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This research investigates whether investment in outreach activities and programs of public education serves to promote use of public records at state archives. Data from the Council of State Archivists' *FY2004 Survey of State Archives and Records Management Programs* is analyzed. The study does not find a significant relationship between overall breadth of outreach at state archives and public use of government records. Though this analysis is only a preliminary investigation into the relationship between the variables, the findings raise questions about the effectiveness of outreach programs in state archives. Given the dearth of program evaluation uncovered by review of the literature, this study highlights the need for greater critical evaluation of the inputs and outcomes of archival outreach.

Headings:

State archives--Outreach programs.

State archives--Evaluation.

Archives and education--United States.

Government archives--Aims and objectives.

Archives--Political aspects--United States.

Use studies--Government archives.

OUTREACH IN STATE ARCHIVES AND PUBLIC USE OF GOVERNMENT RECORDS

by
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Chapter I: Introduction

Public use of government records represents one of the foundational democratic principles of citizen inquiry and open government for which state archives exist. If public use of these materials can be increased in an effective and efficient manner, then it can be argued that it is the responsibility of state archives to do so. However, in a world of finite resources, outreach programs encouraging and facilitating public use of the state archives necessarily require the diversion of resources away from other archival functions that also affect public access to information, such as arrangement and description, preservation, and reference. Therefore, a study of the effect outreach activities have on the public use of state archives could shed some much-needed light on the return an institution may expect on an investment in such programs. The following research hypothesis will be tested: The breadth of outreach in state archives increases public use of government records.

This research hopes to find that outreach and public education conducted by state archives contribute to citizen use of government information stored in those institutions. Open government with citizen access to information is a central tenet of democratic theory, and stimulating citizen engagement and inquiry is an important goal for state archives to pursue as the keepers of the state's historical and administrative record. Likewise, as government agencies, state archives must

efficiently devote the limited appropriations they receive to the activities that are of the greatest service to the public. Determining the amount of funding to spend on outreach programs instead of other important archival functions that also determine citizen access to information can be a delicate balancing act, and administrators could likely use some insight into whether those outreach programs are going to produce real results or not.

While finding that outreach programs *do* increase public use of government records would certainly be the cheeriest outcome of this research, useful recommendations can be produced whether the research hypothesis is supported by the data or not. If the hypothesis is proven, then we can recommend that broadening outreach programs can result in greater usage. More outreach would be good for the public, who would enjoy increased access to government information, and also good for the institution, who could demonstrate that increased public usage to their budget office and strengthen their yearly argument for increased funding overall. Higher visibility with the public at large can translate into increased visibility with the lawmakers who hold the purse strings. If it is in fact possible to analyze different kinds of programs and their effect on public use, more pinpointed recommendations can be made as to what programs offer the best return on investment, helping administrators decide how to best execute a minimum degree of outreach on a shoestring budget. Finally, even if the hypothesis is disproven, then institutions can know that spending too many resources on outreach is wasteful and can appropriately redirect funds elsewhere. While that conclusion may be difficult to stomach, if the data supports it, state archivists as public administrators should

take that into consideration when deciding how to be good stewards of the public's investment in their institution.

Chapter II: Literature Review

In this chapter, the democratic principles that undergird government archives will first be explored, followed by a discussion of professional efforts to encourage public use of those institutions.

Democratic principles for state government archives

A defining principle of democratic government is its accountability to, and the active participation of, its citizens. If there is to be effective and educated participation by the citizenry, there must be a free flow of information between government and the governed. For Americans, the right to the freedom of information is closely entwined with the freedom of expression and of the press protected by the First Amendment, and is specifically delineated by the federal Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and by various “sunshine laws” as enacted in the states. Internationally, it is a principle reflected in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, both explicitly stated in Article 19 and implicitly required in order to enforce other human rights pronounced therein (Barata, Cain, Routledge, & Wamukoya, 2002, p. 68). Though many of us in Western democracies consider it to be so foundational a precept that we take its enforcement for granted, freedom of information must be carefully monitored by the citizenry so that it can hold government accountable, both in the allocation of public resources and in the protection of individual rights. Government archivists, custodians of government

information yet also guarantors of access, play a key role in this system of accountability.

To the service of the government, society, and individual all, government archives exist to preserve a record of state activities and social history. T. R. Schellenberg (1984) averred that an accountable government must, at the very least, preserve some minimum of evidence of its organization and functioning (p. 59). This collection of institutional memory provides a guide for future action and proof of the agency's faithful stewardship of the responsibilities entrusted to it (Schellenberg, 1984, p. 59). The government archivist's role is to select and preserve the historical record needed to serve both the government as an institution and the general public.

In his oft-cited history of archival administration, Ernst Posner (1984) traced a number of principles that we now consider fundamental in government archives to their origins in the democratic wake of the French Revolution. As government archives were nationalized and centralized, two important developments came about: first, Posner wrote, "the state acknowledged its responsibility respecting the care of the documentary heritage of the past," and second, "the principle of the accessibility of archives to the public" was established (Posner, 1984, p. 5). Posner stopped short of explicitly tying this democratization of archival access to the principles of democracy the nation was fighting to adopt. In fact, the political philosophy driving the French Revolution is hardly referenced in the work. Posner did however emphasize that open access to government records was made with the intent to serve the legal needs of citizens claiming title to land or property; while he

appeared disappointed that scholarly access was not the primary goal, he was pleased that it was an implicit consequence of the policy (Posner, 1984, pp. 8-9).

The additional symbolic power of government records was highlighted in Judith M. Panitch's (2000) rejoinder to Posner's history, which she felt underplayed the significance of the destruction of records of "the old regime" carried out in that period of national unrest. Maintained in strict secrecy and considered the "personal documentation" of the sovereigns, government archives prior to the French Revolution supported "the entire legal, political, and economic legitimacy of the monarchy and nobility" (Panitch, 2000, p. 104). It is the symbolic power of these records that Panitch believed offers a basis for understanding the vandalistic demolition of archives early in the Revolution, as well as the more systematic destruction of former state records later ordered by the Legislative Assembly (2000, pp. 104-105). A strict view of archival appraisal followed, where the state archives only collected documents that evidenced ownership (public or private) or served some instructional purpose. Since the titles and charters of the old regime were legally defunct, the National Archives rationalized their destruction (Panitch, 2000, p. 113). Panitch agreed with Posner that the French Revolution was the leading cause for the confirmation of the public's right to access government records (2000, p. 116), but argued that the destruction of the records of the former sovereigns indicated that the national archives had not yet recognized their role in documenting and preserving the country's cultural heritage (2000, p. 118). She imbued in state records, beyond their legal importance, the symbolic importance of building collective memory: "National archives are respected, at least in part,

because they give meaning to the nation, confirming its legitimacy, and—perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the case of Revolutionary France—its vital mythologies” (Panitch, 2000, p. 122).

In their more modern, practical view of “archives for the public good,” Richard Cox and David Wallace (2002) sought to define what it means for a government to be accountable to its citizenry. Turning to the Oxford English Dictionary, they found it to be entangled with issues of responsibility, liability, and the ability to “answer for the discharge of duties or conduct” (2002, p. 3). They cited freedom of information laws as measures to battle administrative secrecy, helping citizens overcome the hurdles they often face when seeking government information (2002, p. 5). Cox and Wallace likewise provided examples of the need for citizens to be able to gather legal papers about themselves to defend their rights against encroachment by the government or other entities (2002, p. 6). A rarer but just as meaningful case for open access to government archives is the truth commission, such as those conducted in recent decades in Germany, South Africa, or the former Soviet Union. By reviewing government records, truth commissions can help communities construct “more realistic assessments” of their troublesome history, with the hope that by reckoning with the past, the community will in time be able to come to terms with it as well (Cox & Wallace, 2002, p. 4). In their writing, Cox and Wallace positioned government archives not as mere repositories for researchers, but as a resource for the common man to hold government accountable for its actions regarding individual rights.

With a research background in the development of “the right to know” in sub-Saharan Africa, where nations for years have been plagued by the corruption of their leaders, Barata et al. (2002) looked at accountability as citizens holding government liable for the responsible allocation of public resources in their chapter in Cox and Wallace’s book. In their view, transparent governance is essential for citizens to meaningfully participate in the management of their country and its resources. Such accountability builds a trust relationship between the government and its people; when government is secretive, Barata et al. explained, “citizens can feel that government is somehow responsible for their misfortunes” (2002, p. 67). In light of their time spent advocating for the freedom of information in countries with long histories of corruption, Barata et al. were understandably more concerned with building up a well-informed electorate for the good of society as a whole.

Particularly with its inclusion in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, freedom of information is frequently considered primarily to be a moral imperative for good government. Thomas Blanton (2002) reported on a more modern argument for freedom of information, casting it as “an indispensable tool for thwarting corruption, waste, and poor governance” (p. 52). As globalization connects nations with vastly different forms of government, freedom of information has taken on a “more value-neutral meaning” that translates across all systems of governance, regardless of their belief in the Lockean natural rights of man and other principles underlying the Western view of this freedom. In an increasingly globalized world, legal reformers argue that governments and multinational corporations can be more efficiently regulated through “the full disclosure of their

activities, rather than by relying on multiple bureaucracies in multiple countries that provide multiple opportunities for corruption” (Blanton, 2002, p. 55). While Blanton cautioned that membership in supranational organizations does not always encourage transparency, he contended that it does much more often that not, by instigating the communication of information between governments, multinational organizations, corporations, the media, and private citizen’s groups worldwide (2002, p. 56). In short, Blanton explained that globalization has necessitated a thoughtful broadening of the defense for freedom of information, moving beyond the moral judgment and promoting it “as another form of market regulation, of more efficient administration of government, and as a contributor to economic growth and the development of information industries” (2002, p. 53).

