

National Archives Assembly Interview with Thomas Elton Brown

April 1989 – June 2006: Manager, Archival Services, Electronic and Special Media Records Services Division; Chief, Archival Services Branch, Center for Electronic Records

February 1988 – April 1989: Chief of Staff, Administrative Staff, Office of the National Archives

January 1986 - February 1988: Archivist, Administrative Staff, Office of the National Archives

June 1983 – January 1986: Archivist, Documentation Standards Division, Office of Records Administration

June 1976 – June 1983: Archivist, Machine-Readable Archives Division / Machine-Readable Archives Branch

HULL: This is an interview with Thomas Elton Brown, recorded September 12, 2006, at [REDACTED] [Adelphi, Maryland], the home of Ted Hull, who is serving as interviewer today. Tom, let me start with letting you know that we have a copy your vita, so I don't think unless there's something that doesn't come out in this interview that you'd like to highlight, that will become a part of the Assembly's Legacy Project package.

BROWN: OK

HULL: But the first question I wanted to ask you was about your educational background and how you came, that, your educational background influenced your decision to work at the National Archives.

BROWN: OK. I went through graduate school at Okie [Oklahoma] State University. My major was American history; my dissertation was on the Catholic church in Oklahoma during the 20th Century. When I got the Union card, i.e. the PhD, I went looking for a job. Through the help of faculty members at Oklahoma State, I ended up at a term-by-term assignment / contract at Grand Valley State Colleges, now Grand Valley State University, at Allendale, Michigan. While a TA [teaching assistant] at Oklahoma State, I had helped a history of science professor start a course which used computerized instruction. Part of this was keying -- using a keypunch machine -- to key in responses that kids, the students, gave to tests and to do some demographic studies on who was taking this experimental course. So at least I knew what a code was and what a field was. While I was at Grand Valley, I continued to look for a [permanent] job. The same professor who was a good friend of Charles Dollar [Director, Machine-Readable Archives Division, August 1974 – 1981] said that Charles was looking for people. At that time you had to have a master's degree in American history to become an archivist at the National Archives. And so Alex Ospovat arranged for an interview with Charles -- for me to come and talk to him. When I came to talk to Charles, at least I knew what a field was. Charles and I were not close at Oklahoma State. When I arrived for the interview that morning, he said "You realize, Tom, that if it's up to me, I'm not going to hire you." I said "Oh, OK." And he said "We'll go through the interview process that I've established to select candidates. And then I have arranged for you to go through the interview process with Presidential Libraries this afternoon because Presidential Libraries has a very good track record of

hiring quality people." I went through the interview with the Machine-Readable Division, had lunch with Charles and Jim O'Neill who was Deputy Archivist [James O'Neill, Deputy Archivist, 19XX – 19XX; Acting Archivist of the United States, 1979-July 1980], and then went down [to the main Archives Building] to go through the interview process with Presidential Libraries. I knew I had the job at Presidential Libraries: I was talking to -- oh I forget the name of the head of Presidential Libraries was at the time [Head of NL, 1976], it's on the tip of my tongue, anyway, he explained that the within the Presidential Libraries that you would come and work in the Washington area for a year as they trained you in the Presidential Library mode. After that year, you would be assigned to one of the libraries. And he asked me which one of the libraries I would like to go to. And I said, "Can I reverse that and tell you where I would *not* like to go?" And he said, "Yes." I said, "I would not want to go to Hoover or Eisenhower." This was in '76, and he said "Do I detect a partisan bias?" I said "No, you detect an urban-rural bias --- I wouldn't mind going to suburban New York, Boston, Kansas City, Austin, but I definitely don't want to go to West Branch, Iowa or Abilene, Kansas." He laughed and said, "You know there are people who work for the Presidential Libraries who couldn't read off a list of their locations" I went back to 14th St., where the Machine-Readable Archives Division was located, and saw Charles. He said, "Well, I got a call from Presidential Libraries and they said that if I don't hire you, they want to." And he said, "Where would you like to work?" I said, "Charles, I'd like to work here," That's when I made the decision. He asked me why and I said, "Well, I want to settle down and start a life. I'm tired of moving. In a year from now, if I were with Presidential Libraries, I'd have to move to another place. And I'm tired of moving." And he said "OK." That's why I joined the staff of the Machine-Readable Archives Division.

HULL: Very good

BROWN: In other words, I didn't choose to work in the [Office of the] National Archives

HULL: ... they chose you

BROWN: Or I just happened to be at the right place at the right time.

HULL: So Charles Dollar was your first supervisor, and what role do you think he played in your becoming the archivist you are today and having such a long and stellar career in the area of electronic records?

