The Reference Interview in Archival Literature

Susan L. Malbin

This essay reviews the two major strands of modern archival writing about reference. The first stresses the importance of subject-finding aids; the second relies on traditional forms of archival retrieval. In recent years, each has emphasized the gains to be achieved by using new technology. However, the literature seems to be missing a crucial step: the continued, or even increased, importance of the reference interview in a technological environment. This essay raises issues for research about archival reference and calls for improved education for archivists in negotiating the reference interview.

Something very strange, almost schizophrenic, seems to happen when archivists write about the role of reference service and the place of the reference interview. A busy university archivist wrote: "I don't think any archivist is appointed just to be a vending machine, handing out whatever is indicated by the user."[1] Yet, at the end of this same article he says that the "two joys in the life of an archivist" are "bringing order out of chaos" and "finding answers to the amazing questions asked sometimes by our administrators, but usually by the public."[2] The dichotomy—reference service can be both too much trouble and a delight—reflects the ambivalent role reference plays in archival literature: it is acknowledged to be an important subject, but few people seem to be writing about it. Since 1989, there has been no major examination of the reference interview in an archival setting.[3]

This article discusses the major strands of archival writing about reference service and the reference interview, with an eye toward suggesting an agenda for future research and action. It begins by reviewing reference implications coming out of the two major North American strands of archival thought about retrieval: subject access or user centered, and materials centered. The first strand emphasizes the importance of standardized finding aids and technology; the second, more common in Canada, relies on traditional forms of archival retrieval, centered on provenance. The purpose of this review is not to summarize every difference between these approaches. Whatever one may think about the differences, at this point one has to take it as given that both will continue to have strong supporters in coming years. Also taken as given is the assumption that pressures—whether from government

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funders or others—to expand public access will increase. As a result, the literature review focuses specifically on one issue: What have authors associated with the two major strands said should be done to improve reference interactions in archival settings? Or, put another way, what have these authors said should be done to improve users' ability to get what they want out of archives?

The review section concludes with a summary and a critique. In its own way, each of the main archival strands seems to be relying on computer-driven technology to solve problems of access and retrieval. But (as this essay then argues) each strand also seems to be missing a key step. Inevitably, archivists will need to help users who are relatively untrained in the ways of archives. If anything, this need will increase with long-distance electronic retrieval. Hence, reference archivists increasingly will have to function much as reference librarians do in a traditional library.

The next part of the paper looks at the still scanty literature on the reference function, and reference interview, in archives. The existing literature has tried to bring concepts of library science to archival training and design. It is an important agenda—one that needs greater emphasis—and the specific piece of reference work that most needs to be highlighted is the reference interview. This article concludes with suggestions for future research and practical implementation.

Review of the Literature
User Centered

There seem to be two modern schools of thought about archival reference service reflected in the literature. One is the increasingly widespread, mostly American school, which favors a user-centered approach: more "user-friendly" finding aids and "subject" indexes or access points to collections. Elsie T. Freeman's 1984 article, "In the Eye of the Beholder,"

marked the major opening of this client-centered front to archival reference.[4] Freeman called for archivists and archives to be more responsive to what users need and want. She challenged the assumptions that archivists know who their users are or that their users are research scholars with an academic purpose. Archivists need to have a better understanding of users, and potential uses, if they are to provide better access to what is in a record. Improved information about, and access to, what is *in* a document (its contents) may well be more important to many users than information *about* a document's provenance.[5]

Freeman was not an opponent of technological innovation, but she warned archivists to be aware of the danger of getting caught up in new technology before they find out who their users are or what they need. She wrote that "we are well on our way to creating electronic systems that do not supply what users want or actually use."[6] Archives need to change to fit users, but achieving this will require more than merely changing some technology.