Public outreach: democratization of archival access

Government archives are the foundation of public accountability, recording the actions of the state, while documenting citizen rights and duties. They also play an important role in preserving their community’s heritage, providing the raw materials for cultural studies and activities. Of course, without an active citizenry tapping into the information resources stored for them, such democratic notions of transparency, memory, and accountability are largely meaningless. As David Bearman (1989) memorably observed, “Most potential users of archives don’t.” To what extent might archives themselves actually be impeding access to the records they so carefully preserve?

The role of outreach in archives has been a common subject within the professional literature only relatively recently, considering the long history of the

archival profession and its traditions. With the hope that archivists would begin to reach out to a wider audience, in 1976 the Society of American Archivists (SAA) surveyed archival institutions nationwide regarding their outreach activities. An astounding 30% of institutions reported no outreach programs at all—even when taking a broad definition of the concept—while many of those who did paid little attention to systematic promotion and evaluation of their services (Pederson, 1978, p. 160).

In response to this apparent professional apathy, Ann Pederson took the lead in encouraging her peers to promote archives to a broader segment of users. Even after over a quarter of a century, Pederson's 1982 manual *Archives and Manuscripts: Public Programs* (written with Gail Farr Casterline) remains one of the only comprehensive guides to designing archival outreach programs. Going beyond simply the hows and whys of outreach, however, Pederson (1978) also challenged the profession to critically measure the outcomes of their outreach efforts:

“Certainly, designing effective promotion and evaluation tools takes skill and effort, but how responsible is an archivist who commits thousands of hard-won dollars to creating a product without any thought for its success? Indeed, is not such neglect being penny-wise and dollar foolish?” (p. 160)

Elsie Freeman Freivogel was another archivist who took an early stand on behalf of outreach activities. Facing down complaints that enhancing public services would eat away at the already tight budgets many archives receive, Freivogel (1978) boldly argued that perhaps archives had not earned improved funding because of their lack of attention to the general public:

“Public values deserve public support, and archives ... deserve public support. But archives deserve it only to the extent that they deliver their materials in ways that are comprehensible to the public. The public can be

expected to pay for archival services if we give them the information they need in ways they can use. In other words, we can expect payment when we give them good value for their money.” (p. 152)

In a somewhat amusing response to this new focus outward, many in the profession heeded the call to think more about the “average user”—and then immediately became most concerned with what this average user thought of them. David B. Gracy, president of SAA from 1983 to 1984, wrote often about the supposedly dismal public image the archival profession suffered, regaling his audience with anecdotes about how misunderstood archivists could be. In spite of an occasionally cringe-worthy lack of self-consciousness in recounting his chosen career’s ostensibly immense unpopularity, Gracy persuasively urged his colleagues to take on a more enterprising attitude, to snap out of their comfortable passivity and engage the public with grassroots efforts (p. 10). All of a sudden, it seemed, the archivist stopped looking down at the record on his desk and up toward the user who needed it.

Under Gracy’s image-conscious leadership, SAA established a Task Force on Archives and Society in 1983 to investigate possibilities for amelioration of their professional reputation—the main goal being to increase public awareness of the importance of archives in society. The groundbreaking “Levy Report” sponsored by the committee dispelled the long-held angst of archivists that they were simply misunderstood by their public; the research showed that resource allocators were actually well aware of the functions and holdings of archives. Rather, the poor image of the profession stemmed from the often accurate perception that archivists would rather hide in the back room and admire their treasures than step out to the

reference desk (or beyond) and interface with the public. In response to its findings, the Task Force likewise encouraged archivists to assume a more proactive role in their organizations and communities so that archives might continue to provide meaningful service (Dionne, 2002).

Since that time, many archivists became vocal promoters of such self-promotion, arguing that outreach could help archives prove their social value to the public. By better defining the role of archives in society and becoming more useful to more people, many believed that outreach activities would return greater financial support for underfunded archival institutions (Gracy, 1984; Grabowski, 1992). In striving to give users a better experience, archivists hoped that users would return the favor by becoming third-party advocates for the archives when it comes time to write the budget. In short, improved outreach was seen as a great cure-all for the underfunding and underutilization of archives by their public.

This outward focus on the user came as a sharp turn away from the inward focus on the record. Many archivists understandably felt that the profession's tendency to turn away from the public and hide in a dark room, working alone with their records, was responsible for this low esteem for archives and archivists held by the public. Their solution, then, was to reorient the profession in a more businesslike direction. Jimerson (1989) argued that archivists could improve their social status by improving services and responsiveness to the "customer"—a noticeable shift in terminology away from the more traditional "patron" or "user". With this new professionalism in mind, archivists borrowed standard marketing skills and buzzwords, and user surveys became a popular new tool (Smith, 2003).

This marketing influence continues to be common in the literature today, as archives strive to merge their historical holdings with the future-minded focus of the twenty-first century.

Fortunately, a number of archivists looked beyond the flashy marketing trends and questioned what concrete changes they could make to increase use. Dearstyne (1987) posited that archival records were underutilized—the evidential and informational value of archival holdings was not being exploited to its full potential. He encouraged archivists to be imaginative about how their records could be useful to different potential user groups, and to actively promote archives outside of their traditional audiences. Grabowski (1992) likewise challenged the profession to question their unspoken disdain for certain kinds of researchers, calling upon the archivist’s democratic creed: “If we say that we are preserving the *nation’s* heritage, we and our colleagues throughout the history profession cannot narrowly define the owners of that heritage” (p. 472). Outreach, it was argued, needed to become another core archival function, not just an optional activity (Ericson, 1991).

A key part of rehabilitating the profession’s image and facilitating use was identifying the physical and psychological barriers to access faced by users, and then lowering or removing them altogether. Wilson (1991) spoke forcefully for the need for archives to become more welcoming and accessible, not merely out of concern for their image, but because of their democratic responsibilities: “In a democratic, information-based society, there exists a basic social right to equitable and free access to archival services. Archives in turn must restructure their services to

respond to this right” (p. 92). By addressing only the needs of “traditional” clients in publications, with inconvenient hours and confusing policies, archivists “covertly impede and ration access to archival services” (Wilson, 1991, p. 97). Government archives especially, as public institutions, needed to readjust their services in order to ensure equitable access.

In this spirit, archivists strove to become more “user-friendly” and put the needs of their users first. This was not an altogether new idea; Elsie Freeman (1984) had early suggested, “we must begin to think of archives administration as being centered on our clients, not on materials” (p. 111). After introducing this seemingly innocuous idea, Freeman’s blueprint of the user-centered archives began to be built in the literature. In his article about marketing archives, Jimerson (1989) drew parallels with train travel and the studio era in Hollywood, reminding archivists of the downfall of industries that were “product-oriented, instead of customer-oriented” (p. 335). Some went so far as to say that user needs should be tantamount not only at the points of access, in reference and public programming, but before that as well, in the appraisal and description phases. Dowler (1988), in outlining a research agenda for archival studies, boldly proposed that “use, rather than the form of material, is the basis on which archival practice and theory ought to be constructed” (p. 74)—strong words for a profession so profoundly structured by its historical traditions. Blais and Enns (1991) echoed Dowler in calling upon archivists to “integrate considerations of use into other core archival functions” (p. 103). However, despite their radical suggestions, these authors simply saw themselves as encouraging their colleagues to rethink their processes with the user in mind—not

to turn the profession upside down, but just to make their institutions a little more user-friendly.

Terry Cook (1999), however, cautioned archivists against this passionate embrace of the user. He argued that though public programming is a good and necessary tool, the record should still be the center of all archival decisions, not the user. Chiding those who, in his view, wanted to turn archives into a McDonald's of information, he worried that the profession's sudden discovery of their user might prompt an excessive diversion of resources away from other necessary functions. Focusing on "the transient whims of users" during appraisal, arrangement, and description, Cook warned, will permanently distort the historical record (p. 130). To "put the user first" is fine so far as a service slogan goes, but to let that motto push aside the central tenets of record provenance and context is a "dangerous reorientation" of archival priorities (p. 123). Materials-centered archives, he argues, are in the best interest of users and archivists alike—the big picture will not be lost in the search for one quick fact. Furthermore, by continuing to focus on the context and provenance of their holdings, archivists will have "something of substance" to call upon when engaging the public with outreach (p. 131).

Cook's stern admonition only accentuates the literature's enthusiastic championing of outreach. Most authors promote outreach theoretically, or give a simple recounting of the benefits reaped from their own public programs, without an accounting of possible detriment. The pros and cons of a particular program are often recited, but an evaluation of the outcomes of outreach versus the input of resources is rarely conducted. While it is reassuring to know that public

programming is often warmly received, little quantitative analysis has been done to examine on balance this professional trend. This lack of analysis is surprising given that, as the profession strives to reorient itself, many are continually mulling over the same question Weir (2004) bluntly asks: “Is outreach a luxury or necessity?” (p. 71). It is a shame that Pederson’s early chiding of the profession not to be “penny-wise and dollar foolish” (1978, p. 160) was apparently of little avail.

