

Future Prospects

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If the goals described in this book are to be implemented, the anthropological community will need to define and agree upon integrated courses of action. A significant step was taken at the 1993 conference (described in the Introduction): the creation of a structure to encourage anthropological organizations and individuals, in cooperation with the archival and information-science communities, to work together in preserving the record.

Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records

A non-profit organization, The Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records (CoPAR), is being founded to provide a disciplinary underpinning to the effort. The following Statement of Purpose was adopted on May 9, 1993 at the conference referred to above:

The purposes of the Council for the Preservation of Anthropological Records are to identify, encourage the preservation, and foster the use of the records of anthropological research. Anthropology is concerned with the study, documentation, and understanding of human cultural, linguistic and biological diversity. Anthropological records contain primary data about, and provide the basis for, continuing research on human diversity, as well as the history of the discipline. Anthropological records thus represent a unique and irreplaceable segment of human knowledge. The Council has as its objective the initiation of programs to: foster awareness of the importance of records preservation; provide information on records location and access; help provide support for existing repositories; provide consulting and technical assistance about records preservation guidelines, bequests, and other parts of the preservation process; and conduct special projects as needed.

An Interim Steering Committee is responsible for overseeing planning for a permanent organization and for implementation of the goals of the Resolution on Preserving Anthropological Records (1992) and the CoPAR Statement of Purpose. The structure of this committee was defined by the 1993 conference, and subsequently the membership was formalized to consist of individuals designated by the organizations they represent. The present members include: Sue E. Estroff (American

Anthropological Association), Don D. Fowler (at-large), Susan Bender (Society for American Archaeology), Victor Golla (Linguistic Society of America), Robert V. Kemper (at-large), Shepard Krech (American Society for Ethnohistory), Michael A. Little (American Association of Physical Anthropologists), Nancy J. Parezo (Council for Museum Anthropology), Ruth Person (Association of College and Research Libraries), Stephanie Rodeffer (Society for Historical Archaeology), Joan Warnow-Blewett (Society of American Archivists), and John van Willigen (Society for Applied Anthropology). Fowler and Parezo were appointed as co-chairs, and together with Kemper, Little, and Person, constitute an Interim Executive Committee, charged with providing leadership in furthering the goals of CoPAR. Other participants in the 1992 and 1993 conferences serve as expert consultants in helping to form the organization and in instituting various projects.



Participants at the first Wenner-Gren Conference, Rancho Santa Fe, California, Spring 1992. Back row (left to right): John Van Willigen, Nancy Parezo, Shepard Krech III, Robert van Kemper, George Farr, Donald Tuzin, William Sturtevant, Don Fowler, Thomas Wilson, Sydel Silverman, Nathalie Woodbury. Middle center (left to right): Mark Mahoney, Joan Warnock. Front (left to right): Douglas Givens, Laurie Obbink, Annette Weiner, Mary Elizabeth Ruwell, John Yellen.

CoPAR's purpose is to respond to a number of specific preservation needs, which are systematized around four main themes.

Awareness and Education: (1) To educate the profession (both individuals and organizations) about preservation needs, ethical and legal issues, and new developments in information management and access. (2) To disseminate information through the promotion of conferences and symposia and through relevant publications. (3) To educate students as future records creators and users. (4) To provide

liaison with archives, libraries, information specialists, and their professional communities. (5) To establish networks with other academic groups and with interested communities. (6) To communicate the value of records for applications to policy and social issues.

Records Locations and Access: (1) To survey existing initiatives by other disciplinary groups and organizations and facilitate coordination. (2) To survey existing significant materials in repositories, in the "gray literature," and in private hands. (3) To produce and maintain databases. (4) To create and maintain information resources on finding aids, indexes, and funding sources.

Consulting and Technical Assistance: (1) To help individuals and organizations make proper disposition of records through the development of guidelines and advice on selecting repositories. (2) To provide assistance on preservation and repatriation issues. (3) To provide referral service for oral histories. (4) To encourage oral histories concerning major disciplinary developments and to document individual careers. (5) To encourage research and publication in the history of anthropology.

Advocacy for Existing Anthropological Facilities: To advocate for the health and continued well-being of the National Anthropological Archives and other repositories that are dedicated to or specialize in the preservation of anthropological materials.

First Initiatives

A number of specific projects have been planned to help CoPAR pursue its goals. Projects undertaken during 1993-1995 included: the generation of proposals for funding; the formalization of the organization's structure and the writing of by-laws pursuant to incorporation; the pursuit of a temporary and permanent home for the organization; planning and implementation of various educational efforts; analyses of user needs through a survey of existing repositories; and identification of a community of archivists and information specialists to cooperate in the preservation effort.

Educational Outreach

Presentations of CoPAR's goals and plans have been given at various professional meetings, and similar events will continue to be held in the future.

An educational project of high priority will be the development of brochures and other reference materials designed to help individual anthropologists, as well as departments and other institutions holding anthropological records, to properly preserve their materials. Other efforts being planned include discussions on ethics and intellectual property rights, the development of training programs and aids concerning professional responsibilities for donors and users, the development of specific disciplinary and subdisciplinary guidelines, and

continued work with professional organizations to ensure their attention to records management schedules.

Further initiatives will be undertaken to develop working relationships between anthropologists and the archival community. The aims are: to assist archivists in understanding the research and preservation needs of anthropologists and users of anthropological materials; to identify archivists who will provide leadership in forming regional archival consortia; and to identify existing and potential repositories of anthropological records.