BROWN: Grand Valley State Colleges had an experimental university that I was involved in. We did a lot of independent studies and self-pacing type of programs. To a large extent what I was working at Oklahoma State with the experimental course was also like that. He [Charles Dollar] wanted me to get involved with developing training courses in machine-readable records because there were very few people who knew anything about electronic records at that time -- sort of like today. Also Mabel Dietrich, who was the head of the Office of the National Archives [Assistant Archivist for the Office of the National Archives, 19XX – 19XX], wanted the other archivists exposed to machine-readable records and she wanted him [Charles Dollar] to get involved in SAA [Society of

American Archivists] and to expand the training. Charles knew I had been involved in some of these experimental educational programs at Oklahoma State and at Grand Valley, so he assigned me as one of the "other duties as assigned" to develop training courses and modules for agencies and for archivists. He then got me involved with conducting a workshop at SAA on appraisal of electronic records -- machine-readable records. That was done several times, and then we did a two-day workshop. Since he knew that I had been involved with some experimental education and self-paced study; he wanted to use that background to develop training programs in-house and externally. That gave me some visibility.

HULL: And so he envisioned your niche, your area of expertise, to be in outreach and educational programs.

BROWN: Right

HULL: To spread the word about electronic records and their value.

BROWN: Right

HULL: How effective do you think that was, I think its very well know in the profession, that outside NARA, SAA and archivists generally learned a lot from those programs and workshops. What is your feeling about how they, those training programs were received internally, by more traditional archivists?

BROWN: I don't know. One of the first courses that we did was to train incoming archivists to deal with electronic records. One of the persons who was in that course was Mike Kurtz [Assistant Archivist for the Office of Records Services – Washington, D.C., 19XX –]. Part of the drill in that course was to write a COBOL program, and so Mike Kurtz was able to write a COBOL program in 1976. Now whether or not <laughter> did Mike have an appreciation of electronic records since then? I think you'd have to ask him. But I really don't see where we were all that effective, either internally or externally, in terms of building allies outside of the program.

HULL: Now, in terms of, and I'll get to more details about this later probably, but in terms of building bonds with other archivists who came in at the same time, like later the CIDS [Career Internship Development System] program and now we have the ADP [Archival Development Program] program, were you part of a group, a class that all received standard training in NARA archival processes and procedures?

BROWN: No, I was probably hired the last year before the CIDS program was established. The only sort of a "class" met twice a week, on Tuesdays and Thursdays. There were lectures that everyone had to attend. At the conclusion of those presentations and some required readings, we had to pass an examination ...

HULL: Wow, was this a GSA [General Services Administration]?

BROWN: No, this was a NARA presentation. CIDS, if I remember correctly, was a GSA-wide program that was established in order to increase upward mobility for internal candidates and to provide some sort of a training development system. NARA took this mandate that they had from GSA and developed a CIDS program for archivists. It became a series of rotational assignments that you had to go through. But it wasn't like the CIDS class that we had beginning under Frank Burke [Assistant Archivist for the Office of the National Archives, 19XX – 19XX; Acting Archivist of the United States, April 16, 1985-December 4, 1987], where everyone was hired *en masse*, all arrived at approximately the same time, one person coordinated all the rotational assignments for the first year, and at the end of that first year each was assigned to a unit. The original CIDS was when you came in and your unit arranged for these various rotational or training assignments. It was not nearly as structured as the second CIDS program. And when I came in [before CIDS], it [training] was even less structured. We were sent on rotational assignments, but it was just sort of hit and miss as to what you did. I think I can probably remember I did about four. One was description in military records. I think in many ways the assignments that Charles sent us on had an ulterior motive. We were public relations people for the unit. Because he believed he had hired some bright people (and I think he did), he would send these people to other units so that not only our colleagues, but people above them would know how bright and enthusiastic we were. I went to military to do arrangement and description because Mabel Dietrich was the former director of that unit, and Charles wanted to get the word up to her. He sent me for an administrative history assignment to work with Leonard Rapport because Leonard was questioning some of our appraisals. And I went to the National Audiovisual Center -- why I did that, I don't remember. <laughter> I mean, Charles was very much of a . . . ; he viewed us as pawns in a chess game as he was trying to advance the image of the program internally. And then, as I said, in the following year or maybe two years, they formulated a CIDS series of assignments where everyone had to go through a certain set of assignments.

HULL: It became more formalized then. Do you think the CIDS program then was informed by the type of, or was this, were your rotational assignments on the informal side, were they part of a larger program where other division directors were doing similar things with their staff? Or was this something that Charles came up with? The reason I ask is you did something similar for me and for Mark Conrad and Tom Southerly, those of us who came in not as part of the CIDS program, but I think, maybe not in as calculated a way that we were ambassadors for the program, but I think for our benefit you sent us on rotational assignments.

BROWN: Rotational assignments have been a standard procedure for incoming archivists or professional staff. When I joined the staff of the National Archives, there was a lot of internal training. If you were in a military unit, you would learn arrangement, description, and reference doing military records in your unit. But they always wanted to send archivists to different media types to expose them to them. They were always sending people to appraisal to give them that experience. But a lot of the training or rotational assignments occurred in-house in the unit to which you were assigned. It was only when you couldn't get internal training would you go someplace else. Charles expanded that

because we could have done [training in] administrative history internally. I may have been the only one who ever did a rotational assignment in administrative history. That was because of Leonard Rapport, and he [Charles Dollar] wanted to establish a rapport with Leonard Rapport. <laughter>

