



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Debby Shoctor, President

Hello again everyone. I hope that when this reaches you it really will be Spring – it's been a long, hard winter out here on the Prairies, and we deserve a lovely Spring. I also hope that this Summer does not bring the terrible floods it did last year, however, if it does, we will be prepared.

The ASA has recently received notification from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation that we will be receiving flood relief funding for last year's floods. This is a great relief for those archives affected by last year's floods, the Museum of the Highwood and Calgary Police Archives as well as Fort McMurray, which was the victim of a different flood. As a result of this funding, we extended our grants program this year to include flood relief, and also extended the deadline for applications for these funds. We also intend to hire a conservator to travel to our member institutions and evaluate their emergency

preparedness plans and make sure they are ready to face any future disasters of this sort. On this front, I am sad to say that there are predictions of more flooding this summer as well, so as the Boy Scouts say, "Be prepared!"

I am looking forward to seeing many of you at our upcoming conference in Jasper this May. Rene and Ericka have been hard at work on preparations for this conference, which should be very exciting. Our special guest keynote speaker is Laura Millar, whom I am sure you will enjoy meeting and hearing. Watch for your invitation in the mail and on our website soon, and be sure



to consider coming to the pre-conference workshop.

I urge all of you to take the training sessions we will offer at the conference on Alberta On Record. Janet McMaster will be in attendance to answer all your questions, and is of course always available by email.

After our conference comes the annual ACA conference, this year taking place in Victoria, BC. I also hope to see some of you out there and look forward to visiting with Raymond Frogner, one of our ex-pat members who has been working out there for a couple of years now.

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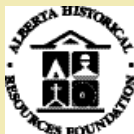
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The Archives Society of Alberta is supported in part by a grant from the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation.

I would like to give best wishes to Dr. Merrill Distad, who is retiring as University Archivist from the University of Alberta this Spring, as well as to Alexandra Hatcher, who is leaving her post as Director of the Alberta Museums Association, and say that I look forward to working with their replacements when they are appointed.

There are a few nominations open for Board positions and awards, which will be coming up at the conference, and if you would like to run for a position or be nominated for an award, I urge you to contact our new chair of the Nominations Committee, Past-President Susan Stanton.

Take care and I look forward to seeing you in Jasper!

FROM THE DESK OF THE NEW ARCHIVES ADVISOR

Rene Georgopolis, Executive Director/Archives Advisor

Since Archives Week finished, Ericka and I have been busy planning and preparing for all the activity that will happen this spring. I am organizing my very first conference.

The conference theme of risk and archives is one that is timely as archives seem to be facing risks and threats in all directions – whether it is from funding shortages or natural disasters or other issues. Laura Millar will

be discussing her thoughts on the current archival climate and ways in which we may act in response.

The idea of archives in interesting times and our future also was a topic at the Archives Summit. In Alberta, there were two host institutions that allowed archivists to come and listen in on the Summit – one in Calgary and one in Edmonton. In Calgary, the University of Calgary was the host venue at which 11 archivists attended and in Edmonton, the Provincial Archives of Alberta offered their space at which about 6 archivists listened in. The presenters gave a variety of viewpoints on the next steps for archives. It was interesting to see presentations from those who are not working in the profession and their ideas regarding our profession. The entire process made me realize that as archivists we have a lot of work to do to spread public awareness of our profession's importance. There was a lack of understanding by some presenters that we are in fact plugged into



social media and working on digital preservation among other things. Elizabeth Walker has provided her account of the Archives Summit in this newsletter.

Also on the topic of risk, the ASA's funding body, Alberta Historical Resources Foundation, announced on January 27 that we will be receiving funding to assist any archival institutions that were affected by the 2013 floods. This money will also be used for preparing for future potential disasters. The programs that we will have in place to assist with disasters should be announced in the coming months.

Other recent news from the ASA is that Heather MacNeil will be teaching a workshop on Privacy and Archives at the ASA Conference on May 22. For details, please visit the ASA website.

I have also been working on assisting institutions with their Access to Holding grant applications and we have now just adjudicated the applications. The Board of Directors has been refining ASA's Strategic Plan and the results should be announced to our membership soon.

Winter will soon be over and hopefully, we will see many of you at the conference in Jasper in May.