Still fewer studies exist of outreach programs in state archives.

Internationally, there has been some reporting on public programming in government archives on a similar level (ten Cate, 1989; O’Donnell, 1995; Nicholls, 2000; Hyslop, 2002; Weir, 2004), but again, little quantitative analysis of such activities exists. This research will inquire not just about who does outreach, but into the tangible outcomes of those activities in state archives.

The literature agrees that citizen access to government information is a foundational principle that ought to be encouraged. The question that remains for state archivists is how to foster civic interaction with their holdings while simultaneously fulfilling their obligations in other core archival functions, in the face of a rapidly multiplying pile of records to accession. This research will investigate whether and how investment in outreach activities and programs of public education serve to promote use of public records.

Chapter III: Methods

The *hypothesis* states that the breadth of outreach in state archives increases the public use of government records.

The *group* under review is composed of all the state archives and/or records management agencies in the fifty American states. The data was obtained from the Council of State Archivists (CoSA) *FY2004 Survey of State Archives and Records Management Programs*, which gathered a comprehensive set of data from each State Archivist and State Records Manager.

It is important to note that the bureaucratic structure of these agencies varies across states, and thus alters how one pairs and interprets the data. At the time this study was conducted, thirty-six states had joint archives and records management (ARM) programs, where the two functions are administratively linked and assigned to the same agency. In twelve states, the functions were split into two separate agencies, and two states had no formal state records management program (Council of State Archivists, 2007, p. 18). In those states with split programs, data points were linked according to the responding agency, not by the state alone. For example, the number of outreach programs conducted by the California State Archives was compared only to the public use of government records reported at that same agency, and not also that of the California State Records Center. Likewise, though the bureaucratic structure of these functions does vary, in this paper, the

term “state archives” and its derivatives are meant to broadly encompass both archives and records management agencies, unless explicitly stated otherwise.

The *dependent variable* under examination is public use of government records. It was operationalized as the percentage of the total usage of government records holdings reported by state archives for all purposes other than administrative use by state government. In the CoSA FY2004 survey, question 8.3 asked respondents to “estimate the percentage of total usage of your government records holdings for each of the following purposes”:

- Administrative use by government agencies
- Genealogy
- Local history
- Scholarly research/publication
- Undergraduate class work
- High school/elementary school projects
- Property/legal research
- Other

To measure the dependent variable in accordance with its operational definition here, the sum of the percentages reported for all purposes excluding the first, administrative use by government, was recorded as the total public use of government records at that agency. Archival agencies in all 50 states responded to the question (though the District of Columbia Office of Public Records did not), and in states with split programs, reference activity in the archives were the only values reported. No records management agencies from states with split programs responded.

Of course, percentage is just one of many ways that public use of government records could have be operationalized. However, given the very great disparities in population size, collection size, budgets, staffing, and other significant factors from

state to state, percentage helps to account for some of these differences in archival “supply and demand” that raw counts could not. Thus, for the purposes of this study, it was felt that percentage was the most comparable measure for public use of government records at state archives.

The *independent variable* under examination is the breadth of outreach in state archives. This was operationalized as the total number of different kinds of outreach and public education programs conducted by the state ARM programs. Questions 14.1-14.5, part a, of the CoSA FY2004 survey asked each respondent to “indicate which of the following activities are sponsored or conducted by your agency”:

- Workshops/training for the general public or other external audiences on:
 - Genealogical research
 - Use of documents in the classroom
 - State history
- Conferences for:
 - Archivists
 - Records managers
 - State employees
 - Local government officials
 - Administrators/volunteers in local historical societies
 - Historians
 - Genealogists
- Tours of state archives and/or records facilities for:
 - School groups
 - General public
- Newsletters or other regular publications (paper or electronic) produced by reporting agency for:
 - State agencies/records managers
 - Local government agencies/records managers
 - Members of friends organizations
 - Volunteers
 - Elementary/high school teachers
 - Genealogists
 - General public

- Programs or services for teachers to facilitate use of archival documents in the classroom:
 - Teaching packets
 - Section for teachers on our Web site
 - Publications for teachers on using archives
 - Workshops
 - Staff/representatives available to visit classrooms in person

To transform the survey data into a measure of the independent variable as operationalized, the total number of activities checked off by each respondent was counted and recorded as the breadth of outreach for that agency. It is important to note again here that for ease of comparison, only responses for the agencies counted in the dependent variable were preserved in the data set for the independent variable. Because no records management agencies from states with split programs responded to question 8.3 estimating usage, their responses to questions 14.1-14.5 about outreach activity were not preserved *for this study*, though of course they are still a part of the master data set assembled by CoSA.

This operationalization of the independent variable certainly does not measure other significant descriptors of an outreach program, such as its quality, extent, or structure, but nor does it seek to. In a fifty-state comparison, one cannot afford to get into a contest of qualitative judgments as to whose newsletters, conferences, or workshops are better than whose. This study, as a preliminary investigation into the relationship between the variables, seeks only to evaluate the number of fronts on which an agency is seeking to engage the public.

The questionnaire also asked if the State Historical Records Advisory Board (SHRAB) conducted any of those same outreach activities as well (questions 14.1-14.5, part b). At the time the survey was conducted, not all states had a functioning

SHRAB. Furthermore, SHRABs are located in several different places within the state's bureaucratic structure—sometimes the SHRAB is affiliated with the archives, in other cases it is an independent organization. If the SHRAB were operated by an agency other than the respondent's, any outreach activities the SHRAB conducts would likely have a spillover effect in encouraging public use of the archives, but would not have been reported by the survey respondent. Nevertheless, any spillover effect that could be captured in the data would be significant to investigate.

Therefore, a secondary analysis of the data that added SHRAB outreach activities (14.1-14.5, part (b) responses) to the outreach conducted by the state archives itself (14.1-14.5, part (a) responses) was also executed. For the purposes of this study, separate responses were combined so that all *unique* forms of outreach conducted by either the ARM or SHRAB were counted towards *breadth* of outreach. As previously stated, this study is not judging the quality or extent of outreach activities; rather, it seeks simply to measure *breadth*: the number of ways in which state archives are seeking to engage the public. Thus, if both the ARM and the SHRAB conducted the same form of outreach, it only counted as one form in this secondary ARM + SHRAB calculation of the state program's breadth of outreach activities.

This secondary calculation of our independent variable allowed for an evaluation of the "added value" a SHRAB contributed to its state archives. By subtracting the breadth of outreach conducted by the state archives alone from this overall ARM + SHRAB measure of outreach breadth, the SHRAB added value was quantified. Values greater than zero indicate "added value" provided by the SHRABs

to their state archives by engaging in additional forms of outreach that the archives did not.

Once the data was tabulated, the variables were statistically analyzed for the strength of association and the significance of the findings, in order to accept or reject the research hypothesis.

After this analysis of the two variables cumulatively was complete, further exploration was done into interactions between different types of use and outreach: first, K-12 use of government records and outreach programs for teachers and students, and second, genealogical use of government records and outreach programs for genealogists.

Chapter IV: Analysis

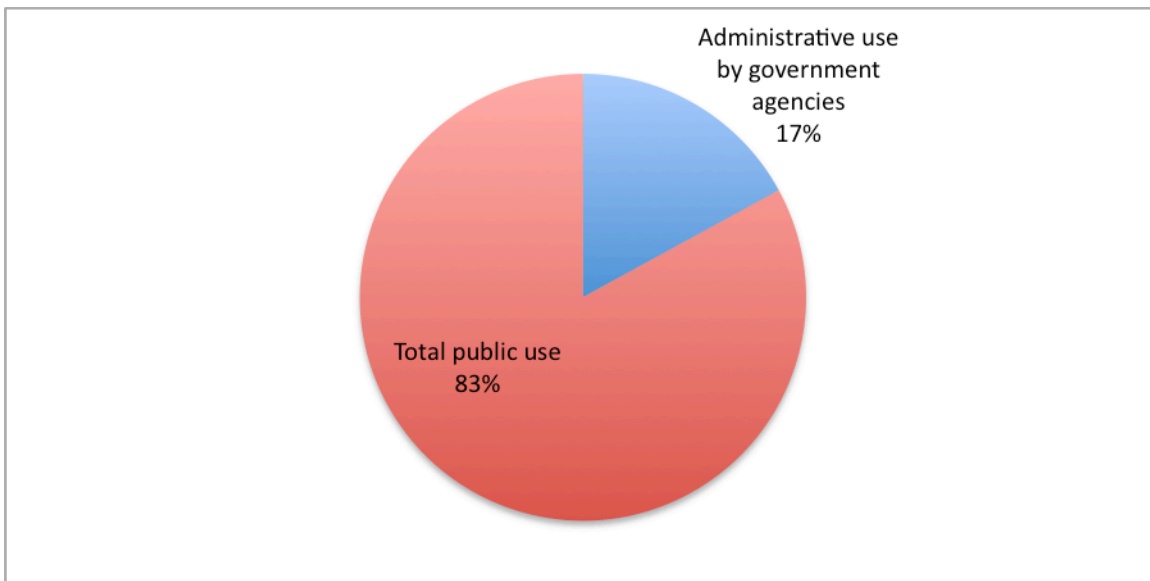
This chapter will begin with univariate analyses of the dependent and independent variables before moving on to bivariate analysis and testing of the research hypothesis. Before proceeding, it bears repeating that the raw data behind the charts and analysis that follows came from the Council of State Archivists' *FY2004 Survey of State Archives and Records Programs* and is freely available online.