Consistent with Freeman's challenge, there was a proliferation of user studies in the 1980s. Some were original pieces of research designed to find out who uses archives, including some whose findings were consistent with Freeman's hypothesis that a majority of archival users are *not* scholars.[7] Others were theoretical calls to have more user studies.[8]

In addition to doing user studies, followers of this approach have focused on the need for "better" finding aids, more "descriptive" materials. Archivists should concentrate on "translating" provenance language into subject headings more appropriate to the typical user's needs. For many, the concern about "translation" (given the unknowable variety of user interests) goes together with an emphasis on developing technology that will let users do their searching alone.[9] The hope seems to be that better technology, stan-

dardized formats, and retrieval systems will allow users to get what they need unaided. As with an automated card catalog, the aim is to let an archives user enter a search string and retrieve the available hits.

"It is time," David Bearman wrote in 1989, "to implement a database of independent reference files supporting archival description and information retrieval."[10] In another article that same year, talking about the new MARC formats on RLIN, Bearman said that archives:

> can benefit from this distribution even more than libraries, precisely because of their reluctance to circulate unique holdings or to make them available for browsing. . . . Those institutions that find a way to store and transmit the information contents of their holdings . . . will reach an audience . . . much larger than they have previously had. [11]

While these kinds of databases may be distant the technical barriers are fast becoming trivial.

None of the authors in this strand explicitly says that technology can do away with the need for reference. However, they do consistently talk about designing systems for unassisted users and remain silent about assistance or reference. If they do not literally believe that technology can make personalized reference interviews obsolete, their writings, through their silences, seem to proceed as if this were so.

Materials Centered
On the other side is the materials-centered approach to archival reference service. This approach favors "pure provenance power" as the means of retrieval, and advocates educating the user to the "richness and flexibility" of this traditional method.[12] This return to prov-

enance, if you will, seems to be a reassertion of the archival principle that archives *are not* like libraries, nor should they be. As Terry Cook, a Canadian spokesman for the position, explained: the job of the archivist in the reference interview should be to educate the reader to the nuances and the richness of the documents, as well as to the contexts in which they are found; and to instill ap-

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preciation for what the documents contain and not merely to help a user extract individual or itemized facts needed for a particular search.[13] For Cook, archives are not just collections of individual documents but, rather, a blend of what is in all of them; the archivist must consider the "fonds" and resist the tendency to pull out an isolated piece.[14]

This approach to cataloging and retrieval has its own characteristic approach toward reference. For example, Cook said: "archives should not stock on their shelves the goods which customers want; rather, they should convince customers to buy what is already there."[15] He is joined by Tom Nesmith, who wrote:

> If description is to focus more than ever on provenance information about fonds, reference service will also move towards greater emphasis on providing such information to users of archives. This implies a decisive shift in the orientation of reference work away from direct provision of specific documents and subject matter information and towards educating researchers to follow provenance information to the location of documents and subject matter which interests them.[16]

Similarly, Gabrielle Blais and David Enns maintained:

> [A] user must learn how to retrieve. . . . We therefore have a responsibility to provide a systematic education that teaches, at least in a basic way, the central principles upon which archival science is based—that is, provenance and original order—and in so doing, provide researchers with the intellectual tools with which to attack their research problems.[17]

In short, rather than changing archives to fit users, this approach would change users, through education, to fit archives.

Critique of Both Strands

One major issue that surfaces in a review of the two major archival strands is the problem of how to enable users to get access to the information they need. Put another way, how do archivists "translate" users' queries into terms that can be searched in archival-finding aids?[18] Both approaches imply that reference archivists will have to train users. For the materials-centered approach, the point is obvious: almost all of its adherents acknowledge that it implies teaching people about provenance. One does wonder, however, whether the adherents of this approach underestimate the problem. Either the public educational system would have to be revamped, or expanding public usage automatically will imply expanding the number of users who do not understand provenance. Thus, the teaching or reference aspect of the archivist's job necessarily would have to grow along with expanded access.

The point is less obvious, but no less true, for the user-centered approach. One reason was suggested by Trudy Huskamp Peterson: the problem of understanding what the user *really* wants is compounded by the state of user imprecision.[19] Changes for the worse in basic educational skills will diminish the ability of many people to use archives effectively. She described what a decline in reading, writing, and arithmetical skills will have on the ability of potential archives users to operate in a repository setting.[20] The fact that most archives users are *not* scholars raises the question of how successful the computer retrieval strategies of people who do not know how to do research in an archival setting or how to use an archival finding aid (or, more basically, who do not know the differences between archives and libraries) will be.

