

RECONSIDERING ARCHIVAL CLASSICS

Jenkinson's Writings on Some Enduring Archival Themes

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First published in 1980, *Selected Writings of Sir Hilary Jenkinson* brings together a selection of the writings of one of the most influential archivists in the English-speaking world. Most archivists know Sir Hilary Jenkinson by name, but few are familiar with his writings beyond his famous *Manual of Archive Administration* (1922). Because these speeches and essays are from another time and, for archivists outside the English milieu, another place, one aim of this introduction is to give some sense of the career of the man who wrote these essays. The other is to give some explanation of the context in which they were written and the reasons they bear reading by a twenty-first-century audience. Remote as they may be, these essays reveal a lifetime devoted to almost every aspect of the archivist's professional endeavour. Reading them helps us appreciate the timeless preoccupations of the archivist, who may encounter novel circumstances but rarely an entirely new concern.

HIS CAREER

Hilary Jenkinson was born on 1 November 1882 in Streatham in south London, the youngest of six children of William Wilberforce Jenkinson, a real estate agent. He attended an English public school where he was nurtured in the ancient classics. He went on to Cambridge University, where he was an outstanding scholar of classics. He graduated in 1904 with first class honors, the highest standing in the British system of higher education. An education of this kind equipped one to be a member of the British intelligentsia. At this time, one of the careers open to scholars educated in the rigors of Latin and Greek language, culture, and history was employment in the British civil service. Aspirants

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to a professional life of public service studied in preparation for writing a demanding set of examinations to qualify for a post in government service. Jenkinson read for these exams, and, upon passing, took a post in the Public Record Office in London at the beginning of 1906. He was then a young man of twenty-three. He remained in the employ of the Public Record Office for forty-eight years, the final seven years of which he headed the institution as deputy keeper.

The Public Record Office he entered was the repository for the records of the government of the United Kingdom, including those records of royal government extending back to the medieval period that had survived. The office's origins go back to the passing of "An Act for the keeping safely of the Public Records" in 1838, although the erection of the building the office occupied on Fetter Lane in London did not begin until 1851.¹ The Public Record Office was the first British archival institution. It was established to centralize the records of British governments housed in innumerable places, often under the most appalling conditions. It was not until 1877 that an act was passed to regulate the disposal of public records, and for most of the nearly seventy years of its existence before Jenkinson's arrival in 1906, the work concentrated on early public records.²

The Public Record Office selected its archivists with great care. Writing in 1838, the deputy keeper, Sir Francis Palgrave, contended that "record employment in its higher branches is a *Profession* . . . requiring previous preparation and long practice and experience."³ Sir John Romilly, master of the rolls in the mid-nineteenth century, described "the very unusual amount of intellectual qualification" required for archival work as follows:

He must understand ancient French and medieval Latin. He must be able to decipher every form of handwriting from the earliest to the latest period. . . . He must make himself perfectly acquainted with the Law in terms and with the usages existing in the management of public business. He must understand the methods of dating ancient documents . . . and a variety of technical details not to be mastered without much labour.⁴

By Jenkinson's time, the gradual abolition of patronage and introduction of competitive examination to gain entry to archival ranks had produced a strict hierarchy governed by salaries and duties. He joined the staff in the lowest rank

¹ The main entrance on Fetter Lane was shifted to Chancery Lane after World War II.

² John D. Cantwell, *The Public Record Office, 1838-1958* (London: HMSO, 1991) is a detailed institutional history.

³ Philippa Levine, "History in the Archives: The Public Record Office and its Staff, 1838-1886," *English Historical Review* 101 (January 1986): 41.

⁴ Levine, "History in the Archives," 23.

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as a clerk. Assistant keepers occupied the next rank, but both clerks and assistant keepers were in effect archivists. The work of archivists at the Public Record Office had over the years made significant contributions to the evolution of the professional study of history. It was these scholar-archivists who first encountered the records of early English administration of government, which extended back to at least the beginning of the thirteenth century in several long series. In their work, the assistant keepers identified these records and explained their context of creation as a necessary foundation for their exploitation as historical sources. They were "deeply concerned in fostering study of the public records and stimulating interest of professional historians and antiquarians in them."⁵ As Philippa Levine explains it, "they were motivated in large part by an ideal of honourable, altruistic service, offering knowledge virtually unobtainable elsewhere and which they had acquired through long and arduous training."⁶

