

YCA Newsletter

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The past six months have been exciting and challenging for me as president of YCA. Exciting because of the myriad of opportunities available for Yukon archivists to be a part of in the coming year. Challenging because there never seems to be enough hours in a day to accomplish one's professional and personal goals.

Congratulations to Ian Burnett who was chosen to represent YCA at the International Congress on Archives (ICA) in Beijing, China in September 1996. Five members submitted proposals to the YCA Board requesting to attend this international conference and because everyone had excellent proposals, all the names were put into a 'touque' and Ian's name was pulled out. The Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) will provide \$3500 towards the costs of the conference and I look forward to Ian telling us all about what he learned in China.

Clara Rutherford and Susan McClure were chosen to be YCA representatives at a "RAD Camp" to be held in Winnipeg in February 1996, sponsored by the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA). This will be an intensive 6½ day training session devoted to the study of RAD, its various chapters, its application, and a study of the many questions that have arisen since RAD's inception. Susan and Clara will become trainers in their own right and will offer training sessions in Yukon. ACA will cover all costs

for Clara to attend this session. Susan's airfare and registration fee will be funded by the CCA through its professional development and training program in cooperation with YCA.

Richard Valpy, Territorial Archivist of NWT, was in Whitehorse in early November to teach a two-day workshop entitled "An Introduction to Archives for First Nations". Twelve participants from eight First Nations attended and were introduced to archival theory and practice. I spoke to a few participants and they reported that they had enjoyed the workshop very much. One participant told me that it was a relief to discover that other First Nations were facing the same problems she was in deciding how to best preserve their archival records.

Donna McBee and Ian Burnett are in the process of planning a workshop entitled "The Fundamentals of Records Management Practice" which is slated to be held on February 2 & 3 in Whitehorse. Grant Mitchell, an archivist/records manager with the Insurance Corporation of B.C., will teach the two-day workshop. More information about this workshop has been mailed out.

The past six months have also been challenging ones due to the concern over the institutional membership changes brought about by the revisions to YCA's constitution at the June 1995 AGM. All institutional members have been notified of these changes by letter – please contact me if you have any questions about how to ensure your archives meets these new requirements.

A final note is to remind you to pencil in the dates of May 29 - June 1, 1996 for the upcoming annual conference of the Association of Canadian Archivists which will be held for the very first time in Whitehorse. Ian Burnett, Chair of the Local Arrangements Committee writes an article in this newsletter which includes more information about what is planned for the conference. The Ruperts Land Colloquium will also be holding their biannual conference in Whitehorse and will share a joint day of sessions with ACA.

Lesley Buchan

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In December, archivists' heads are filled with not only thoughts of Christmas dinners and, hopefully, holidays, but also with finding time to complete those all important grant applications. This issue contains

information on CCA grant requirements (below), a project profile (page 5) and a profile on Yukon's only freelance paper conservator (page 6). In addition, freelance archivist Jerilee Pitzel highlights the issues and challenges of managing electronic records (page 3) and proves that archivists are not all work and no play by providing yet another fun challenge (page 7). Frozen vehicles, oil tanks, and furnaces, along with grant writing and a NAAB appraisal, all contributed to delays in publishing the newsletter. My New Year's resolution is to write grant applications in the summer time.

The next issue of the YCA Newsletter will contain the results of the CCA adjudication of grants and provide us all with the program for the ACA Conference. 1996 promises to be a year of discovery for Yukon archivists as we exchange ideas with fellow archivists from Canada, US, and elsewhere in our own back yard.

Clara Rutherford
Editor, December Newsletter

GRANTS COMMITTEE NEWS: CANADIAN COUNCIL OF ARCHIVES (CCA) GRANTS

The 95/96 grant application forms have been mailed out with the gift of an example of a completed application form courtesy of CCA. The application deadline is January 12/96. This year, the Yukon Council of Archives has been allotted \$36,434 for the regular funding program (Control of Holdings, Professional Development and Training, Special Projects) and \$21,610 for the CPCAR funding program (Preservation Management Program). Emerging archives are encouraged to apply first under Control of Holdings to do program surveys.

