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A PRIMER ON MANUSCRIPT FIELD WORK

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The process of acquiring manuscripts for institutional collections has received little systematic attention in the professional literature, most of which has focused on manuscript administration, definition of collecting policy, and competition between repositories.¹ Discussions of collecting manuscripts tend to be anecdotal, rich in illustrative example and lacking in analysis.² When the acquisition function is treated as an adventure story, two features are common to most accounts: a focus on the collector's personality, particularly traits such as curiosity, empathy, and perseverance; and an emphasis on the role of chance in the discovery of major collections. Neither of these elements is readily translated into guidelines for developing an institutional manuscript program, and the beginning collector may be thrown back on his own judgment and experience. If he has had an opportunity to work with a more experienced field archivist, his judgment may be sufficient for good acquisition decision-making. However, not every archivist or curator with acquisition responsibilities has had an apprenticeship in field work; and a field work program can rapidly become too complex for common-sense approaches. Clear descriptions in the literature of the activities and controlling concepts of field work would obviously be of benefit to the beginner. They might also enable seasoned field archivists to compare their modes of work and develop generalizations about procedures, productivity, and costs of manuscript

acquisition. Perhaps certain working assumptions could be formulated about the factors which make a negotiation relatively easy or difficult, or about the survival rate of certain kinds of manuscript materials. In any event, it is certain that archivists do not need to hear another disclaimer that collecting is, after all, more art than science. Even an art form demands rigor, attention to detail, and some rationale for the technique. ↙

Although attempts have been made to standardize terminology for archival and manuscript functions,³ acquisition work lacks a professional vocabulary. The following definitions are supplied to clarify subsequent usage. Manuscript repositories acquire material from many sources, by gift or purchase, according to some concept of desirable subject areas, time periods, and formats. These parameters make up the collecting policy of the repository. The collecting policy is also influenced by institutional factors such as the amount of space, staff, and budget allocated to the manuscript program. A repository may acquire individual manuscripts, but more commonly it seeks collections, bodies of unpublished materials which originate from a common source or have a common theme or format. In dealing with modern manuscripts, these collections usually are personal or family papers, literary remains, organizational records, or collections organized around a past event such as the suffrage movement.

Field work refers to the activities involved in identifying, locating, and negotiating for and securing manuscripts for an institutional collection. These tasks are carried out by a field agent or representative employed by the repository to develop its collection. Depending on the size, institutional history, and staffing patterns of the repository, the field work role may be performed in various ways. In a small institution, the manuscript curator may conduct field work as one of many responsibilities. A larger repository may support one or more fulltime field personnel. Some directors consider field work their exclusive province. Whatever the administrative hierarchy, however, the field agent should have some input into developing the collecting policy for the repository, and some measure of autonomy in negotiating on its behalf. Decisions made during field work operations largely determine the quality and completeness of collections accessioned, and the field agent is generally the person best acquainted with the problems and potential of any contemplated acquisition.

The field agent has the responsibility of translating the repository's acquisitions goals into reality by developing strong holdings in which the individual collections are significant and the total collection shows depth, interrelatedness, and a perceptible relationship to the universe of data. The activities and tasks which make up field work operations can be grouped into six stages: data-gathering, preliminary contact, appraisal, negotiation, transport and receiving, and follow-up. For the purposes of discussion, these stages will be described sequentially, although they do not always occur in sequence.

Data-Gathering

Usually a field agent begins with a lead, a reference to a person or organization whose records might be valuable. Leads come from many sources: newspaper articles, collections being processed in the repository, research requests for material not held, and referral by donors, colleagues, and friends of the collection. The initial step is to flesh out the lead with information which will enable the field agent to determine whether the collection falls within his repository's collecting scope or possibly merits a shift in the policy. If the field agent decides to pursue the lead, he needs considerable data about the collection subject: for individuals, extensive biographical information; for organizations, founding date and personnel, current officers and administrative structure, and organizational affiliations. The data can be assembled from local directories, biographical dictionaries, obituaries and newspaper backfiles, annual reports, and similar sources. The field agent should also exploit related collections in his repository as sources of information about potential acquisitions, and cultivate scholarly and community contacts who can serve as informants in the anthropological sense.