It was one of these historical scholar-archivists, C. G. Crump, under whom Jenkinson was apprenticed upon his arrival. His mentor introduced him to the intricacies of the study of early records, how to read the documents (for they were in unfamiliar, handwritten script), and how to understand them in the context of the administrative procedures of the office of origin. It is very likely that Jenkinson's own sense of the importance of administrative history to the archivist was imbibed from Crump, whose "greatest service to history was his insistence on the need for the study of records in their proper setting as products of an administrative machine."⁷ Crump put Jenkinson to work arranging and describing the records of the medieval English Exchequer. The Exchequer, which had its origins in the reign of Henry I at the beginning of the twelfth century, was one of the king's courts of administration. These courts both administered the affairs of the king and sat in judgment on matters of law as they pertained to their given realm of affairs. The Exchequer gradually grew into the department of government responsible for receiving and dispersing the public revenue. The word derives from the Latin word for chessboard, *scaccarium*, in reference to the checked cloth on which it became the habit to reckon revenues.

Jenkinson soon established himself as one of the shining lights among the assistant keepers. In 1911, the deputy keeper, Sir H. C. Maxwell Lyte, recommended that he testify, as one of the two representatives of the younger archivists on staff, before a royal commission of inquiry, set up in 1910, to investigate the state of the Public Record Office.⁸ In the same year, he was appointed

⁵ "Memoir of Sir Hilary Jenkinson," in *Studies Presented to Sir Hilary Jenkinson* (London: Oxford University Press, 1957), xiv.

⁶ Levine, "History in the Archives," 40.

⁷ *Dictionary of National Biography*, s.v. Charles G. Crump.

⁸ Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, 365.

to the post of Maitland Memorial Lecturer at Cambridge, his subject being English paleography and diplomatics from the conquest to 1485, the accepted date for the end of the medieval period. He lectured at Cambridge until 1935.

The first report of the royal commission to which Jenkinson testified found serious problems with the facilities and services in the search rooms of the Public Record Office. At the time, the Public Record Office had two search rooms, the Literary Search Room, a glass-domed larger room called the Round Room for consultation of departmental records and other "literary sources," and the Long Room for users of legal records. In 1912, Jenkinson took charge of the Round Room to make changes in light of the recommendations of the commission. In the early 1920s, he took on the task to reorganize the Repairing (that is, conservation) Department, where, with R. C. Fowler, a chemist, he turned his attention to the proper preservation and conservation of the Public Record Office's collection of seals. In 1929, he took over supervision of the Repository, or records storage facilities. His biographer judges his work in the Round Room, Repairing Department, and Repository to be "his most valuable contribution to the Office and its users."⁹ Cantwell, who describes Jenkinson as "perhaps the most active" assistant keeper in the early 1920s, gives an account of his approach to arrangement, description, and reference service:

He had systematically re-arranged the works of reference [finding aids] in the Round Room so that they were no longer haphazard but as far as possible followed the classification of the records to which they referred. Believing fervently in the integrity of records, he insisted that all the old labels and marks should be incorporated in the rebound volumes, that evidence of original make-up, such as filing strings and sewings, should always be carefully preserved, and that an accurate account should be kept of work done.¹⁰

There is no doubt that Jenkinson insisted on the most rigorous standards of practice. His reforms and innovations instituted far more exacting methods for the control of records and communication of information about them to researchers.

This meticulousness and concern for the integrity of records pervades his *Manual of Archive Administration*, published in 1922 when he was forty years old. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace commissioned the book out of concern for the preservation of the records of World War I. It is hard at this remove to understand how remarkable this book was. Before it was published, it was not the habit of English archivists to write in a reflective way about the

⁹ *Dictionary of National Biography*, volume for 1961–70, s.v. "Jenkinson, Hilary" by H. C. Johnson. Hereafter, cited as *DNB*.

¹⁰ Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, 388. Elsewhere, p. 378, Cantwell says, "the excellence of the physical arrangement of records on the shelves owes a great deal to the disciplines he imposed, creating order out of disorder and establishing clear guidelines for repository practice."

