

A Case for Abandonment of 'Respect'.

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The principles of 'respect des fonds' and 'respect for original order' fail to accommodate changes of provenance and record structure during the active life of records. Such changes, indeed, create conflict between them — conflict which is conventionally resolved in the wrong way. The principles thus subvert their own ostensible ends.

P.J. Scott's 'series system' embodies new principles:

- *physical maintenance of final active order at item and series levels.*
- *recording of all the relations, over time, of agencies, series and items.*

Following these principles involves:

- *physical maintenance of lower-level order—the only physical order which really matters — where conventional wisdom and heresy call for its sacrifice to a spurious higher-level order (record-grouping).*
- *rejection of the reconstructionism implicit in both 'respect des fonds' (record-grouping) and 'respect for original order'.*
- *notional, rather than actual, reconstitution of fonds.*

1. History of the issue

Archivists have wrestled for many years with the principles of '*respect des fonds*', and '*respect for original order*' — attempting to resolve the problems which they gratuitously create.

A radically new approach was adopted by P.J. Scott in his 'abandonment' of the 'record group concept' published in the *American Archivist*, October 1966. Describing such an abandonment at the Australian Archives, he claimed that the record group was 'an unduly limiting concept ... and ... an unnecessary complication.'¹

This may be the most original and significant paper the *American Archivist* has ever published. It was indeed 'curious', as G.L. Fischer remarked, that it 'stimulated very little controversy at the time of its appearance.'²

Or, indeed, since. Scott was supported by K.A. Green (1967), and opposed by K.A. Polden (1968) and Fischer (1973). These three Australian papers remain, however, the only extended responses.³ An item at the foot of the 'Abandonment' paper - headed 'Deliver us from evil' — did not, in fact, refer to the heresy above, the only American response being a letter from M.H. Fishbein, who found Scott's proposal 'rational and persuasive' but thought record groups still had their uses.⁴ His position was similar to that of Michael Roper, who acknowledged Scott as the precursor of some reforms at the Public Record Office. Roper's comments, coming from 'the very citadel of Jenkinson-ism'⁵, helped provoke the reaction from Fischer, who referred to the appearance 'both in France and England, [of] some latent — if equivocal — support for Scott's views.'⁶

Meanwhile, in Australia, the 'series system' was being widely copied:— Lee McGregor described the conversion of the Queensland State Archives.⁷ Then Scott and several co-authors published a paper in five parts in which the Australian Archives' 'abandonment' was explained and illustrated.⁸ Part 4 included an account of how Scott and his colleagues 'struggled for more than eleven years to maintain in existence the record group concept, before finally seeing no other solution but the "series system".'⁹

I doubt that Scott needed those years so much to reach this conclusion as to accept a radical break with tradition. For, if Fischer is Australia's Jenkinson, Scott is perhaps our Michel Duchein. He minimises his differences with the traditionalists, on the basis that they agree with him regarding ends, and the issue is merely one of means to those ends. Duchein, however, has denounced Scott's 'deliberate violation of *fonds*', as simply 'wrong', and urges that 'we ought not to have any leniency for an error so serious and so fraught with consequences.'¹⁰

I agree that Scott advocates a deliberate violation of *fonds* in Duchein's terms. However, I consider that Scott is right, and that we ought not to have any leniency for the errors of Duchein and others.

Perhaps the least of Duchein's errors is his failure to understand Scott. His comments, made in a paper first published in French in 1977, and republished in English in *Archivaria* in 1983, are based on a definition of 'series' — supposed to be Scott's — as 'sequences of documents independent of administrative context'.¹¹ Duchein interprets this as meaning 'collections of documents forming a chronological and logical set, whatever their origin', and concludes that Scott would take us back to 'classification by topic'. He sees, in what he understands to be Scott's system, 'the scarcely touched-up face of the old system used before Natalis

de Wailly¹² of 'documents ... sorted, or supposedly sorted, by place, date, reigns of kings, and so on, in such a way that in many cases even the origin of the documents became impossible to establish, everything being inextricably mixed and scattered.'¹³

There are reactionary radicals, such as Frank Boles,¹⁴ who deserve such a rebuke, but Peter Scott is not one of them.¹⁵ In fact, Duchein's rebuke could rather be turned on himself. For Scott's commitment to preserving the authentic given order of records is genuine, where that of his opponents — especially Duchein — is equivocal. And Scott's means of respecting provenance work, where record-grouping often involves great disrespect for it.