Dependent variable: Public use of government records

For this initial single-variable analysis of the data, we will first review the survey results for our measure of primary concern, public use of government records, and its logical converse, administrative use of those records by government agencies. Then, we will discuss findings regarding the different categories that make up public use.

On average, states reported that public use of government records accounted for 83% of the annual total use of their holdings (Figure 1). Out of all fifty states, only the archives in Idaho (85% administrative/15% public) and New Hampshire (60% administrative/40% public) reported public use to be less than half of their overall total. The archival agencies in Alaska, Colorado, and Vermont, meanwhile, reported an even split with administrative and public use accounting for equal halves of total usage. Those states aside, the remaining forty-five states all reported that the public was the most frequent user of government records.

Figure 1. DV: Average use of government records, public vs. administrative



Of course, the converse of high public use means that the overall administrative use of holdings by state & local governments was comparatively low, at only 17% of total use. There was a great deal of variance, however, in the reported administrative use of government records from state to state (Figure 2). On the low end, Mississippi and Utah claimed no administrative use by government agencies at all. On the high end, the Idaho archives reported a massive 85% of their total usage as administrative, noting that the great majority of that was by local governments. Still, only five states claimed administrative use to be at least half of the total, and only two of those claimed it to be more than half.

Though our focus in this study is the simple public-administrative divide, a brief analysis of the different categories of public use would be noteworthy at this point (Figure 3).

Figure 2. DV: Public vs. administrative use of government records by state

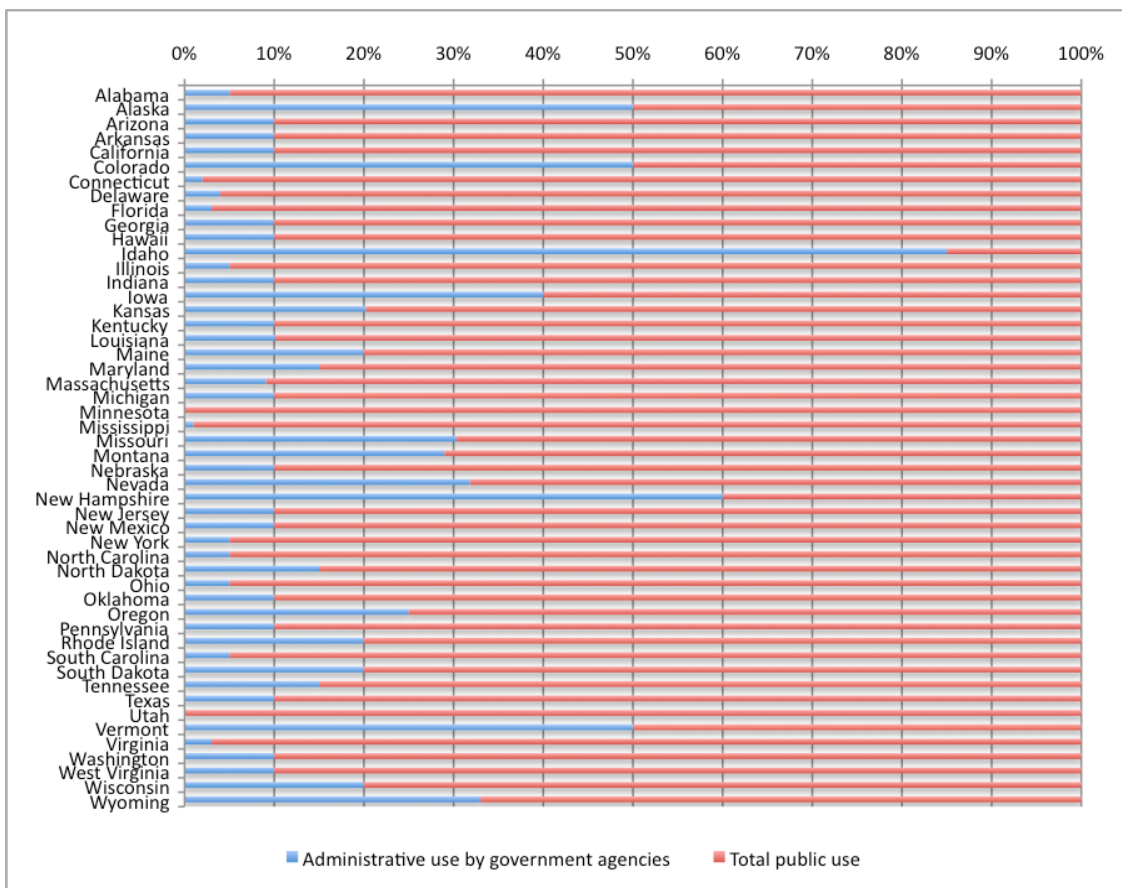
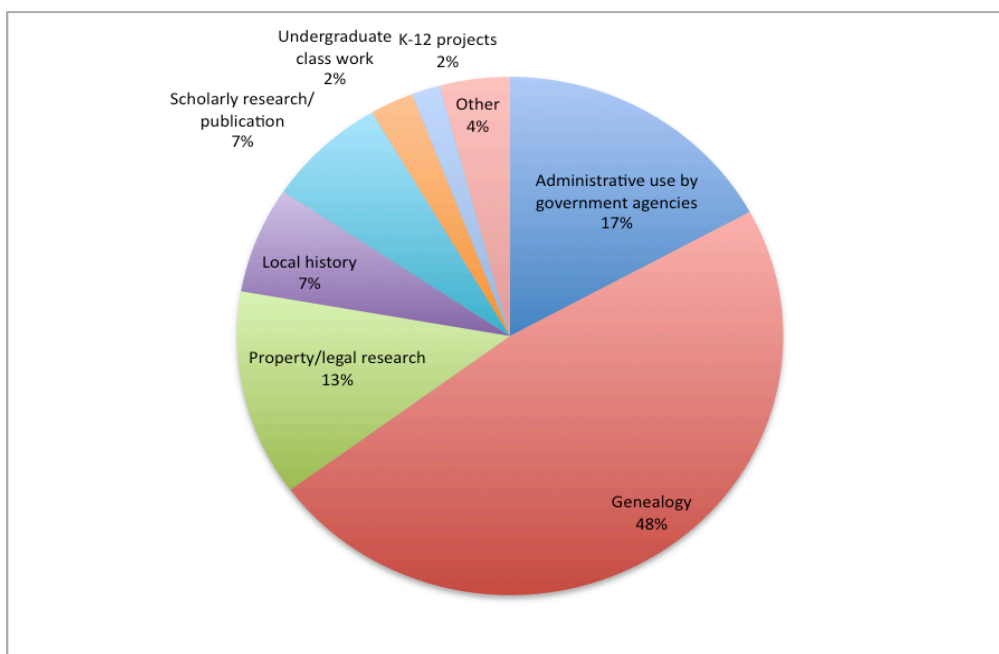


Figure 3. DV: Average use of government records by purpose



Genealogists are reported to be the largest group of users at state archives by a considerable margin, accounting for 48% of total use on average. Out of all the categories presented in the survey, genealogy was the only type of use claimed by every state. Thirty-six states claimed genealogists as their largest user group, with 30 of those states reporting genealogy to be at least half of the total use, and 24 of those reporting it as over half. To put it one way, state archivists report that roughly every other user who walks through their door has come to conduct genealogical research.

Use of government records for property and legal research, at 13% of reported total use on average, comes in third behind genealogy and administrative use by government. Five states claimed property and legal research to be the greatest source of reference activity, but responses varied widely.

Local history research was reported at 7% on average nationwide; no state claimed more than a quarter of its use for this purpose. Use of government records for scholarly research and publications was also reported with an average of 7% of total use. The Wisconsin archives claimed scholarly users to be their largest user group at 43% of their total usage, but that state is an apparent outlier: no other state claimed scholarly use to account for more than a quarter of their total.

Undergraduate and K-12 use of government records constituted a comparatively tiny slice of reported total usage, at 3% and 2% respectively.

