

YOU ARE MY WITNESSES

THE FUTURE OF THE ANGLICAN ARCHIVES NETWORK

The Present Situation

The Anglican Archives Network has been developed over the past twenty-five years to provide a means of communication, training and support for the diocesan and provincial archivists of the Anglican Church of Canada. This development has been largely the result of the work of the Archivist and archives staff of General Synod resulting in a "from the top down" model. However, the General Synod staff support that has been available in the past to carry on the work of the Anglican Archives Network is no longer available to the same degree that it has been due to the financial crisis overtaking General Synod. Therefore, given both the present stage in the development of the Anglican Archives Network and the situation at General Synod, this would seem to be an opportune time to consider the future direction of the Anglican Archives Network. This position paper provides some historical background on archives, some current information and proposes a model for the future development of the Network.

Archives and the Church

The preservation of historical records is often seen as being of little more than of antiquarian interest, but without archives there will be no history in its modern sense. And without history the past is only vague memories and folk-stories. But what are archives? The word itself has a number of senses: it can designate, first, a repository or storage area; second, the material held in the repository and third, the institution whose responsibility is to preserve these records. It is the second sense that first needs to be defined. Archives are original records of enduring value that document the activities of the organization that created them. John Archer amplifies this in a way that embraces both the first and second senses of the definition given above:

That collection of documents or records of whatever nature, which has been to some degree assembled systematically in pursuance of legal obligations or in the transaction of some proper business, whether public or private, and which has been kept for purposes of record or reference.¹

But it is the third sense of the definition above that, since the "Wilson Report" in 1980, has been central to Canadian archival thinking. That is, archives as an institution, whose

1. John Archer, "A Study of Archival Institutions in Canada," unpublished PhD dissertation, (Queen's University, Kingston: 1969), 6, cited in [Ian Wilson], *Canadian Archives* (Ottawa: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1980), 15.

mandate is "1) appraising, acquiring and selecting; 2) conserving; 3) arranging and describing; 4) making accessible ... unpublished or unique materials of documentary nature ... which may shed light on the past."² The experience of the Anglican Church of Canada includes all three senses of this definition. The Church has created records, it has gathered them together and it has created a system of institutions that are responsible for the proper care of these records. The Anglican Archives Network is the national expression of this activity.

For the Church the preservation of its history is more than a pious duty; indeed, it can be seen as an integral part of its witness to the Good News in Jesus Christ. The Church, as an expression of divine community, has a reality that is not limited to the present moment, but that includes both the past and the future. The one holy catholic and apostolic church is not limited either by time or space. This transcendent reality of community, and of communion, includes the whole experience of the Church individually and corporately: its saints and martyrs, its holiness, its intellectual and artistic achievements, and its sinners, its sins of commission and omission and its very humanness with the frailties that are inherent in it. This is the history of the Church and it is in archives that this history finds much of its physical embodiment, its documentary traces. And these can only be properly preserved by duly mandated institutions. Without this documentation and these institutions, the Church can witness neither to its past nor honestly face its present. In the words of the Psalmist (44:1) "Lord we have heard with our ears and our fathers have declared unto us the mighty works Thou hast done in their days and in the old times before them." But equally with witnessing to the triumphs of the past and present, we must witness to the failures of the past and present. "Church archivists and church historians can contribute to this witness by preserving and explicating the history of the church, the history of the church in one's own particular locality. There are many less than creditable events and actions to be recorded in the history of the church, and these must be faced honestly and openly. But church archivists and church historians will have no qualms about facing these because we will be able to provide the context, the social, economic and political context, as well as the religious one."³ But without archives neither the triumphs nor tragedies can be fully articulated. Therefore, with the prophet Isaiah (43:10), it can be truly said of archives (and of archivists) "You are my witnesses."

2. [Ian Wilson], *Canadian Archives* (Ottawa: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 1980), 13.

3. Richard Virr, "Proclaiming the Good News: church archives, church history and the mission of the church," *Journal of the Canadian Church Historical Society*, XXXVI (1994), 69.

History

Anglican Archives in Canada

The development of archives in the Anglican Church of Canada was one of slow but steady growth. In 1905 the position of Registrar of General Synod was created with the duty of preserving the journals, files, papers, reports and other documents of General Synod. A great deal of material was gathered but little progress was made in organizing it. In 1927 "the Archives Committee of the Church of England in Canada" was created to work with the Registrar, but little progress was made until the Registrar resigned in 1941. An archives was then organized in Toronto at General Synod and the Archives Committee began to function.