If the collection subject is not a living person or a continuing organization, the field agent will have to bring his information up to date in order to locate a potential donor. If, for example, records are sought of a settlement house founded in 1900 but not currently operating, he will have to discover whether the organization merged at some earlier period with another settlement. If he cannot trace an organizational survivor, he must attempt to locate former staff members or trustees. When researching deceased individuals, the field agent may undertake considerable genealogical inquiry in the attempt to find descendants or collateral family members.

The field agent also needs information about the prospective donor, particularly the relationship between the donor and the manuscripts. This information can ensure a productive approach to a collection or terminate a fruitless negotiation at an early date. The prospective donor may not have the authority to dispose of the manuscripts even though he has custody of them. The field agent should assemble whatever data he can about the provenance of the manuscripts, being particularly alert to changes in custody which may have implications for transfer of legal title to the materials. If an organizational collection is being sought, the field representative needs to determine who has the power to commit the records to a repository under the constitution and bylaws of the organization.

Another important piece of information is whether any portion of the manuscripts in question have been deposited in or committed to another repository. Split collections do not seem nearly so undesirable to the general public as they do to scholars and archivists. Field agents must be alert to donors' practice of sending materials from a single collection to several repositories according to some notion of their subject specialty. Learning just what other repositories have in their holdings can be difficult. Repository guides, catalogues, and announcements are always out of date, and accession lists are selective and irregularly issued. Despite frequent appeals for the compilation and publication of collecting policies of major repositories, little progress has been made in this area.⁴ There is no substitute for personal familiarity with the holdings and collecting policies of local institutions and those regional or national institutions which collect in the field agent's locality. If there are reasonable grounds to believe that another repository may already have a portion of the manuscripts being researched--or a commitment to them--the best thing to do is to ask the appropriate staff member of that repository. Depending on the response, the field agent must decide whether to pursue the collection. The risk that the inquiry will stimulate a competing offer to the potential donor is minimal and balanced by the reduction in time spent pursuing leads to unavailable collections. (While one cannot always depend on professional courtesy among archival colleagues, one can at least hope for it.)

Finally, the field agent should review the document types which he expects to encounter in the collection under consideration. If possible, similar collections in his own repository

should be examined to determine what items, formats, and records series are characteristic. This prepares the field archivist with a specific answer to the inevitable donor question, "What are you interested in?" A detailed and informed response helps establish the field agent's credibility to the donor, and the familiarity with the records makes the ensuing appraisal considerably easier.

Throughout field work operations, careful record-keeping is essential. The field representative will undoubtedly have many negotiations in progress simultaneously since individual collection negotiations can extend over years. One cannot rely on memory to keep these straight. A lead form is the first of several documents which will eventually comprise the repository's files on a particular collection. The lead form should be standardized and include space for the following information: collection name and significance; source of the lead; name, address, and telephone number of the prospective donor; relationship of the donor to the manuscripts; location and provenance of the manuscripts; date of initial compilation of the form; and the history of the negotiation. This amount of detail is necessary for leads which the field agent wishes to actively pursue; lower priority leads should be briefly noted with the date and source of information and maintained in a back-up lead file.

Preliminary Contact

The data-gathering stage prepares the field agent for productive interaction with the donor. If the repository is soliciting materials, the field agent must convince the prospective donor that a consideration of "old papers" is worth his time. The field agent must establish his credentials and make his institution's program and merits intelligible to the donor. Communication difficulties often occur at this stage if the archivist is not careful to avoid jargon. One cannot assume that the donor has any concept of the organic unity of records, provenance, or the value of preserving historical materials. Without patronizing the donor, the archivist must convey his concerns in terms which are meaningful to a nonprofessional. Drawing on the information previously researched, the field agent should indicate briefly the kinds of material being sought and the reasons for the repository's interest. He should then request an opportunity to meet with the donor and examine the manuscripts.

The mechanism for making this initial contact varies according to the source of the lead, the nature of the entity which created the records, and the level of personal acquaintance between the field agent and the donor. A formal letter enclosing the repository's descriptive brochures may be an appropriate first approach to a bureaucratic organization such as a welfare agency, while a phone call or visit may accomplish more in dealing with a labor leader, an artist, or a political collective. A social lunch, arranged by a mutual acquaintance, may be the only way of meeting a prominent politician or businessman. The field agent must tailor his approach to the donor based on his assessment of the situation in which the donor will be most comfortable.

