society and Harry Piers, Deputy Keeper of the Public Records from 1899 to 1931, fomented public interest in an archives for Nova Scotia. The Archives building came about with the aid of the premier, the president of Dalhousie University and a wealthy Annapolis Valley "apple baron," William Chase, who wrote the cheque.

Carroll points out that the provincial archives was seen as an educational and research coup for Dalhousie University, and was deliberately set up by Premier E.N. Rhodes to operate outside the provincial government and be independent of political intrusion. The new Archivist, Professor Daniel Cobb Harvey, was a University of British Columbia historian and it was he who adroitly dubbed his charge a "historical laboratory" for Nova Scotia. Carroll observes that "Harvey was a suitable choice as he was respected in the historical community, knew the area well, and fit the mould which the board apparently wanted — an academic, of medium age, a male, with administrative experience and able to teach at the university level." The legacy of his outlook has been double-edged. The reputation of PANS as a haven for researchers of all kinds is legion, and many an archivist might envy an arm's-length existence from the entanglements of government process; being adjacent to government, however, has made both instigation of and integration with modern records and information management difficult. Fifty years later, the Public Archives moved off-campus under Hugh Taylor's guidance to an attractive custom-designed brick building on University Avenue, Halifax. Sixty years later, without relinquishing its relative fiscal and administrative independence, the Archives has moved programmatically closer once more to the source of its public records. It deserves mention that Carroll's article was originally presented as a paper to the Royal Nova Scotia Historical Society, the president of which has always been an *ex officio* member of the Board of Trustees of PANS.

Influencing the creation or re-engineering of a building for archives, notwithstanding the attractions and sensibility of David Bearman's anti-custodial advocacy for tomorrow's (more accurately, today's) archives, has to be one of the private delights of an archivist. The last decade has seen a number of large and small efforts across the country in almost every province. Even the National Archives looks as if it will secure something more appropriate than its twenty-five-year condominium with the National Library. The Public Archives of Nova Scotia building under Hugh Taylor was one of the first large new designs in 1980, but Shirley Spragge's essay "Old Wine in Old Bottles" will remind him of the community flavour he discovered in Nova Scotia and the sense of owned heritage which archives can engender. Spragge recalls how Hugh Taylor's leadership derived from his experience (especially in northern England) of "the reality of the day-to-day care of the records — the chain that links one generation and one age to another." The records of the Anglican Diocese of Ontario, reaching back to the 1780s

before the earliest days of Upper Canada, were kept in the Anglican Cathedral before being moved to the Synod office when the diocese was formed in 1862. Shirley Spragge describes how after 1966, an Italianate limestone villa was overhauled to produce a Diocesan Centre and hold the Diocesan records. They were in deteriorating physical condition and might have been further abandoned or passed to the care of an existing archives for preservation. Instead, the church decided to look after its own and Spragge pays testimony to the "willingness of the church community not only to provide quarters that ensured the safety of their records but made public access to them possible and pleasurable." The story is a warm and comforting one, and not infrequently repeated in the archives firmament, though whether it makes long-term economic sense is debatable. Shirley Spragge would no doubt argue this was not her point.

The symbolic significance to its community of the Anglican Diocesan Archives accommodation in Ontario is self-evident. Anne MacDermaid, on the other hand, turns her attention to a somewhat less obvious consideration — "the symbolic value of a document, which reinforces individual, community, or cultural identity." Her argument seems to be that archives are not necessarily keeping what she calls "the right kind" of records. On one hand, MacDermaid speculates on the reasons behind the furore in the Ontario heritage community over the destruction of original land instruments when the information they contained was already available through microfilm duplication and transcription. She attributes the consternation at least partly to uncertainties spurred by the rapidity of social change and its assault on individual "rootedness" and "identity." The land records are put forward as evidence of symbolic attachment. On the other hand, she suggests that "the long aisles of records series" in archives may be repetitious and less redolent of "essential messages already publicly known." She advocates more stringent sampling, ostensibly to make room for records of "aboriginal peoples, of immigrants, of women, and of others whose causes have not generally been a topic of sustained concern in cultural institutions." It is difficult to grasp MacDermaid's contention. Is she saying that some documents have symbolic (almost artefactual) significance? Few would disagree. Is she saying that more of these documents should be kept at the expense of other documents which happen to be more bulky? The comparison is surely one of eggs and apples. Both have value but they are not the same. Surely the issue here is one of appraisal — making decisions about the kind of records to be acquired which reflect the society, or part of society, for which the archives in question has a mandated responsibility. If the institution's existence has to do purely with collecting along subject rather than archival lines, then perhaps a documentation strategy of the Helen Samuels's variety would be a profitable construction, into which might fall the records of "forgotten or neglected societal groups, sections, and types." It does seem doubtful that symbolism *per se* would form a significant element of such a strategy.

