



PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

Debby Shoctor, President

I hope everyone has been enjoying their summer vacation. While you have been busy lying in the sun, canoeing, sailing, cottage-going and what have you, I have been busy packing. Yes, for the first time in its history, our Archives is moving. For some of you, who have experienced this situation, I feel sympathy pains as you roll your eyes and groan. For the rest of you, I can only warn you about what upheaval this brings.

At first, I thought, "No big deal, everything is already in boxes." Well, MOST things are in boxes, but what about all the files that have to be put in boxes, the large format items in map cabinets that have to be foldered or rolled and then put in boxes? What about all the framed items you never got to that have to be un-framed, all the plaques that have to be disassembled? Then there are all the books, video tapes, DVDs, etc. that are loose and have to be boxed. Have you ever packed 5000 books with a summer student who can't alphabetize or categorize and whose handwriting you can't read? I started weeding the collection about four months ago, leaving items on a table labelled "Free Books to Good Homes," and miraculously, most of them disappeared. But that was counterbalanced by the people who still continue to this day to bring me more

books and more items for the archives. Normally, I would be thrilled by this, but when you are packing to move out, donations are an unwelcome visitor.

We actually got in a very important donation a couple of weeks ago from a prominent member of the community who was going into an old age home. I couldn't refuse this donation even though I had to drop everything I was doing and rush over there to help the family sort through it, box it up, put it in my car to take back to the archives, and then process it. And I am glad I didn't – it was an invaluable collection which will be the highlight of this year's donations, but it certainly threw a wrench into my packing.

Another problem with moving is that you keep getting reference questions and inquiries, even though you have

packed everything in boxes. Then you have to go looking for things which were formerly easily accessible, and now are packed away. It is a very difficult decision to make whether to go looking for something for a patron who desperately needs it, or to simply tell them, sorry, we are moving, so I can't help you for at least a month, maybe more. It goes against the principle of being a reference archivist and trying to help people, but unfortunately, sometimes you just have to bite the bullet and say no.

The process of sorting and weeding has also brought to light some undiscovered treasures of the collection. People always say, "How can you discover things in an Archives, everything should be catalogued." Yes,



contents

- 3 Not Goodbye, but See You Again
- 4 ASA Database Conversion
- 5 Tamming the White Elephant

- 6 Return to High River
- 7 People and Places

archives

SOCIETY OF ALBERTA

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

President — 2012 - 2013

Debby Shoctor

Vice President

Judy Kovacs

Secretary

Karen Langley

Treasurer

Lisa Atkinson

Institutional Member-at-Large

Leslie Pearson

Individual Member-at-Large

Jennifer Willard

COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Grants

Leslie Pearson

Education

Susan Stanton

Communications

Terry O'Riordan

ANA

Braden Cannon

NEWSLETTER

Advertising, Design and Layout

Carrie Herrick-Fitzgerald

ASA STAFF

Executive Director/Archives

Advisor

Temporarily Vacant

Member Services Manager

Carrie Herrick-Fitzgerald

Financial Coordinator

Temporarily Vacant

Database Administrator

Carrie-Ann Lunde



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

things are catalogued, but not down to the item level, and it sometimes takes a thorough house cleaning to find them. For example, my student, David, while packing, discovered some very rare books in our collection, because he is naturally curious, and started looking them up on the internet. We have now separated from the bulk of the collection almost 100 books which are over a century old and very rare, and I will take special care in housing them in our new location. In addition, I found an autographed program from an Edmonton Flyers vs. Detroit Redwings game in Edmonton in 1958, signed by every player on both teams, including Gordie Howe and Red Kelly! One of my co-workers happened to walk into my office at the time and offered me \$1000 on the spot for it. Of course I refused and ferreted it away in its fonds again, but at least I know it is there.

That's another point – although we have all sorts of sophisticated finding aids and cataloguing systems, a lot of the knowledge of an Archivist is physical, spatial and temporal. I have a mental filing cabinet where I keep a map of my collection and intuitively “know” where things are without looking them up. When we move, this will all change. It will probably take me a year or more to adapt to our new surroundings to the point where I instinctually know where things are again. And here's the clincher: our new space is only temporary – in two or three years, I will be doing this all over again!