The initial overture to a donor may produce no response, and the field agent should be prepared to follow up the inquiry. This follow-up may take the form of a telephone call, a second letter, or a contact made by a mutual acquaintance. Securing the opportunity to meet with the donor is often the single most difficult step in a negotiation. Obviously some discretion must be used in the process to avoid harassment of the donor. This process can be prolonged, and the field representative must be sensitive to nuances of communication, evaluating the reasons for delay and the most effective means of prodding a stalled negotiation. Careful dated notes should be made of any contact with the donor, and telephone memoranda and copies of correspondence should be entered in the repository's collection file.

Once an appointment has been secured with the prospective donor, the field agent has a complex agenda. He is seeking concrete data about the manuscripts in order to determine whether they represent a desirable addition to his repository's holdings. He also wants information about the provenance of the materials and the locus of authority to dispose of them. Finally, he must ascertain under what conditions the donor would be willing to place the materials in a repository. The two tasks, appraisal and negotiation, generally proceed simultaneously.

Appraisal

Appraisal involves assessing the nature, informational content, and completeness of a manuscript collection and its relevance to an institution's collecting policy and goals. The format of the records and their physical condition must be

evaluated in terms of costs and prospects for long-term preservation, and the administrative demands in processing and servicing the collection must be estimated. Optimally, the field agent formulates these judgements as a result of a thorough survey of the records on-site. During the preliminary research the field agent will have developed a hypothesis about the document types and subjects which "ought" to exist in any particular group of manuscripts. By comparing this outline to the actual materials, he can begin to determine whether there are gaps in the chronology or missing document types.

Surveying records on-site involves a feedback process. The field agent compares what he sees with what he thinks should be there; and asks questions. The materials which are initially shown to the field agent often represent only a small fraction of the extant manuscripts, since organizations are frequently unaware of the extent of their backfiles. Both organizational and personal donors are usually uncertain just what the field agent wants to see, and frequently think that the published reports or writings are essential and the unpublished material trivial. The field agent should routinely inquire about additional storage areas and examine them if possible, while educating the donor about the types of material he is seeking. For organizational records, or papers of professional people kept in office files, the field representative needs to learn what the actual practice has been in keeping files, as opposed to the formal procedures. Longtime clerical employees are frequently the best source of this information. Once they accept the legitimacy of the field agent's access to the files, they may be able to locate materials in dead storage as well as account for losses by natural disaster or records destroyed by former employees. Eliciting this kind of data requires patience and discretion; the field agent must also avoid being drawn into office politics. The survey is not a substitute for an accession record and the field agent should not become mired in detail. Essential information to be gathered about the records includes: inclusive dates, footage or number of pieces, document types, physical condition, and general arrangement. Unusual items such as rare periodicals, autographs, iconographic items, and artifacts should be noted. Large collections may require a survey of only a sample of the records series rather than examination of the entire collection, but in any event, the survey should not occupy more than a single working day.

The field agent's role in appraisal is not to determine the market value of records or their abstract merit as historic evidence but, rather, their value to his repository. Obviously, factors such as high monetary value and unique informational content will influence the assessment of desirability, but the field agent must also consider the relationship of the proposed acquisition to the repository's collecting policy and the costs and problems of housing, processing, and servicing the materials. Seeking to acquire any and every collection which is potentially available is not routinely the best decision; the field agent may recommend another repository as more suitable or may suggest that the donor consider establishing an in-house archive.

Frequently it is thought that a subject background in a particular area is the single most helpful tool in appraisal; but that emphasis leads to problems for the field agent who cannot be a specialist in all areas in which he collects. If the field agent relies exclusively on subject specialists for leads to collections, his collecting strategy may be skewed by the research interests of the advisors or current research fads. Furthermore, researchers who are not archivists are of little or no help in appraising potential acquisitions, since they are ill-equipped by training or experience to deal with voluminous collections of modern manuscripts. Most field representatives can tell horror stories about the prolonged negotiations required to correct problems with truncated collections which were solicited for repositories by subject specialists who were not archivists. The essential element in appraisal is the ability to perceive a collection as a whole, based on a brief examination of its component parts which are frequently disorganized and scattered.