John Milton remarked of post-revolutionary orthodoxy — 'New Presbyter is but Old Priest writ large.'¹⁶ Our traditional principles emerged from a dispute between the pedantic pioneers of professional archiving and some presumptuous pretenders who had already made a mess of things. The reaction against the subject-sorters led to a fixation on physical *fonds*, in the defence of which the orthodox have actually slipped back into the old errors against which they ostensibly protest. Having fallen into a certain vertical thought pattern, they can hardly understand — let alone accept — the lateral insights of a new *Natalis de Wailly*.

Nor has it helped, that *Natalis de Wailly* had no reason to be particularly concerned about the implications of administrative change. That problem was still largely in the future, but now gravely confuses those who would maintain their conventional respectability regarding *fonds* and original order.

2. Facing the reality of administrative change — Scott's new approach.

Conventional *respect des fonds* is based on a conception of records growing organically — as it were, like the leaves on a tree of administrative hierarchy. It recognises that the leaves must be identified in terms of their origins on particular branches, boughs and twigs. So long as the tree is substantially unchanging over long periods, there is no problem about this.

However, neither of the conventional respects accommodates growth and change in the tree — especially a tree which is able to relocate its branches and boughs, and to rearrange its foliage, in ways unknown to natural trees. It is thus obvious why traditional methods were first seriously questioned in the Archives of a government with a habit of repeated drastic reorganisation.

Argument over the frequency of significant change, however, is beside the point. It was a tactical victory for Scott's opponents, that he was goaded into it.¹⁷ It reflected, perhaps, his reluctance to directly challenge conventional respectability, that he tried to excuse his departures from French and English table-manners by so pleading the rugged dynamism of the antipodean frontier. It certainly obscures the fact that his case against

record-grouping as a fundamental principle requires no such excuse.

Scott recognised 'that administrative structures and provenance are more accurately revealed in finding aids than in any inherently imperfect grouping or juxtaposition of series on shelving.'¹⁸ He gave up, as it were, attempting to reassemble the leaves on a mockup of the tree in one of its past states, or in some fictitious compromise state. He decided to represent the past states of the tree and its leaves notionally rather than actually — as it were, by means of time-lapse photography. The resulting 'movie film' is his context-control system, the individual frames being inventories of series maintained by various agencies.

In the simple case of no change, the movie film, shows a static tree and a single deployment of records. That is, the context-control system boils down to a record-group inventory. Where there has been change, however, there are several inventories, and a multi-provenant series is listed in more than one — in each case, with the same unique registration number. It is also possible to record truncated and extinct series whose contents were reorganised into more recent series, and to include series which always were notional rather than actual (for instance, a numbered and registered series of submission scattered through several series of files). Scott has provided means to show not only relationships between series, agencies and items, but relationships amongst them at each level — both of succession, control and intermixture — both ancestral ('diachronic') and contemporary, ('structural'). The system thus has the flexibility 'to cope with all known possibilities.'¹⁹

As regards physical order of records in the repository, Scott sees no need, having recorded all the past relations of records and agencies, to maintain any particular 'juxtaposition of series on shelving.' He is, however, committed to maintaining the physical integrity of record items, and to keeping them together in authentic series.

Scott's approach has three elements:

- physical maintenance of lower-level order, rather than physical record-grouping at high level
- physical maintenance of final active order, rather than physical reconstruction of earlier orders
- notional, rather than actual, reconstitution of *fonds*

These elements will be discussed in turn.

3. Physical maintenance of lower-level order rather than physical record-grouping at high level.

'Essentially', as Scott remarked, 'the point at issue is the *level of physical classification* of records'.²⁰

The conventional view is that physical order is more important at the top

than at the bottom. Few may agree with G.F. Weibull, 'that in the interests of historical research records should be grouped by subject matter within each *fonds*','²¹ but there is a general presumption that '*respect des fonds*' takes precedence over 'respect for original order'. According to Schellenberg, 'While the principle of provenance is basic and inflexible and relates to a matter of the highest importance to the archival profession, the principle relating to the original order of records involves mainly matters of convenience or use.'²² Again, Duchein sees 'the logic' of *respect des fonds* as implying, 'that sooner or later we would come to respect not only the external integrity of the *fonds* but, at least in theory, the internal integrity of its different parts ... today the notion of internal integrity of *fonds* has become an integral part of the principle of *respect des fonds*.'²³ Boles, likewise, thinks respect for original order 'broadens considerably the cardinal principle of provenance.'²⁴

I shall argue — leaving aside for the present my objections to 'respect for original order' — that this is to value the bathwater above the baby. I shall argue that the general fixation on '*respect des fonds*' has caused an inversion of priorities. Like Scott, I find 'the two cardinal principles ... in conflict ... [and come] inevitably to the conclusion that ... one should *not* do violence to the natural original structure of records and should *not* force them into a record group system into which not all series will fit and which for some would result in an alien framework being superimposed.'²⁵

I shall consider, in turn, the issue of physical order at each of the three levels — top, middle and bottom — record-group, series and item.