So enjoy your summer, but please think of me schlepping boxes and cutting packing tape, hooking up computers and labelling lids, taking shelves apart and putting them back together – someday it will be YOU!

NOT GOODBYE, BUT SEE YOU AGAIN

Michael Gourlie, Executive Director/Archives Advisor

Picture it – July 1997. The United Kingdom returned jurisdiction of Hong Kong to the Republic of China. Steve Jobs rejoined Apple Computer. Within weeks, the world would be shocked at the sudden death of Diana, Princess of Wales. Buffy the Vampire Slayer was well into its first season on television. And, to quote Homer Simpson (whose television show surpassed The Flintstones in 1997 in terms of the number of episodes aired), “the domestication of the dog continued unabated.”



July 1997 also happened to be my first month with the Archives Society of Alberta. I arrived from Kelowna for a year-long contract, knowing little of Alberta’s archival community beyond the information on the ASA’s recently launched website. I met with Wayne Murdoch, who handed off four boxes of files from the previous advisor Elizabeth Denham, who’d left several months earlier. Those boxes, combined with a short series of meetings that week with then-ASA President Bryan Corbett and a few local archivists, was my entire orientation to the province’s archives and archivists. The year, and a steep learning curve, stretched before me. With seeming increasing speed, one year became two, then three, until finally, 2012 marked my fifteenth year with the ASA

After all those years, comprising thirteen institutes, scores of site visits, dozens of workshops and conferences, to say nothing of tens of thousands of kilometers on Alberta’s highways (mostly Highway 2), all good things must come to an end. My last day at the ASA was August 31, when I left to join the staff of the Provincial Archives of Alberta as a Government Records Archivist.

Like all jobs, working as the Archives Advisor had its ups and downs. Driving for kilometres on end (especially on Highway 2!) was sometimes tedious, but the trips represented the invisible bonds between members and soon-to-be members that formed the archival community. Planning and executing conferences and other events was hectic and required incredible logistics within the Secretariat, but connecting with members and watching them engage with incredible keynote speakers made it all worthwhile. It seems almost too big a sentiment to express in so little words, but I’d like to thank everyone for all their assistance, contributions, and support throughout my years at ASA – I truly appreciate it. Extra special thanks to all who worked as part of the ASA Secretariat –the teamwork was incredible.

In many ways, it is a great time for me to start my next adventure. The Society’s finances are robust, thanks to the continuing and generous support of the Alberta Historical Resources Foundation. The members are welcoming and eager to work towards goals of broad interest to the community. These factors, combined with other intangible elements, lead me to think that there is no better time for a new person to take the reins and lead the ASA to the next level while maintaining its standard of creative, beneficial projects benefitting the province’s archival community.

I’m glad that I’m staying in Alberta and remaining part of the community. I am not saying goodbye, but, rather, see you again soon!

THE ASA DATABASE CONVERSION PROJECT

Carrie-Ann Lunde, ASA Database Administrator

The Archives Society of Alberta (ASA) is dedicated to the promotion and advancement of the collection, preservation, and use of archival materials. One of the ways we do this is through the ASA's online database system, which is a valuable tool for the general public, researchers, and archivist professionals to access archival collections across the province.

To continue to meet this need in the community, the ASA is building a new database system with the International Council of Archives' ICA-AtoM software to streamline current archival practice, trends, and technology. ICA-AtoM is a web-based, open source application developed specifically to support archival description standards. Its developer, Artefactual Systems, will be working closely with the ASA over the coming months to build a site that meets the needs of Alberta's archival institutions and the communities they serve.

The project will include migrating the data from the ANA, InSight, InWord, and Repository databases from the current Cinemage system to the ICA-AtoM system. In order to migrate the data effectively, updates can no longer be made to the Cinemage System. Please do not add or revise any further records. If you know of records that need to be updated or added, please track them internally, or you can send them to me and I will save them until the new system is up and running.

The current Cinemage system will remain active until the final conversion is complete and there should be very little down time for public access to the collections. Adapting materials created and generously made available freely by other jurisdictions, the ASA will develop a training manual for its members, and training sessions will begin to be offered to institutions after January 2013.