It all HULL: Yes of course. I find that very interesting because, for the benefit of those who will view or read this transcript, Tom's chapter in the book *Thirty Years of Electronic Records*¹ does such a wonderful job of capturing the history of the first 30 years of the program and how Charles Dollar was so instrumental in establishing a permanent program for electronic records. I think you point out in your chapter a couple of real watersheds where the division had problems or was confronted with issues that were not anywhere within his control. The first is the FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] project, and that again is very well documented in the book, and the second is the RIFS [Reduction in Force], the Reagan RIFS. And I think a number of the Assembly interviews have talked to other people who were at NARA during that traumatic period. I would like to get your impression of that because you were in the Machine-Readable Division at that time and just how the Machine-Readable Division was really devastated by the RIFS, and if you could just talk about that, your personal impressions of that and how traumatic that was for the division, but I don't want to put any words in your mouth. I've heard it discussed so many times as really being a traumatic period.

BROWN: It was. I think that it is sense of the Archives as well. Part of our corporate culture is that we have people here at the Archives who worked 30-, 40-, 50-years. You come to work for the Archives; you find your niche, and you stay. That's part of the culture, which has its good side and its bad side. And suddenly this whole corporate culture is being challenged and through a way that no one could see. There was a rumor at the time -- the word on the street at the time. I have not read Bob Warner's [Archivist of the United State, July 1980-April 15, 1985] book so I don't know whether or not he documents this. But it was rumored that he had made an agreement with the Administrator, Gerald Carmen, of GSA [Administrator, May 26, 1981-February 29, 1984] that if he [Bob Warner] would testify against the re-authorization of the NHPRC [National Historical Publications and Records Commission], then the National Archives would not endure any RIFS. Of course, this turned out not to be true. He did testify against the re-authorization of NHPRC, but we still underwent RIFs. NARA did the RIFS by abolishing all the positions of anyone who had not been with the agency for 3-years. , Because once you were there for 3-years, you had career status. And it was harder for someone from outside of NARA but still someone from GSA to come in and bump you out. By the fact that we [Machine-Readable Division] were a new unit, a lot of our people had not been there yet for 3-years, and so all of them were out the door. And fortunately, I was hired in '76. I had been there for 5-years so my position was not abolished. But I was on the RIF list ... I was second from the bottom to go.

¹ Ambacher, Bruce, ed., 2003, *Thirty Years of Electronic Records*, (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press); Ch. 1: "History of NARA's Custodial Program for Electronic Records: From the Data Archives Staff to the Center for Electronic Records"

HULL: So in your chapter in Thirty Years, the Division staff fell to 12, in February 1982.

BROWN: That's probably correct

HULL: So from '82 then, so after '82, the division was reorganized into a branch and Trudy Peterson became the branch chief until August 1983.

BROWN: Yes. I left the branch at that time. Trudy left the branch too at that time or right after that.

HULL: OK so after that in terms of your career, you had been an archivist in the Machine-Readable Archives Division and in the Machine-Readable Branch through, I'm looking at your vita just to put the time frame together, until June 1983. And then became an archivist in the Documentation Standards Division in the Office of Records Administration. Can you talk a little bit about the work of that division and how what you did contributed to that? I'm not familiar, excuse my ignorance, but I'm not familiar with documentation standards.

BROWN: I was the first member of the staff or the division. When we were moving towards independence from GSA, Bob Warner said that we would hang our hat in records management on that phrase in the Federal Records Act, "heads of agencies shall make and preserve adequate and proper documentation." So we proposed to establish standards for what would constitute adequate and proper documentation. These standards would be required for [both paper and] electronic materials. This is how we would get our foot into the door. That's why I was hired -- to make certain that these standards addressed electronic materials that the government -- that Federal agencies were creating. Of course, Patti Aronsson was hired to be the division director. And she had some problems with the office head.

HULL: This was in the Office of Records Administration? Who was the office head at the time, do you recall?

BROWN: Yes. Jim Moore [James W. Moore, Assistant Archivist for the Office of Records Administration, 1983-19XX].

HULL: Oh, OK

BROWN: Patti and Jim did not get along well personally. We did only two things of substance. It ended up being a staff of only five people. First, we wrote a pamphlet that I think the Archives still issues in revised form to pass out to heads of Federal agencies. It explains what they should do when they come into office and when they leave office as to distinguishing between personal papers and official records and what their responsibilities are for official records. We also conducted a study of rulemaking records of Federal agencies as to what should be created during the rulemaking process and how these records should be organized and maintained. After that, the program sort of withered on the vine. The other two people involved with the program that are still with

the Archives are John Vernon and Fynnette Eaton. They remained with the program after I left. Trudy Peterson, whom I knew as my former branch chief, was, I guess, acting head of the Office of the National Archives [Assistant Archivist for Office of the National Archives, 19XX – 1993; Acting Archivist of the United States, March 25, 1993- May 29, 1995]. She said to me that she realized from her perspective that the Documentation Standards program was in trouble within the Archives. She said, “Why don’t you come to work for me? I need someone to deal with the budget side.” It turned out that she also wanted me to write internal procedures. Since I had done this study on rulemaking, I was sort of prepared for that. So I went to work for Trudy on part of the Administrative Staff and became chief there. I can remember Ray Mosley [see where he was in 1985] making a comment to a group of Federal agencies while I was still on the [Documentation Standards] staff. When someone asked what about the documentation standards program, Ray said “Well, at the National Archives, we view documentation standards as a goal, not a program.” <laughter> I sort of agreed with that – it was not a program ---

HULL: Yes, it’s a very difficult position to be in, did you feel that you made some progress though in the area of electronic records? Because the examples you gave could be ...