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nature of records and the processes of their proper care, let alone to consider the great question of appraisal that has so preoccupied the current generation of archivists. There was no scholarly journal devoted to archival science in Britain. Most of the writings of Jenkinson's colleagues aimed to communicate historical understanding of the holdings of the Public Record Office, or bore on highly technical matters. Jenkinson's effort to generalize about records and about their appraisal, arrangement, and description, which undoubtedly owed a great deal to practice in the Public Record Office and to his own expertise with medieval records, was virtually novel.

Certainly, his effort to write extensively about the foundational principles of archival work was new to the English scene, if not the larger European archival milieu. Much later, his friend and colleague, H. E. Bell, commented that it was not in Jenkinson's "nature to abandon any archive principle that he determined sound and right."¹¹ Above all else, it was this overriding aim to enunciate principle as a guide to practice that distinguishes the *Manual* and recommends its close reading to archivists. This same inclination, which can be detected in many of the essays in this volume, turned out to be both strength and weakness for Jenkinson. In the *Manual*, Jenkinson spoke of the relation between principle and practice or, as we might say today, theory and practice. After remarking that "all the processes to which archives are subjected, must to some extent be governed by circumstances," he goes on to say that "the best archivist is the one who frees himself most from circumstances and, knowing the ideal, gets as near as possible to it."¹² No one would gainsay that any profession must grapple with the conceptual basis of its practice, and in this Jenkinson, for all that has passed since his time, remains a master.

Unfortunately, he often carried his love of principle too far later in his career as deputy keeper when dealing with the problems of administration, ironically to the detriment of approaching the ideal for which he strove. On this score, his biographer says, "his pursuit of perfection betrayed him into a doctrinaire advocacy of ideas and practices that created difficulties and brought frustration."¹³ Higher officials in government labeled him "not a good committee man." His obstinacy about principle kept him from being named to the Grigg Committee set up in 1952 "to review the arrangements for the preservation of the records of Government Departments." His most vociferous pugnacity was reserved for officials of the Treasury, who, he thought, had no competence to

¹¹ H. E. Bell, "Archivist Itinerant: Jenkinson in Wartime Italy," in *Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, ed. Albert E. J. Hollaender (Chichester: Moore and Tyler, 1962), 177.

¹² Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual of Archive Administration: Including the Problem of War Archives and Archive Making* (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1922), xiii.

¹³ *DNB*.

give advice on the operation of an archival institution. He also fought them long and hard for better pay for archivists.¹⁴

In another sphere, Jenkinson's determination to lay the intellectual foundations of his profession found success. Very early in his career, he began lecturing on archives. He gave classes in diplomatics and archives at King's College, London, from 1920 to 1947, and on paleography and archives at the School of Librarianship at University College, London, from 1920 to 1925. Later in his career, he was instrumental in the establishment of a diploma in the study of archives at the School at University College. About his role in establishing the first archival education program in Britain, Raymond Irwin, one of the professors there, says: "Few men have, so persistently or over so long a period, steered a shadowy ideal into hard reality."¹⁵

Jenkinson had virtually another archival (as opposed to scholarly) career outside his work at the Public Record Office. He was instrumental in forming in 1932 the British Records Association, which aimed "to ensure the preservation and accessibility to students of documents in local and private custody and exposed to risk of dispersal or destruction."¹⁶

He worked tirelessly to bring about the establishment of county record offices to preserve the archival material of local government and private owners. He was the prime instigator of the National Register of Manuscripts, which serves the same purpose as the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections to publicize archival holdings in the United States. He was also deeply involved in the affairs of the Surrey Records Society, which promoted preservation, publication, and use of that county's archival material.

On the international scene, in 1944 Jenkinson was assigned to a special sub-commission of the Allied forces to assist in making provision for the proper care of Italian cultural property. He traveled widely in Italy, conferring with Italian colleagues to assess the best way to protect archives rendered vulnerable by the war. After the war, he was one of the leading lights in the establishment of the International Council on Archives, at an early meeting of which he read in French the paper on "Private Archives" reprinted in *Selected Writings*.

This brief sketch reveals a man of many parts and many talents. At the Public Record Office, Jenkinson held himself to the highest standards in his own work and imposed those same demands on the areas of work that fell to his charge. Outside his official duties, he worked to pass on his knowledge to others and to defend and promote the cause of preservation of archives with fierce devotion. In many ways, he was the archetype of the advocate of archives. One

¹⁴ Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, 445–79.