More information about ICA-AtoM and its functionality can be found here: www.ica-atom.org. Artefactual completed a similar conversion project for the Archives Association of British Columbia, so if you would like to see an example of what our new site will look like and how it will work, check out Memory BC at www.memorybc.ca.

If you have any questions or concerns about the ICA-AtoM Conversion Project, please feel free to contact me at carrie.lunde@gmail.com.

TAMING THE WHITE ELEPHANT

Jim Bowman

A white elephant is venerated as a sacred animal in Buddhist cosmology, symbolic of peace and prosperity. Monarchs of Burma, Thailand, Laos, and Cambodia kept them to characterize their reigns as just and peaceful. In the nineteenth century, it is said, the kings of Thailand presented them to courtiers they disliked, because they had to be cared for at great expense, yet had no practical value.

In 2004 the recently-formed archives of the Mennonite Historical Society of Alberta (MHSA) was presented with 70 standard records storage cartons from Mennonite Central Committee Alberta (MCCA). MCCA is the renowned social service and international aid agency which is supported formally by a half-dozen or so Mennonite denominations ("branches"), and supported informally by independent Mennonite congregations and some Hutterite colonies in Alberta. It is also the owner of the building which houses the MHSA Archives.

The accession contained about 4.5 cartons of records of the *Vertreterversammlung* ("Delegates' Assembly") also known by its English name Meeting of the Representatives of Mennonite Churches and Groups of Alberta. This important organization, which existed from 1929 to 1966, provided vital assistance to Mennonite refugees in the 1930s; it was also a pioneering venture of cooperation among the various branches of the Mennonite faith. This portion of the accession was arranged and described as a separate fonds almost immediately. The accession also contained about one-half of a carton of constitutional documents and high-level minutes of the MCCA from the period of its inception, the late 1960s.

The remaining 65 cartons consisted of records of the Employment Development Project, an MCCA agency based in Edmonton which specialized in job training and work experience programs for the disadvantaged, such as immigrants, indigenous peoples, and victims of family breakdown. From

about 1985 to 1996 it operated several programs, including Edmonton's major recycling operation, a home renovation/neighborhood improvement business, and a landscaping service.

Judith Rempel, the MHSA's Archives Coordinator from 2002 until her death in 2011, compiled a preliminary inventory of the records, and supervised their refolding and removal of fasteners. Initially she was reluctant to dispose of any of the records, but as she became more experienced and confident as an archivist, she began to see that reappraisal would be necessary. But the sheer volume of materials requiring selective retention was overwhelming.

This year the MHSA received an Access to Holdings grant from the ASA for the reappraisal, arrangement, and description of the records. The grant was enough to fund 20 days of my time, of which 11 days have now been completed.

Some of the appraisal decisions were easy to make. 20 of the cartons consisted predominantly of bookkeeping documents, such as bank statements, cancelled cheques, receipts, invoices, and expense claims. Indisputably, these had no archival significance. 10 cartons contained case files on employees and counselling clients. I thought that these records had no significance for genealogical or social studies, because they didn't systematically document a large population. In addition, responsibility for retention of records containing personal information was a concern. There is no certainty that a volunteer-run organization will be able

to administer privacy restrictions over a lengthy period. 3 cartons contained records of house renovation projects. It was decided that these were of marginal significance in terms of both social history and architectural history.

The remaining 32 cartons were "office files" – originally kept in filing cabinets at the request of the project's executive director and filed in alphabetical/chronological sequences. With about 5000 files to sort through, appraisal decisions often had to be made in a split second. Materials that actually documented transactions of the agency were preferred for retention: minutes, contracts, correspondence with senior decision-makers. Files that were kept in the office only for reference purposes – brochures and report literature, early drafts of documents, unaudited financial reports, personal letters – were generally not retained.

The final steps in the Access to Holdings project will involve integration of the executive director's office files into one series of perhaps five metres in extent, writing the inventory, and mounting it on the MHSA website. Reduction of the extent will make better use of the MHSA's limited storage space. With good management, even a white elephant can be put to work.