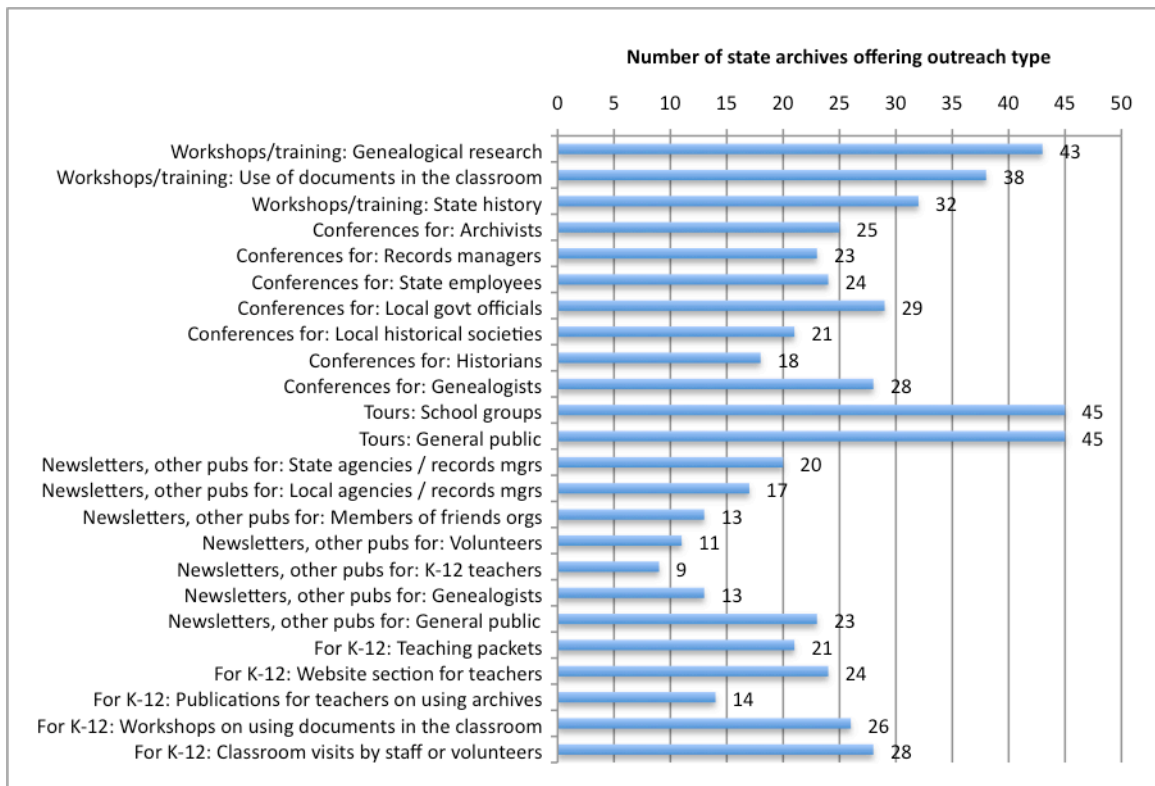
Finally, “other” uses of government records were reported at 4% of the total on average. Montana cryptically claimed half of its total use to be “other” without further clarification, but by and large “other” responses were generally low—most

respondents apparently felt that the seven other categories given were generally sufficient descriptors of all usage of government records at their institution.

Independent variable: Breadth of outreach activities

In this section, we will first examine the breadth of outreach activities in state archives/ARMs alone (IV₁). Next, we will briefly review the outreach activity of SHRABs alone (IV₂), before proceeding to analyze the breadth of outreach activities when taking both the state ARM and SHRAB into account (IV₃).

To begin, we shall conduct our primary evaluation of the breadth of outreach in state archives (Figure 4). Looking first to the types of outreach conducted, tours for school groups and for the general public were the most popular forms of outreach, both conducted by 45 out of 50 archives. Notably, 43 states reported providing workshops and training for genealogical research, possibly a reflection of size of the genealogist constituency uncovered in the analysis of our dependent variable. Workshops and training on the use of documents in the classroom (38 states) and on state history (32 states) were also ranked high on the list. In contrast, newsletters for specialized user groups were less popular nationwide, with newsletters for K-12 teachers (9 states), volunteers (11), friends organizations (13), and genealogists (13) all falling at the bottom of the list of all forms of outreach. That said, almost half of the programs (23 states) did report at least offering a newsletter for the general public.

Figure 4. IV₁: Popularity of outreach activities with state archives

Turning now to the key statistic of interest, the breadth of outreach in the state archives alone was distributed fairly evenly nationwide (Figure 5). On average, state archives reported engaging in half of the 24 possible categories of outreach defined by the survey, evidenced by the mean of 11.8 and median of 12. A simple average, however, does not fully express the strikingly even distribution of the responses across the spectrum of possible responses, from zero to 24. The quantile box plot in Figure 5 demonstrates this even spread of the data, marking the minimum value at 1, the maximum value at 24, and the middle 50% of responses spread between 7 and 16.25.

Massachusetts reported the broadest outreach activity with the maximum value possible, 24 unique types of outreach (Figure 6). Wyoming and Minnesota also

reported notably broad programs with 22 and 21 different forms, respectively. Meanwhile, though no state reported zero forms of outreach, New Hampshire scored the lowest with just one type of outreach, while Alaska, Montana, North Dakota, and Rhode Island all reported less than 5 forms each.

Figure 5. IV₁: Box plot for breadth of outreach activities in state archives

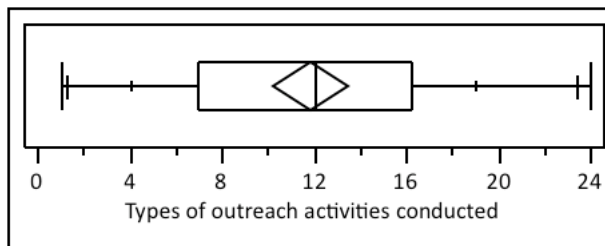
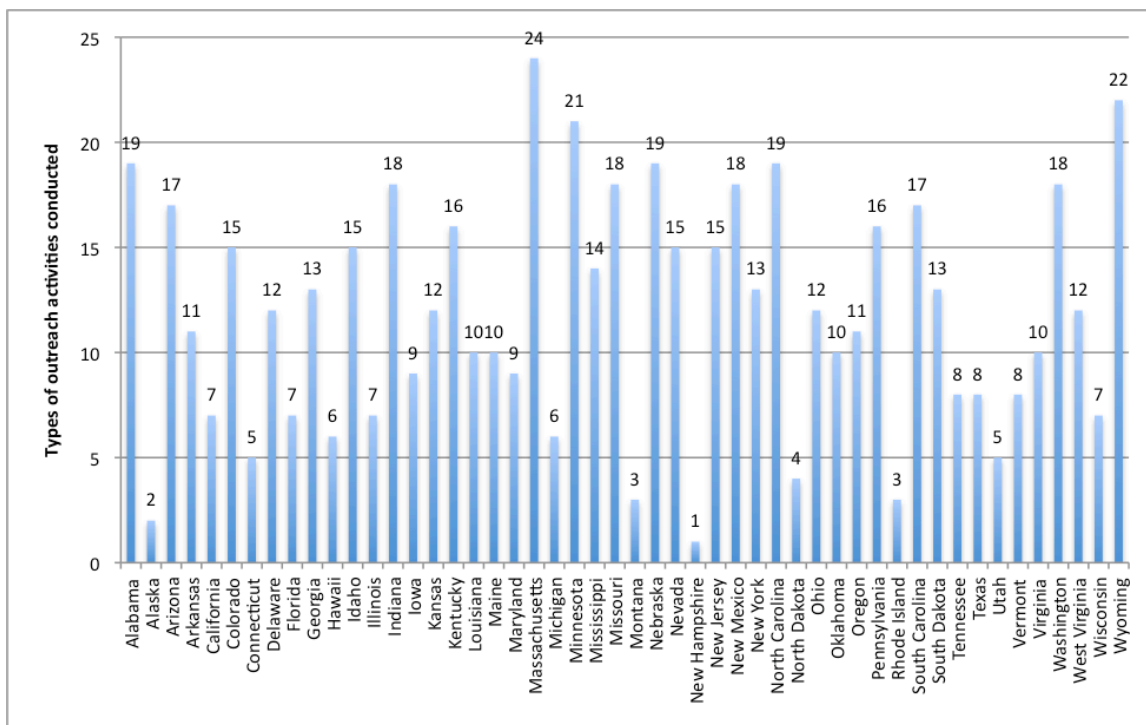


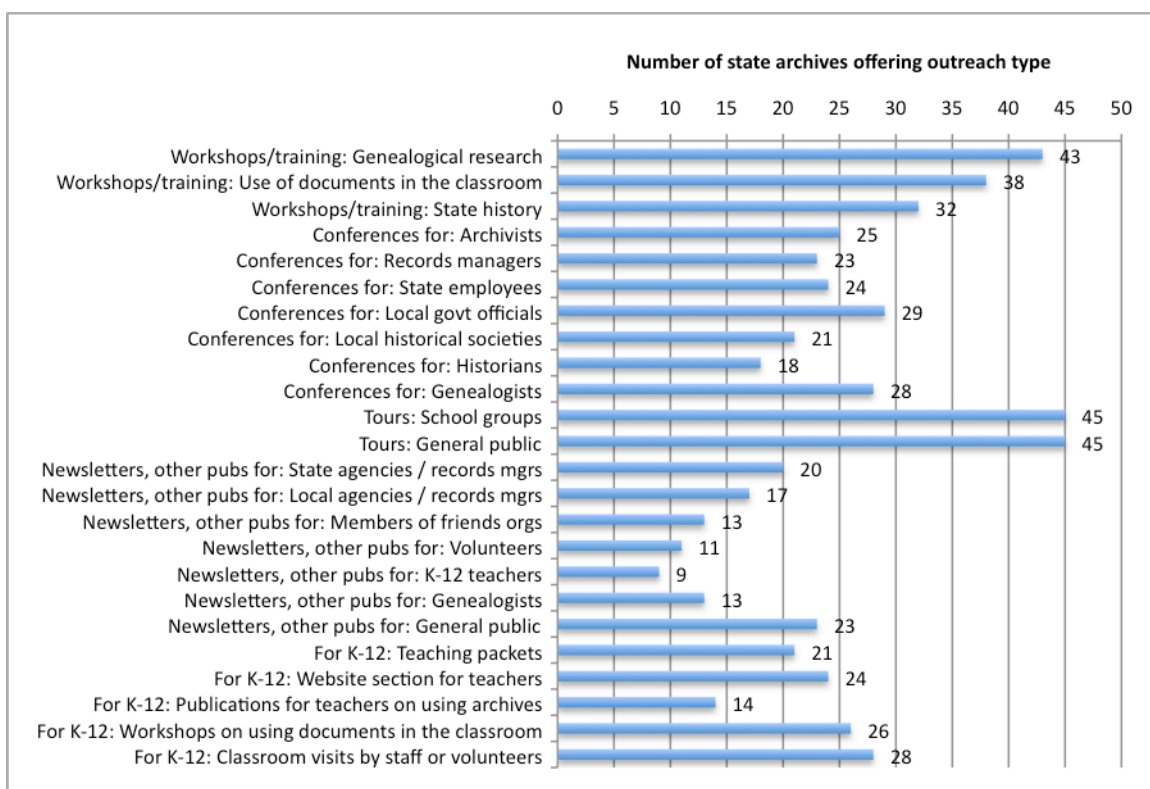
Figure 6. IV₁: Breadth of outreach in state archives