3.1 The record-group level

It is generally presumed that respect for provenance requires a literal, physical maintenance of record groups. Muller, Feith and Fruin have a rule that 'The various archival collections [ie groups] placed in a depository must be kept carefully separate.'²⁶ Duchein refers to '*a fonds d'archives* in the sense the archivist gives this term, an infrangible whole ...'²⁷ and says, '*respect des fonds* means to group, without mixing them with others, the archives (documents of every kind) created by or coming from an administration, establishment, person or corporate body.'²⁸ 'Provenance insists', according to Boles, 'that archivists respect a creator of a body of documents by maintaining that group of records as a distinct unit, neither adding to nor subtracting from the files.'²⁹ 'According to the principle of provenance,' explains Schellenberg, 'an archivist should keep each group and subgroup intact and treat it as an integral unit ... an archivist should not disperse records, from a particular group or subgroup, among subject or other kinds of classes.'³⁰

'We should not deceive ourselves', warns Fischer, 'that the listing of series on card indexes or other tables, however elaborate, is any substitute for the reality of the administrative structure and physical propinquity that the records of a given agency once had ... archivists should contemplate

with concern any method of arranging records that does not, so far as possible, ensure an enduring physical reflection of the administrative structure that gave rise to them.³¹ And McGregor — so deceiving herself — nevertheless finds that 'It goes very much against the grain for any archivist to abandon the concept of original order on the shelf even when that order is being meticulously preserved in the finding aids.'³²

McGregor considers, indeed, that she is 'open to the charge of giving repository management a higher priority than basic archival principles.'³³ However, the system's principles are its true glory, and far more important than its narrowly practical advantages.

I shall discuss the latter before returning to the principles.

3.1.1. Abandoning record groups — the narrowly practical implications

Scott's is a 'case for abandonment' of record-grouping as an obligation — not for its prohibition. His method renders record groups 'superfluous',³⁴ rather than impermissible. There is no demand to gratuitously break up consignments — still less, any support for the splitting of papers from one source between institutions.

Again, an institution with an irreversible commitment to record-grouping can easily superimpose an improved context-control without physical rearrangement and renumbering. Roper describes how, at the Public Record Office, abolition of the record group is not an option, it having 'become a feature of the document reference system which has been used and cited by several generations of scholars. It has nevertheless been possible to reduce the emphasis on the record group and to concentrate it on the series [or class] ... Successive transfers of records in a continuing series are now placed in the same class irrespective of their source; new classes are placed in the most convenient group, having regard to related classes; new groups are not necessarily created when a new department is established, if there is a convenient existing group.'³⁵ Meanwhile, the PRO's *Guide* has begun to present notional arrangements by provenance.³⁶ This accords with Fishbein's suggestion that record-groupers might follow Scott to the extent of developing 'an auxiliary control based on names of key persons and agencies [with] Name indexes ... prepared from detailed series entries that list all custodians, as well as the names of other persons and agencies with which the records deal importantly.'³⁷

Fishbein's main reservation about Scott's proposal was that it seemed to demand description of records at a relatively detailed level at the outset, whereas record groups 'provide a major unit of arrangement and description for ... [a] rapidly increasing volume of holdings ...'.³⁸ In this he appears to agree with Schellenberg that an archivist 'should definitely forego the detailed description of individual record items until he has provided a comprehensive description of his holdings.'³⁹

However, Scott's method does not, in fact, call for an initial focus on the

item level. Nor does it preclude provisional registration of records *en masse* to provide 'an interim solution'.⁴⁰

Fishbein may also share Schellenberg's perception, after Ellen Jackson, that ' "It is worse than useless — it is extremely dangerous — to try to arrange any portion of a collection without a considerable familiarity with the whole." '⁴¹ Scott's abandonment of the attempt to create a *physical* 'whole', however, does not lessen his early and pre-eminent concern to develop such a familiarity — it being expressed in his context-control system. Again, there is not so much a progression from the general to the particular as a two-way interaction, and this may be helped by an initial focus at the middle, or series, level. Nor is there any implication, in Scott's approach, of irreversible commitment to a particular detailed arrangement before one has got the general picture.

