

Preserving History's Future: Developing a Nationwide Strategy for Archival Preservation

Paul Conway

Head, Preservation Dept., Yale University Libraries

Since 1989 the Society of American Archivists (SAA) has been developing a nationwide strategy for the 1990s to guide archivists in taking individual and cooperative action on behalf of the nation's archival record. SAA undertook the project to encourage and support innovative action by archivists, librarians, and others who have a commitment to the long-term preservation of historical resources. This article identifies the need for coordinated nationwide action, describes the components of the document, and outlines the process followed to develop the strategy.

Archivists, working separately and in tandem with librarians, have long recognized the broader cultural significance of preservation. Over fifty years ago, Robert Binkley, a pioneer in preservation microfilming, identified the ultimate value of archival work.

The objective of archival policy in a democratic country cannot be the mere saving of paper; it must be nothing less than the enriching of the complete historical consciousness of the people as a whole.¹

Guy Petherbridge has written more recently in a similar vein:

The perpetuation of society as we are accustomed to conceive or idealize it is dependent to a very large extent on the preservation *en masse* of our accumulated group memories and consciousness stored in the form of the written, printed and otherwise recorded word or symbol.²

In support of these broad cultural and management needs, archivists have defined their particular professional niche in terms of ensuring the identification, preservation, and use of records of enduring value. The report, *Planning for the Archival Profession*, prepared by SAA in 1986, identifies archival preservation programs as an indispensable function. Successful archival administration, it states,

is more than just the management of archival repositories; in a larger sense it is the goal of an entire profession whose mission is the preservation of information important to the legal, economic, political, intellectual, and cultural life of society.³

The report clearly recognizes that meeting the archival preservation challenge depends largely on the cumulative efforts of many individual archivists working in unique institutional settings.

Until a decade ago, it appeared possible that archivists could fulfill their responsibilities to the historical record, and therefore to society, chiefly by collecting and housing materials in secure environments and permitting access to those who asked. Today more and more archivists, along with other professionals who see their mission encompassing the protection of cultural heritage, recognize that preservation is a specific set of technical and administrative processes that affect every archival function. Preservation in this context includes policies and specific actions that prevent further damage and prolong the usability of collections of materials.⁴

As the volume of archival records increases and as archival documentation appears in an expanding variety of media and formats, archivists are faced with making hard decisions about selecting a portion of the historical record for preservation, choosing the most appropriate and cost-effective methods for preserving the records appraised as having long-term value, and enhancing access for an increasingly diverse group of patrons. It is inappropriate and, in fact, impossible to make responsible preservation decisions of this nature without coordinating preservation efforts with other archival repositories on statewide, regional, and national levels.⁵

The Society of American Archivists recognizes that archivists need a framework that provides archivists and their institutions, as well as funding agencies and professional associations, with a clear statement of archival preservation goals and objectives. An outline for action should reflect commonly accepted operating principles and should focus clearly the efforts of both the archival profession and those of individual practitioners. Most importantly, a nationwide strategy should enhance the capacity of this country's archival facilities to build institutional and public support for comprehensive preservation programs.

A coordinated set of nationwide initiatives, carried forward over the next decade, supports the central component of the archival mission by defining the scope of preservation efforts and providing a structure around which institutional, regional, and national programs can be built. A nationwide archival preservation strategy serves to unite archivists around a clearly significant cause and integrates their efforts with those of a broad community of professionals committed to protecting our nation's cultural heritage. It is criti-

cal that archivists strengthen and support ongoing preservation initiatives by librarians, museum curators, and history professionals to ensure that archival concerns are integrated into ongoing nationwide preservation efforts.

The Context of Archival Practice

Archival materials have much in common with the holdings of research libraries and should therefore be subject to most of the fundamental preservation and conservation processes appropriate for library materials. In theory, two pieces of paper could be treated in like fashion even if one piece is found in a book cataloged according to basic library principles and the other is placed in a folder along with other archival materials. Similarly, photographs, motion pictures, videotapes, optical disks, and other media, once properly identified in terms of content and composition, have no special technical conservation requirements simply because they form part of an archival collection rather than being housed in a general library collection. This fact has led some people to question whether archival issues have any bearing on preservation processes.