But the problem may be more systemic than Peterson suggested. It may be not only with declining educational skills, but also with the disjunction between the specialized training needed for using archives versus even a good general education received by a potential user. The user-centered approach hopes to bypass traditional finding aids with standardized computerized records and, eventually, free-text searching. The rhetoric seems to embrace the hope that technological innovations may someday make retrieval relatively easy for an ever-expanding pool of unaided users. This has many potential advantages, but there are still two inevitable gaps: a user still needs to know (1) how to use the computer technology to retrieve a record, and (2) how to read the record's contents once retrieved. Unless one assumes that whatever a user learns in school will be good for a lifetime of computer changes, even the user-centered approach necessarily implies reference interviews and negotiations.

It should be noted that both the materials-centered and the user-centered strands call for expanded technology in record format and content.[21] For format, this means use of the USMARC AMC format as a standardized container. For content, this means tighter control and standardization of the "boxes" within a format, either computerized or printed.

Better content control will permit prospective users to learn more from finding aids to determine whether a collection suits their needs.

These are important issues. Record contents do need to be improved; the use of technology does need to be expanded. Nevertheless, expanding technology cannot resolve all reference problems. Three issues inevitably will remain no matter how well records are built. First, some bad records are bound to remain. Error rates can be reduced but cannot be eliminated. Second, for reasons already explained, not all potential users with a general education can be expected to understand MARC formats. And third, future changes in technology are bound to require users—no matter how knowledgeable—eventually to learn new programs and/or formats. The net result is that these new formats—whatever their virtues—will continue to require some "translation" for users. New standards will not automatically mean better access unless users know how to use what is available.[22]

In some ways, technology may well mean more reference work, not less. Now the off-site negotiated reference interview may be written, phoned, or even e-mailed.[23] With online technology, MARC records may be searched through remote log-in or off-site. Robert P. Spindler and Richard Pearce-Moses argued that most users do not or cannot understand what such a standardized, computerized format means anyway.[24] Yet, in an era of scarce travel funds, these demands surely will increase. However, nothing has been written about how to explain the use of the new computer formats to distant users. There are no published analyses of the issues of archival reference service in conjunction with computer technology, as there are in the library literature.

This gap in the archival literature is troublesome. In libraries, computer terminals are replacements for well-done card catalogs that allowed multiple-subject access points. Despite the fact that all libraries tend to have more or less the same *kinds* of holdings, good librarians were always needed to suggest research strategies and alternatives to the card catalogue users: they are still needed with computerized library catalogs. However, because each archival holding is unique, by definition, that makes standardized heading access rather difficult. By implication, therefore, personalized interpretation of standardized contents will continue to be more important for archives than for libraries.

The Reference Interview
All of this logically implies a greater need for reference and therefore a greater need to think about the reference interview. This conclusion follows for *both* strands of archival literature, even though each implies a different objective for reference. However, despite the increase in need, little has been written about the reference interview itself. This section reviews what has been written to date.

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For fifty years, Margaret Norton's 1939 essay, "Reference Work," reissued in her *On Archives*, had more to say about reference interviews than any later article.[25] Obviously, the world of reference and archives has changed since then. The changes mean new thought should be given to the reference function in general and the reference interview in particular. As Mary Jo Pugh noted in 1982: "archivists have not analyzed the elements which comprise a successful reference interview and have not studied the process of question negotiation in the archival setting."[26]

One important article on teaching reference to archivists did appear in the

American Archivist in 1988. In what was clearly intended as a first, not a last, word on the subject, Janice E. Ruth wrote: "Little, if any, attention has been given to the teaching of archival reference and the development of those skills most needed by archivists to assist users in a reference situation."[27] Ruth stressed the need to educate archivists to help untrained users. However, for archivists to become educators, they must first educate themselves. They must be able to make clear the archival technicalities (e.g., the difference between provenance- and subject-centered descriptions). She stressed that what is most necessary, however, is for archivists to communicate effectively with users—to pay attention, to listen. Her conclusion laid out a program of suggestions for an archival reference course.[28]