BROWN: No

HULL: media neutral? They apply to records regardless of ...

BROWN: No. I don’t think the program ever got off the ground. We had two people -- Patti Aronsson and myself -- in ‘84 reorganization. I don’t think we every really did anything -- either for electronic records or for establishing standards. I think that once Bob Warner retired back to Michigan, the impetus and support that the program had left with him [in 1985].

HULL: So in January ‘86, you moved to work for Trudy [Peterson] on the Administrative Staff in the Office of the National Archives, becoming Chief of Staff in February ‘88, and serving until April ‘89, I promised I wouldn’t read your resume, but that is in chronological order. You said you joined the Administrative Staff, and during that time, I’m looking at your resume again, as you mention you successfully, or you implemented policies and procedures, and in your resume you mention successfully coordinated and reorganized the Office of the National Archives. Can you talk about your role or the Administrative Staff’s work on that reorganization within NN [the Office of the National Archives]?

BROWN: Yea, prior to that time, NN was organized by subject matter. I am talking about NN as the paper unit. We had a military division, and we had a civil division. Then those divisions differed somewhat in how they were organized functionally. But the basic division was a civil division and a military division. We were beginning to move towards the creation of Archives II. We had to figure out a way how to organize the records -- the paper records -- for the move to Archives II. This meant the need to

change the whole subject matter organization into a functional organization so you would have a projects division and a reference division. The theory behind it was that we had to speed up the process of processing and describing the paper records in order so that we would know what we had in order to be able to move them and to be able to find them at Archives II. We referred to URUs -- unrecognized records units -- or undescribed records. This is when we began the master relocation register and all that description because the theory was that, as long as people, were doing both projects and reference, reference is going to eat into the project side. Only by establishing a bureaucratic wall [between projects and reference resources] could we ensure that enough time was spent to come to some sort of intellectual control over the paper records or we would never be able to move them. And so that's what we did; we reorganized the paper side. On the electronic side, this was when the Center for Electronic Records developed. Amazingly enough, I had nothing to do with the creation of the Center for Electronic Records. I think Edie Hedlin [Chief, Machine-Readable Branch, 1986-1988] did that. It was sort of the peripheral to the larger effort of organizing the NN office internally.

HULL: Looking back, do you think looking back do you think that the reorganization of the paper units was successful?

BROWN: I do

HULL: The move was certainly very successful!

BROWN: Yes, the move was very successful. And that same reorganization has continued. I find it interesting today to hear the discussion about the need to increase the resources that will be processing the paper records. I hear echoes from that earlier time frame today. What they're doing now is to try to limit the reference resources [to ensure that the paper records are processed].

HULL: Yes, it's a reorganization without reorganizing.

BROWN: Yes.

HULL: So during your time period as Chief of Staff of the Administrative Staff, what, other than the reorganization are there other parts of that you would like to highlight?

BROWN: Well, I think that Trudy always wanted me to be involved with anything dealing with electronic records. And so whenever anything [with electronic records] came up, it would be passed on to me. I think the other thing we did was under Frank Burke who was Acting Archivist. He said that we are a national organization therefore we shall recruit nationally. To go back to the CIDS issue: It was at that time which we recruited the first CIDS class, brought them all in, supervised them for the first year under the Administrative Staff and then farmed them out to the separate units. We established that program; I thought that was really a rather successful program. We were under very strict instructions to recruit nationally: "The CIDS class should be representative of the nation as a whole, both geographically and demographically."

HULL: Since the CIDS program did have such, and continues to have such, a big impact on the directions the National Archives has taken, with the number of talented people and really good people who have been hired through that program, are there parts of the training that you developed that you feel were especially influential in moving people along their career paths?

BROWN: Well, I think it may inculcate within the CIDS person the desire to stay at the National Archives for a long time since they've invested two years before they're allowed to do anything. <laughter> I think that the CIDS program as it developed probably became over institutionalized and had a lot of wasted effort with it. Everyone, no matter what your background was, had to take all the same rotational assignments. Even if you had spent a career or ten years as a reference archives technician, you still had to go through the reference rotation. They didn't eliminate any of these rotational assignments based upon your previous experience at the National Archives or other archival institutions or upon your education. And I think they should have probably have customized it to the individuals and their individual backgrounds. But maybe not so much as how Charles customized it Then the other thing, you also had a research paper at the end. I'm all in favor of the staff of the National Archives being professionally active regarding professional issues. But it always struck me as strange that here we bring somebody into the program for two years and then expect them to write an archival paper. The quality of the CIDS papers has varied immensely, and I don't know whether or not the amount of effort the CIDS archivists put into it and the amount of effort from the supervisors was worth it, given the fact that you're talking about someone with basically two years of professional experience trying to write a professional paper. It really started with the first CIDS class. It wasn't that you wrote a paper independently. It was more like a seminar paper. The CIDS class met, I think, once a week for 10 or 12-weeks like a graduate-level seminar. I think the first year was with Frank Evans; I'd have to go back and see who it was. But they [the CIDS archivists] met with someone who was a very distinguished member of the staff who had been active professionally and had conducted professional seminars. They would all study the same issue, and they would each write a seminar paper about that issue. And then this devolved into the CIDS archivist working with his supervisor to write a CIDS paper on whatever subject they thought of at the time. Like everything it evolved.