RETURN TO HIGH RIVER

Michael Gourlie

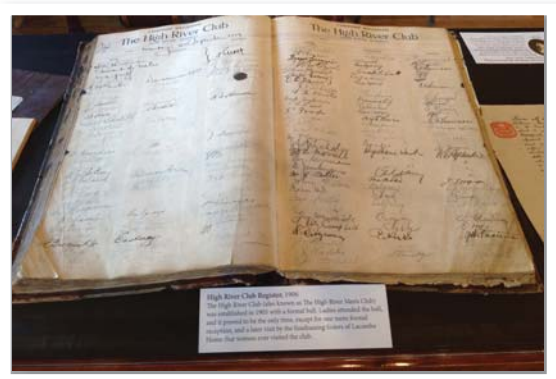
In the Fall 2010 issue of the ASA News, I described a visit that I had made to the Museum of the Highwood shortly after a July fire that destroyed only approximately 2% of the artifacts but left a majority of the remaining holdings smoke and water damaged to varying degrees. After a lengthy twenty-two month process of rebuilding, cleaning and restoration, the Museum reopened in its new, old home in the train station during a celebration on the long weekend in May 2012. A return visit to see the renewed museum seemed to be in order.



After \$1.7 million in restoration costs borne by the Town of High River and the insurance proceeds, the sandstone train station glows like it must have when it opened in 1911, with fresh paint and gleaming woodwork. As part of the repairs and restoration, the museum spaces have been reconfigured, resulting in fewer partitions and more access to the outside windows. New display cases fit into the overall architecture of the space. Small, concise displays incorporate both artifacts and archival records highlighting the history of High River as well as thematic events, such as the Queen's 60th Jubilee. There is a new children's area, the Imagination Station, incorporating the spirit of the previous displays but reinterpreting them for the renewed exhibit space.

In terms of the space for the archives, there has been a complete transformation. Previously, the archives were tucked away in a small room which, while secure, made it awkward to find and retrieve materials. Now, a new bank of mobile shelves perched over supporting walls in the basement occupies a central space adjacent to a combined exhibit / reference room space. The improved physical access, combined with an NADP-funded project in 2011/2012 to produce fonds-level descriptions, has resulted in greater accessibility to the archival holdings than ever before. Future projects include creating additional fonds-level descriptions to make more of the holdings available as well as uploading digitized content from the photographic holdings.