Now we will examine independent SHRAB outreach activity. Conferences are by and large the most common form of outreach for SHRABs to engage in, according to survey responses (Figure 7). Fourteen SHRABs reported sponsoring conferences

for local government officials, while 13 SHRABs held conferences for archivists, and another 13 held them for local historical societies. Still, even those numbers are low, considering that the maximum response of 14 SHRABs represents less than a third of all SHRABs nationwide. Most outreach activities queried by the CoSA survey were conducted by SHRABs little if at all; 17 out of the 24 total forms of outreach were conducted by fewer than five SHRABs.

Figure 7. IV₂: Popularity of outreach activities with SHRABs



The *breadth* of SHRAB outreach was likewise comparatively low (Figure 8).

The Ohio and Wisconsin SHRABs have the broadest outreach programs, each engaging in 12 different activities, followed by the Maryland (11) and Nebraska (10) SHRABs. Those numbers are far from the norm, however. Twenty-eight states reported either no SHRAB activity or no functioning SHRAB at all that year. The

quantile box plot in Figure 9 demonstrates that, with over half of all states reporting no SHRAB outreach contribution, the distribution is strongly right-skewed.

Figure 8. IV₂: Breadth of outreach activities in SHRABs

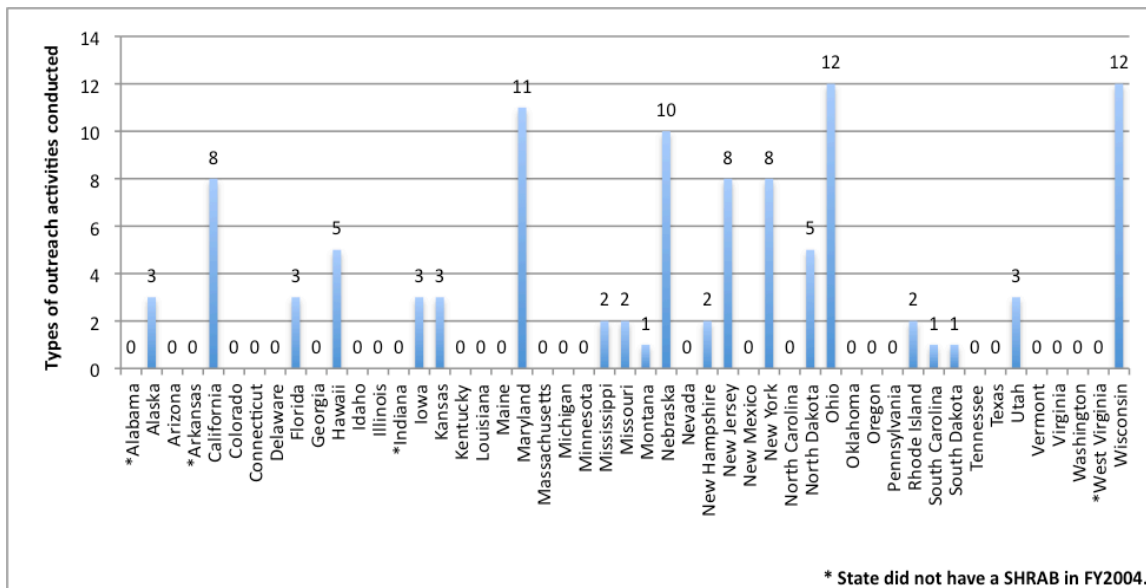
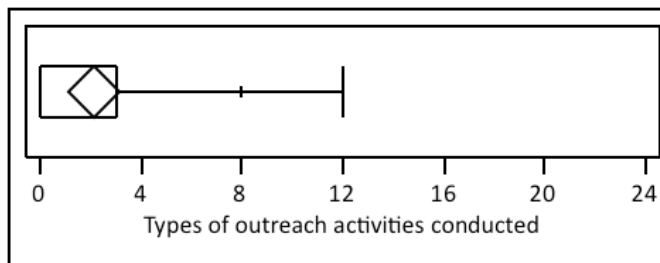


Figure 9. IV₂: Box plot for breadth of outreach activities in SHRABs



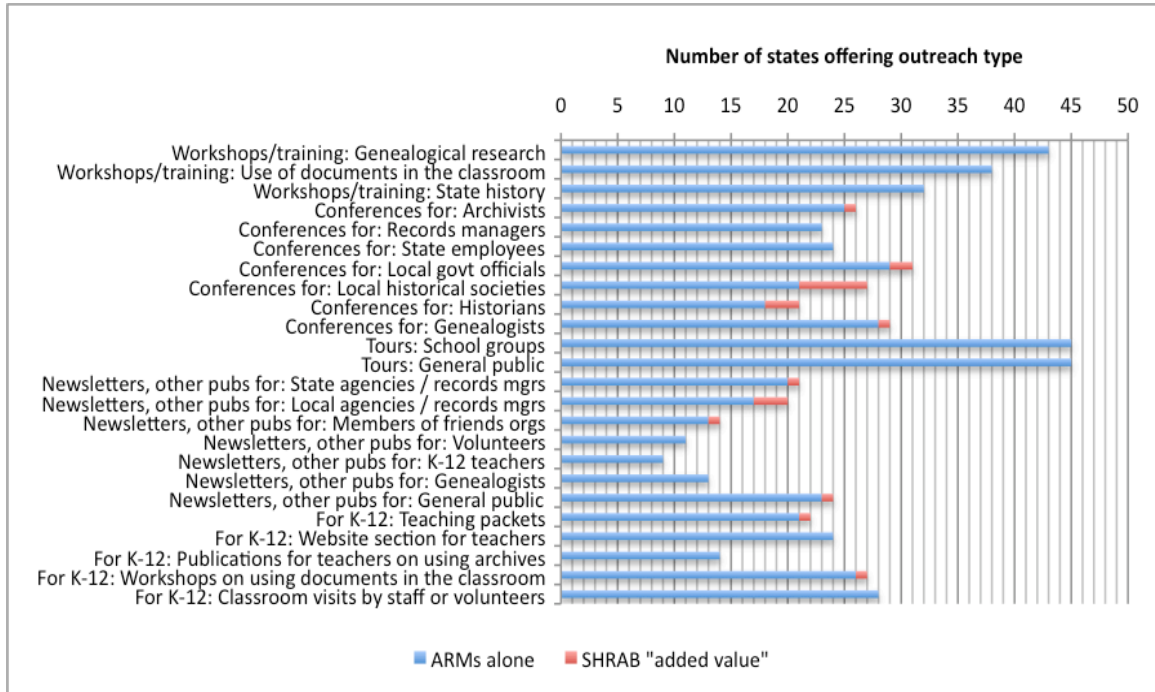
Finally, we will discuss the total breadth of outreach taking both ARM and SHRAB activities into account, and evaluate the “added value” of SHRAB contributions to state archival outreach.

To restate the methodology behind the calculations for this statistic, separate responses were combined so that only *unique* forms of outreach conducted by either the ARM or SHRAB were counted towards *breadth* of outreach. Thus, if the SHRAB was duplicating an outreach activity already provided by the state archives (e.g.,

tours for school groups), that form counted only once in the calculation of the overall breadth of outreach activities by the ARM and SHRAB together. Next, by comparing this number to the breadth of outreach activities conducted by the state archives alone, we measured the “added value” SHRABs provide their state archives by engaging in additional forms of outreach that the archives does not.

First, regarding the frequency of different outreach activities, adding SHRAB contributions resulted in no change to the most and least common forms of outreach nationwide (Figure 10). SHRABs provided no added value at all for the most popular activities, tours and genealogical workshops—a trend that is partly due to low SHRAB activity in those areas, and also to the fact that so many archives engage in those activities, the few SHRABs that do report performing them are just duplicating those efforts. SHRABs provided the greatest added value in holding conferences: a total of six state archives that did not give their own conferences for local historical societies reaped the benefits of a SHRAB that did (SHRAB added value of +6); conferences for historians (+3), local government officials (+2), archivists (+1), and genealogists (+1) were also included among SHRAB contributions.