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Since then, only one research article directly on point has appeared: Linda J. Long's excellent "Question Negotiation in the Archival Setting: The Use of Interpersonal Communication Techniques in the Reference Interview," published in 1989.[29] Long focuses on the dynamics of question negotiation, defined as the process by which one person (the archivist/librarian) tries to find out what another (the user/patron) wants to know.[30] In library terms, this is the translation of the patron's initial query to find the true information need. Long wants the archivist to use all the literature on communication techniques available to librarians because "helping researchers find what they need is the major professional task of archivists."[31] Describing a power dynamic inherent in the researcher/archivist relationship, Long saw the researcher as being dependent

on the archivist in two ways: first, procedurally, to provide physical services in a closed-stack environment; and second, intellectually, to translate the user's subject level terms to provenance or hierarchy terms in order to retrieve items. Ultimately, Long felt, skill at negotiating would help give better service and better feedback to the archives itself about what it needs to collect or describe.[32] Her article is primarily a plea for more research but remains the one piece of work on the subject to date.

Since 1989, a number of manuals and articles have agreed that more work on the reference interview is needed without quite specifying what research needs to be done. The standard recent archival manuals or readers mostly treat reference service in terms of procedure about access and use, giving a brief nod to the reference interview at best. All endorse the importance of reference service as the "front line" or public face of an archives, but even so, reference ends up occupying a small fraction of the manual's or reader's space.[33]

The most complete recent treatment and bibliography is in Pugh's 1992 manual, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts*.[34] She stresses the archivist's changing role—from the old custodial keeper of the records to a more "activist" role, promoting wider use. Her manual outlines and explains the intellectual components of reference service, the ways of providing intellectual access, and the need to identify individuals using the archives. The conclusion calls for more education for reference archivists and a need to evaluate the performance of archivists in reference service.[35] Her bibliographic essay reflects the current emphasis of American archival studies on user studies and intellectual aspects of reference service: each topic receives a page of citations. Long's is the only article cited on the subject of interpersonal aspects of the reference interview, and Pugh notes that the lack of

citations contrasts with that of library literature.[36]

At about the same time as Pugh's manual, two articles—one by Richard J. Cox and the other by Carolyn A. Heald—appeared in nonarchival journals that also compared the literature on reference in archives with that in libraries.[37] Cox compared what he saw as a dearth of careful or systematic research on the archival reference process to the wealth of material on reference in libraries and information science. His comparison covered research in four defined areas: (1) actual use; (2) accuracy and effectiveness of archival reference; (3) technology's impact on reference services; and (4) the nature of the archivist/searcher relationship. Despite the existence of a plentiful library literature on each of these subjects, Cox said that few archival writings used the library sources. Archivists need to understand "their" reference process better to make better appraisal, arrangement, and description decisions.[38]

Heald went beyond comparing the two sets of professional literatures to make a statement about librarians and archivists themselves:

> While librarians seek to promote free and equal access to library services and resources, archivists have no such professional ethos of public service. Reference service is most often regarded as secondary, a necessary evil, a diversion from the principal duty of collecting and preserving the sponsoring body's documentary heritage.[39]

To help remedy this, Cox and Heald separately called for more research in archival reference. Each called for evaluating how archives are used through user studies, analyzing the quality of reference service in archives, and, most important, *reeducating the archivist*. Along with Pugh, they point to Janice E. Ruth's article as the model for this reeducation.[40]

Two 1993 books also have some relevance for this topic. In *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, Michael R. Hill discussed archival reference practices from a user viewpoint and is most candid about what to expect.[41] *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, edited by Tom Nesmith, illuminated the issue from the materials-centered, as opposed to the user-centered, perspective.[42] No later articles have appeared on the reference interview in archival literature. Unfortunately, none of these works has taken the state of research on this subject beyond the 1989 article that Long saw as a beginning.