Having advanced the notion that documents may bear information of symbolic value over and beyond the information they were created to record, Anne MacDermaid launches into a contrast between "a comfortable world of archivist-assisted research" (one-on-one with researchers, printing records of "a personal nature") and an electronic one bereft of "consanguinity." Her point is that archivists preparing the means of conveying information about documents should use modern information technology to encode contextual data for descriptive formats. If this is a reinforcement of the centrality of context in archival operations, well and good. Yet it is not a revelation, and its relationship to the symbolic significance of documents seems forced. This essay,

entitled invitingly “The Essence of Archival Communication,” ends up being curiously opaque and distinctly uncommunicative.

One of the most enduring of Hugh Taylor’s reflections is his urging archivists to consider the cultural context which gives rise to the creation of records. By understanding and recognizing the forces and concepts which have given birth to societal functions, archivists make sense of the outpourings of records generated by these functions. In short, at a base of knowledge about the way in which the records of any given archival jurisdiction emerge, there lies the framework for erecting an appraisal policy. How, one might ask, could archivists do otherwise? What feasible alternatives could exist?

None of any significance, writes Terry Cook in a formidable statement on appraisal theory, probably the most thoroughgoing of any yet in print. Cook fairly demolishes appraisal practices in one fell swoop as he amplifies Taylor’s focus on the “forms and patterns of knowledge which may be the only way by which we will transcend the morass of information and data.” In his customary erudite, tightly argued style, Cook presents a model for conducting archival appraisal which asks not what documentation should be kept, but rather what should be documented. He perceives that much North American archival appraisal practice — one selfishly hopes not all! — is governed by what he calls a “value-through-use” approach. Cook explains the matter thus:

indigenous appraisal theory has rarely advanced beyond the “taxonomic” stage, that is to say, beyond a systematization of various “values” of records (such as evidential and informational, legal and fiscal, primary and secondary, etc.) and of various characteristics relating to records (their uniqueness, age, authenticity, manipulability, time span, extent, etc.). Within this “values” framework, archivists since Schellenberg have in effect appraised in a circular fashion: they have studied certain collections of records, determined that certain of the above types of values and characteristics were found in them, codified these as appraisal criteria.... Records which reflect these codified “values” are declared to be archival; those which do not are rejected as non-archival.

To explain “the relative failure of current appraisal theory” (practice?), Terry Cook draws on a contrast between Platonic philosophy (embraced by Taylor), which conceived of “a holistic universe uniting spirit and nature, mind, and matter,” and the rationalist, scientific method of Cartesian logic. He cites Michel Foucault’s analysis (in such works as *The Archaeology of Knowledge*) to show how concentration on organization and structure of information systems “devalues the other half of Descartes’s dichotomy: the mind before matter, the intelligence behind the fact, the function behind the structure.” Cook does not reject scientific method entirely, but insists that archivists fix their sights on the mind behind the record, rather than the reverse.

The careful progress of Cook’s argument demands sharp attention. Footnoted comments and additional references are abundant, so much so that the reader is tempted to put his essay down every few minutes to pursue a suggested line of thought more fully, especially when confronted with a thinker of the stature of American philosopher William Barrett. Nevertheless, in the middle portion, Cook develops his notion of “top-down” or macro-appraisal, drawing on European and particularly German perceptions of capturing the “image of society” through analysis of societal functions before appraisal is begun. He refers of course to Hans Booms’s remarkable 1972 article on “Society and the Formation of a Documentary Heritage,” as well as German colleague Siegfried

Buttner's innovative documentation strategy (giving credit for addressing non-governmental, or other than institutional archival jurisdictions).

In the final pages, we are presented with an actual appraisal model, based — it is fair to say — on Cook's familiarity with the Government of Canada but intended to be universally applicable. The detail is too precise to bear description in this review. Suffice to say that it involves the emergence of appraisal "hot-spots" as programme, agency and citizen interaction takes place. It is an overthrow of any approach to appraisal which focuses upon the document for its intrinsic or relative value and upon any attempt to keep records based on trendy or speculative research use. The theory behind the model is a fascinating fusion of Hugh Taylor's "my very act and deed" perception, which observes the "transactions and customs" to which records "bore witness as 'evidences,'" and the Cook-Buttner theory of "the Unesco RAMP study on the appraisal of personal information." However — one might respond to the model itself — there is no doubt that "Mind over Matter" puts the cat among the pigeons.

In a totally different kind of essay, ruminative and appropriately inconclusive, Terry Eastwood also takes up the subject of archival appraisal. He attempts to raise what he calls a "social theory" of appraisal in order to rescue archivists from their "quagmire of philosophical relativism." For Eastwood, archivists are "ineluctably contemporary actors in various realms of their own society," drawing on the widest possible knowledge of how that society works in carrying out their role as public memory-keepers and makers. He refers to Hugh Taylor's equation of the archivist with the "remembrances of preliterate society." Few would disagree — Eastwood is making a very general and easily recognizable statement about the purpose of archives in society. The issue, as Terry Cook has critically defined it, surely is how appraisal decisions are to be made so that archives are adequate public memory; to say "valuable" public memory conjures up all sorts of relative spectres.