Alberta On Record News

Janet McMaster, ASA Database Administrator

I am happy to be back as the ASA's Database Administrator, and very happy to report that there have been some significant improvements and developments with Alberta on Record over the last several months. These include:

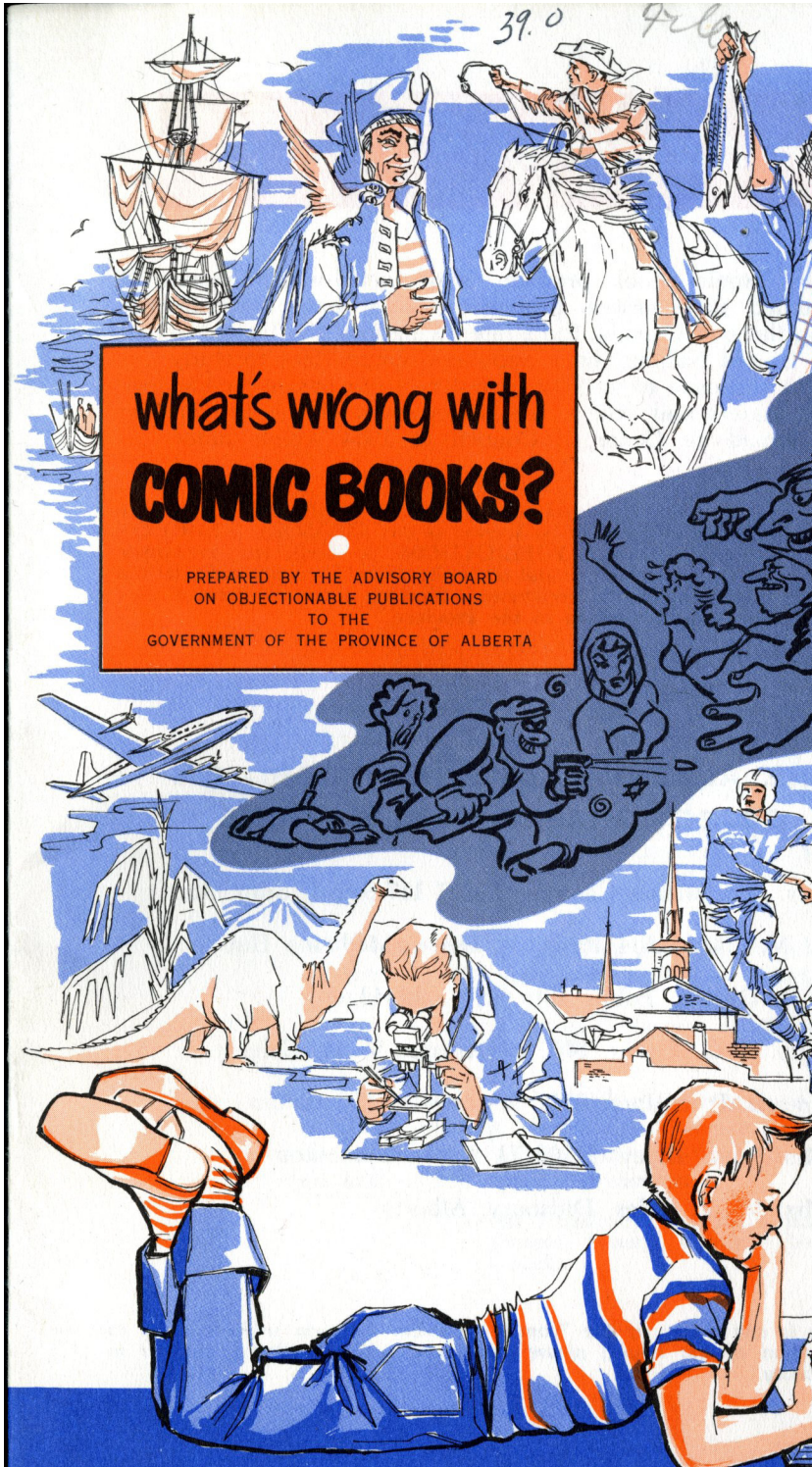
- Authority Records – Initially, there were issues with some authority records being linked to the incorrect fonds, but these have now been corrected.
- Proper Display of Scanned Documents - Scanned documents that were migrated from Alberta InWord were difficult to read. Artefactual have made some changes in the way our scanned documents are displayed in Alberta On Record, and they are now showing up properly.
- Subject Taxonomy – The ASA has traditionally had a controlled list of subject terms, and there were some inconsistencies with the terms after the migration was done. These have now been fixed.
- Database Upgrade – In mid-January, Alberta On Record was upgraded to AtoM 2.0. This new version of the software has a number of significant improvements, including increased searching capabilities. The look and feel of Alberta On Record has been tailored to match the new look of the ASA's web site, and the feedback that has been received to date has been very positive.

While there are still a few outstanding issues to resolve, I feel that we are definitely moving in the right direction. I am currently in the process of updating the training manual to reflect the changes in AtoM 2.0, and then will be scheduling some training sessions. If you have any questions or comments in the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact me at archives.database@gmail.com, or by phone at (403) 236-3406.