HULL: Right, so were you surprised when the CIDS program basically ceased to be, after, when was, probably in '98, '99?

BROWN: Surprised, no. Like I said, I thought that certain aspects of it had become too bureaucratic, too fossilized. I figured that there would be some changes, I was not expecting it to cease. As a supervisor in the CIDS program, I saw that it was taking an awful lot of time of the supervisors and the office heads, scheduling these quarterly meetings, and all the other drills that one went through. In my own mind, it was becoming too fossilized. I think that is a good term for it. It probably should have been reinvented instead of abolished. Every training program should be.

HULL: Quite a few CIDS trainees assigned to our unit, and I guess we can move on to the Center for Electronic Records now, who didn't seem to stay around very long because they were able to move on to other parts of the Office of the National Archives and get better positions, but that's just my opinion and it's not my interview ...

BROWN: Right, one of the spreadsheets that I kept was a list of all the CIDS people that had been assigned to us, the date they were assigned, and the date they left. And I think only one stayed ...

HULL: Yes, Greg LaMotta is the one.

BROWN: Yes, that had become rather obvious.

HULL: So in 1989, shortly after the Center for Electronic Records was established, you were hired on as a branch chief of the Archival Services Branch. I don't know, as Chief of Staff, I guess, yes, you were a supervisor, but now you in charge of supervising as a branch chief I assume a larger unit of archivists, technicians and a reference program and all that ...

BROWN: Right, I was now a line supervisor as opposed to a staff supervisor.

HULL: Can you talk about how you got your position as a branch chief?

BROWN: Well, when Edie wrote all the [material to launch the Center], she established the Center with two branches, Archival Services and Technical Services. And it was up to Ken to hire Technical [sic Archival] Services [Branch Chief]. Ken [Ken Thibodeau, Director, Center for Electronic Records, December 1988-February 1998] called me down and, or I guess up [from 6W to 13E]. We had a discussion as to whether I would like the job, and I told him I would. We talked about it – it was a job interview including why I wanted it. And at the conclusion, he called Trudy and said, "I'd like to hire Tom." At that point, since I was already a supervisor and already a [Grade] 14, it was merely a lateral reassignment.

HULL: And Trudy was willing to let you go?

BROWN: I think so. I think Trudy saw that being the head of an administrative staff really was not my cup of tea. I was really much more of a line manager.

HULL: And so at that time in 1989 it was truly a growing program as you document in *Thirty Years*. Can you talk about how you were able to hire people outside of the archivist series, myself included? Because I think that was a very masterful stroke of genius on your part, to be able to hire people who had truly electronic records backgrounds, or at least data, data librarians ...

BROWN: When we posted an archival position, we could not find anyone who knew something about data. No one would be hired. And so we said, "Well, let's change the job series and get rid of this American history requirement." And we did. We worked very closely with personnel. Trudy Peterson is a woman that I respect dearly, and I owe a lot of my career to her. But she did not truly appreciate our need to move toward using the archives specialist series as a professional job series just as we would use the archivist [job series]. But I think she also understood [if not "truly appreciate"] why we were doing it. ... When the last CIDS class was hired [in the late 1990's], they just threw it open and you could hire archivists, archives specialists, or librarians. She probably would have disagreed with that because she probably would have thought that it was very important for a traditional archival program to hire archivists. But she understood that we were not a traditional archival program. And so I think she understood [why we were doing] what we were doing and probably would support it. I feel quite strongly she would support the current ADP program that is far broader than ... you know ... your 18 hours of American history.

HULL: Also the job requirements for, the positive educational requirements for the archivist series have changed since then. How does that relate to the archives specialists and the rigidities of the old archivist job series? Is it just recognition that you can hire archivists ...

BROWN: The 18 hours of American history requirement was developed in the 1960's when there were not any archival training programs anywhere. What training would allow someone to become an archivist? That was when, as I pointed out, you basically had to have a Masters degree in American history so that at least you would have done some research in an archives or in original primary source material. I think that it shows that the profession has grown far beyond this narrow confine. I would say of all the things that I have done, probably to increase the diversity of the background of the people working in the Center is probably one of the things I am most proud.

HULL: Again, as you document in *Thirty Years*, during your tenure as branch chief a number of important external influences impacted on the program. The biggest of which I'm sure anybody would say was the PROFS case² that really impacted the trajectory of growth that was predicted for the program. Having been on the reference staff, I was pretty much shielded from any PROFS related activities, but from a manager's perspective, can you explain a little bit about how this impacted your work or the work of the Archival Services Staff?