Indeed, the system permits a maximum degree of suspension of judgement — recording what one knows of fragments and allowing a pattern to emerge. 'Simple consecutive numerical control of series allows flexibility in processing because series may be registered and numbered before their administrative context ... is fully determined.'⁴² The record-grouper, on the other hand, is constantly concerned that 'once the series numbers are allotted an additional series that is accessioned cannot be inserted readily in its logical position. One must therefore become reconciled to either disorder or a general renumbering.'⁴³

McGregor describes such a dilemma at the Queensland State Archives, where 'it proved impossible to predict accurately just what volume of records would be transferred from any given department. So [they] were constantly faced with the problem of reshelving if the records were to be kept in their proper order. In fact [they] tended to use space allocated for other departments to avoid large-scale reshelving. As the quantity of records under the control of the archives increased, some records had to be stored in other buildings in the city. The attempt to use the classification system as a location order gradually broke down completely.'⁴⁴ And while Schellenberg suggests that 'the order in which series within a group or subgroup are placed has little effect on their evident value',⁴⁵ this is neither the general view, nor a complete solution of the record-grouper's unnecessary problem.

Using the series as the highest level of physical aggregation, one avoids that paralysis of 'final processing and numbering ... postponed indefinitely to await the likelihood of an additional series being discovered'⁴⁶ - the sort of paralysis found in France where 'the archival treatment of documents [did] not [in 1977] go beyond 10 July 1940 ... All documents later than 10 July 1940 receive[d] only provisional treatment.'⁴⁷ Compare the Australian Archives which in 1977 was registering series up to 1970.

There is also less difficulty, using Scott's system, about the segregation, for various good reasons — of control records; of consignments of records

all due for destruction at the same time; of security-classified records; of maps, films (including nitrate film) and tapes. While such exceptions were endorsed by Muller, Feith and Fruin,⁴⁸ they clearly violate the principle of physical record-grouping according to provenance.

Scott's approach removes the rigid nexus between context-control and repository management — to the great benefit of both. The control system becomes a flexible device for the identification of series in terms of both their immediate and ultimate origins, and their relations to other series. The repository manager is freed to locate series with regard to physical characteristics and repository constraints, without gratuitous dictation from the registration and description branch. The two independent systems are linked through a register in which the location of each series is recorded alongside its number. Changes in location, or revisions of series registrations involving changes of series numbers, are accommodated by amending this register. It is not necessary to do consequential renumberings and relocations far beyond the immediate sphere of revision.

It is not true, however, as Fischer claims, that Scott seeks 'to deny the reality of the situation merely in the interests of current repository management.'⁴⁹ The serving of those interests is quite incidental. 'If, as a by-product, one may achieve more efficient repository management, then so much the better, but in no sense is "provenance ... secondary to repository convenience".'⁵⁰

Indeed, it is really Fischer who is denying the reality of the situation.

3.2 Lower-level order — lip service and reality

As one descends to lower levels, notional recording of arrangement becomes increasingly impractical. Indeed, at the item level it is an absurd proposition.

Again, the lower the level, the more difficult it is to re-establish relations of agencies, series, items and documents, once physical arrangement has been lost. While the contents of documents will generally betray their provenance, and file numbers may enable one to reconstruct series, reassembling dismembered files is usually impossible.

I shall comment on the series level, then deal with item level, then look at the approach to both — that it, to 'respect for original order' — by a patent heretic (Boles) and two champions of orthodoxy (Duchein and Schellenberg). I shall show that the views of the orthodox are very similar to those of the heretic, in that all three qualify their commitment to the physical integrity of records precisely where it matters most.

3.2.1 Series level

The physical preservation of series facilitates maximum retrieval with minimum effort. Changing file numbers, or failing to keep files in their original sequence, will render useless the contemporary cross-references on

documents, and original indexes and registers. Scott's awareness of this is evident in the attention he gives to the correlation of related series, and to the understanding and explanation of the creators' systems so that they can be exploited by later users.

However, the term 'series system' is somewhat misleading, in that Scott's approach to series is relatively conventional. He is really at odds with the orthodox at the extreme levels of record order. At the upper extreme, he rejects their insistence on physical arrangement as the way to respect provenance. At the middle level, he meets them travelling in the opposite direction. At the bottom, he is genuine — where they are not — about preserving items intact.