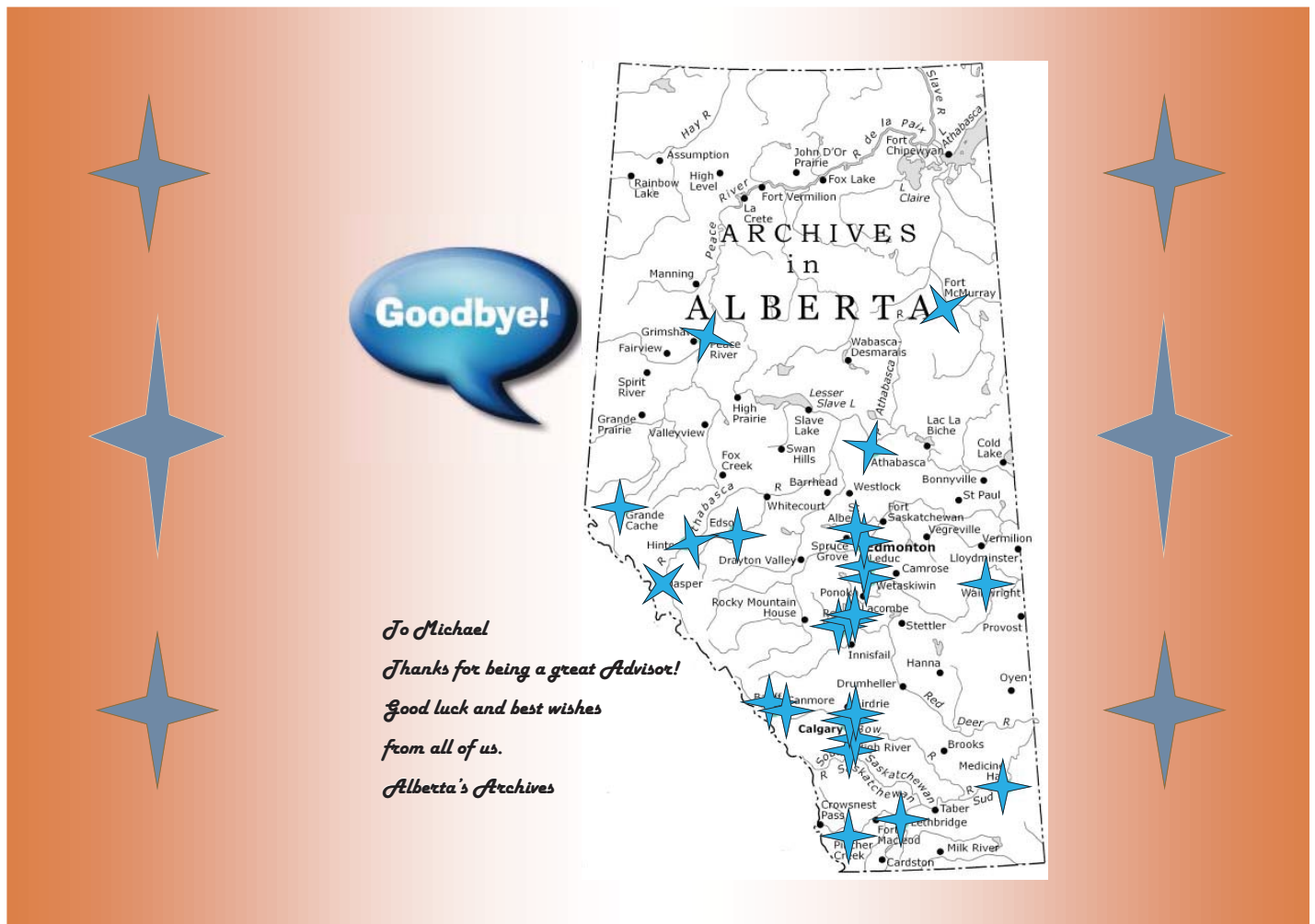
Despite the major setback brought about by the fire, the massive effort to bring the building and the holdings back to life has paid great dividends. For further information, check out the museum's website at <http://www.museumofthehighwood.com/>.



PEOPLE AND PLACES

The Provincial Archives of Alberta filled several vacant positions recently. Glynys Hohmann, formerly of the City of Edmonton Archives and Service Alberta, is the new Team Lead for Government Records. Braden Cannon, formerly with the Friends of the Provincial Archives of Alberta, is now a Private Records Archivist. The new Government Records Archivists are Sara King and Michael Gourlie.

The Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta has a new temporary home while its new facility is being constructed. The new address is Suite 200, 10220 - 156 Street, Edmonton, Alberta T5P 2R1. Email and phone number remain unchanged.



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:

Archives Society of Alberta
PO Box 4067
South Edmonton Post Office
Edmonton, AB T6E 4S8

Editor contact information:

Telephone: (780) 424-2697
Fax: (780) 425-1679
Email: archivesab@shaw.ca

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



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

ARCHIVES SOCIETY OF ALBERTA MEMBERSHIP
APPLICATION 2012 – 2013

Name (Institution or Individual)

Address

City

Province

Postal Code

Telephone (_____) _____ - _____

Business Phone (_____) _____ - _____

Fax (_____) _____ - _____

E-mail _____

Voting Delegate (Associate)

Institutional Affiliation (Individual Members)

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP

Please Check

- Archives Employee \$50.00
- Students, Volunteers, Seniors. \$25.00
- Associate Institutional Member \$75.00
- Institutional Member (Please contact the ASA for further information)
- Yes, I would like to volunteer for an ASA Committee

Credit Card No. _____

Expiry _____ Visa MasterCard

Card holder name (please print) _____

signature _____

Please make cheque or money order payable to the **Archives Society of Alberta** and mail to:

Archives Society of Alberta
PO Box 4067
South Edmonton Post Office
Edmonton, AB T6E 4S8