At least three aspects of the archival context, however, present special challenges for preservation. The scope of the archival record needing care is immense, both in terms of its volume and physical location. A recent study of state government archives' programs concluded that many of the 2.5 billion paper records held by the agencies—not to mention valuable government information existing in other formats even less stable than paper—are in serious danger of irreparable loss.⁶ A more comprehensive nationwide study confirmed the scale of the problem and also showed how widely dispersed is the nation's archival record. According to this study, a typical archive houses about 1,000 linear feet of records and has fewer than three staff dedicated to their care and use. Even more important for those advocating preservation are the many small but historically significant collections that are housed under environmentally hostile conditions without adequate organization.⁷ One preservation challenge in the archival context is to identify materials needing special care, in thousands of institutions nationwide, and match preservation needs with appropriate methods and resources. This challenge is further complicated by the lack of reliable mechanisms for appraising archival values across disparate collections.

Archival programs typically are small units viewed by top administrators as peripheral to the core mission of the organization that houses them—if their existence is even recognized at all. As a result, an archive can become a dispensable extension of library or other more vital information services, the tail-end of a records management cycle that must also cope with current information needs and the emergence of new technologies, or, as with some

museum programs, a luxury item in an era of severe competition for very limited funds. The second archival preservation challenge, therefore, is to build comprehensive programs that serve central organizational needs.

Archives are by nature unique, representing some measure of knowledge not existing in quite the same form anywhere else. Archives are not singled out for preservation because of their value as artifacts, but rather because they document individual or organizational activity over time. Nevertheless, archives are typically used for purposes quite unlike those which caused their creation in the first place. Most importantly the value of archives is vested not simply in the content of a single item but in the context of its creation and in the relationships between items. This paradox presents a third challenge for archivists: to preserve both content and context so that the materials retain their value as evidence for historical understanding.

Together these three aspects of archives—scope, setting, and nature—argue for the articulation of a nationwide agenda based on a full understanding of existing archival preservation practice. Because archivists lack a comprehensive education and research program in universities—where a profession's knowledge base is usually identified, practical experience generalized, and intellectual skills honed—the archival profession's national membership association may be the most appropriate forum for developing such an agenda.

During 1988 and 1989, with the assistance of a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Society of American Archivists studied the current state of preservation programs in U. S. archival facilities, primarily for the purpose of developing new educational initiatives for the 1990s. Findings of the extensive research project, which included a statistical survey of archival programs, interviews with national preservation experts, and a thorough review of recommended practices, suggest that archivists understand the national significance of their preservation efforts and are applying information on basic treatment techniques. Yet they have only partially integrated archival preservation into their professional practice.

In summary, the SAA research project found that archival units are often isolated from the organizations of which they are a part, playing a far more limited role in supporting the institution's mission and purpose than they should. Archivists tend to take a piecemeal approach to preservation, picking and choosing from among the possible activities, instead of working through a planning process that sets priorities for the unit and for the parent organization. Archivists still are not accustomed to viewing preservation as an umbrella under which many archival functions could be placed. Many archivists need to move their preservation efforts beyond a rudimentary level and learn how to make preservation a central management function.⁸

It is doubtful that significant new progress on preserving archival collections can occur in many types of administrative settings until archivists succeed in functionally integrating the activities of their departments into the mainstream of their institutions. If undertaken systematically and comprehensively, archival preservation has the potential to become the primary impetus for improving the overall quality, value, and effectiveness of individual archival programs. SAA's research shows that archivists may be more effective in improving their capacity to undertake comprehensive preservation programs if their efforts are supported by a nationwide archival preservation strategy, developed and coordinated by archivists themselves.

Nationwide Preservation Initiatives

In its current form, the SAA strategy document consists of a preamble and thirty-five initiative statements organized under seven broad objectives, which together represent a series of challenges for professional archivists. The preamble states four assumptions that underlie the document, including the linkage between preservation and access, the need for continuing leadership by SAA, the value of inter-institutional cooperation, and the focus on preservation as a central management function of archives. Each objective is accompanied by an explanatory paragraph defining the context and scope of the statement. What follows is a brief description of the seven objectives of the strategy. The full document is reproduced along with this article.

