Introduction/Context Setting

- 1978 SAA meeting in Nashville
- College and University Archives Committee (then about 50 people) with about 34 present.
- Agenda for CUAC: News, *College and University Archives Reader*, report of Sub-Committee on Standards for College and University Archives.
- Product of that day was a document that later was approved by SAA Council as the *College and University Archives Guidelines*. 
Tensions and Controversies

“We could never consider having students do the processing.”

“Modernist”/public archives approach for hybrid archives/manuscript repositories vs. “Traditionalist” emphasis on core institutional records and services--archives as an extension of the college administration.

Currents in a Flowing River

- The C&U Archives Committee, soon to be a PAG, was a flowing river of unknown width and velocity.
- Later learned that it was filled with eddies and whirlpools that were taking their toll on the consensus and cohesion of the group
Early 1970s, new group of archivists, especially those coming out of training programs in Midwest, were pursuing a rather expansive vision of the college and university archives calling for archivists to be involved in:

- records management,
- outreach/promotion of use of holdings
- collecting records of faculty
- alumni papers
- documentation of student life
- subject collections beyond institutional history
- oral history
- research and publication
- service on university committees


The “expansionists” saw themselves in opposition to:

"... Pyrrhic purist[s], [who] in defining too narrowly the archivist's purview, succeed only in diminishing his influence on the campus."

30 years later, however, it would seem that the “expansionist” side carried the day. Academic archives today typically include much more than institutional records. They function largely in a library and information service mode. They have followed guidelines if not specific standards, and there is a strong interest in records management.
Meanwhile, back at the ranch . . . .

Trends in higher education:

- interdisciplinarity
- diversity of student, faculty, and staff
- de-unionization
- corporatization
- student-centric focus
- information technology that results in more documents of lower quality
- decrease in staff attention to management of files and information resources

Profession not standing still: the “NEA Agenda”

- digital "collecting" and collaborations
- institutional repositories
- electronic records management programs
- digital asset management systems
- integrating primary sources into the curriculum
- documenting the classroom
- portals, e-journals, grey literature, web publishing
- faculty and archivist collaborations to integrate archives into courses
- cross-institutional collaborations
- revenue-generating ventures
- service on campus committees & task forces
- personnel management
Dwarfs agenda articulated by Burckel and which raised the concerns of the then traditionalists.
Yet, logically cannot really argue against this new agenda any more than 1970s archivists could have dismissed Burckel’s.

Alternatives to just throwing up our hands:

Pre-eminent issue is involvement in the design and creation of new record systems. Otherwise, there will be no archives to process, preserve, or provide reference service to in the future.

Not a radical position--55 years ago, Ernst Posner wrote
“Unless the archivist undertakes the delicate job of volunteering advice in matters of current record administration...the future user will find altogether too many gaps in the records, while on the other hand he will be overwhelmed by the plethora of valueless material."
Letting go: Setting priorities

- Accept limits on what can do--some things are going to be lost and the archives cannot be complete
- Use strategic planning and follow a progression of selective attention over 3-5 year cycle
- For “must do” customer services, continue them but set quotas and limits

Setting priorities

- Do as much as you can with collaborations--get others to do archival tasks
- Build allies among those institutional agents with a strategic stake in the same areas as the archives, e.g., campus computing, auditing, registrar
- Work to convince campus agents to understand that the archival need for enduring records is also their need and responsibility as well
- Get others to be their own archivists
Setting priorities

- Create a quick and dirty electronic infrastructure to stash away those electronic materials that do come your way even data refreshing, migration, or emulation must wait until later
- Try to make the paper “float”
  - let incoming paper material, sit unprocessed, or accessioned only
  - combine with remote library-depository like storage.
  - require folder lists with all records transfers
  - consider doing full processing only “on demand”

Distinctive character of archival mission

- Our job is to be the faithful archivists for society—we should not try to be librarians, historians, or digital information specialists.
- Don’t get lost in technology or item-level management
- Keep focus on the seven domains of archives:
  - authoritative establishment and administration of programs,
  - authentication of documents,
  - appraisal,
  - arrangement,
  - description,
  - preservation, and
  - use
Archival gymnastics

- We are not magicians, but we have to be jugglers or maybe slight-of-hand artists.
- The archivist needs considerable autonomy to define the archives' mission and goals, as well as the means needed to accomplish them.
- The archivist must take primary responsibility for all decisions affecting the program’s direction.
- Must maintain a balance among the many forces bearing down on the program. Over-compliance with any particular interest group will weaken the core of the archival program.

Archival leadership

- At the heart of the best archival programs, will be the archivist's vision and ability to exploit multiple interests and constituencies.
- It is precisely the challenge of selecting of which practices to follow and which influences to accept—that renders archives a professional activity.
- Such balancing requires compromises and local approaches but with one eye clearly fixed on external expertise.
- Academic archives is managerial work that requires decisions and actions based on a thorough professional knowledge combined with a deep understanding of the realities of one's own institution.
Core of being a professional

- Not rigidly adhering to externally developed standards, but
  - balancing resources, opportunities, external standards, and institutional interests.
- Textbook answers are seldom real solutions.
- The challenges are multiple, our resources are few, but our vision and our sense of purpose are unbounded.
- Go for it!