¹⁵ Raymond Irwin, "The Education of an Archivist," in *Essays in Memory of Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, 189.

¹⁶ "Memoir of Sir Hilary Jenkinson," xxiii.

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colleague, summing up his career at the time of his retirement from the Public Record Office in 1954, recalled him as “a scholar and teacher and as a tireless organizer and propagandist for the preservation on scientific principles of all archival material.”¹⁷

THE WRITINGS

At the outset, something should be said about Jenkinson the writer. He is a difficult writer for the contemporary reader. To begin, there is the eccentricity of his punctuation and especially of his practice of capitalizing words we would not normally capitalize today. Early in his term as deputy keeper, he went so far as to issue a memorandum to the staff on “Departmental Rules for the form of Letters and Memorandum.” In it, he set out rules, which the memorandum itself illustrated, “for capitals for reasons of ‘Courtesy and Respect’ and to pick out particular words for the ‘Reader’s Convenience.’”¹⁸ These eccentricities are the least of it. Opinion varies on Jenkinson’s style of writing. Some find it difficult to read, even though he is unfailingly clear in what he says. The greater problem than his style is that he writes about subjects and things that are unfamiliar to the contemporary reader. This is true of a number of the essays in *Selected Writings of Sir Hilary Jenkinson*, although many are completely accessible today. In any event, the aim of this section is to convey enough sense of the context for these essays to give the reader a chance to profit from even the more difficult of them. In this volume, the essays are ordered chronologically as they were published, but in fact they fall nicely into a number of groups, which the reader may want to read group by group. From time to time it will be convenient to refer to the essays by the numbers they are given in the table of contents.

The first group, comprising the first three essays, the sixth, and the twenty-fourth, arises from Jenkinson’s work on medieval records. In the first, “Paleography and the Practical Study of Court Hand,” he responds to Continental criticism, none of which he cites, alas, that English paleography was poorly developed. Paleography is the study of ancient writings. In the Continental way, it had by Jenkinson’s time been developed into a rigorous method of reading ancient inscriptions according to the way various letters were formed in each tradition of writing. Jenkinson describes paleography from this Continental perspective as the “science which examines the forms of individual letters in every obtainable stage of their evolution from the earliest known down to the present day, classifying them according to the origin and succession of their forms, the writing materials used, the way in which the pen or writing instrument is held, and so forth.” In the

¹⁷ Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, 478.

¹⁸ Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, 447.

English way, for which this essay is an apology, paleography was judged according to its efficacy as a means to the practical end of reading documents. In Jenkinson's view, formulaic paleographical methods were unsuited to the eccentric English environment. He is here writing about the handwriting of the medieval monarchical courts of administration, from the king's personal court, or *curia*, which moved about with him, to the Chancery, the Exchequer, and other minor courts that grew up as the king's administrative reach expanded over time, although its use eventually extended to the local administration of the borough, the guild, and the manor. This handwriting, "a very slovenly and decadent form," was referred to as English court hand. All students of medieval English history had to be instructed to read English court hand, which is what Jenkinson began doing in his teaching at Cambridge in 1910. In 1915, Oxford published his book *English Court Hand* written with Charles Johnson. For all his criticism of the arid strain of paleography, he himself was an accomplished paleographer. His book on *The Handwriting of English Documents* published in 1958 continues to be a leading text on the subject.

The gist of Jenkinson's argument is that the paleography of English court hand is very particular, each court having its special practice tied to the way it administered its affairs. It was therefore necessary, as a precondition to understanding the handwriting, to understand the administrative processes and procedures of the office creating the records. Such administrative history was, in his view, "the one thing necessary for the explanation of our English documents." He therefore concluded that students of medieval England did not need to be trained in diplomatics "in the sense in which that highly organized science is understood" or "in scientific paleography" so much as in administrative history. No doubt Jenkinson is reacting to the scholasticism into which the study of diplomatics and paleography had fallen, but we can see that Jenkinson began to develop his ideas about the enduring qualities of records during his encounters with medieval records in his first decade at the Public Record Office. In this vein, this essay is a good companion to the first chapter of his *Manual* where he lays out his definition of archival documents or records and explains their qualities of impartiality and authenticity.