To begin to implement these various initiatives, CoPAR held an education outreach workshop in April 1995. Its goal was to develop a five-year program for activities aimed at various audiences, including professional and avocational, museum collections managers, archivists and librarians, academic and other administrators, and interested communities.

Structural Organization

Papers for incorporation of CoPAR as a non-profit organization were filed in 1995. Its institutional base will be the University of Nevada, Reno until the permanent structure is established.

A plan is also being developed to create a series of consortia through which existing archives will be affiliated regionally, building up a network of institutions committed to preserving the anthropological record. CoPAR's role will be to serve as an information clearinghouse for these consortia and for the profession in general.

Development of Archival Standards for Anthropology

Access to existing archival collections is difficult at the present time because archival thesaurii do not include anthropologically crucial categories such as culture name, time period of information, location, and research problems. There is a lack of basic reference tools, requiring researchers to rely on anecdotal knowledge obtained through personal networks. There is currently no database, clearinghouse, or abstracting service covering the field that could help researchers locate appropriate repositories. It is CoPAR's goal that over the next several years there be developed appropriate and accessive interactive finding aids in electronic and hard copy, regularly updated, to be available in libraries, museums, archives and departments. As a step toward this goal, CoPAR has formed a task group to begin to develop standards and the parameters of a common vocabulary applicable to anthropological archival collections for electronic catalogs. This group met in a workshop in March 1995 and outlined a plan for future work.

Inventory of Existing Facilities

In order to gain a first approximation of the scope of the problem, CoPAR conducted a preliminary inventory of existing anthropological archives

and manuscript repositories, since no comprehensive information of this kind is available at present. Information is needed on the status, holdings, and problems of anthropological archives in departments, museums and manuscript repositories across the United States. A survey was carried out to: (1) gain a preliminary understanding of the number, locations, and types of extant archives and manuscript repositories, the general nature of their holdings, and the problems relating to their preservation and access; (2) document the electronic data-base capabilities of those archives; and (3) establish contact persons for later outreach efforts aimed at the formation of regional consortia.

In early 1994, 644 questionnaires were mailed to academic departments and museums known or believed to house anthropological records. Over 120 were returned. The results confirmed our expectations based on anecdotal information: a concerted action plan is needed to help individual repositories adequately care for the anthropological record.

Sixty-two academic anthropology departments — ranging from major research institutions to community colleges — responded to the survey. Most have collections of anthropological records, but in the majority of cases they are not well organized. Twenty-eight departments report having some kind of established departmental archives; of these, six have a designated part-time "archivist", and five have a records management policy; only four have consulted with a professional archivist. Six departments reported that they use a central university archives for their records; most others did not know whether their institutions have centralized records repositories. Nineteen departments have still-photo archives, and sixteen have film, video or audio collections, used primarily for teaching. Six report that they encourage their faculty to preserve personal papers. Sixteen institutions have some form of computer-based cataloguing system available, although these are not necessarily designed for archival use. However, 38 report that their institutions are connected to Internet; in 22 OCLC or RLIN is available. Archival activities are a low priority; 52 departments note that there are no funds budgeted for records preservation, while the maximum amount budgeted (one department) is \$12,000.

Thirty-four museums, all with significant anthropological collections, responded to CoPAR's request for information. Twenty-nine have archives, nine have records management policies, twelve a central museum archives, thirty a still-photo archives, and thirteen film, video or audio collections. Eleven are designated federal repositories for archaeological collections and meet federal preservation and conservation standards. Seven institutions actively encourage their staff to preserve their own personal papers. Twenty-eight have some kind of computer-based catalog for records and manuscripts, although not all of them in their manuscript repositories. Eleven museums are connected to Internet, and ten have libraries connected either to OCLC or RLIN. The types of computer systems vary widely. Many in-house systems are in evidence; while six museums use the ARGUS system, the majority use some form of DBase software or clones. Archives do not receive as high a priority in museums as object preservation; dollar amounts allocated specifically to archives ranged from none (24 museums) to \$43,000.

Archaeological repositories, research centers, and Native American archives and libraries follow similar patterns.

Comments by respondents expressed the need for advice on how to accomplish archival tasks, for information networks, and (not surprisingly) for increases in funds and staff. In many cases, individuals have worked to improve access to collections, but all too often they have worked in isolation. Especially problematic are the lack of finding aids, the absence of information about the scope and location of existing archived materials, and the number of different computer systems that are in use. There is a critical need to break through these barriers, to increase cross-institutional communication and develop a coordinated preservation effort.

The problems identified by the contributors to this book and articulated in the CoPAR mission statement are large and complex. Yet they must be addressed. Records from extant and past cultures are unique historical documents, part of the general record of the human experience. If these documents are lost, so too will be much of our knowledge of human commonalities and diversity. Moreover, with anthropological records being used increasingly by native peoples, other interested groups, and scholars from a variety of disciplines, the value of preservation extends well beyond the anthropological community.

Ensuring that the anthropological record is preserved and accessible for current and future generations will require a concerted effort on the part of all anthropologists. Preservation must become part of standard professional activities; a preservation ethic must be developed. This effort will also require the collaboration of archivists and information specialists. CoPAR will strive to become a discipline-wide forum and clearinghouse through which information can be disseminated and mechanisms of cooperation established to safeguard the future of the anthropological record.