Eastwood tackles this central aspect of the problem in a section of his essay entitled "Grounds for Appraisal." He dismisses the two traditional bases for appraisal customarily espoused by archivists: provenance-analysis — because it is insufficient of itself, calling rather for wider contexts and constructs; and pertinence-analysis — because it emphasizes the informational content of documents and detaches information from transaction. Appraisal is "an exercise without proper foundation" when it is merely a search for value standards. He afterwards concludes, somewhat alarmingly, since his thought and language appeared to be moving in a contradictory direction, that "appraisal is essentially predictive, a best guess at what will be valuable"; "the basis for evaluation is ultimately a consideration of use." Perhaps, nevertheless, Terry Eastwood's notion of use is closer to Terry Cook's "image of society" proposition than it may seem. While such an affinity is unclear, Eastwood does write very briefly of the appraisal of records (he frequently says "archives," which puzzles and misleads): "all along the continuum of their existence — an existence, after all, determined, continued, and terminated on the basis of usefulness," and in "the immediate social context of creation." An elaboration of the meaning of these statements would have been helpful, for ultimately all that Terry Eastwood really offers, despite the leisurely probing of the apparent intractability of archival appraisal, are tombstone inscriptions of dubious immortality: "So, of course, it is not easy to appraise," "appraisal ought not to be intuitive" and "appraisal is not necessarily biased, simply possibly so." In this piece on appraisal, the pigeons are still ascendant.

Cook and Eastwood are highlighted once again in Kent Haworth's call to professional arms. Haworth seizes on their 1985 exchange about the nature of "shadows in the Canadian archival *zeitgeist*" (as Cook entitled his reply to Eastwood), in which both worried about the "lack of clear thinking about archives and the principles which govern their management." The acknowledged subsequent benefits of the Canadian Archival System notwithstanding, Haworth makes an eloquent plea for "reclamation" of archival principles in "Articulating a Language of Purpose." He holds that the lengths to which archivists are urged to go in justifying their work, particularly in the kind of sloganizing and promotional energy advocated by David Gracy, for example, are often at the expense of developing a language of purpose. That purpose "involves thinking about the 'why' questions rather than the 'what' questions" — for instance, why society should support archives. Presumably the "why" question is at the very heart of the emergent graduate programmes in archives and a constant in every archival conference, where this paper's ringing tones would doubtless rally the troops. Haworth focuses on appraisal and description as the two processes which "distinguish the archivist from other related information-gathering professions," and urges the adoption of standards against which to measure activity in each. Inevitably, moreover, he warns archivists to attend to the impact of information technology on the creation and use of records in electronic form, and to adjust their language of purpose (and principles of practice) accordingly. In the long run, however, despite his nice distinction between justification and purpose, Kent Haworth is probably splitting hairs on this one.

A final word about Hugh Taylor, whose inimitable likeness is captured in a fine frontispiece photograph by Ed Dahl, comes from the review of his writings by James Burrows and Mary Ann Pylypchuk. Their essay, not an easy task, is a gem of sifting and compression. How Hugh Taylor will recognize himself or agree with their assessment, one wonders. The division of his thoughts into three categories of essential archival knowledge, archival administration, and archivist as "comprehensivist" (an ugly and not very meaningful label) was understandable, but the outcome is not wholly satisfactory. The effect is somewhat too categorical and misses the context of Hugh Taylor's views about archives through time, which doubtless involved people, places and events that had a bearing on their evolution. Nevertheless, the essential Taylor is there, speaking, as the reviewers put it, "more of galaxies, patterns, and far-ranging processes, than of columns and rows, causes, and effects."

### *Postscript*

Some thirty-two years ago, Hugh Taylor gave me my first summer job, indexing letters from a collection held by the library of the Society of Antiquaries of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, England. The days passed slowly in the quiet shadows of an upper floor of the Black Gate Museum, looking across from the military medieval to industrial surroundings of the city as I read through distinctly rural correspondence from central Northumberland. Towards the end of the job, Hugh Taylor asked me what I was planning to do after my history degree was through and whether I had ever thought of becoming an archivist. He talked of the University of Liverpool's graduate diploma in archives administration and showed me some of the work he was doing at the County Hall to bring some order to the "heap on the floor," as he would have called it later. I declined and went into teaching, thinking it to be more action-filled and satisfying.

What I clearly had not grasped in those days was the curiously absorbing attraction of the archival vocation. This was something which Hugh Taylor patently possessed then and which became increasingly obvious in subsequent years as I watched him work from time to time as County Archivist and talked with him on evening walks to the bus-stop. It was on one of these occasions that we mentioned that we were both leaving for western Canada in forthcoming months, he to become the first Provincial Archivist of Alberta, myself to Vancouver to teach. Our paths have crossed at various times since then, for various reasons. The excursions in archival practice and theory represented in *The Archival Imagination* is one reminder of what I should have forfeited had I not caught those unique vibrations of archives from Hugh Taylor so many years ago.