Once that perception is gained, the archivist can proceed to evaluate the utility of the collection for research purposes and its suitability to the repository's program. The archivist should acquaint himself with research subjects and techniques in a number of fields so as to be able to gauge the informational content of records. He should also study formats and techniques of record-keeping characteristic of the historic periods in which he collects, and the changes in such practices up to the present. Ultimately the archivist will have to make the determination of which materials are of enduring value and should be housed in his repository.

Negotiation

The field agent's objective is to obtain both physical custody and legal title to the manuscripts being sought. Why a donor chooses to place materials in one repository rather than another is conjectural. Factors quite separate from a dispassionate evaluation of the merits of a repository may intrude upon the negotiation. Yet the field agent needs to keep in mind certain modes of decision-making behavior which frequently occur when dealing with donors.

For example, solicitation of organizational records usually involves preparation of a formal proposal submitted to the chief executive officer of the organization. The proposal summarizes the nature of the records sought, their historic significance, and the suitability of the soliciting repository for their deposit. Usually a draft copy of the proposed deed of gift is included, incorporating whatever restrictions or special provisions have been discussed in the preliminary stages. In a covering letter the archivist reviews the negotiation, outlines a sequence for implementation of the proposal, and requests an early decision.

The field agent must be aware of the effect of the donor's personal or institutional calendar on his willingness to make a decision about the records. Some administrators regard records disposition as a pre-retirement decision. Others will take action only when imminent disaster threatens the storage area or when the volume of non-current records being maintained in the office files becomes unmanageable. Even when the executive is convinced of the worth of an archival disposition, his ability to give priority to historic records will be influenced by such seasonal demands in the organization as budget preparation, reviews by a licensing or accrediting agency, or an annual meeting or fund-raising event. Unless the field agent gets a point-blank refusal to proceed with discussions, he should interpret delays as caused by internal factors. Sometimes a discrete inquiry about a more appropriate future date will produce the information that clarifies the source of the delay. In any event, the strategy with stalled negotiations is to maintain amicable personal contact with the executive. Forcing the issue will almost certainly be counterproductive--at all costs one wants to avoid a formal decision to refuse the repository's offer or to destroy the records.



Usually the final decision-making authority will be vested in a governing board with which the field agent may have to interact. The board may invite the archivist to address a monthly meeting or attend some social event. The field agent must adapt himself to the board schedule and have enough flexibility in his own working hours to meet over lunch, during the evening, or on weekends. Social invitations, particularly benefits, must be handled delicately. The field agent cannot be put in the position of financially supporting the organization in order to obtain the records, but he must realize that board members' responsiveness to a proposal may be conditioned by their personal acquaintanceship with the field agent.

Occasionally the field agent will pursue a collection to the final negotiating stage only to find that educating the board about the value of the records has precipitated their choice of another repository for their deposit. Although frustration at this kind of eventuality is natural, the archivist should take a long range view of the situation and conclude that the records are better housed in a repository--even though it is a competitor--than lost.

When dealing with donors of personal or family papers or collections assembled by a collector, the field agent has some different problems. Transactions between such donors and the field representative are likely to be considerably more personalized. The field agent will probably not be allowed unsupervised access to the manuscripts, and may have to proceed under the direct scrutiny of the donor and his lawyer. The donor may have an intense emotional reaction to the memorabilia of a spouse or parent and the field agent will need to exercise tact in meeting these feelings while getting his job done. The negotiations are very frequently conducted during quasi-social occasions, where discussion of business must be muted.

Personal privacy as an issue can often surface as donors attempt to avoid future embarrassment from disclosure of the papers. Donors may attempt to withhold certain materials they consider damaging to their reputation or that of their family. They may also attempt to draw the field agent into long-standing family disagreements, particularly if questions of the monetary value of the papers become involved. The field agent must be adept at diplomacy and prepared to suggest appropriate restrictions which will preserve the integrity of the collection without exposing the donors to casual scrutiny.

The timing of the decision to place papers in a repository can be quite different between institutional and personal donors. While dealing with a board may involve months of negotiation, a personal donor may offer papers on the spot--most frequently when a home or office is being vacated following a death. The field agent must be prepared to make a quick decision about the collection and to implement that decision. While a formal proposal is rarely employed in soliciting personal papers, the drawing of a deed of gift is frequently accomplished only after prolonged negotiation with family members and their attorneys.