3.2.2 Item level

The importance of the arrangement of documents within items inspired Jenkinson to make an 'absolute Rule that *no original filing or binding may be interfered with in any way.*'⁵¹

'Separation for one reason or another of documents that have been preserved together is so common an error, and so fatal,' warned Jenkinson — '... as a general rule it is only some lucky chance, which has made it possible to put the error right, which reveals even the existence of these mistakes; the vast majority of documents so mishandled are from the very circumstances of the mishandling lost to view.'⁵²

Others are not quite so strong — and often also vague about the level of order which concerns them most. Fischer considers it 'obviously impossible to split bound volumes except by acts of archival vandalism.'⁵³ Muller, Feith and Fruin think it 'By far the worst objection ... [to] ... breaking up ... dossiers [that] the natural relation of the documents is destroyed.'⁵⁴ Duchein acknowledges 'the value ... theoretical and practical, of the respect of the structure of *fonds*...'⁵⁵ and says 'we would be wrong' to stop making the principle of structure an archival rule of the same importance as the principle of provenance.⁵⁶ Schellenberg warns that 'each single item torn from its context is likely to lose some of its meaning'⁵⁷ — that the 'content of individual documents that are the product of activity can be fully understood only in context with other documents that relate to the same activity.'⁵⁸ Even Boles concedes — albeit in a paper entitled 'Disrespecting original order' — 'that the ordering imposed upon documents by the creator has evidential value.'⁵⁹

3.2.3 Boles' heretical disrespect for item-level order

Boles is representative of a school of archivists who react against 'respect for original order' in favour of subject-grouping. Others are F.M. Miller⁶⁰ and G.F. Weibull.

Boles' 'disrespect' is based on a view of 'evidential value' as confined to 'reveal[ing] information about the character and organisation of the

creator independent of the documents' content.⁶¹ He does not acknowledge that the significance of documents may only be apparent from their original juxtaposition or cross-reference. He distinguishes two sorts of evidential value — that of documents and that of their filing — and considers the former to be greater than the latter, and not to some degree dependent upon it. He concludes that 'when a filing scheme imposed on documents by their creator proves unworkable it becomes legitimate for the archivist to destroy the original order insofar as it is necessary to insure that the evidentially superior documents may be successfully used.'⁶² He apparently agrees with Miller that 'It should be possible for us to retain the general divisions mandated by provenance, put less emphasis on lower levels of physical arrangement, and recognise that our major responsibility is to provide information.'⁶³

Boles appeals to Schellenberg's statement that the archivist 'should have no compunction about rearranging series in relation to each other or single record items within them if by so doing he can make the records more intelligible and more serviceable.'⁶⁴ Schellenberg, however, refers quite specifically to middle-order, whereas Boles singles out the lowest level as the most appropriate for his permissive approach.

Boles also claims that section 16 of Muller, Feith and Fruin 'is primarily concerned with arrangement at the record group level'⁶⁵ in its call for 'arrangement ... based on the original organisation of the archival collection'.⁶⁶ 'Below the record group level,' according to Boles, the three 'become ever more liberal in allowing the archivist to vary the documents' original order.'⁶⁷ However, the passages which Boles quotes are misconstrued.

Boles makes much, on the one hand, of the trio's commitment to 're-establish' original order only 'as far as possible'.⁶⁸ He goes rather further, himself — as also do Schellenberg⁶⁹ and Powell⁷⁰ (and I) — in urging imposition — rather than reconstruction — 'if there is no order'.⁷¹ It is beside the point, however, in a discussion of 'the principle of original order', to bring up the case of 'those papers *lacking all order*, either originally or due to hopeless confusion.'⁷² As Hurley observes, 'There are no grounds for rejecting a valid principle simply because it fails to apply in particular instances .. original order (*where it can be discerned*) ought not to be abandoned ...'⁷³ Nor is it difficult to distinguish disorder from order, given care and experience. Nor is it true, as Powell suggests, that persons who respect disorder are 'Faithfully following Jenkinson'⁷⁴ — who countenanced the imposition of order in such cases — albeit very guardedly.⁷⁵

Boles' other passage from Muller, Feith and Fruin is also beside the point — being their recognition that an archivist may legitimately demolish the order imposed by a previous archivist.⁷⁶ Our concern is with the preservation, in Boles' words, of 'the ordering of documents *by their*

creator', 'the creator's ordering.'⁷⁷ We are to distinguish, following Jenkinson, between 'altering ... the arrangements undoubtedly due to an Archivist, [one's] 'predecessor', — acceptable — and 'the alteration of anything done by the original administrator, the person or body who compiled the Archives', — not acceptable.⁷⁸ Again, Schellenberg observes that the archivist 'should have no compunction about rearranging items within an artificial collection'.⁷⁹