² The case takes its name from the IBM PROFS (Professional Office System) email system used in the White House. In a later opinion, the US Court of Appeals also held that National Security Council staff solely advise and assist the president and thus create presidential records not immediately subject to the Freedom of Information Act (see *Armstrong v. Executive Office of the President*, 90 F.3d 553 (D.C. Cir. 1996), cert. denied, 520 U.S. 1239 (1997)).
[http://www.archivists.org/glossary/term_details.asp?DefinitionKey=1847]

BROWN: I think it impacted the Technical Services Staff more than the Archival Service Staff. And also [it impacted] the management level of trying to figure out the money angle of it because the resources that we were getting were being drained toward processing the PROFS material as it was coming in. That's the downside. One of the great upsides that came out of PROFS was that it ratified what many of us in the Center for Electronic Records always believed. Email was indeed record material and had to be managed. The fact that it was record material that had to be managed did not necessarily make it archival material, but it had to be managed while it's in the hands of the agency. If it is important, it should come to the archives for permanent retention. I think all of us in the Center for Electronic Records believed that, and we're glad that the court case ultimately decided that. In other words, they never asked us -- the Department of Justice never asked us our opinion,. Those of us who worked in electronic records for so long believed in the importance of this material. I can remember representing the [National] Archives at a Coalition for Networked Information meeting. On the panel with me was Scott Armstrong. One of the people in the audience stood up and began criticizing the National Archives and me personally since I was the representative of the National Archives. Scott intervened and said "Just a second, there have been many, many people laboring in the vineyards trying to preserve this stuff for decades. And this man is one of them." So, there are some people out there who understood that the government's position was not necessarily the position of the archival staff or, for that matter, the Acting Archivist Trudy Peterson.

HULL: Well since that time we've heard a lot about the importance of agency's adopting electronic record keeping systems. And I've always heard you talk about that, that record keeping systems are what's needed to manage electronic records of an office automation form and email. Since the PROFS case, in your opinion, have agency's made any real progress, and also from your great experience in looking at records disposition schedules and the area of records appraisal. Are agency's really making any progress towards ... ?

BROWN: I haven't seen it. I think that the vast majority of the stuff out of the White House that we have looked at is not worthy of permanent retention. I think Greg LaMotta did some interesting studies for his paper that he gave at SAA in trying to explain just how much chaff is in the wheat of the email out of the White House. And I don't know how many agencies are actually involved with implementing records management systems for email, but what it is going to take is for agencies at the time of creation to figure out what to dispose of at the appropriate time and to figure out a way how to transfer that which needs to be saved to the Archives. One thing that I have learned is that the most important thing about electronic records is not the technology but is the human angle. As you know, if we lose the technical documentation and the codebook to a data file, no amount of money can recreate the usability of that data file; it is lost forever. However, if we have the documentation but the data file is in a native format, we can spend money to get it out of that native format into something that is usable. It's all a matter of money if you're trying to solve a technical problem. If you're trying to solve an intellectual problem, there are certain human problems that no amount of money can solve.

HULL: And that well, we can talk about that point for a long time, because that hearkens back to something I didn't talk about, or didn't ask about from *Thirty Years*, that is you call it the, I always think of it as the COM Debacle, Subcommittee C, and how perhaps we need to microfilm our documentation and at least send that to Boyers along with our backup tapes. But I think you've documented that so well in *Thirty Years* unless there's something you want to add something to your very pointed discussion about all of that craziness.

BROWN: But it was always like a bad penny that always kept coming back and coming back. I think I've said enough in there ...

HULL: Hopefully we're beyond that. The other aspect to your discussion in *Thirty Years* about the changes the Center went through, one of the more, actually the whole part of the electronic records program, was where to put appraisal. And certainly you left a lasting mark in the area of electronic records appraisal and so my question is while the Center had appraisal of electronic records, did we really do that good of a job?

BROWN: I'm glad you asked that question, because I think that our colleagues in the appraisal unit today have a misinterpretation of what all was going on when we acquired appraisal in 1989. We had appraisal up until 1984. With the establishment of the Office of Records Administration under Jim Moore, they consolidated the appraisal function in order to focus in all of the records management activity within the agency. The only two things that we had that was records management was appraisal and documentation standards. And they wanted consolidated these; it was a political move so there would be one-stop shopping for records management.

HULL: This was at the same time as independence

BROWN: Right

HULL: To distinguish what NARA did from what GSA did

BROWN: That was, I think, a strategic, tactical -- whatever you want to call it -- move to make sure that we didn't lose our foothold within the agencies. In 1989, five years later, when Don Wilson [Archivist of United States, December 4, 1987- March 24, 1993] said he wanted to establish a model program [for electronic records], he asked Ken and myself what it was that we needed. And in 1989, the vast majority of electronic materials being produced by computers in the Federal government that had long-term value were data files. You had the beginning of stand-alone PCs about 5-years earlier. Most of the PCs were not networked; they were being used to generate output and individuals were managing their own work [spaces]. In this environment if something is not communicated somehow, I don't think it would be a record or would rise to the level of a level of a permanent record. Something on my C: drive is probably not a record unless I attach it to an email and send it to you. The problem that we were having was [our exclusive concern with data]. I think this is one of the big issues when you asked earlier how successful have we been educating our colleagues about the importance of electronic