1. Public Commitment. The first objective of the nationwide strategy is to keep preservation issues on the nation's agenda. Issues come and go from that agenda based largely upon economic, social, and political forces well beyond the control of individual practitioners. Nevertheless, a fundamental challenge for archivists is to nurture a kind of gut-level feeling in the general public (especially at times when the nation's economic growth is slow) that the preservation of historical source materials is worthy of continuing financial support. The objective assumes that public support for preservation derives from a number of sources, some close to home (e.g., institutional administrators), some at a distance (e.g., legislators), and some only partially known (e.g., taxpayers and scholarly users). The objective statement also identifies the common interest of a broad professional community, including librarians, curators, history administrators, and other caretakers of the nation's cultural heritage.

The eight initiatives identified in the document supporting the objective of increased public commitment call on continuing leadership by SAA and cooperation between SAA and other national and regional organizations. The initiatives recognize the need for new funds and new educational and advoca-

cy tools and specifically pinpoint the value of minimizing future preservation problems by creating records on media that meet accepted standards of permanence and durability. Other initiatives draw attention to the fact that a heightened preservation sensibility also has important implications for the entire records life-cycle—from initial creation and use, temporary storage, and ultimately to long-term housing and use for research in archives. Finally, the document recognizes that public commitment should be translated into legislative action.

2. Education. The second objective of the nationwide strategy calls for expanded training opportunities over the coming decade. The objective suggests at least three appropriate domains for such educational activities—formal university course work at the graduate level, continuing professional education workshops and seminars, and on-the-job training programs. In addition a key feature of the objective is its recognition that a “one size fits all” approach to education and training is not sufficient; programs should be tailored to the needs of audiences from various institutional settings or with varying levels of experience.

Seven specific initiatives expand the range of the objective by focusing on introductory continuing education and master's-level programs. A multi-tier approach to meeting intermediate and advanced training needs is suggested. In this scenario, recently adopted by SAA for a new training program under development, participants attend a sequence of workshops or seminars where learning is reinforced by structured assignments carried out between sessions. The strategy recognizes that currently there is a shortage of qualified instructors who understand the specific problems of caring for archival materials. It calls for training programs to build a cadre of educators. The objective is rounded out by initiatives that call for additional classroom tools, new fellowship opportunities, and consultant programs that recognize the special administrative contexts of archival institutions.

3. Program Development. The third objective of the nationwide strategy gives voice to the old adage “think globally, act locally.” The fundamental principle of the program development objective is that the goals and structure of institutional-level programs must match the mission and goals of the parent institution. A necessary part of the archival program development process may indeed involve re-defining the parent organization's mission statement or legislative mandate to incorporate a commitment to preserve and enhance access to its archival record. The nationwide strategy implies that the bottom line of successful preservation programs is top-level institutional commitment to the objectives of archival preservation. Beyond this solid internal support, however, success may also depend on the ability of archival program administrators to reduce barriers to inter-institutional cooperation.

The seven initiatives designed to support the objective of comprehensive preservation management programs include establishing benign environmental storage conditions and specific performance standards for archival preservation activities, gathering and disseminating data on the functions and costs of existing programs, and encouraging continuous self-assessment supported by appropriate evaluation tools.

4. Selection for Preservation. Archivists have long recognized that their first professional responsibility is to identify and protect the small portion of the overall record that has long-term value, either to those who created the archival record in the first place or to those who use it for purposes other than that intended by the creators. In recognizing that the amount of monetary and human resources available for preservation will always be limited, the fourth objective of the nationwide strategy gives prominence to the need for intelligence in preservation selection. The document implies that systematic judgment is required not only to select specific materials for preservation but also to choose the most appropriate prevention and treatment measures for select materials.

The strategy lists three specific initiatives to further the goal of systematic selection for preservation, including adapting existing archival appraisal theory for purposes of preservation, developing tools to help the practitioner make intelligent decisions within a comprehensive framework, and encouraging the exchange of ideas and techniques across disciplinary boundaries.