The sorts of archival imposition which Muller, Feith and Fruin consider 'not only *may* but positively *must* be modified'⁸⁰ would include, presumably, the products of such errors as they deplore *viz* 'forcing the archival collection into an alien mold' — into a 'system [which] accepts headings foreign to the archival collection and its organisation';⁸¹ 'break[ing] up any series of letters received by a single administrative body on the most diverse subjects in order to make up a bundle of documents relating to one particular matter'⁸²; and imagining that this sort of interference will be helpful to the researcher, when it is just as likely to '[turn] him aside from the right path' or to result in his 'not be[ing] able without a complicated search to discover where the letters and other documents belonging with ... minutes are kept'.⁸³

So much for any suggestion that Muller, Feith and Fruin support Boles' argument for a principle of 'useability'. Rather, they are in strong reaction against earlier versions of the same thing — especially in France, where archives had 'been torn away from their original connection and mixed together', this being 'very generally regretted even in France itself.'⁸⁴ Duchein regrets it, complaining that prior to 1841, 'the archival document was considered to possess an interest *by itself*, independent of its context ...'.⁸⁵

Duchein might thus recognise in Boles, rather than in Scott, 'the scarcely touched-up face of the old system ...'.⁸⁶ Indeed, he might rather find it in his own thinking.

3.2.4 The orthodox disrespect of Duchein and Schellenberg

We have noted respectful statements by Duchein and Schellenberg regarding low-level order. In the end, however, it is difficult to distinguish their position from those of Boles and the precursors of Natalis de Wailly.

Jenkinson directed us 'to establish or re-establish the original arrangement; even if, when we look at it, we think we could have done better ourselves.'⁸⁷ For Duchein, however, 'respect [for the internal structure of *fonds*] does not ... constitute an obligation if the arrangement practised by the agency is overly defective or inconvenient for research.'⁸⁸ And he finds much that is defective in modern record-keeping, to the extent that he concludes 'it would be deceptive and dangerous to try to adopt systematically the arrangement given by the creating agency as the archival arrangement.'⁸⁹ He therefore puts numerous conditions on his respect for

low-level order. 'If all these conditions are not fulfilled, [he] considers[s] it necessary to stop following the arrangement given by the creating agency, and proceed as if the *fonds* had not been arranged before coming into the care of the archivist.'⁹⁰

Schellenberg, too, believes that 'In most modern filing systems, the original order given record items contributes little to an understanding of organic activity, and an archivist should therefore preserve the order only if it is useful.'⁹¹ Systems in which 'individual record items may be arranged alphabetically, chronologically, numerically, or by subject, or under a combination of these [What is left? CVS] ... From an archivist's point of view, most[ly] ... are notoriously bad, because they do not show how records were accumulated in relation to the activities to which they pertain.'⁹²

It is difficult, having a Jenkinsonian conception of archives as 'documents which formed part of an official transaction ...'⁹³, to quite make sense of this. How can records which virtually *are* the organic activity fail to contribute to its understanding, through their arrangement as well as their content? Again, even if one interprets Schellenberg as referring to series-level only (which is difficult) one has to wonder at his readiness to sacrifice ready-made retrieval systems, given his rejection of rearrangement of records into subject categories partly on the basis that it cannot be done 'without infinitely complicating the task of the archivist.'⁹⁴

Nor does it help, that Schellenberg pursues in his next paragraph the red herring of records found in *disorder*, rather than merely in an order which is 'bad' from an archivist's point of view'. The Prussian description, quoted by him, of some older registry systems as being 'without system, foolish and impractical'⁹⁵ muddles the issues further.

Duchain's argument is generally similar to Schellenberg's. He rejects, as unworthy of preservation, any arrangement 'carried out according to principles *foreign to archival methods* and closer to the arrangement of libraries of research centres (decimal classification, classification by subject, and so on)...'⁹⁶ He also explains the greater regard of German archivists for low-level order, as merely reflecting the better order of German records, and complains that French systems 'six out of ten times are not of significant value and three out of ten times are catastrophic from an archives point of view.'⁹⁷

These statements betray a perception of archiving quite foreign to Jenkinson's. There is an inversion of professional conscience, Duchain finding it 'tempting for the archivist to keep whatever arrangement was given to the documents by the agency...'⁹⁸ where Jenkinson warned us to put aside thoughts that 'we could have done better ourselves.'⁹⁹ One sees, indeed, in Duchain, 'the scarcely touched-up face of the old system...'¹⁰⁰ — the old impository systemising.