Conclusion

It is surprising that the archival reference interview has received so little attention. Archivists know the value of explaining the uniqueness of their holdings to prospective users, but in the desire to make archives more "accessible" to nonspecialists, there is a tendency to slight the importance of the personally negotiated element in each user's research. One cannot help but conclude that archivists undervalue the interview, or at least fail to think systematically about it. As both Hill and Long have remarked, from opposite sides of the table, the reference interview can be perceived as threatening or uncomfortable. It is much easier to slide over it altogether. Whatever the reason for this situation, the few who have looked at the subject agree, broadly, that more work needs to be done. To help take this process a needed step further, this paper concludes by recommending (1) future research steps that would advance reference archivists' knowledge about patrons' retrieval problems and (2) practical implementation steps to improve the interaction between reference archivist and researcher/user.

Research

Earlier, it was noted how some archivists seem to hope the standardized MARC

records will reduce the need for reference. However, as already explained, ever-changing technology, with new containers, may mean a need for more and not fewer explanations for an expanding pool of users. But Spindler and Pearce-Moses have argued that most users do not or cannot understand what standardized, computerized MARC format records mean for archives, at least in their current state.[43]

It would be useful to have more information testing Spindler and Pearce–Moses's findings on how users and archivists negotiate using the new technology. If they are right, computer technology will lead to an even greater need for a proper reference interaction to *explain* to the user how to use the system—to negotiate what the user really means, what the format really means, and what the

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contents of the retrieved formats really mean. The interactions of archivists and users, either online or on-site, increasingly will approach library-type reference transactions in content, even if the interaction itself may take the form of reading printed words across a screen.

At least some future archival research, therefore, should be directed toward solving the problems of computer retrieval. Spindler and Pearce-Moses's initial finding that users do *not* understand a standardized online MARC AMC format means that more research is needed to ascertain precisely what they *do* learn from a MARC record. This author has begun such an exploration by administering Spindler and Pearce-Moses's survey instrument to both experienced and inexperienced long-distance users to test the effect of previous library training on what is understood.[44]

The foregoing line of research is intended to improve understanding about what people learn from computerized *records*. Additional thought also needs to be given to help and query procedures. Research is needed to isolate which of the problems encountered in distance retrieval with long-distance reference interactions are different from those encountered in on-site computerized retrieval with an archivist available face-to-face. When MARC formats can be picked up through various Internet servers, such as gophers, or the World Wide Web, or when Special Collections can be searched through remote log-in, what impact will that have on the quality of the information the user understands? The aim should be to identify and improve reference interactions for long-distance computerized queries.

There also needs to be more research about how best to improve or refine record formats, including how best to link records within the MARC format. The manner in which the format boxes are filled also has to be standardized by settling on clear criteria for authority control.[45]

Finally, we need to take another look at users, not for the purpose of redesigning archives or computer formats, but as a basis for thinking about reference interviews. For example, some scholars in the social sciences have sophisticated needs, but very elementary knowledge about how archives operate.[46] These users typically want to find parallel or complementary pieces of information in many archives, rather than becoming experts in the holdings of only one or a few collections. Because there is no overlap in archival holdings, reference archivists must help such users/researchers who have to move into different milieus each time they visit a new archives. Many of these researchers/users are not interested in learning the creator or provenance relationships for each site visited; rather, they may have broader questions

that do not even fit the subject access points devised by the descriptive processing archivists at a particular site. More research on how users sort out or do not sort out their subject requests would give reference archivists more insights into the thought processes, and hence the real needs of the users.

Practice

On a practical level, reference archivists need more exposure to reference negotiation and training. As librarians have learned, the question a patron/user verbalizes is not always what he or she really wants. It does not matter whether the school of archival training is "subject access/user oriented" or "provenance power centered": the end result will be that the reference archivist will have to translate user/patron requests into terms that are meaningful for retrieval in particular archival holdings/collections. As the above literature review has shown, the library literature on the reference interview is ignored in the archival literature. In 1988, Jacqueline Groggin wrote:

> Much of the difficulty archivists have in providing reference service stems from lack of training. Unlike librarians, archivists are not formally trained to provide reference service, unless they went to library school.[47]

The reference training recommended by Groggin (and Ruth cited earlier) is still necessary. Long made this point in 1989, and it is even more true today, in light of the increased use of distance retrieval.