The following is a brief summary of the new CCA requirements for the various programs:

- Applicant's contributions of staff time, or CCA funds requested for staff time, should be calculated using the wage rates for those who will be doing the work.
- Supervisory time to be spent on a project should be indicated.
- Supervisory time should not exceed 20% of the total

number of project days.

- Finding aids for textual records cannot provide access below the file level.
- If applicable, type and extent or percentage of restricted material and the period of restriction must be indicated.
- Applicant's contribution must not include purchase of equipment, including computers and software, with the exception of a dataloger.
- Backlog material must be more than five years old and must have been acquired at least three years before the application date.

Please note: as described in a letter (December 4, 1995) to each institutional member, documentation supporting that your repository is an archives as defined in YCA's 1995 constitution is required by April 1, 1996 in order to retain your institutional membership. Phone numbers indicating who to contact if you have any questions are included in that letter.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM TAMING THE BEAST: BASIC MANAGEMENT OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

Vancouver, 19 October 1995. Sponsored by UBC Continuing Education. Speakers: Jane Bellyk, Charles Dollar, and Terry Eastwood

The electronic records management seminar is now quickly becoming only a memory, but the issues and challenges which it addressed are here to stay. Here are a few which were raised:

- Are electronic records even records? Sometimes they are missing some of the necessary characteristics traditionally associated with records (such as an identifiable author or a signature. How do we sign a computer screen?)
- Are electronic records reliable? One can imagine so. Just as people were suspicious of the transition from oral to written records, there will likely come a time when we trust electronic records more than paper records.
- Are electronic records secure? There is certainly more room for loss of information or for corruptibility (intentional or accidental) than there is with paper.

- What do we do about hardware obsolescence? When the machines that read the records become unserviceable, the information on the discs will be lost. The National Archives of Canada's strategy to combat this is to employ "technological migration" whereby important records are constantly upgraded onto more modern machines.
- Unlike boxes of paper, computer discs are small and we may have room to keep all of them. Yet we do ourselves and our researchers no favour by saving too much information. Therefore, our appraisal and retention guidelines must be strict and respected.
- How do we accommodate the researcher interested in viewing these records? Must researchers be given computer courses when they enter the archives, or does the research archivist remain glued to their side? Accessing electronic records will be very costly.
- Eighty percent of all new database installments are "relational" databases, in which there are no real records in the system, only data stored in data housing. An operator calls up data on the screen and views a "virtual record" which only exists on the screen. It ceases to exist when the operator closes the application and sends the data back to its housing.

The seminar ended by suggesting that we are entering a "postcustodial age", with less and less records making it to the archival stage. For example, most e-mail correspondence, which is rapidly replacing meetings, written correspondence, and evidence of procedure, is transmitted and then erased without a trace.

The Beast, thriving on forever killing its old self in the name of technological advancement, stands to paralyze the archival profession which desperately hopes to arm itself with an electronic records management system "something like central filing." Charles Dollar remarked, "We're losing here. We can't tame the Beast, we can only try to be equal to it. Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all."

Anyone out there love a challenge?

Funding towards my participation in this workshop was made possible by financial assistance from the federal government through the National Archives of Canada, the Canadian Council of Archives, and the Yukon Council of Archives.

Jerilee Pitzel

ACA '96 UPDATE

The Program and Local Arrangements Committees for ACA '96 are diligently working to ensure that the upcoming conference is an educational and enjoyable experience for all participants. The Program Committee recently convened in Winnipeg to begin planning session and workshop topics in line with the conference theme of "The Frontier". Although the speakers and presentations have not yet been confirmed, some of the issues to be explored include: the experience of universities with freedom of information and privacy legislation, the impact of government program devolution on the archival record, the archival implications of the Internet, the application of the *Rules for Archival Description*, and the difficulties of preserving electronic records. In a departure from previous conferences, ACA '96 will include a number of short presentations in which archivists will discuss significant projects on which they have been working. The Program Committee of ACA has been working with the Rupert's Land Colloquium to develop a program of interest to both archivists and historians for the one day on which the two conferences overlap. Topics for discussion on this joint day include oral traditions and the use of new technologies such as multimedia and interactive compact discs.