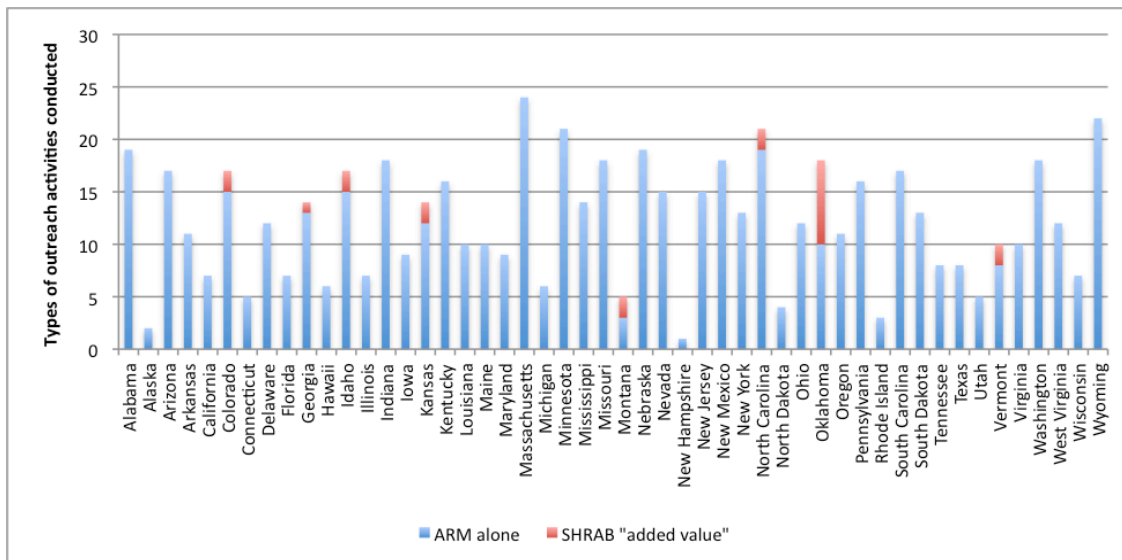
Figure 10. IV₃: Popularity of outreach activities, ARM + SHRAB



Our key metric of the overall breadth of outreach, ARM and SHRAB activities combined, showed little change in the “leader” and “loser” states (Figure 11). The three states with the most active state archives (Massachusetts, Wyoming, and Minnesota) remained at the top of the list, though North Carolina joined Minnesota in third place, benefitting from a SHRAB added value of +2. Likewise, most of the states with the narrowest outreach programs in the archives stayed at the bottom of the list even after including SHRAB contributions. It is surprising that the states with the most to gain from SHRAB outreach received little help as well. (Montana is an exception to this generalization, which rose out of the bottom three states with a SHRAB contribution of +2.) Oklahoma’s SHRAB provided its state archives with the greatest added value of any by conducting eight additional outreach activities. Even so, with only 8 states reporting any added value from their SHRABs at all (in

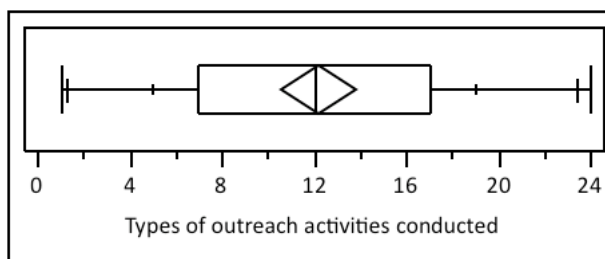
comparison to the 22 states with a SHRAB that reported independently conducting at least one outreach activity), it appears that the duplication of outreach efforts between SHRABs and state archives is considerable.

Figure 11. IV₃: Breadth of outreach activities, ARM + SHRAB



Similarly, little change in the distribution was brought about by the inclusion of SHRAB outreach in the measure of the breadth of outreach (Figure 12). The data is still evenly and broadly spread across the possible range of zero to 24, and the median remained at 12. The mean rose by 0.4 (from 11.8 to 12.2), so it could be said that, on average, SHRABs contributed less than one half of one additional outreach activity to their state archives.

Figure 12. IV₃: Box plot for breadth of outreach activities, ARM + SHRAB



Bivariate analysis

Now having examined the variables individually, we will review the relationship between those variables in which this study is primarily interested. As previously defined, the research hypothesis (H_A) asserts that greater breadth of outreach in state archives increases public use of government records. The null hypothesis (H_0) states that there is no relationship between the variables.

Our dependent variable, public use of government records, has been measured as ratio data, and the independent variable, breadth of outreach, has been captured as interval data. Therefore, to assess their relationship, Pearson's product-moment correlation (r) is used as a measure of association, and a linear regression t -test is the chosen test of statistical significance.

Figure 13: Bivariate fit of public use of government records by breadth of outreach, ARM alone

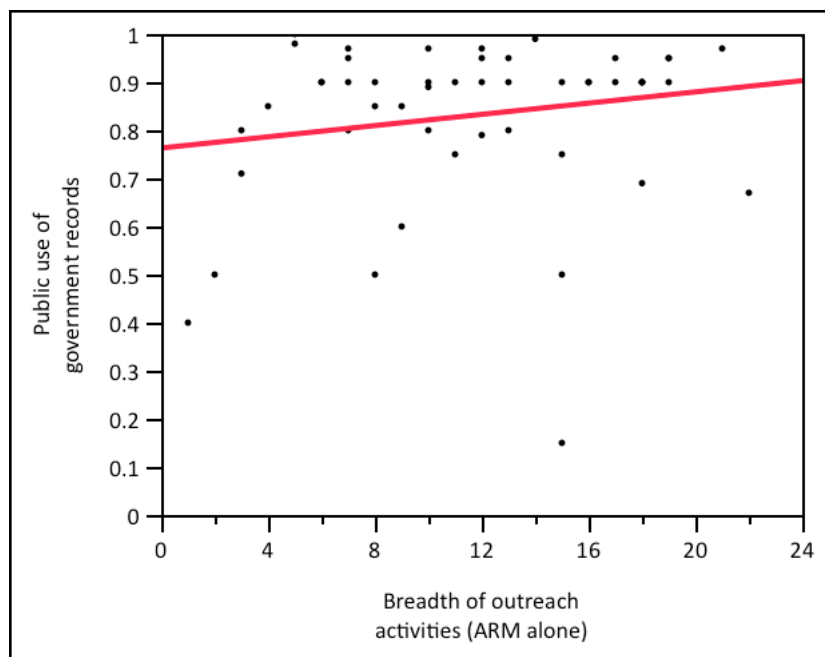
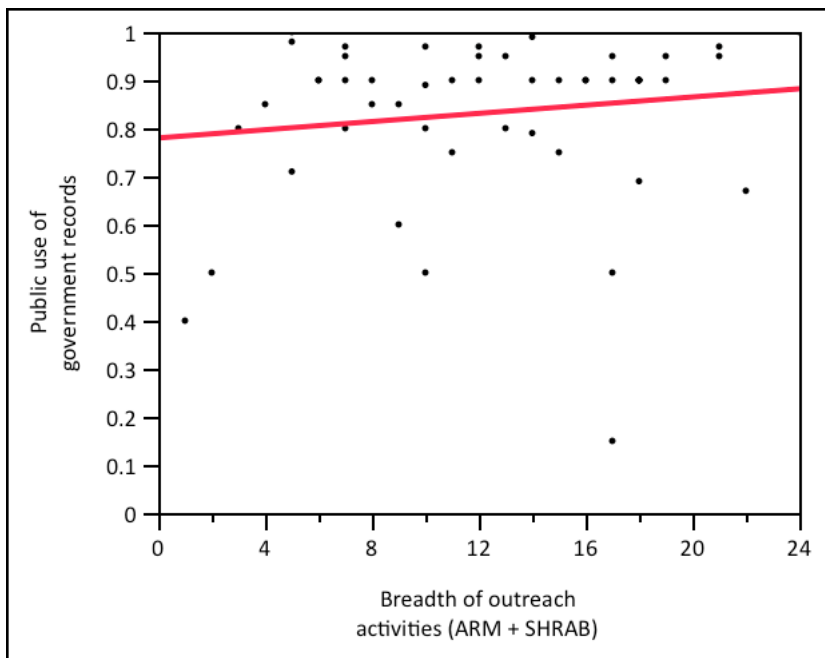


Figure 13 plots the 50 state archives' public use of government records (Y) by breadth of outreach (X), as well as a regression line with the equation $Y' =$

$0.763039 + 0.0058442X$. To the naked eye, there appears to be little discernable pattern to the data. Pearson's r reported a value of 0.1899, meaning that a mere 3.6% of the variation in public use of government records is explained by breadth of outreach ($r^2 = 0.03607$). The t -test, however, returned a p -value of 0.1865, which is well above the 0.05 threshold for statistical significance. Therefore, H_A is rejected and H_0 is accepted—this study did not find a significant relationship between breadth of outreach in state archives and public use of government records.

Figure 14: Bivariate fit of public use of government records by breadth of outreach, ARM+SHRAB



Next, the relationship between the variables was assessed using our secondary measure of the independent variable that includes SHRAB contributions in our calculation of breadth of outreach in state archives. Figure 14 graphs public use of government records (Y) by breadth of outreach by the ARM and SHRAB (X). The regression line is represented by the equation $Y' = 0.7798048 + 0.0042713X$. Pearson's r , at 0.14, again reports a very weakly positive association between the

variables, though even less of the variation in public use ($r^2 = 0.02$) is explained here by this measure of breadth of outreach than by the primary measure of state archives' outreach activity alone. Regardless, the p -value returned by the t -test was 0.3273; this also is not significant at the 0.05 level. H_A is rejected and H_0 is accepted—yet again, this study did not find a significant relationship between breadth of outreach in state archives, SHRAB contributions included, and public use of government records.