However, this is also a two-way street. More archivists are likely to have formal reference training if American Information Science or Library Science programs more closely incorporate archival studies into reference and cataloging courses. (The benefit for nonarchivist librarians will be an improved understanding of special collections they can now access online.) Archivist training should include knowledge of MARC formats along with reference training in their retrieval. The research agendas Ruth described must now be executed. There needs to be closer cooperation in the training of archivists and librarians in order to provide the full access that unique archival and special collections deserve.

As mentioned earlier, all archivists know that archives are not libraries but, rather, unique special collections of textual (and nontextual) items. As an archives-using sociologist put it, archives require "user adaptation."[48] But that should not prevent archivists from realizing that interpersonal skills are essential if archives are to be used fully. A negotiated interview is an exchange between the researcher/user/patron/information-seeker and a provider. In other words, reference archivists need to begin thinking more like reference librarians.

Notes

1. Clifford K. Shipton, "The Reference Use of Archives," in *College and University Archives: Selected Readings* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1979), 130.

2. Ibid., 135.

3. Linda J. Long, "Question Negotiation in the Archival Setting: The Use of Interpersonal Communication Techniques in the Reference Interview," *American Archivist* 52 (winter 1989): 40–50.

4. Elsie T. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder: Archives Administration from the User's Point of View," *American Archivist* 47 (spring 1984): 111–23. That same year, Canadian Hugh Taylor also advocated looking at users. See *Archival Services and the Concept of the User: A RAMP Study* (Paris: UNESCO, 1984), 21–36. Mary Jo Pugh's, "The Illusion of Omniscience: Subject Access and the Reference Archivist," *American Archivist* 45 (winter 1982): 33–44 was an earlier but less sharp call along the same lines.

5. Freeman, "In the Eye of the Beholder," 111–23.

6. Ibid., 112.

7. For example, see Stephen E. Wiberley Jr. and William G. Jones, "Pattern of Information Seeking in the Humanities," *College & Research Libraries* 50 (Nov. 1989): 638–45. The authors examined a group of humanities scholars to find out how they use archives and make recommendations based on their findings. See also, Randall C. Jimerson, "Redefining Archival Identity: Meeting User Needs in the Information Society," *American Archivist* 52 (summer 1989): 332–40; Diane L. Beattie, "An Archival User Study: Researchers in the Field of Women's History," *Archivaria* 29 (winter 1989–90): 33–50; Lawrence Dowler, "The Role of Use in Defining Archival Practice and Principles: A Research Agenda for the Availability and Use of Records," *American Archivist* 51 (winter and spring 1988): 74–86; *Midwestern Archivist* 11, no. 1 (1986), which featured three user studies in the same volume. There are earlier user studies, but this gives the flavor of the field. For an article on nonscholar users, see Phebe R. Jacobsen, "The World Upside Down: Reference Priorities and the State Archives," *American Archivist* 44 (fall 1981): 341–45. Most of the users who come to the state archives are genealogists.

8. For example, see Paul Conway, "Facts and Frameworks: An Approach to Studying Users of Archives," *American Archivist* 49 (fall 1986): 393–407. Conway tries to structure a comprehensive program of user studies using reference practices already in place, because for him, "service to users is the foundation of archival programs." Mary Jo Pugh uses Conway's three-part evaluation framework (quality, integrity, value) as the evaluation tool in her manual *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992), chapter 8.

9. For example, see Charles M. Dollar, *Archival Theory and Information Technologies: The Impact of Information Technologies on Archival Principles and Methods* (Macerata, Italy: Universita degli studi di Macerata, 1992), 62–64; Jill Tatem, "Beyond USMARC AMC: The Context of a Data Exchange Format," *Midwestern Archivist* 14 (1989): 40–42. See also, David Bearman's three articles: "Access and Use," *Archival Methods*, monograph no. 9 of *Archives and Museum Informatics Technical Report* 3, no. 1 (spring 1989): 39–49; "Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities: Challenges and Opportunities," *American Archivist* 52 (winter 1989): 26–39; and "Authority Control: Issues and Prospects," *American Archivist* 52 (summer 1989): 287–89. Note also, Alan M. Tucker, "The RLIN Implementation of the MARC Archives and Manuscript Control Format," and Lawrence Dowler, "Integrating Archival Management with Library Networks: Implications for the Future," in *Academic Libraries: Myths and Realities*, eds. Suzanne C. Dodson and Gary L. Menges (Chicago: ACRL, 1984), 69–84; Nancy Sahli "National Information Systems and Strategies for Research Use," *Midwestern Archivist* 9 (1984): 5–13.