The Local Arrangements Committee for the conference is working to ensure that all of the facilities, equipment, accommodations, transportation requirements and social events are in place for the conference. The traditional ACA East versus West baseball game will take place during the evening of Thursday May 30. The LAC has decided to host this game at the ball diamond in Carcross, allowing visitors to Yukon an opportunity to take an excursion from Whitehorse and see some of the Territory. A banquet and dance have been arranged for the evening of Friday May 31 and will take place at the Mount McIntyre Recreation Centre. The final social event of the conference will be a joint banquet with members of both ACA and the Rupert's Land conference held in the evening of Saturday June 1. Arrangements are being made to have this event feature First Nations food and entertainment.

With the hard work of both the Program and the Local Arrangements Committee ACA '96 is guaranteed to be a success.

Ian Burnett



The ACA '96 Programme Committee taking a dinner break during their planning sessions in Winnipeg, November 11, 1995. (L to R) Doug Whyte, Luciana Duranti, Susan Hart, Diane Haglund, Duane Mombourquette, Ian Burnett and Lesley Buchan. *YCA Photograph.*



Jean-Pierre Wallot, National Archivist, making a speech during the CCA's 10th anniversary celebrations at the National Archives in Ottawa, October 21, 1995. *CCA photograph.*

GRANT PROFILE: YUKON ARCHIVES EXAMINES ITS CORPORATE RECORDS

*I*s it tattered or torn, moldy or warped? Are paper clips and carbon papers still stuck to the records? Do we find photos hiding among the letters? Are the records self-destructing or are they A-OK?

All of the above were found at the Yukon Archives, which recently undertook an appraisal of its corporate records. The records range from turn-of-the-century grocery stores ledgers to financial statements of the 1990s. Problems range from deteriorating bindings of sternwheeler ledgers and papers once dropped in the mud to teeth marks from hungry mice, chewing away at Yukon's history. All in all, the records are in good condition, with less than twenty collections needing a conservator's attention. 168 collections contain minor preservation problems that can be treated by archives staff, including tasks such as photocopying news clippings onto non-acidic paper, removing artifacts from the file folders, and unfolding or flattening records. If a word of advice were to be offered to the corporate community in

light of this study, it would be to compile the corporate scrapbook with care. It's sad to see decomposing pages of acidic news clippings, certificates, and memorabilia, slathered with paper-eating glue, or yellowed by dried-up scotch tape which has left the clippings to fall away. Some of these scrapbooks, once grand showpieces, can barely be handled today. The result of this project (other than four archivists discussing the history of scotch tape) is a comprehensive report of all present and foreseeable preservation problems in the Yukon Archives' corporate collection. It is the companion study to Lesley Buchan's 1994 study of the manuscript collection and the 1995 assessment of the photograph collections done by Lloy Billingham and Bruce Binder. Stay tuned for Part Four: the state of the government records. (This project has been made possible by financial assistance from the federal government through the National Archives of Canada, the Canadian Council of Archives and the Yukon Archives in cooperation with the Yukon Council of Archives.)

Jerilee Pitzel
Project Archivist

MEMBERSHIP PROFILE

Lloy (pronounced like Lloyd, but without the “d”) Billingham is a freelance paper conservator in the Yukon. What’s a conservator, you say? No – she doesn’t plant trees or recycle plastic bottles. A conservator is the person responsible for the physical safeguarding of the artifacts in a collection. Lloy has been working for the Yukon Archives for the past six years with intermittent contracts for the MacBride Museum and Heritage Branch in between. For her, being a conservator is a love affair that started over thirty years ago on weekend trips to museums, antique shops, country shops and garage sales around Guelph, Ontario. During her fifteen years as a laboratory technician at the Veterinary College, University of Guelph, Lloy also acquired a well-rounded knowledge of antiques, their history, material makeup and use. She became the unofficial medical illustrator for the Vet College and has had 200 of her illustrations published.

