

Francis X. Blouin

## PROJECTS

### ACADEMIC PROJECTS

#### **Archival Education Program**

In 1971, in conjunction with the U-M School of Library Science (now known as the School of Information), the staff of the library led by Robert Warner inaugurated a graduate seminar on the administration of archives. Students came to the library once a week for a semester-long course on the varied functional operations of the Bentley Library. In 1978, Francis Blouin was appointed assistant professor in the school to oversee the archives education program. It was during these years that the Bentley Library was at the center of national discussions about the nature of archival education and the appropriate requirements for the archival component of a Masters Degree. Course offerings in the School were expanded to include a fall introductory lecture course and a winter practicum. The practicum seminar integrated specific projects undertaken at the Bentley Library with broader discussions of issues relating to the administration of modern archives. These courses were also cross-listed with the Department of History and served as the foundation for the department's Master's program in the administration of historical archives. In 1981, when Dr. Blouin was named director of the Bentley, a succession of library staff members continued to staff the existing course offerings and an expanded curriculum that included a seminar on archival issues. These early programs emerged as a model within the archival profession for graduate education.

In 1995 the school appointed Margaret Hedstrom to restructure the program with an eye toward emerging technological challenges. This redefinition took place within the context of the transition of the School of Library Science to the School of Information. Over the next years the number of full-time professors in the archives education program expanded to three, two of whom Prof. Elizabeth Yakel and Prof. Paul Conway had taken the courses offered in conjunction with the Bentley Library at the early stages of their post graduate education at Michigan. The library maintains close ties to the SI program and has regularly taught a special seminar that has served to link the theory and practice in the conceptualization and administration of modern archival institutions. A growing number of archival graduate students have come to the library for paid work experience and for special projects. They work primarily in the library's reference division and in processing

collections (both historical manuscripts and university records). In reference, the graduate students assist in the reading room with in-house users, but they also respond to the requests of remote researchers. In both of these areas, students learn about the Bentley's philosophy of service to the university community (students, faculty, administrators and staff) and to a wider public of scholars and citizens interested in Michigan history. Working in the collections division, students gain an in-depth understanding about the complex nature of historical and contemporary records and the tools archivists use to appraise, arrange, describe and preserve archival documentation.

### **Mellon/NEH Fellowships for Study of Modern Archives**

In 1983, with a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, the library began a program of offering fellowships to archival professionals that would enable those selected to come to Ann Arbor for one to four months in order to pursue research related to professional issues. Given the press of day-to-day responsibilities, Francis Blouin and William Wallach, the co-directors of the program, argued that release time spent away from the office would encourage the most creative minds in the archival and related professions to formulate their ideas and convey those through publication. During its fifteen years of existence, the fellowship program fostered systematic research on problems relating to the archival management and scholarly use of modern documentation. Over the years, we received additional funding from the Earhart Foundation of Ann Arbor, two supplemental grants from the Mellon Foundation, and two grants from the National Endowment for the Humanities' Division of Preservation and Access.

From 1983 through 1997, the program funded a total of 122 fellows, who worked on 84 individual and team-based projects. The research fellows funded through the program significantly enriched the extant body of archival literature relating to problems in the selection, use, understanding and administration of contemporary records. The Fellows funded by this unique program published more than 70 articles and monographs, many of which became staples in the curricula of archival education programs in the U.S.

James M. O'Toole, professor of history at Boston College, stated that the Bentley's fellowship program has "produced much original and creative thinking about the problems of archival theory and practice" and that "the work done by fellows at the Bentley includes many of what are now considered the seminal works in the contemporary professional literature." Another archival educator, Richard J. Cox, professor of archival studies at the University of Pittsburgh, wrote, "This single program has been the source of some of the most original and provocative archival thinking and writing [on archival issues]."

## **Public Goods Post Doctoral Fellowships**

In 2001 the Bentley was asked by then Provost Nancy Cantor to join with select museums, libraries and other academic programs on the campus to form a group called the Public Goods Council (PGC) of the university. This was a way of recognizing the important contributions of these units to the academic mission of the University of Michigan as a whole. One initiative coming from that group was a postdoctoral program funded for five years by the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and located at the Bentley Library. Through this program the PGC selects scholars to come to the university to teach in the undergraduate program using the resources of the PGC libraries. The fellows have a primary appointment within the department where that person's teaching takes place. The program is enormously important to the Bentley because it integrates the library directly into the academic program of the university and makes the library a full academic partner based on the intellectual strengths of library holdings. At the time of this publication the program is in the third year and has welcomed six scholars to the campus offering a variety of courses located in eight academic divisions of the university