10. Bearman, "Authority Control: Issues and Prospects," 297.

11. ———, "Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities," 38.

12. Terry Cook, "Viewing the World Upside Down: Reflections on Theoretical Underpinnings of Archival Public Programming," *Archivaria* 31 (winter 1990–91): 123–34; David Bearman and Richard K. Lytle, "The Power of Provenance," *Archivaria* 21 (winter 1985–86): 14–27.

13. Cook, "Viewing the World," 124–26, begins by arguing against those (like Dowler, Jimerson, and Freeman) who call for studies of users and use.

14. Ibid., 128–30.

15. Ibid., 132.

16. Tom Nesmith, "Introduction: Archival Studies in English-Speaking Canada and the North American Rediscovery of Provenance," in *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, ed. Tom Nesmith (Metuchen, N.J. & London: Scarecrow Pr., 1993), 21–22.

17. Gabrielle Blais and David Enns, "From Paper Archives to People Archives: Public Programming in the Management of Archives," in *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*, 449.

18. William Saffady noted this twenty years ago in "Reference Service to Researchers in Archives," *RQ* 14 (winter 1974): 142.

19. Trudy Huskamp Peterson, "Reading, 'Riting, and 'Rithmetic: Speculations on Change in Research Processes," *American Archivist* 55 (summer 1992): 414–19.

20. Ibid. Peterson argues: (1) The decline in reading and its complement, an increase in oral intake, will mean that users will be less patient than ever with "slow sequential written finding aids" and will want faster computer or screen access; (2) the decline in writing will mean an increase in oral inquiries, with attendant imprecision; archival staffs will have to devote more time to clarifying and defining the object of a patron search because it will be less structured or logical thoughtout; (3) the decline in arithmetical skills will have a direct impact on users' ability to structure a database search successfully.

21. For example, Bearman, who pushes the power of provenance, stresses increasing technol-

ogy by computerizing and standardizing archival holdings. See Bearman, "Authority Control Issues and Prospects," 287–89; Bearman, "Archives and Manuscript Control with Bibliographic Utilities," 27.

22. For example, see Sahli, "National Information Systems and Strategies for Research Use," 6.

23. Zachary M. Baker, "Problem Patrons and Problem Librarians: A Personal Confession," *Judaica Librarianship* 6 (spring 1991/winter 1992): 168–71. The negotiated written interview can have important ramifications as this personal account shows. A persistent patron caused an archivist to refer the question to a colleague who produced a successful search strategy.

24. Robert P. Spindler and Richard Pearce-Moses, "Does AMC Mean `Archives Made Confusing?' Patron Understanding of USMARC AMC Catalog Records," *American Archivist* 56 (spring 1993): 330–41.

25. Margaret Norton, "Reference Work," in M Norton, *On Archives* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, Ill.: Southern Illinois Univ. Pr., 1975): 101–5.

26. Pugh, "The Illusion of Omniscience," 38.

27. Janice E. Ruth, "Educating the Reference Archivist," *American Archivist* 51 (summer 1988): 267. Here, too, there is a literature review. Ruth concludes that very little has been written on the subject of archival training and reference service.

28. Ibid., 272–76. Ruth cites Pugh, Freeman and Conway, Berner, Lytle, and Bearman on the subject, as well as Sahli and Michelson on automation and technology.

29. Linda J. Long, "Question Negotiation in the Archival Setting," 40–50.

30. Ibid., 41.

31. Ibid., 41–43. Long's review of the literature notes that "no articles . . . on negotiated process have yet been published in archival literature." She begins her review with Schellenberg and moves up to the present. Her discussion of the levels of information needs of users is straight from library literature.