This essay is an appeal for close study of the most immediate context of records, the context of their creation by the body that produced them. In recent years, there has been renewed interest in the study of provenance as a fertile contextual principle governing the treatment of archives.¹⁹ Similarly, the

¹⁹ See 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 (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1993), who cites a wealth of literature on the renewed interest in provenance. For a pithy statement of the modern perspective on these same ideas Jenkinson was voicing, see Heather MacNeil, "Weaving Provenancial and Documentary Relations," *Archivaria* 34 (summer 1992): 192–98.

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interest in functional analysis of records, as advanced in the literature on appraisal, departs from the same interest in provenance viewed as the administrative context of records. Jenkinson defines administration as "the regulation of any side (social, industrial, legal, military, ecclesiastical) of the affairs of a person or community of persons by constituted authority,"²⁰ so he encompasses public and private archives of both organizations and individuals in his advocacy of administrative-historical study as the key to archival work and the understanding of archives. His unshakable belief that context was the key to understanding archives made him hold tenaciously to the idea that the archivist should do nothing to add or subtract from the character or qualities of records endowed by their creation.

The third essay on medieval tallies speaks from Jenkinson's long and arduous efforts to piece together understanding of the operation of the medieval Exchequer. From the twelfth century until the nineteenth, sticks of wood from the hazel tree were systematically notched to keep both public and private accounts of monies owed, paid out, and received. Jenkinson describes his part in the collective historical effort to understand medieval finances as the antiquarian effort to know the system of accounting, the meaning of the various notches, and so on. In fact, his work was a necessary part of identifying the tallies and describing them for the use of scholars. Even though this essay is about a subject difficult for the nonspecialist, of which the present writer is one, it provides a fascinating picture of how archivists of medieval records like Jenkinson worked, the knowledge they called upon to do their work, and the difficulties they faced.

The second, sixth, and twenty-fourth essays reflect Jenkinson's longstanding interest in seals. After his first encounter with them, he maintained a special interest in seals, which obviously fascinated him as objects and as an element of the documents to which they were attached for the purpose of authentication. The second essay reveals a mind closely attentive to very particular, practical, physical matters important to proper preservation. It, along with much else that Jenkinson wrote that is not in this volume, makes it clear that he had another, very practical side besides the austere theorist of archives revealed in his *Manual*.

His essay on "The Study of English Seals" remains a good introduction to the subject. He covers their purpose, use, design, makeup, construction, preservation, and description. Seals have survived into our day. Although they are hardly likely to be the preoccupation they were for archivists of medieval and early modern records, it is still the case that every archivist should have a fundamental understanding of seals, and this essay is a good place to start. As

²⁰ See fn. 2 in the essay under discussion.

Jenkinson notes, seals “were the equivalent of the modern signature at a time when the principals in any business or administrative transaction could seldom read and still more seldom write.” In the second to last essay, he briefly traces the role seals played in administration through the centuries as part of his appeal for their close study. The attachment of the seal testified that the person whose seal it was did the deed, and even an illiterate person could see that the document contained that person’s seal. We find the same notion in the phrase “seal of approval.”

The second group of essays is on a circumstance that occurred twice during Jenkinson’s career, the threat to archives during wartime. In the seventh essay, “The Choice of Records for Preservation in Wartime: Some Practical Hints,” he writes briefly at the outset of World War II with practical advice to his colleagues about determining where to place one’s special efforts at preservation when under duress from possible perils of war. Jenkinson begins this essay by stating, again, for it represented one of his cardinal principles, his firmly held view that archivists ought not to be in the business of destroying records, that is to say, should not be involved in appraisal.

Let it be said at once that the title to these notes is not to be taken either as condoning by implication the destruction of Records or as suggesting that any qualities of scholarship or experience will make it possible for anyone to “choose” with certainty out of a mass of Records those which future historians will find most useful. Records ought not to be destroyed: the necessary selection of current office documents for final preservation as Records should have taken place long before the “Record” stage is reached.

Jenkinson’s idea, propounded at length in part 3 of his *Manual*, was that selection of records for long-term preservation by archivists for historical or other reasons would impair the integrity of archives and in particular their impartiality, or the quality they have to provide evidence of the matters for which they were created.