Duchain and Schellenberg see the archivist as being in the same business as managers of current records, to the extent that he should sit in judgement on their work, and remedy its deficiencies. They do not see all record-making systems as by definition non-archival, and the archivist as nevertheless obliged to accept them as given. Again, for Duchain — if not perhaps for Schellenberg, the distinction between undoing the work of a previous archivist, and undoing the work of the record-creator, is meaningless. He does not recognise the significance of records becoming inactive — that one may rearrange them during their active life, but not after they become inactive. Duchain, in short, does not accept that what we ought ultimately to respect, physically, at the lower levels, is the *final active order*.

Editors Note: Parts 4-6 of this article will appear in the next issue of *Archives and Manuscripts*.

FOOTNOTES

1. P.J. Scott 'The record group concept: a case for abandonment' *American Archivist* Vol 29 No 4, October 1966, p 502.
2. G.L. Fischer 'Letting the archival dust settle: some remarks on the record group concept' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* Vol 4 No 8, October 1973, p 640.
3. The following is a list, in chronological order, of published papers which have referred to Scott's ideas:—
 - M.H. Fishbein 'The record group concept' *American Archivist* Vol 30 No. 1, January 1967, pp 239, 240.
 - P.J. Scott 'The record group concept' *American Archivist* Vol 30 No3, July 1967, pp 541, 542.
 - K.A. Green 'The series — a specialised "record group"?' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol 3 No 5, November 1967, pp 13-15.
 - K.A. Polden 'The record group — a matter of principle' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol 3 No 6, May 1968, pp 3-7.
 - M. Roper 'Modern departmental records and the Record Office' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* Vol 4 No 5, April 1972, pp 400-412.
 - G.L. Fischer 'Letting the archival dust settle: some remarks on the record group concept' *Journal of the Society of Archivists* Vol 4 No 8, October 1973, pp 640-645.
 - P.J. Scott 'Facing the reality of administrative change — some further remarks on the record group concept, *Journal of the Society of Archivists* Vol 5 No 2, October 1974, pp 94-100.
 - L. McGregor 'Arrangement and description of records at Queensland State Archives' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol 6 No 5, November 1975, pp 147-154.
 - P.J. Scott, C.D. Smith and G. Finlay 'Archives and administrative change: Some methods and approaches' *Archives and Manuscripts*
 - Part 1 Vol. 7 No 3, August 1978, pp 115-127
 - Part 2 Vol 7 No 4, April 1979, pp 151-165
 - Part 3 Vol 8 No 1, June 1980, pp 41-54
 - Part 4 Vol 8 No 2, December 1980, pp 51-69
 - Part 5 Vol 9 No 1, September 1981, pp 3-18
 - M. Duchain 'Theoretical principles and practical problems of *respect des fonds* in archival science' *Archivaria* No 16, Summer 1983, pp 64-82 (Originally published in French in *La Gazette des Archives* 97, 1977, pp 71-96)