Audience-specific analysis

Having detected no relationship between the variables overall, ties between outreach aimed at specific audiences and that audience's responding use of government records will be investigated. Genealogists will be studied first, followed by K-12 teachers and students.

Figure 15: Bivariate fit of public use of government records for genealogy by breadth of outreach for genealogists

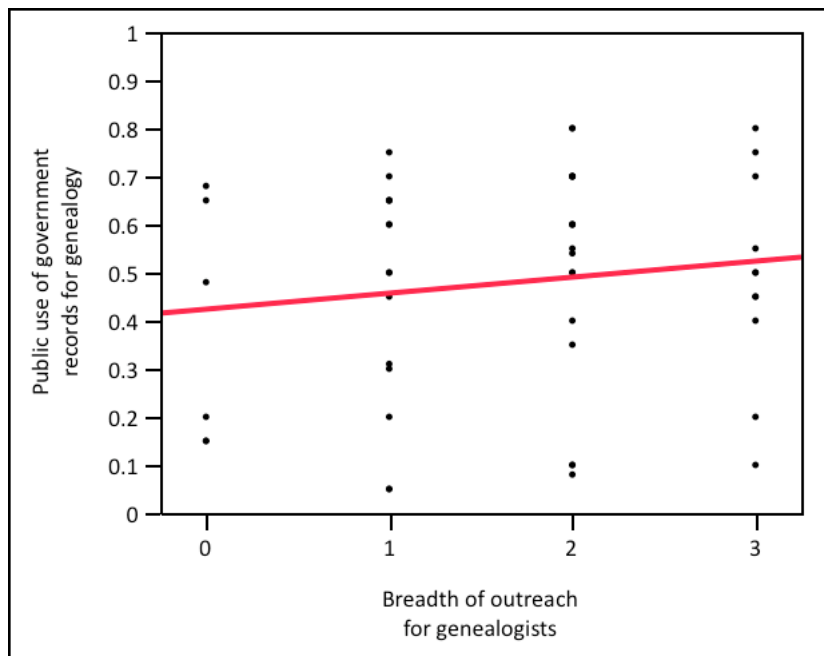
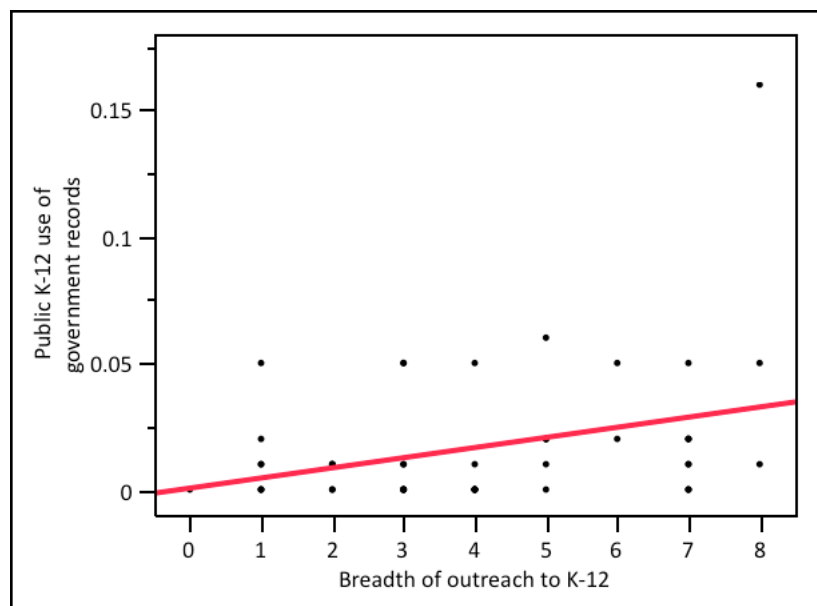


Figure 15 charts the public use of government records for genealogical purposes (Y) against the breadth of outreach conducted by state archives specifically for genealogists (X). The regression equation of the linear fit is $Y' = 0.4237701 + 0.0333512X$. Pearson's r ($r = 0.14141$) yet again reports a weakly positive correlation; breadth of outreach aimed at genealogists explains only 2% ($r^2 = 0.019996$) of the variation in genealogical use of government records. The t -test returned a p -value of 0.3273, which is again not significant at the 0.05 level. H_A is rejected and H_0 is accepted—this study found no significant correlation between the breadth of outreach that state archives provide for genealogists and genealogical use of government records.

Figure 16: Bivariate fit of public K-12 use of government records by breadth of outreach for K-12 teachers & students



Finally, Figure 16 plots the K-12 use of government records (Y) by the breadth of outreach conducted for the K-12 audience (X), as well as a regression line with the equation $Y' = 0.0005509 + 0.004012X$. An apparent outlier exists to the

upper right corner of the graph, representing Minnesota, which boasted both an exceptional degree of K-12 outreach *and* use. When including Minnesota in our analysis, Pearson's r reports a value of 0.331685, indicating a positive association between the variables that, while not particularly strong, is noticeably stronger than the correlation found between outreach and use by genealogists or by the public as a whole. Indeed, 11% ($r^2 = 0.110015$) of the variation in K-12 use of government records is explained by the breadth of outreach aimed at that audience. Because the t -test returned a p -value of 0.0186, this association, however weak, can in fact be deemed statistically significant at the 0.05 level. H_A is accepted and H_0 is rejected. While much of the variation in the dependent variable remains to be explained by other factors, the breadth of K-12 outreach in state archives can be said to have some influence.

Chapter V: Discussion & Conclusions

This study found no significant relationship between the breadth of outreach in state archives and public use of government relationships. Furthermore, the exceptionally weak association indicates that even if the relationship were statistically significant, it would not likely have been substantive. At a single point in time, the analysis indicates that the number of fronts on which the archives is attempting to engage the public has no association with the degree of public use of government records.

Some positive correlation was found between breadth of outreach to K-12 teachers and students and corresponding K-12 use of government records. Certainly this outcome had much to do with Minnesota's exceptionally broad outreach and high use in this particular audience. Nonetheless, Minnesota deserves to be in the data set for comparison as much as any other state, and as such, indicates that focusing many outreach efforts on one audience may in fact generate higher use by that group.

Of course, this study as a preliminary investigation has some limitations on the extensibility of its findings. First, the dependent variable, as operationalized here, does not directly account for the size of the government records collection, the size of the state population, or total reference volume. Measuring public use as a proportion of total use, as was done here, allowed the researcher to balance those

factors of “supply and demand” across fifty institutions that varied dramatically in size and structure from state to state. Still, instead of relying on the director’s responses and risking some degree of respondent error, it might be wise for future research to attempt to construct this proportion independently based on raw reference statistics. Any operationalization of a variable has its strong and weak points. The benefits to measuring public use as a proportion of total use in this case were its comparability and its availability, which were arguably important in a study such as this one with restricted time and resources.

As for the independent variable, there are many defining attributes of an archive’s outreach program other than its breadth. This study was primarily interested in gauging the number of ways in which the archives was attempting to reach out to its public, as previously discussed. In taking a broad look at all fifty states, it would be neither feasible nor useful to pick apart the pros and cons of every outreach activity in every state. Still, the researcher is well aware that breadth of outreach certainly does not account for other variables critical to a program’s success, such as its quality, volume, or reach. Naturally there are an infinite number of variables at play with several intangibles as to what makes for a “good” outreach program. Nevertheless, it is essential that archivists do attempt to do a better job of finding what works and what does not. Future studies should conduct both quantitative and qualitative research into the making of an effective and efficient outreach program.

Finally, the one-shot case analysis used by this study was certainly a good place to begin a line of inquiry into the effectiveness of state archival outreach

programs by looking for possible ties between broad outreach programs and higher public use of government records. However, the observations made here only reflect associations (or the lack thereof) at a single point in time. Even if stronger correlations between the variables were found by this study, those alone could not prove causation. Further avenues of research should search for cause-and-effect relationships between the variables with longitudinal studies of archival programs over time.

As has been made clear, this study does not in any way purport to be the last word on the effect of outreach in state archives. What this paper *does* hope to accomplish is to raise questions that are too rarely asked in the archival community. Undoubtedly there has not been enough critical evaluation of outreach in the literature. The lack of any significant relationship between breadth of outreach and public use detected by this study proves all the more the need to examine the effectiveness of outreach by assessing its *outcomes*, rather than by describing one's *output*. With state archives serving as stewards of the public monies as well as their records, archivists in those institutions need to show a keener interest in determining how to get the most "bang for their buck."

Much of the literature touts outreach as a way to improve the archivist's reputation with the public (Jimerson, 1989) and to prove to stakeholders that archives are indeed worthy of increased financial support (Gracy, 1984; Grabowski, 1992). Without a critical evaluation of resource inputs versus program outcomes, however, archivists conducting outreach may actually be demonstrating themselves to be less worthy of the public trust and funding than they realize. Considering how

central outcome measurement and program evaluation is to policy analysis in other departments of government, it is shocking that state archivists have not heeded Pederson's 1978 "penny-wise and dollar foolish" advice earlier.

It would be disheartening for this study to be taken as an indicator that outreach was not worth doing at all. The author is genuinely passionate about the democratic responsibilities of archives, but is also curious about the bounds of the enthusiasm the profession so openly holds for outreach. When one moment spent on outreach is a moment not spent on selection, description, preservation, or other archival functions that also profoundly affect citizen access to government information, archivists must be more discerning about how they marshal the resources they have, and more critical about evaluating the outcomes of their work.

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