Personal donors or collectors may also be interested either in selling the manuscripts or in having them appraised for purposes of obtaining a tax deduction. This situation is fraught with difficulties for both novice and experienced field agents. Purchasing manuscripts involves making an estimate of their fair market value--or having them professionally appraised. The field agent who does not regularly purchase manuscripts from dealers may be totally unprepared to make an offer to a donor without considerable research into auction catalogues and other price sources. Under the new tax law, donors of self-created materials will still be prevented from claiming tax deductions of the market value of their works.⁵ Furthermore, donors of assembled collections have had the valuation of their gifts increasingly challenged by the Internal Revenue Service. The field agent should familiarize himself with the extensive literature on these issues and the names of qualified appraisers in his locality.⁶ No one should attempt to offer tax advice to donors without a legal opinion.

Once the decision has been made to place material in his repository, the field agent's objective is securing transfer of title and literary property rights to the collection. The need for the repository to control access to and copying and publication of manuscripts in its holdings has been extensively discussed in the literature, and samples of deeds of gifts incorporating the basic provisions are available. A repository should have its own set of standard forms, approved by legal counsel, which can be modified to suit particular collections. Since most donors will refer this document to their lawyer, the deed of gift should be drawn in conformance with the relevant statutes governing contracts in a given locality.

If the early negotiations have been well thought out, this

concluding transaction should present few problems. The deed of gift will have been prepared to reflect the negotiated terms between the donor and the repository. The final document should be prepared in at least two copies and signed by the donor and the representative of the repository. The field agent may have the authority to execute such deeds, but a higher-level signature may be more appropriate for major gifts, especially if the initial deposit signals a continuing relationship between the donor and the repository. The deed of gift becomes part of the repository's permanent files on the collection; the donor also retains a copy.

Transport and Receiving

The field agent's goal is to deliver all the manuscripts designated for deposit from the donor to the repository with a minimum of disturbance of the original order and no physical damage. The field agent should arrange transport with the lowest expenditure of repository resources consonant with these objectives. Depending on the size and condition of the collection, and access to and distance of the storage areas from the repository, the field agent may become involved in packing, hauling, and supervising transport.

When collections are shipped to a repository from some distance, the reliability of the carrier and the storage conditions in transit are of paramount importance. If the donor is assuming responsibility for packing and shipping, the archivist should recommend packing techniques and the preferred carrier: air freight, bus, United Parcel Service, registered mail, etc. The packer must supply a detailed description of the number of items and containers, shipping date and point of departure, and shipping numbers and expected date of arrival. All of this information will be essential in tracing a shipment which fails to arrive, and a packing list will speed the inventory of the collection when received. In recommending a carrier, the field agent needs to be familiar with the experience of local repositories and weigh the relative importance of speed, reliability, and costs in transporting any particular collection.

If the field agent is to arrange transportation on-site, he has considerably more control over protection of the materials and maintenance of the original order. The field agent will decide whether part or all of the manuscripts must be repacked--in containers which he supplies. Delivery to the

repository depends on the size of the collection, the distance, and the transportation available. If one is collecting out of the immediate vicinity of the repository, the material will probably have to be placed with a commercial carrier. Local collecting depends largely on the volume of the materials. Small collections (one to six records center boxes) can be carried in a taxi, and two persons can transport ten to fifteen such boxes in a station wagon. Anything larger may require a van or truck. Some institutions have their own truck and crews, others will have to hire them or rely on volunteer assistance. In dealing with unionized labor, the field agent must be aware of the conditions which govern working hours, breaks, and performance of specific tasks. A working acquaintance with the foreman or supervisor of whatever trucking crew is being employed will prove immensely beneficial.

Mechanics of packing are not complicated, although they can be exhausting. Some system of identifying the sequence of containers as they are packed must be established, the containers marked in at least two places, and a packing list prepared. Exceptionally fragile items will require special care.⁷ If file cabinets are to be transported intact, drawers must be secured, and the filing labels noted. All repacking should be done by the archival staff or under the direct supervision of the field agent. There are many possibilities for misunderstandings during these activities, and the field agent must be available to answer questions, enforce the packing specifications, and generally mediate between the donor and the laborers. One cannot rely on the donor to supervise pickups on-site without risking missing containers and misdirected shipments. In the repository receiving room the field agent must leave instructions about the unloading order and the storage arrangements. The delivery must be verified against the packing list. Time spent at these tasks will not only guarantee the integrity of the collection as received, but will also immensely simplify the accessioning.