5. Technical Standards. The fifth objective of the nationwide strategy is a double-edged sword for archivists. Acknowledging that administrative procedures must be built upon measurable standards, the objective calls for the inclusion of technical standards in archival practice. More importantly, perhaps, the objective urges archivists to become actively involved in identifying areas of practice where technical standards are needed and to participate in the process of developing a consensus on relevant technical issues among product manufacturers, vendors, service organizations, and other groups that may be interested only peripherally in archival practice.

Initiatives supporting this objective include gathering (in some cases translating) and disseminating scientific research findings that may bear on the condition of archival materials, working closely with technical standards-setting organizations, and taking action to ensure that developments in mass treatment procedures consider the special challenges of archival collections.

6. Access. The strategy's sixth objective declares that preservation activities should be designed to enhance access to the original or reformatted records themselves and suggests that the decisions by funding organizations

to support preservation projects should be governed simultaneously by concern with access and preservation outcomes. To help ensure that preservation action enhances access to the historical record, the strategy identifies three promising mechanisms. Two initiatives call on archivists to make maximum use of the bibliographic record to describe preservation activity, to share information on preserved records among repositories, and to include detailed descriptive information in national bibliographic networks. A third initiative assumes that it is not sufficient to disseminate information *about* preserved records without serious efforts by many organizations to make their own preserved records more widely available, either through traditional interlibrary loan procedures or full-text via electronic networks.

7. Research. The seventh objective of the nationwide preservation strategy encourages creative research on preservation topics, especially studies that seek to illuminate the relationship between preservation activities and other fundamental archival functions. As such the objective is one significant mechanism for encouraging innovative practice over the decade of the 1990s and beyond. By all rights, initiatives supporting research and analysis should be a part of each of the preceding objectives. In posing strategic research as a special objective, however, the document draws attention to limitations in the existing body of theory and common practice.

The final four initiatives of the strategy, oriented toward accomplishing the research objective, include increasing funding for academic and applied research activities, encouraging wide dissemination of the findings, and creating new opportunities for multi-disciplinary research efforts. The final initiative once again reminds us that research, just as with other preservation activities, cannot be isolated from core archival functions.

The Process of Development and Review

In September 1989, fifteen archivists, archival educators, conservators, and preservation administrators, plus three observers from national funding agencies, met in a three-day seminar at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Library and Information Science to consider a draft nationwide strategy prepared by SAA's Preservation Program Officer.

The group reviewed the findings and recommendations of SAA's preservation research and evaluation project as a point of departure for creating a full-scale strategy document. The consensus of the group was that the first purpose of a nationwide archival preservation strategy should be to mobilize the archival profession to do its work and to empower archivists to fulfill their preservation responsibilities using the widest possible range of resources. Seminar participants also identified potential uses of the strategy document,

including as an education tool within the profession, an endorsed statement of what needs to be done to ensure a professional level of preservation practice in institutions throughout the country, and a guide for funding agencies to the needs of the profession.

In reviewing the draft document as a whole, the participants in the Pittsburgh seminar placed highest priority on continuing the leadership role of SAA (Initiatives 1 and 2), increasing support for permanent/durable paper legislation and regulation (Initiative 6), and identifying new sources of funding for preservation activities (Initiative 8). Overall, the group recognized that the key to speeding the adoption of comprehensive archival preservation management programs may be improved education and training programs, at several levels of sophistication (Objective 2). There was a general consensus in the group of Pittsburgh seminar participants, however, that in order for the draft document to be a useful tool for education, fund raising, and program development, it should receive wide circulation within the archival profession and beyond.

To encourage discussion and systematic review of the draft strategy document, SAA's Council followed up on the Pittsburgh seminar by establishing a Task Force on Preservation at its October 1989 meeting. The Council charged the Task Force to:

. . . serve as a focus for preservation planning activities within the archival profession. Its immediate, specific charge is to seek comments and reactions from the archival community to the planning document *Preserving History's Future: Nationwide Initiatives for the Preservation and Use of the Archival Record*. These responses, together with the Task Force's observations and analyses, will be incorporated into the document for presentation to the SAA Council within eighteen months. Additionally, the Task Force will help to maintain momentum and continuity in the Society's preservation efforts during the gap in outside funding for the SAA's Preservation Office.