In 1943 the Archives Committee had a great deal to report to General Synod. Among other things it recommended that each diocese appoint an archives committee or archivist, or both, responsible for the diocesan records and who would "cooperate" with the Archives Committee of General Synod. In 1944 the Committee defined the role of diocesan archives and among the duties was cooperation with the General Synod Committee. In 1949 these recommendations were repeated and it is on the basis of them that most diocesan archives have been established. One of the most significant features of the early work of the General Synod Archives Committee was the attempt to establish an interconnecting system of archives — diocesan archives working in unison with the central repository.⁴

Canadian Church Historical Society

The Canadian Church Historical Society, following a resolution of General Synod in 1946, was established in 1949 to promote the study of Canadian Anglican history. In fact, the Canadian Church Historical Society was organized by the Archives Committee of General Synod and, in the early years of the Society, the two were closely associated and involved the same people. In 1950 the Society began publishing the *Journal*. Originally concerned only with Canadian Anglican history, the *Journal* has become "a highly regarded peer-reviewed journal specializing in the history of Christian Churches in Canada." But at the same time, the Society has maintained its interest in and support of Anglican archives and history. The Society has supported the publication of the Anglican Records Series and in 1998 published *Living Tradition: Researching, Writing and Celebrating Parish History*, a handbook for parish historians, by Wendy Fletcher-Marsh and Norman Knowles. And in 2001 the Society with the Historical Society of the Episcopal Church, the Episcopal Women's History Project and the National Episcopal Historians and Archivist sponsored the Toronto conference celebrating the tercentenary of the S.P.G. "(Re)Making Anglican Tradition(s) in North America." The Society is at the present time in the process of incorporating as an independent non-profit charitable organization.

4. For more details see: *Ibid.*, 60-62, and [R.V. Harris], *The Story of the Movement to Preserve our Church Records*. Occasional Paper "A", Canadian Church Historical Society, 1957.

The Canadian Church Historical Society provides, in fact, the "voluntary network" for all those interested in Anglican Church history including parish archivists and historians and academic historians. It also helps maintain those ecumenical and international relationships that help keep our parochialism in check. The Society will continue to be an active partner in the development of Anglican archives in Canada.

Anglican Archives Network

The Anglican Archives Network began in 1975 when the archivists of the General Synod started to work in collaboration with an expanding number of archivists of dioceses and ecclesiastical provinces. Initially, the work was one-on-one training for new archivists and the introduction of conservation microfilming. After 1986, following a long-range planning review, training has been offered through a rotating series of workshops with two workshops a year sponsored by the ecclesiastical provinces. The diocesan archivists in consultation with national staff undertake the timing and planning of the workshops. Budget and programme approval lay with the General Synod Archives Committee, 1986-1998 and later after the completion of a national strategic planning process with the Information Services Sub-Committee, 1998-2001. The Network includes all the dioceses of the Canadian Church.⁵

The activities of the Network fall under five headings:

1. Training of diocesan archivists
2. Records management instruction
3. Information exchange on policies and developments
4. Support to archivists and dioceses
5. Coordination of activities.

All of these activities have been, in one way or another, the responsibility of the General Synod archivists.

In the past year the Provincial Archivists have agreed to take responsibility for the Networks directory, and the Millman Bequest, the Church Society of the Diocese of Quebec and the Canadian Church Historical Society have provided funding to make possible the first steps towards the creation of a website for the Network (<http://www.anglicanarchivesnetwork.ca>). In the coming year both of these initiatives should begin to bear fruit. The Anglican Archives Network is unique in the Anglican world. No similar networks exist in the United States where the organization is voluntary with a membership fee, or in England or in other provinces of the Communion.

5. Terry Thompson, "Where are we now in December 2001?" Article for *The Historiographer*.

Who We Are

Anglican archivists are largely volunteers. There are twenty-nine dioceses and most but not all have an archives and in most cases these are governed by diocesan canon.⁶ A few of these dioceses (two or three) have a full-time or part-time paid archivist, and a few others (again two or three) have a full-time or part-time paid assistant. However, many of the diocesan archivists (and assistants) are professional archivists. The archives programmes of the dioceses vary widely from large and long established and active holdings to much more modest operations. In a number of dioceses the collection is deposited with another institution — a provincial archives or university. No diocesan archives has an unusually large budget, although this varies across the Church. The archives of the Diocese of the Arctic are on deposit at the General Synod Archives.