## **Sawyer Seminar on Archives and Social Memory**

During the academic year 2000-01, William Rosenberg, Alfred Meyer Professor of History, and Francis Blouin offered a yearlong seminar on "Archives, Documentation, and the Institutions of Social Memory." The seminar, funded under the Sawyer Seminar program of the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, was the principal offering of the Advanced Study Institute of the International Institute at the U-M that year. The Mellon grant was supplemented with contributions from a number of university units. During the course of the year more than 65 scholars were brought in from universities and archival institutions across the nation and from abroad. They provided perspectives on issues relating to the role of archives as repositories for collective memory and as institutions that shape memory. Among those who participated were David Lowenthal of University College (London), William Kirby of Harvard University, Dakpesch Charkabarty of the University of Chicago, Beatrice Bartlett of Yale University, Joan Schwartz of Queens University, Terry Cook of the University of Manitoba, and Hayden White of Princeton University. The seminar was conducted principally for the students enrolled in the course. Due to widespread interest in the topic on campus, sessions regularly had as many as 50 additional observers. The theme of the seminar has been chosen as the basic theme for the quadrennial meeting of the International Council on Archives in Vienna in 2004.

## The Vatican Archives Project

In 1984 with seed funding from the Horace H. Rackham Fund, Francis Blouin embarked on a trip to Rome and Paris to explore possibilities for international collaboration on archival projects. While visiting the Vatican Archives in Rome, he noted that the access system seemed difficult to penetrate. With the encouragement of the prefect of the Vatican Archives, Rev. Josef Metzler, and the prefect of the Vatican Library, Rev. Leonard Boyle, Dr. Blouin along with Bentley archivists Thomas Powers and Leonard Coombs embarked on a project to apply the basic principles of the access system at the Bentley Library to that of the Vatican Archives. With a small grant from the Office of the Vice President for Research and an invitation to be visiting scholars at the American Academy in Rome, the three traveled to the Vatican to test the idea on the Vatican's diplomatic records. With additional funding from the Getty Grant program, the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Lilly Endowment Inc., the National Endowment for the Humanities, the Homeland Foundation of New York, and the American Friends of the Vatican Library, a full-scale project was launched to integrate into a single database basic series-level information on the holdings not only of the Archivio Segreto Vaticano, but also of the archives of Propaganda Fide, the Fabbrica di San Pietro, the Archivio di Stato di Roma (Papal States period), and miscellaneous related holdings at other repositories such as those at Trinity College (Dublin) and the Archives Nationales (Paris). Project staff received unprecedented access to the Vatican Archives stacks that allowed them to carry out their work.

The principal result of the project was *Vatican Archives, An Inventory and Guide to Historical Documents of the Holy See*, edited by Francis Blouin, Leonard Coombs, Claudia Carlen, Elizabeth Yakel, and Katherine Gill and published by Oxford University Press in 1998. For their work, the Society of American Archivists awarded the volume its C. F. W. Coker Award for best finding aid in 1999. The journal *Choice* named it a best academic book for 1998. As part of the overall project, the descriptions of the Vatican holdings as revised by Dr. Blouin and his team were entered into the database of the Research Libraries Information Network (RLIN) where they are available to scholars around the world.

At the time *Vatican Archives* was published, the archives of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (CDF) was closed to research. Not long after the publication of the Oxford volume, it was announced by the Vatican that the CDF archive would be opened to research for the first time since its founding in the early sixteenth century. In February 2003, with funding from the Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation, Francis Blouin, while a visiting scholar at the American Academy in Rome, worked with Peter Horsman of the Archiefschool in The Hague, to inventory its holdings that included extant records of the post-Reformation Inquisition and of

the Congregation for the Index of Forbidden Books. The Bentley Library published the results of that effort in 2004.

## South African archival initiative

In recent years the University of Michigan has had an ongoing relationship with various educational institutions in South Africa. During the summers of 1998 and 1999 Bentley assistant director William Wallach and archivist Brian Williams along with students from the School of Information traveled to South Africa to advise on and assist in the organization and preservation of records relating to the liberation movement in South Africa. The archival holdings that were the focus of the project included records of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), housed at the University of Fort Hare in Alice in the Eastern Cape. This university was the alma mater of Nelson Mandela and other leaders of the ANC, PAC and other liberation movements. The two Bentley staff members visited UFH in March/April 1998 to assess the archival needs at Fort Hare, develop plans for processing the archival records of the Pan Africanist Congress and other historical record groups, and to carry out a pilot processing project. On this project, they worked closely with UFH assistant archivist trainee Ms. Noludwe Lupuwana. Mr. Williams returned to South Africa in May/June 1998 and May/June 1999 to supervise the work of University of Michigan students from the School of Information, who implemented the plan developed by Mr. Wallach and Mr. Williams. Between visits to South Africa, Mr. Williams, SI students and other Bentley staff developed electronic finding aids for the processed collections and made them available on the UFH website. The U-M work with the University of Fort Hare was funded by a variety of sources including the USIA and the Kellogg Foundation.