Appointed by SAA president John Fleckner, members of the Task Force are:

Christine Ward, New York State Archives and Records Administration, co-chair
Howard Lowell, Delaware Bureau of Archives and Records Management, co-chair
Margaret Child, consultant

Paul Conway, National Archives and Records Administration
Lisa L. Fox, Southeastern Library Network (SOLINET) Preservation Program

Karen Garlick, National Archives and Records Administration
Anne R. Kenney, Cornell University
Paul McCarthy, University of Alaska, Fairbanks

The draft strategy document, with a request for comment, was initially published in the *SAA Newsletter*. The Commission on Preservation and Access funded two meetings of the Task Force to revise the strategy in light of comments received from reviewers and interim guidance from the SAA Council.

The Task Force completed work on the strategy document in early 1991 and presented the results to the SAA Council. The group requested formal endorsement of the document and authorization to invite allied professional organizations (such as the National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators and the American Library Association) to join with SAA in endorsing the recommendations in the final document. The SAA Council approved the following five clusters of strategic initiatives, which were identified by the Task Force during the review process as having the highest priority for the next three years:

1. The Society of American Archivists should begin work toward funding a permanent staff position at its headquarters to provide leadership, educational program development, and information and advice on preservation planning and action. (Initiative 1)
2. The archival profession should investigate the relationship between appraisal and selection for preservation, focusing on ways to evaluate comparatively the significance of collections and on developing and standardizing criteria for selecting materials to be preserved and for setting priorities for preservation. (Initiatives 23 and 24)
3. The Society of American Archivists, through its Committee on Legislative and Legal Affairs, should promote the inclusion of preservation issues on legislative agendas, particularly initiatives to increase the use of permanent and durable media for the creation and retention of archival records. (Initiative 6)
4. The Society of American Archivists should take a proactive approach to developing and setting both programmatic and technical standards that relate to archival practice. (Initiatives 18, 23, 27, and 35)

5. The Society of American Archivists should support comprehensive preservation education and training programs. (Initiatives 11, 12, and 13)

As the work of SAA's Task Force ends, implementation of priority initiatives has already begun. Although space prohibits a review of the many ongoing projects that address the strategy's priority areas, two new projects illustrate the scope of efforts underway. Beginning in 1992, with the support of a three-year grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities, SAA will again have the services of a full-time program officer to coordinate a major new preservation education program for the Society and to provide leadership on preservation issues. Second, the Commission on Preservation and Access is funding a working group of appraisal and preservation experts, headed by Margaret S. Child, a national leader in archival and library preservation, to examine the applicability of existing appraisal theories to preservation selection decision making.

Progress is also being made on paper permanence and technical standards. SAA endorsed a resolution on permanent paper and is coordinating efforts with allied professional associations to get appropriate legislation passed in the states. SAA is now a voting member of the National Information Standards Organization (NISO). The National Archives and Records Administration actively supports research and development on preservation and technology standards by funding a variety of in-house projects and backing a long-term effort by the National Institute of Standards and Technology to assess the stability of electronic media. Additionally the Commission on Preservation and Access has initiated a program to review technical and scientific literature for findings applicable to practicing archivists and librarians.

The process of developing a nationwide strategy to guide archival preservation efforts was an important and necessary exercise in defining issues and building consensus. The final product is, on one level, a tool for archivists to use in clarifying the preservation challenge before them. On another level, the nationwide strategy document may hold the potential to become a common agenda for all professionals who care for, or care about, the future of our nation's historical record.

Preserving History's Future: Nationwide Initiatives for the Preservation and Use of the Archival Record

PREAMBLE: This document is presented as an action plan for the decade of the 1990s. It outlines the agenda for archivists to follow to ensure the preservation of the nation's documentary heritage. Four operating principles under-

lie the plan presented here. The archival profession's ability to carry out the initiatives set forth in this document is dependent upon its acceptance of these basic principles:

- Preservation and access to archival information are fundamentally linked.
- Advances in archival preservation cannot occur without active leadership from the Society of American Archivists, in alliance with other professional organizations concerned with the nation's documentary heritage.
- Cooperative approaches to the preservation challenge are essential to implement the archival preservation agenda.
- The archival profession must move beyond the traditional technical approaches to treatment and incorporate preservation as a basic concern of archival management.