Optimally, every repository should have a receiving area isolated from the rest of the manuscript quarters. In practice this is not always the case, and the field agent has the responsibility of preventing contamination by incoming collections. If the materials have been stored in a basement, attic, or other location where presence of mold and insects is a reasonable assumption, the collection should be fumigated before it is brought into the repository. Commercial fumigators

are often inexperienced in treating paper, and the field agent should seek advice from a conservator before proceeding. Once the collection has been accessioned, the materials are no longer the direct concern of the field agent.

Follow-Up

Maintaining good donor/repository relations requires follow-up activities. Donors should be recognized for their contributions to manuscript collections. This recognition can take many forms: thank-you letters, listing of donors in the repository newsletter or annual report, social events, exhibits, and the like. In many cases a donor will have additional materials to give; either supplementary additions to the original collection, different collections, or leads to other potential donors. In some instances, donors may even support the establishment of a collection with a financial gift. They should be cultivated. If the institution has an organized group of friends and benefactors, much of the public relations work can be performed by them. Otherwise, the field agent will probably have the major role in continuing relations with donors. He may give advice on records management and microfilm projects, consult on exhibits and anniversary celebrations, and assist with special projects. The possibilities are endless and time-consuming, but a necessary part of the field operation.

In practice, of course, field work operations do not fit neatly into the sequence described; various stages are telescoped or elongated. The field agent is not always in the position of soliciting materials; sometimes collections are offered which he cannot appraise and must accept or reject on the significance of the subject or the reputation of the donor. Sometimes a supplementary accession proves more significant than the original, due to the discovery of missing materials or a more receptive attitude by the donor. Negotiations for transfer of title may continue long after materials are accessioned. In cases of defunct organizations, it may be difficult to determine who has the authority to transfer title. In some cases a personal donor may wish to place materials on indefinite deposit, perhaps awaiting a more favorable tax situation. Occasionally a donor may be willing to part with his entire collection at one time, but more often the field agent is involved in repeated dealings with the same donor as material is parcelled out to the repository over a period of years. It may not always be possible for the field agent to conclude a collection negotiation

with all questions of ownership resolved. He must, however, make an effort to determine the ownership of materials in his repository's custody, even if he cannot secure transfer of these rights to the repository.

Conclusion

This discussion of the technical operations of field work would be incomplete without some consideration of the overall approach which characterizes a successful operation. In a sense, the field agent tries to create within his repository a microcosm of a past world, the boundaries of which are defined by the collecting policy. Collections accessioned are perceived as a part of a universe of data which once existed, only portions of which survive. The field agent strengthens his collection by acquiring materials which fill in gaps in that universe or make clearer the significance of previously acquired manuscripts. Thus, one of the most important characteristics of a field representative is the ability to perceive linkages between the present and the past, and among elements of that past.

The field agent must develop a sensitivity to various types of connectors, persons and geographic location in particular. It is a commonplace observation that individuals in modern society perform in many roles and that interest groups form around issues. The field agent tries to discover the connecting links among persons, organizations, issues, and events in the past in order to determine what materials to seek out for his collection. As one becomes more familiar with a historic period, certain individuals take on pivotal significance; all their associations, personal and professional, become potential acquisition targets. When such individuals cluster in an organization, it becomes a high priority collection subject. As the field agent researches a potential acquisition, he will undoubtedly turn up considerable data on these related entities which he should exploit as sources for additional manuscripts.

Like the historian, the field agent tries to develop an empathy for the past, a sense of the relationships which once existed. One of the most useful tools is a grasp of locality. In a metropolitan area, for example, one can identify residential, commercial, and industrial areas, and similar types of organizations which tend to cluster in certain areas, often in the same office building. This contiguity not only provides

leads to current organizations, but it also suggests the value of familiarity with the geography and man-made landscape of the area in which the field agent collects. Urban geography undergoes many changes, but scattered buildings, street names, and familiar colloquialisms may identify a former ethnic settlement or occupational district. The ability to pinpoint the physical location of a collection subject may enable the field agent to find long-forgotten manuscripts by walking the streets, looking at the buildings, and talking with local people. This technique may well be at the root of the discovery stories so dear to the hearts of raconteurs and journalists.