records or how to manage them. I questioned [whether] we had been that good because for so long all we were interested in was data. because [only data] was being born digital. And data from 1985 to 1989 was not being scheduled. We explained this to Don. And he said, "OK, well, you're now responsible for scheduling and appraising." We said, "We're really not really interested in doing the scheduling because that means we would get into the temporary stuff." And he said, "Well, then, you can be in charge of appraisal of electronic records." At that time, electronic records meant data. But within 3- to 5-years that, shall we say, was overtaken by events. Technology had changed, and suddenly data was not the major records management concern. We had gone into LANs and email, and both intranet and internet email. As that became important, it was sort of difficult to say, "OK, you're going to have this group over here appraise the paper correspondence in an office and this group over there appraising the electronic form of that [correspondence]." And I know when we were in the White House trying to appraise the Clinton email after PROFS, it was always sort of strange with Jim Hastings and I both there trying to deal with the appraisal issue. So I really think that the removal of appraisal from the Center for Electronic Records in 1998 reflected the change in technology that email and office correspondence within the office, or between offices, or between agencies, or the public and the agencies probably needs to be appraised together. My great fear is the fact that the data is not going to be appraised. Because, I guess, of all the formats in the National Archives, data is the only one in electronic form that the Archives had not acquired in a earlier capacity in analog form. You have digital photographs, analog photographs; digital memos, paper memos; digital movies, analog movies.

HULL: I have a comment, unless you count survey forms, that we have a lot if you look at Record Group 257, Consumer Expenditures Surveys from 1918, 1930... You're referring to punch cards in an earlier form, digital data, as we know from Peggy's article³ that punch cards were not really considered record material.

BROWN: Well, some people considered them to be. Well, I think what's fascinating about these [paper] surveys that we have acquired is that -- yes, and we have some Census schedules from the economic censuses of 1927 or something like that -- because when the Archives opened its doors, they just took in anything. They needed to justify their existence. And the truth of the matter [is that], when the electronic records program was established in 1968, it took in everything that it could. [Of the seriesws on] the first list of accessioned material in the National Archives in digital form from -- I think it [that list] was in 1973 - '74 -- within five years; all but one of those [series of] records had been internally disposed of. So I think its sort of human nature to go and grab everything initially.

TAPE 2

HULL: Thank you for your comments on electronic records appraisal, because I think that is such an important aspect of the work you've done of the last 30 years. Now I'd like to move onto some general questions. I think we've touched upon major points in your career. What were some of the challenges and issues that you faced in your career

³ Margaret O. Adams, "Punch Card Records: Precursors of Electronic Records," *American Archivist* 58 (Spring 1995): 182 - 201.

with the agency. Let's start with what was the biggest challenge that you were confronted with?

BROWN: I think probably it's always been limited resources because archives is a very labor intensive operation, even if you are dealing with electronic records. There's always been the push to do more with less, and I think that's always been the biggest challenge. As I said earlier today in the [Archivist Development Program] workshop, John Carlin [Archivist of the United States, May 30, 1995- February 15, 2005], was very successful in increasing the amount of money. How that was money was spent would be subject to some discussion. But other than that period, we've always been suffering from limited resources.

HULL: And we're back to that point again.

BROWN: Yes.

HULL: Yes, what was your biggest disappointment during your career?

BROWN: I would say the appraisal of the 2000 Census. [I am disappointed in] the fact that we, in effect, appraised 500 million blank pages as permanent, the amount of money that will waste if we don't correct it, and the failure of our colleagues in the agency and outside of the agency to see that -- what is it? -- the Individual Census Record File contains all of the information that anyone will ever want, that is the only thing that will need to be saved and that is the only thing that will ever be used. I would say that that was my biggest disappointment. No matter how hard we argued, those arguments fell on deaf ears except inside the Center for Electronic Records.

HULL: And that goes back to your earlier point about data. Because that's what it is, it's data! Very good. Did changes in the administration change the nature of your work assignments, describe those changes. I think this is really, how did you work in the hierarchy? I think in your case, the head of the Office of the National Archives certainly had a big impact on your career.

BROWN: Oh yes, Trudy obviously had an impact on my career. I don't think that, outside of [Trudy], who held the Office of the National Archives really impacted me because most of those people -- whether you're talking about Mabel Dietrich or Jim Moore [Assistant Archivist for the Office of the National Archives, 198X – 198X] [had an impact.] I guess when Jim was there with Mary Ann Wallace as NN-B, it really did impact the Machine-Readable Branch because that was when we were moved into 13E stack area. That's where Trudy in *Thirty Years*⁴ talks about she could only open one side of her desk drawers. They also took away all access to technology from us, and that probably impacted [us] severely. But Frank Burke, Michael Kurtz, and Mabel Dietrich were always focusing on trying to get as many resources as they could from the

⁴ Ambacher, Bruce, ed., 2003, *Thirty Years of Electronic Records*, (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press); Ch. 7: "Views of Managers: "Which Drawer Do You Use?"