OBJECTIVE 1: Increase the public's commitment to preserve and to use the historical record.

Archivists serve a broad-based group of users and are dependent upon many resource allocators, including legislators, institutional administrators, the general public, and scholars. The strong and continuing support of these publics (at the national, state, and local levels), as well as the community of professionals who house and care for all historical materials, is essential for the long-term success of archival preservation programs.

Initiative 1: Develop mechanisms within the Society of American Archivists, including a permanent staff position, to provide leadership, educational program development, and information and advice on preservation planning and action.

Initiative 2: Forge alliances between the Society of American Archivists and other national or regional organizations and foundations concerned with the preservation of historical materials.

Initiative 3: Encourage the expansion of existing sources of financial support for the preservation of library materials to include support for archival preservation projects.

Initiative 4: Produce and encourage use of educational products that raise awareness of the need for archival preservation, including audiovisual programs, exhibitions, and press articles.

Initiative 5: Identify the best of existing advocacy materials on preservation and tailor their use to support archival preservation.

Initiative 6: Promote the inclusion of preservation issues on legislative agendas and support legislation, executive orders, and other enforceable initiatives to increase the use of permanent and durable media in the creation and retention of archival records. Assist in the development of definitions of permanency for new and emerging technologies.

Initiative 7: Increase awareness of preservation issues among records creators and records managers throughout all phases of the records life cycle.

Initiative 8: Promote legislation at national and state levels to establish new funding for preservation.

OBJECTIVE 2: Support comprehensive preservation education and training programs.

A comprehensive preservation education program underlies the archival profession's ability to preserve archival materials. Until such programs are established, the profession will be unable to ensure that the nation's archives are being cared for in the most cost-effective and responsible manner. Education and training should be available through at least three vehicles: formal higher education, continuing professional education, and on-the-job training. Education programs should be targeted to the type of institutional setting or specific audience, such as archivists, preservation managers, archival conservators, technicians, educators, volunteers, consultants, and institution and program administrators.

Initiative 9: Strengthen master's-level education programs in both preservation management and archival conservation.

Initiative 10: Strengthen and update basic/introductory workshops on preservation to transmit new knowledge to practicing professionals and para-professionals. Develop agreements with regional archival associations to promote educational offerings.

Initiative 11: Develop curricula for multi-tier workshop/seminar programs for archivists with preservation management responsibility to ensure the reinforcement and practical application of lessons learned at each level of training.

Initiative 12: Develop training programs for archival educators, workshop instructors, and consultants to ensure consistency and quality in the information they impart.

Initiative 13: Develop practical handbooks, assessment tools, and case studies suitable for use in the classroom or on-site, and publish them in print, audiovisual, or software formats, as appropriate.

Initiative 14: Provide opportunities for internships and fellowships in archival preservation management and archival conservation.

Initiative 15: Investigate educational consultant programs aimed at improving the preservation skills of archival staff in their institutional settings.

OBJECTIVE 3: Support the development of comprehensive preservation management programs and activities.

Because most archivists function within institutional settings that include other programs and that have specified missions and goals, it is essential that archival preservation programs be comprehensive, integrated, and tailored to meet the needs of the institution and its overall goals and objectives. Because of the high costs associated with funding preservation and the scarcity of professionals experienced in preservation administration, inter-institutional cooperation may be an essential element in the development of these programs.

Initiative 16: Promote the development and implementation of preservation plans and activities that encourage cooperation among institutions.

Initiative 17: Develop strategies to help archivists establish benign environmental storage conditions in all archival repositories.

Initiative 18: Encourage the development and adoption of program performance standards for archival preservation activities, including: holdings maintenance; conservation treatments, reformatting; and replacement.

Initiative 19: Collect and disseminate comparative data on archival preservation programs to encourage use of and compliance with program performance standards.

Initiative 20: Gather and disseminate data on the costs of preservation action, and the costs of inaction, in archival repositories.

Initiative 21: Encourage funding organizations to support systematic institutional self-assessment, preservation surveys, and basic

preservation activities such as environmental monitoring and disaster planning.

Initiative 22: Develop and promote the use of tools for preservation needs assessment and preservation priority setting.

OBJECTIVE 4: Identify and promote the use of systematic selection procedures for preservation.