New in Collections Management at the Provincial Archives of Alberta

Provincial Archives of Alberta

The Collections Management Section is pleased to announce that the records of the Advisory Board on Objectionable Publications sous-fonds (GR0065.001SF) have been described and are now available on HerMIS.



Throughout North America in the early 1950s, parents and politicians grew concerned over the amount of criminal, violent and gory scenes depicted in comic books, particularly after the 1954 publication of psychiatrist Frederic Wertham's *Seduction of the Innocent*. To address these concerns in Alberta, the provincial government created a committee known as the Advisory Board on Objectionable Publications.

Active from 1954 to 1973, the Advisory Board reviewed comic books and magazines to determine whether they were suitable for sale in Alberta and provided advice about which ones should be withdrawn from sale. The Advisory Board produced several publications, including a popular pamphlet titled *What's Wrong with Comics?* that sold thousands of copies across North America. By the 1960s, the rationale behind the Advisory Board gradually came into question. There were no laws to enforce the recommendations of the Advisory Board, leading to a patchwork of compliance on the part of magazine distributors across the province. By 1970, members of the Advisory Board themselves questioned their "effectiveness and purpose in this day and age." The Government of Alberta did not appoint new members after the terms of all existing members expired in 1973 and formally disbanded the Advisory Board in 1976.

The records are available to researchers without restrictions. The Provincial Archives also holds the records of James G. MacGregor, the last chair of the Advisory Board (PR0206). All records may be accessed in the Sandra Thomson Reading Room during regular hours.

Upcoming Exhibit: The Sisterhood of Longing

Marlena Wyman, Honorary Member

Honourary ASA member Marlena Wyman's exhibit *The Sisterhood of Longing* opens April 25, 2014 at Jackson Power Gallery, Edmonton (2nd fl. 9744 - 60 Ave). This is the exhibit that Marlena has been working toward for the past couple of years, inspired by her archival research into pioneer prairie women's diaries, letters and photographs.

Her encaustic paintings and installations will incorporate primary source documents and photographs from numerous archives across Alberta and Saskatchewan.

She is also curating a concurrent group exhibit at the gallery titled *The Memory Rooms* that will include local artists Patrick Arés-Pilon, Caitlin Richards and Mallory Gemmel, whose artworks are also history inspired.

The archival connection continues; Jackson Power Gallery is managed by artist and former archivist Paddy Lamb.

For further updates regarding the exhibit, see Marlena's art blog: <http://theprairieline.wordpress.com/>

Encaustic and mixed media on canvas, 16"X 20"

Inspired by a quote from Gertie Chase's letter to her mother, 1921

I made the girls middies out of dyed flour sacks. I dyed some pink, they look alright with a little white piping on them...I have to make skirts and drawers out of flour sacks too, and a good many other things. I made Florence a dress and bloomers out of pink flour sacks. Nobody would guess it. It looked just like chambray.

Gertie Chase came to the Wapiti River area, Alberta, from Tonasket, Washington State in the 1920s.

(Letters: Provincial Archives of Alberta PR1973.0569)

(Photograph: The Potter Children, [Edmonton, AB]. Provincial Archives of Alberta B8444)



Flour Children by Marlena Wyman

Some Thoughts on the Canadian Archives Summit

Elizabeth Walker, Archivist, City of Edmonton Archives

On Friday, January 17, I joined archivists in regional gatherings across the country for the live streaming of the Canadian Archives Summit: Towards a New Blueprint for Canada's Recorded Memory. In Alberta, the gatherings were at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) and the University of Calgary. As the actual Summit was held at the University of Toronto, we got up ridiculously early to participate while those in the east stayed at work late on a Friday night.

The bilingual event was organized by the Association des archivists du Québec (AAQ), the Association of Canadian Archivists (ACA), the Canadian Council of Archives (CCA) as well as Ian Wilson. It had three components, background papers, presenters and discussion. This discussion is ongoing as the proceedings will remain online for a few months to give everyone the opportunity to participate. The Summit was the start of the development of a new, coordinated Canadian archives strategy and will be used to inform the activities of our national organizations.

The writers, presenters and the audience in Toronto were a mix of archivists and allies (as Ian Wilson calls them) like historians and representatives from heritage organizations. Most of the day was spent on the presentations by Les Agents Provocateurs, which is a curious name. At first I thought it was because they were there to raise controversial issues and perhaps to spark reactions. But then I remembered that the term actually means something quite different: infiltrators planted to spark rash action! At any rate, the presentations were successful at generating discussion in my group. I think it was a very different experience in Toronto compared to those in the gathering points. Our discussion was lively and there was something very cathartic about making sarcastic remarks at the screen when a speaker said something we disagreed with. Other regional participants said they had similar experiences. I believe it led to a greater degree of honesty than a conventional gathering would have. At the end of the day we submitted a synopsis of our discussion by e-mail.