There are four ecclesiastical provinces — Canada (with seven dioceses), Ontario (with seven dioceses), Rupert's Land (with ten dioceses) and British Columbia and Yukon (with five dioceses and the former Diocese of Cariboo) — each with an archivist and archives usually governed by provincial canon. The provincial archives have collections greatly varying in size and importance depending largely on the history of the province. One provincial archives is housed in a civil provincial archives. The four provincial archivists are also diocesan archivists, but only one is paid (part-time) by the province. In all cases the provinces include more than one civil province or territory, although in the case of the Province of Ontario all the dioceses are at least partly in the civil province.

General Synod

The General Synod Archives has been established as the repository of record for the national level of the Anglican Church of Canada since 1953. In 1986 the General Synod adopted Canon V on Archives that governs its work. This Canon is unique because it includes in addition to the duty to collect, arrange, describe, conserve and make available the records and historical collections of the General Synod, the responsibility for nurturing the network of Anglican diocesan and related agency archives across the country.

The General Synod Archives also provides records management services to the National Office, and the Councils and committees and commissions of the Church. Training sessions have been provided to these agencies when new procedures are introduced or when new personnel or volunteers begin their work. In addition, a manual for records management for dioceses has been developed, refined and offered to bishops' secretaries.

The Archives continues to be an open and available public repository and also continues to provide access to its collections for staff researchers. Two separate staff cuts in 1994 and 2000 have put severe pressure on all services but particularly on the Anglican Archives Network's collaborative model for training and development. Added to this has been the steadily increasing time that the General Synod Archivist has spent providing

6. The archives of the former Diocese of Cariboo are now the responsibility of the Archives of the Province of British Columbia and Yukon.

litigation support services to the Residential Schools staff team, legal team and the General Secretary.⁷

What is becoming increasingly clear is that, unless there is a significant reallocation of staff to the General Synod Archives, it is no longer possible to provide the many services and oversee the activities that were provided and organized in the past. Such a reallocation of staff is, at the present time, most unlikely. Furthermore, if a new national structure should come into being, there is every likelihood that archives would not be an immediate priority. In this latter situation, the four provincial archivists with the metropolitans would, presumably, become canonically responsible for the administration of Canon V on Archives. The canons of the Anglican Church of Canada, including Canon V, have been adopted by the synods of the four provinces. The difficulties of administering Canon V, including the services and activities that have been long associated with General Synod Archives, with the possibility of little or no funding, would be very problematic.

The Future

A number of possible models for the future have been identified,⁸ but the first three have been rejected as unsatisfactory of the reasons provided with each model.

1. A diocesan model of self-sufficient diocesan archives with voluntary links to other diocesan and civil archives. The adoption of this model would mean that the Anglican Archives Network had ceased to exist in any meaningful way. Furthermore, dioceses that have strong archival programmes would continue to flourish, while those that don't would probably fall by the wayside.
2. A provincial model that has two variants; in both cases the provinces would be solely responsible for any archival network.
 - a. Each province would develop structures that would create links among the diocesan archivists of the province. Each province would be basically self-sufficient, but could, of course, find ways to cooperate with other provinces. The Network would cease to exist.
 - b. Each province would establish an archives council that would be composed of all diocesan archivists. The existing provincial networks, such as they are, would provide the continuity to the new councils and be responsible for connecting new diocesan archivists to the council. These councils would arrange for training and where possible for grants for arrangement, description and conservation.⁹ Again the Network would cease to exist as a national presence.

7. These three paragraphs are taken from Thompson, *op. cit.*

8. The first three were outlined by Thompson, *op. cit.* They have been slightly modified and expanded.

9. The Province of Canada now includes in its budget \$2000.00 every two years for training.

3. The current Anglican Archives Network model would continue and have a national archives presence along the current lines recognizing that there are reduced staffing and resources at General Synod.

None of these three possible models is particularly satisfactory in that in numbers one (1) and two (2) the Anglican Archives Network would cease to exist and in number three (3) the ability of the General Synod Archives to provide any kind of significant support is extremely doubtful. Therefore, instead of pursuing these three models further, a fourth (4) model is recommended that would combine some of their features and provide for the possibility for on-going development of the Network.