This idea of Jenkinson’s has received, as might be expected, almost universal condemnation by archivists who routinely conduct appraisal, often nowadays mandated in legislation where public records are concerned. It may seem that events have passed Jenkinson by, but, in fact, as several archivists inspired by postmodernist thinking have argued, when archivists decide what to save and what to destroy, they begin to be a factor in the determination of what archives are. It was precisely this that Jenkinson wished to avoid. We cannot fault him for caring to preserve archives from the ravages of self-conscious selection for the interests of posterity. In Jenkinson’s view records are drawn up with the interests of the business at hand and not those of posterity in mind. Of course, considerations of posterity, what the future will think, do intrude sometimes when people are making records, but on the whole the authors of records are con-

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centrated on the business at hand. Knowing this, scholars accord them special evidentiary value.²¹

In fact, Jenkinson was quite capable of responding to circumstances propelling the archivist to take part in appraisal for selection of records for long-term preservation. There is evidence that he approved of the role the Grigg Committee assigned to archivists in the selection process.²² That he was not completely unbending on the issue of archivists' involvement in appraisal is evident in the eleventh essay, "British Archives and the War." In dealing with the salvage of valuable records during the war, he advises archivists to "offer . . . aid not merely in saving but in destroying," and he mentions in a footnote that the Public Record Office, which by statute controls to a very considerable extent the elimination of papers by public departments, has also been very active during the war in hastening and encouraging . . . destruction . . ." He then goes on to say, "there is in fact much work for archivists to do in the way of encouraging intelligent elimination, as well as preservation." This essay shows that Jenkinson was not nearly so hidebound on the issue of the archivist's involvement in appraisal and disposition of records as is often supposed.

In another wartime essay, "The Expert Care of Archives: Dangers of the War and Post-War Periods," he saw a threat to the continued health of the archival profession. With the benefit of hindsight, we now know that his fears were unfounded. Nevertheless, the vision he articulated for the profession does not seem dated. After remarking on a circumstance many readers may have encountered, to the effect that "many people . . . still cling to the view that the administration of Archives requires no special knowledge; still hug the even more ingenuous belief that if you provide a building it will somehow contrive to run itself without staff," he says

. . . if we can keep in existence a body, even a small one, of men and women trained to Archive work and zealous in their calling and other things we desire will be added: the Archivists can be trusted to see somehow work for the care and arrangement of their documents and their accessibility to Students does go forward; and, what is almost equally important, the technical research for the betterment of their own knowledge and method is not neglected.

Essays on the expert care of archives during wartime, protecting Italian archives, and British archives after the war round out this group.

²¹ For a detailed discussion of the criteria employed in evaluating archival documents as legal and historical evidence, see Heather MacNeil, *Trusting Records: Legal, Historical, and Diplomatic Perspectives* (Dordrecht, The Netherlands: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2000.)

²² Cantwell, *The Public Record Office*, 469, says that he was not opposed to the system of two reviews the committee recommended, the second of which involved archivists in appraisal decisions.

Another large group of essays (numbers 5, 9, and 16–20) dwells on the English scene. The first of these, “General Report of a Committee on the Classification of English Archives,” discusses the various broad classes of archives preserved in English repositories. The six main classes are documents of (1) central public administration; (2) local public administration; (3) semipublic activities, such as public utility companies and charitable institutions; (4) purely private concerns, “whether by an Individual or by a Corporation or Institution”; (5) ecclesiastical administrations; and (6) historical interest artificially collected. The effort to classify archives in this way was a traditional part of archival science in all European countries. This essay, though it treats the English scene, provides a useful overview of all the classes of archives that need attention in society. The eighteenth essay carries this form of analysis further when Jenkinson, speaking as president of the Jewish Historical Society in his country, reflects on all the classes of Jewish archives worthy of preservation and archival treatment. The sixteenth essay, which might be a good starting point in this group, provides a very useful overview of “Archive Developments in England, 1925–1950.”

The ninth essay on “The Classification and Survey of English Archives” is noteworthy for Jenkinson’s discussion of what he calls the qualities of archives. Not everyone agrees with his characterization of these qualities, but every archivist should ponder what he says. One might read this essay in conjunction with part I of his *Manual*. In this essay he explains the quality of naturalness, that is, that archives come “together by a natural process” and were not collected for literary or historical purposes. He also explains how archival documents are interrelated by virtue of participating in the same activity and affair and how important it is therefore to understand the workings of the body (or individual) that created them. Despite the importance of naturalness and interrelatedness, the two great qualities of archives for Jenkinson are their impartiality and authenticity.