Planning and systematic allocation of resources are essential to the development of a repository's holdings. The field agent must have a concept of the specific areas in which he wants to build collections and strategy for their acquisition. Components of this strategy are both conceptual and pragmatic, since the field agent has limits on both time and money. If the field agent has funds with which to purchase manuscripts, the costs of acquisition are obvious, but gifts also involve costs in salary, mail or phone solicitation and entertainment of donors, and travel and transport of material. The field agent must attempt to rationally allocate his own time, devoting the major portion to tasks which he alone can perform (negotiation and appraisal in particular) and delegating others to trained staff. To achieve efficiency in acquisitions, the field agent must ensure that all tasks are performed in accordance with accepted professional standards, while resisting the temptation to do them all himself.

Finally, a successful field operation is characterized by meticulous attention to detail supported by careful record-keeping. Thorough research on a collection subject may turn up the essential fact which enables the field agent to make a productive approach to the donor. Assimilation of the details of the field survey may make the difference between accessioning a complete collection or a truncated one. Record-keeping is essential because acquisitions often run a tortuous course. Frequently, negotiations have to be deferred and resumed after months, even years, elapse. In the course of negotiations, manuscripts may be moved from their original location, suffer damage, or be lost. Challenges to already completed negotiations may arise subsequently due to changes in personnel in the donating organization or claims to ownership by a previously unknown person. The field agent must prepare for the

unexpected by documenting the nature of the collection and the course of negotiations with carefully dated notes and copies of all relevant communications between repository and donor.

Completion of the tedious details of negotiating collections is a hallmark of a well-run program. One further quality deserves mention--the effort to make accessible to the repository the information about acquisitions which the field agent carries in his head. It is obvious that no two field representatives will have the same personal style or contacts, and thus no field agent is ever truly replaceable. However, it is unlikely that a field agent will devote his entire professional career to building the collection of a single repository, and therefore naive to assume that he will always be available to clarify the terms of the negotiation, the peculiarities of the donor, or the schedule for future accessions of supplementary material. It is his obligation to keep records of such facts so that his successor can carry on the program without re-inventing it. The ability to take a disinterested view of one's successes and failures in field work and to convey that experience to others is the sine qua non of a professional field agent.

1. The most useful references on manuscript acquisition are Kenneth W. Duckett, Modern Manuscripts (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1975): Chapter 3; and Ruth B. Bordin and Robert M. Warner, The Modern Manuscript Library (New York and London: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1966): Chapters 1 and 2. A scenario on collection development is portrayed in Mary Lynn McCree's article, "Good Sense and Good Judgment: Defining Collections and Collecting," Drexel Library Quarterly 11 (January, 1975): 21-33. For a review of the literature, see Modern Archives and Manuscripts: A Select Bibliography, comp. ([Washington, D.C.] Society of American Archivists, 1975): Section 23.1 - 23.6.

2. Robert M. Warner, "History in Your Attic," Journal of Mississippi History 26 (1964): 283-98; and Lucile M. Kane, "Manuscript Collecting," In Support of Clío: Essays in Memory

of Herbert A. Kellar, William B. Hesselstine and Donald R. McNeil, eds. (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1958): 29-48, both place their examples in the larger context of developing a program, but the acquisitions processes receive comparatively little attention in their discussion.

3. Frank B. Evans et al., "A Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers," American Archivist 37 (July, 1974): 415-33. This article, available as a reprint, does not include any definition of terms such as field work, lead, donor, acquisition, negotiation, etc.

4. The National Historical Publications and Records Commission's project to update and revise the 1961 Guide to Archives and Manuscripts in the United States has requested information on the collecting policies of reporting institutions ("current subject areas of solicitation" and "other materials accepted"). The NHPRC plans to include this data in their forthcoming publication.

5. Tax Reform Act of 1976, P.L. 94-455, approved October 4, 1976.

6. The Society of American Archivists' Committee on Collecting Personal Papers and Manuscripts has compiled a list of appraisers which is available in mimeograph form from the committee.

7. Caroline K. Keck's volume, Safeguarding Your Collection in Travel (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1970) although addressed principally to curators of museum objects, contains useful suggestions on packing and shipping.