4. Fishbein, op cit, p 239
5. Fischer, op cit, p 640
6. Ibid p 641
7. McGregor, op cit
8. Scott, Smith and Finlay, op. cit.
9. Scott, Smith and Finlay, op cit, December 1980, p 53
10. Duchein, op cit, p 72
11. Ibid, p 71. This reading appears to result from translation into French, and back into English, of the latter part of a statement by Scott that we should 'base the physical arrangement of archives on the record series as an independent element not bound to the administrative context.' (op cit, 1966, p 497) But this is a proposed way of dealing with a series, rather a definition of one. Scott's definition appears on the next page (498), and makes it clear (indeed, it is clear throughout his writings) that series are authentic structures given to records by their creators. Duchein appears to imagine otherwise and/or to discount the significance of such authenticity. In view of the position he adopts regarding the expendability of authentic low-level order when it conflicts with his ideal of *fonds*, the latter is perhaps more likely.
12. Ibid, pp 71,72
13. Ibid, p 65
14. F. Boles 'Disrespecting original order' *American Archivist* Vol 45 No 1, Winter 1982.
15. Scott refers, himself, to a prevalent French misunderstanding of his proposal. He complains (op cit, December 1980, p 63) that the *Manuel d'archivistique* (Paris, 1970, pp 191-193) 'refers mistakenly to the "regime atomise" of a series system as doing away with all classification and arrangement of archives, while recognising the fluidity of administrative structures and proposing the solution of classification or arrangement by function.'
16. John Milton, 'On the New Forcers of Conscience'.
17. See, in particular, Scott, op cit, 1974 and Scott, Smith and Finlay, op cit, 1978.
18. Scott, op cit, 1974, p 98
19. Scott, op cit, 1966, pp 498-501
20. Scott, op cit, 1967, p 541
21. View attributed to Weibull by G.T. Powell in his paper 'Archival principles and the treatment of personal papers' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol 6 No 7, August 1976, p 263.
22. T.R. Schellenberg 'Archival principles of arrangement' *American Archivist* Vol 24, No 1, January 1961, p 23.
23. Duchein, op cit, pp 75,76.
24. Boles, op cit, p 29.
25. Scott, op cit, December 1980, pp 56, 57
26. S. Muller, J.A. Feith and R. Fruin *Manual for the arrangement and description of archives* New York 1968, p 33.
27. Duchein, op cit, p 70.
28. Ibid, p 64
29. Boles, op cit, p 29
30. T.R. Schellenberg *The management of archives* New York and London 1965, p 95. (Emphasis removed)
31. Fischer, op cit, p 644
32. McGregor, op cit, p 148. The 'original order' here referred to is order at the record-group level.
33. Ibid, p 148.
34. Scott, op cit, 1967, p 541
35. Roper, op cit, p 403.
36. Ibid, p 409.
37. Fishbein, op cit, p 240
38. Ibid, p 239.
39. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, p 112
40. Scott, op cit, 1967, p 542.
41. Schellenberg, op cit, 1961, p 11
42. Scott, op cit, 1966, p 500

43. Ibid, p 496.
44. McGregor, op cit, p 147
45. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, p 100.
46. Scott, op cit, 1966, p 496.
47. Duchein, op cit, p 80
48. Muller, Feith & Fruin, op cit, pp 156-8.
49. Fischer, op cit, p 642
50. Scott, op cit, 1974, p 98.
51. H. Jenkinson *A manual of archive administration* London 1966, p 88.
52. Ibid, p 84
53. Fischer, op cit, p 643
54. Muller, Feith & Fruin, op cit, p 50.
55. Duchein, op cit, p 76.
56. Ibid, p 77
57. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, p 104
58. Ibid, p 92
59. Boles, op cit, p 29.
60. F.M. Miller 'Social history and archival practice' *American Archivist* Vol 44 No 2, Spring 1981, pp 113-124.
61. Boles, op cit, p 29
62. Ibid, p 30.
63. Miller, op cit, p 122.
64. Schellenberg, op cit, 1961, p 24. Quoted by Boles on p 30.
65. Boles, op cit, p 28.
66. Muller, Feith & Fruin, op cit, p 52.
67. Boles, op cit, p 28.
68. Muller, Feith & Fruin, op cit, pp 59 and 60. Quoted by Boles op cit, on p 28.
69. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, pp 101-102.
70. Powell, op cit, p 261.
71. Boles, op cit, p 31.
72. Ibid, p 30. (My emphasis)
73. C. Hurley 'Personal papers and the treatment of archival principles' *Archives and Manuscripts* Vol 6 No 8, February 1977, p 351. (My emphasis)
74. Powell, op cit, p 263
75. Jenkinson, op cit, p 114
76. Muller, Feith & Fruin, op cit, p 59. Quoted by Boles on p 28.
77. Boles, op cit, p 29. (My emphasis)
78. Jenkinson, op cit, p 114
79. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, p 104
80. Muller, Feith & Fruin, op cit, p 59.
81. Ibid, p 54.
82. Ibid, p 65
83. Ibid, p 54
84. Ibid, p 65
85. Duchein, op cit, p 65.
86. Ibid, pp 71, 72
87. Jenkinson, op cit, p 99 (Emphasis removed)
88. Duchein, op cit, p 78
89. Ibid, p 79.
90. Ibid
91. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, p 101. (Emphasis removed)
92. Ibid
93. Jenkinson, op cit, p 4 (Emphasis removed)
94. Schellenberg, op cit, 1961, p 18.95.
95. Schellenberg, op cit, 1965, p 102.
96. Duchein, op cit, pp 78, 79. (My emphasis)
97. Ibid, p 79, footnote
98. Ibid, pp 78.
99. Jenkinson, op cit, p 99
100. Duchein, op cit, pp 71, 72.