INSTITUTIONAL SPOTLIGHT

THE INTERNATIONAL HARVESTER ARCHIVES

The primary purpose of the International Harvester Archives, established on a formal basis in early 1971, is to provide a permanent, organized, usable repository of documentary material related to people, products, and significant events in the long history of the company and its principle predecessor companies, for the preservation of the corporate memory, for administrative reference, and for use in serious scholarly research.

In pursuit of these objectives, procedures began two and one half years ago to locate, collect, identify, evaluate, classify and preserve material related to IH's history as a multinational business. Currently, the holdings of the IH Archives (located at 401 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. 60611) occupy about 400 cubic feet of file-box space and 540 linear feet of shelf space - - identified with about 5,000 official document numbers, representing group-related series and individual items. A large amount of material remains unprocessed. The company does not have any museum-type facilities for collection, restoration, housing or display of its historic products.

At the outset, I, as the administrative assistant to the Corporate Secretary, faced several problems following my designation as the company's Archivist. These included: (1) the stablishment of a subject category classification system broad enough to embrace all of the material that potentially might be included (2) with a limited budget, provide the necessary manpower to accurately classify, document and file those items coming into the possession of or knowledge of the archives and (3) provide a modern information retrieval system that would be relatively easy to use, yet meet the requirements of the archives.

After a survey of material known to be available, as well as considering the types that might later become available, we developed a three-digit coding system with ten major or primary headings and a total of 130 subject classifications for use in identifying groups or series of related items.

The second problem concerning manpower, was for a large part, resolved with a decision to recall certain retired mangerial employees. The men who have participated thus far, with varying backgrounds of company experience prior to retirement, have been most enthusiastic. Their personal knowledge has been invaluable in documenting material turned over to the archives. However, because of personal plans and earnings limitations under Social Security, the turnover, of course, is higher than if regular employees are used. Nevertheless, the keen personal interest these men have taken in their work certainly serves as a balancing factor. At any one time, one to four of these men are working in the archives.

The third problem, was the development of and information retrieval and finding-aid system - - a major objective for getting the newly accessioned collection under control. After months of looking at studying, and evaluating many different systems, we finally selected a computer time-sharing system and program called "WORD/ONE" offered by the Chicago branch of the New York based Bowne Time-Sharing, Inc. This program, designed for the processing of words and verbal text, proved to be a natural for the needs of the archives. Its basic operation is simple in that it utilizes a standard IBM Communicating Mag Card Selectric Typewriter as a computer terminal for input and print-out.

After accessioning and processing an item, a permanent document number is assigned and the subject classification code mentioned earlier is determined. This information is manually recorded on an inventory work sheet along with a record of the source of the item, the issue date, the date-range covered, file location, title and a descriptive abstract of the text.

Inventory work sheets are kept in document number sequence. New inventory sheets are periodically given to the WORD/ONE operator for recording of the essential information from the sheets into the computer memory bank. The operator types in one line of information, limited to 124 characters, which includes document number, location code, subject code, issue date, date range, title and certain descriptive key words, from <u>each</u> inventory sheet. Input of this information, via the Communicating Mag Card Selectric Typewriter, can be made directly from the typewriter keyboard or

recorded onto magnetic cards which are subsequently used as an automatic, high speed input device for entering the information into the computer memory.

This random list of archives document descriptions, in pre-programmed format now in computer storage, can then be easily manipulated by the operator with the use of a few simple typewritten commands. The list can be almost instantly sorted by the computer, first into subject category groupings and then chronologically by issue date, within each category. The line entries can subsequently be edited, corrected or shifted to another position. The machine can be queried, via the typewriter, for speedy, automatic response as to the possible listings of a particular subject or as to the location codes of all items on that subject previously entered into the system. In making a computer search, for example, a typewriter query for information related to a key word will bring automatic response and print the complete line-descriptions of all items previously recorded which contain that key word.

A complete line-numbered computer printout of the entire list of items in the collection is obtained on command. Usually the source selected for this print-out is a high speed printer located at the Bowne Time-Sharing computer center in New York using a mylar carbon ribbon printing on continuous form bond paper. This printout produced in a day or less and air-mailed from New York is received in Chicago the next day. Upon receipt, reduced-size (letter size) copies are reproduced and distributed to selected personnel within the company for reference retention. Complete or partial listings, for editing purposes, can also be obtained automatically directly on continuous form paper of the typewriter terminal in the archives office. This is done when high quality readibility for reproduced copies is not required. In addition to its capabilities for storing, sorting, editing, searching and finding, the WORD/ONE system readily lends itself to updating of the list in its memory. At any time desired, after the accumulation of a number of new items, an updated, complete print-out may be obtained.

Acquisitions of material have come from a wide variety of places. In some cases, the material was simply stored at various company locations. Other items were made available as certain operations were closed down or consolidated. In January, 1973 Mr. Brooks McCormick, IH president, wrote to key personnel of all company operations outlining the archives program and soliciting assistance in locating material. In April pensioners of the company were advised of the program. Members of both of these groups have provided a new flow of material.

Some significant acquisitions have also been made of collections donated by, or in a few cases purchase from, interested "outsiders." Reference material is also available in the archives, for the benefit of researchers, as to the location of IH related materials in certain other archives and libraries. Paralleling the growth of the archives, a "Chronology of Significant Events," a type of historical calendar, is also being developped. This will include genealogical information, historical listings of officers, and historical "firsts" relating to products and major events.

Within the company the archives has proven highly valuable in answering requests for information about people, products and events of the past. Many inquiries are also received from authors, publishers, and antique collectors for data on specifications or photographic reproductions of long discontinued products of the company.

Users from outside the company have primarily been researchers seeking to add to their knowledge of the company's history. A printed folder, "Rules Governing the Use of the IH Archives" has been published setting forth the company's policy for access and use of its historical collection by approved researchers. Written inquiries are answered unless they are too complex to be covered in a letter. In such cases the individual is asked to utilize the archives in person.

The International Harvester Archives, established less than three years ago has successfully blended a wealth of documentary historical material, the dedication and in-depth knowledge of a small staff, and one of the most sophisticated electronic information retrieval and finding aid systems available. Many businesses and other institutions have neglected their historical records. If the IH Archives can be of assistance to any organization considering the establishment of an archives, please feel free to contact us.

James D. Henn