## France Exchanges

Over the past twenty years the Bentley Library has been involved in a number of projects and exchanges with the archives community of France. This began when Nancy Bartlett of the staff was selected to attend the Stage Technique Internationale d'Archives of the Archives de France in 1985. In 1992 Francis Blouin, William Wallach along with Ms. Bartlett conducted a two-session seminar with faculty members from the École nationale des Chartes, the Grand École in France for the preparation of archivists and records professionals. The focus of the seminar was the application of the principles of diplomatics to electronic records. The first session was held in Ann Arbor, the second in the summer of 1993 was held at the École in Paris. The results were published in *The American Archivist* in Fall 1996 as a special issue on "Diplomatics and Special Records." The same content was published in French in the archival journal *La Gazette des Archives* in 1996. Since 1990 the library has hosted a student nearly every summer from the Institut

Nationale du Patrimoine in Paris. Students have come for one or two months to study the American tradition in archival service. While at the library they have undertaken a variety of projects. For example, Béatrice Olive, who visited in 1999, worked on a description of the manuscript journals of Gabriel Richard, a French missionary and a founder of the 1817 University of Michigan in Detroit. The journals, written in French, are kept at Sacred Heart Seminary Library in Detroit. In the fall of 2003 Nancy Deromedi of the staff addressed the Stage Courant of the Archives de France. She spoke on electronic records issues.

## **Russia Exchanges**

Over the years the staff of the Bentley Library have worked in partnership with members of the faculty of the Center for Russian and East European Studies (CREES) to explore the implications of rapid political change for archival practice. These exchanges began in 1987 when Francis Blouin and Edwin Bridges of the Alabama Department of Archives and History were selected to be the first archivists from the USA to visit the archives of the Soviet Union under the U.S./USSR program of cultural exchanges. After the fall of the Soviet Union, the library and CREES established a relationship with the newly established Russian State University for the Humanities. That university was an outgrowth of the Moscow Historical and Archival Institute. Several exchanges took place, with some funded by the Earhart Foundation of Ann Arbor, designed to discuss issues of access and organization of archival material. Beginning in 1999 the library staff, working with U-M Prof. William Rosenberg (History), began a series of presentations at the European University in St. Petersburg.

## **China Exchanges**

Since 1989, the Bentley Historical Library has enjoyed a very unique and enriching relationship with the State Archives Administration of China. Senior administrators, educators, editors, and even sizeable delegations of young archival professionals have all visited the Bentley for conferences and seminars, working meetings on joint publications, and research on archival administration and theory. Their visits have ranged from just a few precious days to as long as several months. Certainly among the most memorable experiences for several on the Bentley staff have been the official exchanges between the State Archives Administration of China and the Bentley. In 1999 and 2001, the Bentley hosted as many as thirty Chinese professional archivists for a series of daily seminars on American archival principles and methods. By the end of these three-week seminars, our Chinese visitors had not only absorbed a tremendous amount of information about the American archival method, they had also prepared very astute final reports on their intensive seminar experiences. Two small delegations of Bentley staff have had the privilege of visiting China as guests of the State Archives Administration of China. During their visits to China in 2000 and 2002, Bentley staff

were invited to offer lectures on subjects as varied as archives and the law in America, advances in appraisal of digital records, and the Western approach to paper conservation. This last topic was presented by Bentley conservator James Craven, whose remarks in Beijing were so well received that they were subsequently reprinted in a recent Bentley bulletin. The Bentley staff eagerly await the next delegation of Chinese visitors, whose arrival is scheduled for shortly after the opening of the new wing of the Bentley in Fall 2004. In the meantime, the Bentley is further promoting the remarkable history of relations between the University of Michigan and China –dating back to 1847 – through its online exhibit chronicling this past, in both English and Chinese, in a website prepared by Zheng (Jessica) Lu, a University of Michigan graduate of the School of Information, former Bentley Historical Library graduate student assistant, and native of China.

## Denmark Exchanges

Through a program jointly administered by the United States Information Agency and the American Library Association, Nancy Bartlett was awarded a six-month fellowship appointment in 1994-95 at the Danish Emigration Archives, in Aalborg, Denmark. Having conducted a year of research on emigration history in Denmark as a Marshall fellow in 1979-80, Ms. Bartlett was prepared to conduct a thorough survey of the Danish Emigration Archives during this subsequent visit. With the dual goals of a published guide and an archival database, she examined existing finding aids and translated, standardized, and synthesized their contents in a database. A published guide was also produced, entitled *A Guide to the North American Collections of the Danish Emigration Archives*. In 2002, Francis Blouin presented “An American Perspective” at the European Expert Seminar on Methods of Digital Archival Description, as a guest of the Danish State Archives.