In 1986, after hearing a radio interview with the conservator of Seagrums Museum Lloy contacted him to request information on becoming a conservator. She was accepted that year into the Art Conservation program at Sir Sanford Fleming College in Peterborough, Ontario. For her, discovering that there were artifact “conservators” was like having a light come on suddenly. She could draw upon her experience with antiques along with her technical and artistic abilities and apply them to a new profession – that of conservator.

The first two years of Lloy’s studies was on: the materials comprising museum artifacts (wood, metal, glass and china, paper and textiles); their makeup; and the factors that could lead to their deterioration. Most of the 2 years was in the laboratory, learning hands-on restoration techniques practiced on artifacts borrowed from the local pioneer village.

In 1989, after a telephone interview with Joanne Meehan, Lloy was winging her way to the Yukon to take on the advertised summer position at the MacBride Museum. It turned out to be the most incredible summer. The basement storage area was reorganized and new shelving installed, the artifacts in the yard were assessed for conservation needs, and one inch of dust was removed from everything inside Sam McGee’s cabin. Further, fate had taken a hand in Lloy’s northern adventure. She met Ron Billingham the first week after her arrival and six months later, on Christmas Eve in the MacBride Museum Board Room, they were married. Six days later, Lloy flew out to Ontario to complete her third and final year.

specialization chosen from either textiles, ethnology, metals, decorative arts, paper, wood/furniture. Lloy chose paper partly because of an identified need for paper conservators but mostly because of a love of old things paper...maps, prints, letters, postcards, etc. and her internship was done in the paper lab of the Canadian Conservation Institute in Ottawa.

Upon graduating and flying home to a long-overdue reunion with her husband, Lloy started the first of a series of contracts for the Yukon Archives. A room in the new building had been designated as the paper conservation lab, so her first order of business was to furnish the lab with equipment, materials and supplies. Since then, many paper artifacts have been conserved (see the “Manuscript from Hell,” *YCA Newsletter*, September 1995) and conservation concerns (e.g., light levels in the Reading Room, the hazard of nitrate-base movie film, design of a map display cabinet, etc.) have been addressed. Lloy’s duties include everything from recommending suitable material for housing or storing individual artifacts, demonstrating how to (or how not to) handle artifacts during retrieval and put away, to the hands-on repair of damaged artifacts (which Lloy likes doing most of all).

In 1993, with funding provided by the Yukon Archives and the Yukon Council of Archives, Lloy had the opportunity to do a second internship at the British Columbia Archives in Victoria. It was a chance to work in a fully equipped lab and learn more advanced conservation techniques. It also provided access to their extensive library of conservation publications. To mention one highlight of the internship is difficult, but two projects that do stand out are: 1. the conservation of one of the original Rattenbury architectural drawings of the Parliament Buildings in Victoria and 2. the removal of a coating of varnish from an original watercolour painting.

To say that Lloy enjoys her work is an understatement. She considers it a privilege to work in such a pleasant environment as the paper lab at the Yukon Archives and to work on artifacts with such an interesting past. Her work is truly a labour of love.



Year three of the Art Conservation program is the year of

UPCOMING WORKSHOP

A workshop entitled "The Fundamentals of Records Management Practice" will be offered on February 2 & 3, 1996. It will be held in Whitehorse and out-of-town members may be eligible for travel and accommodation assistance. More information about this workshop has been mailed out. Contact Donna McBee at 667-3108 or Ian Burnett at 667-5827 if you have any questions.

SUBMISSIONS, COMMENTS

The YCA Newsletter is the official publication of the Yukon Council of Archives. The Publications Committee welcomes articles, project reports, and announcements for publication in upcoming issues. Articles printed in the YCA Newsletter do not necessarily reflect the views of the Yukon Council of Archives.

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