4. Recommended Model:

A revamped Anglican Archives Network that would seek to strengthen the Network by combining features of models 2b and 3.

This model would (1) see the creation of provincial archives councils composed of all diocesan archivists that would be responsible for training and support within the province; (2) make the provincial archivists responsible for the exchange of information including the directory and the website and (3) leave the responsibility for coordination and general oversight with the archivist of General Synod.

The responsibility for the five activities of the Network that have been identified would fall as follows:

1. Training of diocesan archivists with requisite funding: provincial councils
2. Records management instruction: provincial councils
3. Information exchange on policies and developments: provincial councils and provincial archivists
4. Support of diocese and archivists: provincial councils and archivists
5. Coordination of activities: General Synod archivists.

This model has a number of implications that should be spelled out.

1. Provinces will have to assume greater responsibility for archival programmes within the province and provincial synods will have to provide adequate funding to support the work of the provincial councils and provincial archivists for training and administration.
2. Provincial archivists will have to assume a position of leadership both provincial and nationally.
3. All archivists, both diocesan and provincial, will have to be willing to participate as actively as possible in the provincial council.
4. It will be necessary to designate a provincial/diocesan archives that will act as the secretariat for this revamped Network.

5. Regular meetings of the Provincial Archivists will continue with the participation of someone appointed by the Information Resources Committee and a staff person from the national office.
6. The Network will have to take full advantage of the potential of its website both to make Anglican archives more accessible and as a new way of working together and developing its future. The development and use of new technologies was identified as a priority by the diocesan archivists consultation in April 2001.

However, this redistribution of activities from General Synod to the Provinces does not address the broader issue of those other activities that have been the responsibility of the General Synod archivists, and which, perhaps, are inherent in the very nature of the present national organization of the Anglican Church, but from which both diocesan and provincial members of the Network benefit.¹⁰ While it may not be possible or appropriate for the Network as a group or individual dioceses or provinces to take over any or all of these activities, still it is in the interest of the Network to insure that these activities are not left to fall by the wayside but find appropriate organizational expression in a continuing General Synod or in a new national organization. An informed position on these matters will insure that the concerns of the Network will be taken into consideration when decisions have to be made.

10. These activities include policy development on access to information, privacy issues and electronic records, the maintenance of authority files, the bishops' biographical database and election and consecration certificates. (The Chancellor has already taken responsibility for obtaining and depositing episcopal consecration certificates.) The General Synod Archives has been responsible for monitoring diocesan canon and policies, salaries, fees etc. As well, there are links to the rest of the Anglican Communion and other denominations and organizations both national and international. These include the Anglican Consultative Council, Lambeth Palace Library, the USPG and CSM; the United Church of Canada, the Presbyterian Church of Canada, Roman Catholic diocese and religious orders and the World Council of Church advisory group; and the Association of Canadian Archivists, the Canadian Council on Archives and the International Congress on Archives. Other activities of which members of the Network should be aware that may become of concern depending on developments at General Synod and in particular if there is a new national structure include the House of Bishops' collections, the Primate's papers, private papers, ACPO and the upcoming changes to Canon XXI on Marriage. Some of these activities are more strictly archival in nature than others, but all fall, or have fallen, within the purview of the General Synod Archives.

Conclusion

The future of the Network is very much a part of the ongoing development of the Anglican Church of Canada and the direction that the Anglican Archives Network will take in the coming years is up to its constituent members. But it might well be observed that if after twenty-five years of work and existence a network of provincial and diocesan archives has not emerged that can now undertake some responsibility for its own activities, then this work has been largely pointless and the Network has not really developed, but always remains at square one. The challenge, then, would seem to be how to build on the original design of the 1940s and the experience of the past twenty-five years and not how to consign the Network to oblivion. Model 4 outlined above offer the best opportunity for the future development of a strong Network. It not only builds on the past but also takes into account the realities of the present. It provides for continuity and opens a path forward that is sufficiently flexible to meet future challenges. Without a strong Network there will be very limited support for a return to the level of archival activity at the national level that has characterized the past three or four decades. A continuing national presence for Anglican Archives, just as much as for the Church as a whole, depends on the willingness of Anglican archivists, and Anglicans, to develop new ways of working together that take into account past success and present realities to fashion a model that will serve the Anglican archives community and Anglicans in the future. It is by being witnesses that we fulfil our vocation both as archivists and Christians.

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