32. Ibid., 43.

33. For example, see William J. Maher, *The Management of College and University Archives* (Metuchen, N.J. and London: Society of American Archivists and Scarecrow Pr., 1992), where the reference process occupies two and a half pages (from the bottom of 133 to the top of 136) in a 353-page manual. Sue E. Holbert, *Archives and Manuscripts: Reference and Access* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977) has nothing on how to conduct a reference interview. The two paragraphs in her manual (13) on entrance and exit interviews are both procedural: to make the rules clear, to save time, to help the archives with arrangement errors, etc.

Two chapters on reference in two different archival readers follow this pattern: (1) George Chalou's "Reference," in *A Modern Archives Reader*, eds. Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch (Washington, D.C.: National Archives & Records Service, 1988), 257–63, spends only one page on the reference interview and the rest on a procedural outline of what it takes to have a good reference service; (2) David R. Kepley, "Reference Service and Access," in *Managing Archives and Archival Institutions*, ed. James Gregory Bradsher (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 1988), 161–73, devotes only half that space to reference, with only one paragraph about "understanding the researcher's questions"; Lucille Whalen, "The Reference Process in Archives: An Introduction," in *Reference Services in Archives*, ed. Lucille Whalen (New York: Haworth Pr., 1986), 1–10, mentions the reference interview, but most of the articles are archival descriptions for the nonarchivist, not accounts of how to do reference service or a reference interview; James M. O'Toole's article, "Reference Service in Catholic Diocesan Archives," in *Reference Services in Archives*, 149–58, is the major exception.

34. Mary Jo Pugh, *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1992).

35. Ibid., 97–98.

36. Ibid., 112.

37. Richard J. Cox, "Researching Archival Reference As an Information Function: Observations on Needs and Opportunities," *RQ* 31 (spring 1992): 388, contains a table of the major writings on reference, 1980 to present, as well as a list of all the post-1980 articles on the subject (394, n. 4). Carolyn A. Heald, "Reference Service in Archives: Whither a Professional Ethos?" *Canadian Library Journal* 49 (Oct. 1992): 354, n. 9 (358), contains a list of recent *American Archivist* articles on the subject.

38. Cox, "Researching Archival Reference As an Information Function," 393. He (1) analyzed how researchers used archival repositories (citing Bearman, Conway, and Beattie), Ibid., 389–90; (2) noted the lack of adequate user studies to let archivists know who the users are (again citing Bearman, Lytle, Conway, and Pugh), Ibid., 390–91; and (3) noted the lack of any firm data about the reference interview, 392. He commented that the impact of RLIN and USMARC AMC studies

shows "development of an automated national guide without an understanding of how research-ers currently used archival sources could result in frustration and wasted resources" (citing Sahli and Michelson), Ibid., 391–92.

39. Heald, "Reference Service in Archives," 354–55, discusses Freeman's "misassumptions" but endorses many of her recommendations.

40. Cox, "Researching Archival Reference As an Information Function," 394–95; Heald, "Ref-erence Service," 357.

41. Michael R. Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques* (Newbury Park, Calif., and London: Sage Pubs., 1993).

42. Nesmith, *Canadian Archival Studies and the Rediscovery of Provenance*.

43. Spindler and Pearce-Moses, "Does AMC Mean `Archives Made Confusing?'," 330–41.

44. Susan L. Malbin, "Does AMC Really Mean `Archives Made Confusing'? Retesting Patron Understanding," paper presented at the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, College Park, Md., May 3, 1996.

45. For example, see bibliographies in Richard P. Smiraglia, ed., *Describing Archival Materials: The Use of the MARC AMC Format* (New York: Haworth Pr., 1990); Wesley M. Stevens, ed., *Biblio-graphic Access to Medieval and Renaissance Manuscripts: A Survey of Computerized Data Bases and Information Services* (New York: Haworth Pr., 1992).

46. For example, see Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, 42–46.

47. Jacqueline Groggin, "Commentary," *American Archivist* 51 (winter and spring 1988): 88.

48. Hill, *Archival Strategies and Techniques*, 41–42, called orientation interviews "mandatory interaction rituals" and described how the researcher must negotiate the process. It is instructive for the archivist to read this "outside" perspective because its aim is not to criticize the archival reference process but, rather, to teach the researcher how to maneuver it.