Because the costs of meeting the preservation challenge are far greater than the resources available, archivists must devise procedures for selecting materials for preservation. Archival appraisal techniques and procedures can provide a basis for making preservation selection decisions. Judicious selection of materials for preservation is critical to the efficient and effective use of resources, and therefore to successful preservation program development.

Initiative 23: Encourage the application of appraisal and collection development approaches, including documentation strategies, to the selection of materials for preservation.

Initiative 24: Develop, test, and disseminate tools that will help archivists to: systematize preservation selection activities; determine the preservation profile of an institution's archival holdings (scope, value, and condition); and adopt and incorporate techniques developed in institution-wide reappraisal projects.

Initiative 25: Encourage the identification of common issues and needs and the cross-fertilization of ideas among appraisal archivists, collection development librarians, and preservation administrators.

OBJECTIVE 5: Encourage the development and dissemination of technical standards for preservation processes.

Technical standards are the foundation upon which preservation programs are built. Archivists need to influence more directly the development, dissemination, and adoption of standards bearing upon archival preservation.

Initiative 26: Enhance ongoing efforts to gather and disseminate research findings on the nature, the stability, and the rates of deterioration of papers, films, magnetic, optical, and other media found in archives.

Initiative 27: Identify needs for new or revised technical standards and encourage the involvement of archivists in their development, review, testing, dissemination, and application.

Initiative 28: Identify the special archival considerations that relate to mass treatment processes, such as deacidification, and support efforts to adapt these processes to archival needs.

OBJECTIVE 6: Facilitate access to preserved archival holdings.

Use and scholarship are the primary reasons that archival materials are kept. Preservation enhances the research value of archival materials by extending their availability for use. Without significant efforts to provide access to information about preserved records—and access to the original or reformatted records themselves—archivists limit the value to users of the preservation projects they undertake. Since funds to address archival preservation needs are inadequate, the decision to support a preservation project should be based in part upon the institution's willingness and ability to make records accessible and to encourage their use.

Initiative 29: Involve archivists in the review and acceptance of MARC 583 field conventions and encourage the exchange of preservation information among archival repositories.

Initiative 30: Encourage the creation of full MARC records for all preserved archival holdings at the collection or series level and include those records in national bibliographic data bases.

Initiative 31: When reformatting is the most appropriate preservation method, encourage the broad dissemination of reformatted records.

OBJECTIVE 7: Support analytical studies and dissemination of their findings on archival preservation and related topics.

Ongoing systematic research on archival theory and practice is vital to maintaining a strong archival profession. Having moved forward with research on appraisal strategies and on the uses of historical records, archivists should now turn to developing a body of theory and accepted practices for the technical and administrative aspects of archival preservation.

Initiative 32: Increase funding for preservation research in archival institutions and schools of higher education.

Initiative 33: Establish effective means of disseminating preservation research findings and products.

Initiative 34: Build mechanisms for cooperation with allied professions in preservation research.

Initiative 35: Stimulate research that links preservation activities with other archival functions and activities.

Notes

1. Robert C. Binkley, "Strategic Objectives in Archival Policy," *American Archivist* 2 (July 1939): 165.
2. Guy Petherbridge, *Conservation of Library and Archive Materials and the Graphic Arts* (London: Butterworth, 1987), 10.
3. *Planning for the Archival Profession: Report of the SAA Task Force on Goals and Priorities* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1986), 14.
4. Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler, *Preserving Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, forthcoming).
5. Carolyn Clark Morrow, ed., *Nationwide Conference on the Development of State-wide Preservation Programs*, (Washington, D.C.: Commission on Preservation and Access, 1991).
6. Howard P. Lowell, *Preservation Needs in State Archives* (Albany, N.Y.: National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrators, 1985), 10.
7. Paul Conway, "Archival Preservation Practice in a Nationwide Context," *American Archivist* 53 (Spring 1990): 212-13.
8. Society of American Archivists, Final Report, Evaluation of Basic Archival Conservation Program, NEH Grant #PS-20144, December 31, 1989.

Advances in Preservation and Access

VOLUME 1

1992

*Edited by Barbra Buckner Higginbotham
and Mary E. Jackson*

Meckler
Westport • London