I plan on submitting further comments as there were several interesting ideas put forward in the papers and presentations that I have definite opinions on.

The Thought Papers are available on the ACA's website <http://archivists.ca/content/resources-canadian-archives-summit> and the recording of the livestream is available here <https://webcasts.welcome2theshow.com/ACA2014/2034>. It is unedited so there is some footage of coffee breaks, etc. There was mention of making the speakers notes available and possibly an edited version of the live stream.

I was most interested in two themes, lack of public awareness and the management of born digital records. With the former, most people are unaware of archives and those that know about us usually have misconceptions. Either we're dusty places that have little to offer or, we are useful but only if we digitize everything. Tom Nesmith's paper calls for advocacy and suggests creating something like a Coalition for Canadian Archives made of representatives from our associations as well as users of archives. A couple of people mentioned this idea in their presentations and I would like to see it given more thought.

I found Richard Dancy's presentation on RAD very interesting. He talked about how RAD has fallen behind international standards and said we should ask ourselves what we are trying to describe and for what purposes. RAD helped us by getting us to all describe the same way. A new RAD should help us look outward so we're not just talking to ourselves. We need to recognize that there are other communities who have different wants and needs from description. Perhaps more inclusive description would go a long way to improving our image.

Born digital records came up a few times throughout the day. Jonathan Dorey argued that archival theory has a solid foundation but we need to expand our analogue focus to include the needs of digital records. I believe our larger institutions struggle with digital records, so how can the small, community archives cope? One statistic from Lara Wilson of the CCA is that 64% of Canadian Archives operate with a discretionary budget of less than \$10,000. I'm very interested in a community solution to born digital records. Sharing resources and expertise (something the associations are already designed to do) would go a long way to helping these small archives with their digital holdings. This idea was touched upon in Luciana Duranti and Corinne Rogers' paper as well as by Lara Wilson.

At the PAA, our discussion focused on user needs and the lack of sustained funding. It was pointed out that the users of archives change over time. Genealogists are one of our biggest user groups right now, but this may not always be the case. People use archives for all sorts of reasons (some of the papers and presenters touched on these different uses) and we can't focus on the needs of one group at the expense of others, or even over other archival processes. We talked about how we need to focus on all our core activities and access is just one of them.

In terms of sustainable funding, we discussed how some things, like archives, are a public good and should be publicly funded. Something like corporate sponsorship inevitably skews work and it becomes about the corporate good, not the public good. Would it be better for us to focus on a public relations campaign on what archives are and what archivists do and change expectations? All the archivists I know truly believe that archives are necessary in society but we only seem to talk to ourselves about it. I think we should take our passion for archives and start selling it to the average Canadian.

You may disagree, or you may have other concerns. I invite you to have your say and send your thoughts by e-mail to summit@archivists.ca or through an online form at <http://archivists.ca/content/comment-agent-provocateur-presentation-commentaires-sur-la-pr-sentation-d-un-agent-provocate>. The more voices that contribute, the more nuanced a strategy that will come out of the Summit. There are so many issues confronting archives, I don't envy those who will try and make a strategy to deal with all of them. But that's what this Summit was for. And it's what we, as a profession, need – a cohesive, national strategy to maintain and grow a healthy Canadian Archives System.

PEOPLE AND PLACES

Mary Flynn has left the Sisters of Providence Archives as she has been offered a new position in Halifax. We will miss Mary.

Karen Baron retired from the Lutheran Historic Institute Archives on February 1.

Heather Northcott of the Edmonton Public School Board Archives has just been hired as the intern for Reference Archivist at the PAA. Her last day at the school board is March 6. Congratulations on your new position!

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SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

SUBMISSIONS, QUESTIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The **Archives Society of Alberta News** is published quarterly by the Archives Society of Alberta. Submissions, questions and suggestions should be directed to the Newsletter Editor c/o:

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Individuals and institutions are encouraged to submit articles, reviews, reports, photographs or letters to the editor to the **Archives Society of Alberta News**, Issues #1, 2, and 3. Submissions are preferred in electronic format as Word files for textual submissions, or as JPG files for graphic submissions.

Please note:

Issue #4 is reserved for Annual Reports of the Society and its committees.

The views expressed in the Archives Society of Alberta Newsletter are not necessarily those of the Archives Society of Alberta or its Editor.



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