Impartiality is Jenkinson’s word for the character of truthfulness archives have because the force of having to conduct affairs causes them to speak to the matter at hand, not to posterity. As he says, where archives are concerned, “we start with the enormous advantage of knowing that there can be no intention on the part of the document to mislead us: we can only go wrong owing to our own misinterpretation of it.” Of course, much depends on interpretation. The author of a record may well have wanted to influence or mislead the reader, or even aimed to speak to posterity, for many authors cannot help being historically conscious when writing documents, but it is still a matter of interpretation to ferret out, from analysis of a document and its context, from comparative study of other documents and so on, what the document means for any particular purpose. People do in fact turn to records for trustworthy accounts of actions and events. They are the foundation for accountability and for historical understanding of many spheres of human activity. Jenkinson was mainly con-

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cerned to see that this special quality of the evidence in archives was protected, and he thought it the archivist's main duty to do so.

He connected authenticity with continuous custody of archives by their creator and its legitimate successors. The argument is that the creating body has an interest in preserving its records free from any tampering that would affect their authenticity, of being what they seem to be. He cites the interesting case of how an entry in an account book of an early seventeenth-century court was used as evidence to date one of Shakespeare's plays. This evidence, he says, would have been unimpeachable were it not that the particular account book had fallen into the keeping of a "Shakespeare enthusiast," who, some suspected, may have manufactured the entry in question. While it is true that issues of authenticity arise more often for interpreters of archival documents than for archivists, it is also true that the ability to make changes to electronic records has refocused the attention of business, the courts, and archivists on the authenticity of records. Indeed, the careful control of records, whether traditional or electronic, throughout their life cycle is and always has been a significant protective measure of their authenticity.

In three essays (numbers 4, 13, and 25), Jenkinson explains his fundamental ideas. In the fourth essay, "The Librarian as Archivist," he dwells on the need to protect the integrity of archives. Near the end of "The English Archivist: A New Profession," he succinctly expresses the archivist's credo in this regard:

His Creed, the Sanctity of Evidence; his Task, the Conservation of every scrap of Evidence attaching to the Documents committed to his charge; his Aim, to provide, without prejudice or afterthought, for all who wished to know the Means of Knowledge.

The last essay, "Roots," perhaps the most familiar to an American audience, was given as his presidential address to the Society of Archivists just before his death. It is an interesting essay. We see the elder statesman of English archives reflecting on how his main ideas hold up in the face of changing modern conditions. He could see well enough that the modern conditions required new practices, but he argues that the same principles apply even in these new circumstances.

Two essays—numbers 14 and 21—touch on archival developments in the United States. The first is a brief review of a guide to records in the National Archives. It reveals that Jenkinson was alert to many of the issues of arrangement and description that have come to dominate archival discourse on these subjects since the 1980s. The second is a review of T. R. Schellenberg's *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*. Here we have the writer of the seminal English manual of archives administration reviewing the most important work of the pre-eminent American archival thinker of his day. Schellenberg's book comprised a series of lectures and speeches he gave while on a visit to Australia, where he

discovered that Jenkinsonian ideas held much sway, with deleterious effects, Schellenberg thought. The two differed on the question of the definition of a record, as Jenkinson explains in his review, and therefore on the question of the qualities of archives, in particular on the quality of impartiality of archives.²³

Some would have it that Jenkinson was an unbending theorist and Schellenberg an unrepentant pragmatist. In fact, this black-and-white characterization is unfair to both. As these essays and his career reveal, Jenkinson was never afraid to tackle the practical problems of archives administration, however much he believed the archivist was directed in his work by principle. Similarly, Schellenberg's interest in developing ideas attuned to modern conditions does not disguise his interest in the principles guiding archival work. Both men spent much time proselytizing for their ideas about the proper care of archives, and both were staunch advocates for the worth and dignity of archival work and the importance of archival education. It is fitting that republication of *Selected Writings* makes the voice of Sir Hilary Jenkinson more accessible to the contemporary North American reader, for, like that of Theodore Roosevelt Schellenberg, it speaks with passion and acumen of many concerns that continue to reverberate in the contemporary archival community.

²³ For an extensive discussion of their differences on these questions, see Trevor Livelton, *Archival Theory, Records, and the Public* (Lanham, Md.: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1996), Ch. 3, "Records," 59–92.