Archivist, the resource allocator at that point, as opposed on affecting the line manager or the line supervisor.

HULL: What would you say were the most significant turning points in your career?

BROWN: Well, I would say coming to work for Charles Dollar in the Machine-Readable Archives Division; leaving the Documentation Standards Staff and going to work for Trudy Peterson [since] that gave me some valuable administrative experience; and then going to work for Ken as a line manager. I had that job for 18-years, and it was the finest job I could ever imagine.

HULL: Very good. Here's something external about your relationship with Federal ... what has been your relationship with other Federal agencies and how have changes within those agencies impacted your work? I think this is a very interesting question; this is one of the Assembly questions!

BROWN: In my position as a line manager in the Center for Electronic Records, I seldom dealt with Federal agencies. It's amazing! I dealt with archivists who dealt with Federal agencies; I dealt with archivists in NWML who dealt with other Federal agencies. But I seldom got involved. I think there's a story I'd like to tell in terms of Federal agencies. I was probably here at the National Archives for probably one year or two years, and Joe Califano was the head of HEW [Joseph Califano, Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, 1977-1979]. He had hired a computer person to put together an automated index for his central correspondence file. I was given the task to appraise this index. We're talking about a very senior person working for a very senior person [a cabinet secretary]. I'm a GS 9 archivist. This is what all of us [in the Machine-Readable Archives Division] were doing at this level because no one else was dealing with electronic records. So you had very junior people -- very junior archivists -- going and talking to very senior people. I arrived at his [the IT official designing the index] office. The appointment was at 10:00, and I made certain I'm there by 10 minutes early. Well, I arrived and was immediately escorted into his office. And he said, "You were supposed to be here 20 minutes ago. Where have you been?" I just sort of stammered all over the place, and said I thought the appointment was for 10:00. "No, my calendar says it's 9:30. If my calendar says it's 9:30, it's 9:30." And I apologized, then he turned and said "You know, the only one person would I waste 20 minutes waiting for would be somebody from the National Archives." It turned out that he was a Civil War history buff, and we proceeded to spend the next hour talking about Civil War history. Fortunately I was not that far out of grad school so I could still remember [enough history to discuss] it. And he always spent his summer vacations touring Civil War battlefields; the previous summer he had gone to battlefields in Missouri and to Pea Ridge, Arkansas. Well, my senior thesis happened to be on Pea Ridge, Arkansas. He and I then spent a good thirty minutes reliving the Battle of Pea Ridge and questioning Sterling Price's military strategy. <laughter> I tell that story because it, I think, captures the fact that within other Federal agencies we have a reservoir of support of people who appreciate the fact that we are preserving American history. I think we should figure out a way to exploit that fact. This is opposed to trying

to minimize the fact that we are a cultural agency and to maximize that we are a records management agency.

HULL: We never got the index though, did we?

BROWN: I appraised it as temporary.

HULL: You did? Index to the Secretary's correspondence?

BROWN: Yes, it would not facilitate access to the information given the data elements that was in it. He was more than willing to give it to me if we wanted it.

HULL: I'm not sure how this next question, I feel obligated to ask all these questions now, how this applies to you but I think it does, describe, and I think you may have touched on this already, in your discussion of your early training, describe the process of becoming a subject area expert, in electronic records, how did researcher interest and research demands guide your work with the records? I think you can interpret that in many different ways.

BROWN: I don't think I ever became a subject matter expert. I may be an expert in electronic records, but that was certainly not driven by researcher demand. It was not like Greg Bradsher and his subject area expertise in records relating to Nazi Germany since researcher demand obviously drove him to learn everything that we could figure out about those records. So I really don't think that I have a subject matter expertise. And if it were in electronic records, it wasn't driven by researchers since I have had very little active involvement in responding to reference.

HULL: But I think your subject area expertise is really in Census, at least I consider you to be, in two areas, not just the Census Bureau but in FOIA and access

BROWN: OK ... when I was a line archivist from '75 to '83, that was my agency and that's when we worked an awful lot on getting records in from the Census Bureau. But we spent a lot more time trying to get records in than actually getting records in. It wasn't until Mike Miller came along that he was actually able to burst the dam, and the stuff really began to flow.

HULL: The dam's been closed. [?]

HULL: But in the area of FOIA and access, how did you develop that expertise, I'm curious?

BROWN: Back in '82 (I think it was) or early in the early 80's, the whole issue of contract and grant records came up. I was working with a lot of contractor-generated records -- a lot of stuff from the National Institute of Education, -- all of which were created under contracts, grants, or combinations thereof. The whole question was, "Were these Federal records? Could you have access to them?" It was an issue in various

professional associations like APDU [Association of Public Data Users] or IASSIST [International Association for Social Science Information Service and Technology]. And that was how the FOIA became important. When the *Forsham* decision was handed down,⁵ we were trying to get involved with the [scheduling of the] National Science Foundation's contract laboratory records. The FOIA question came up as, "Is the data created under contract and/or grants a Federal record that should be managed as such?" Can you have access to it? If the agency gives you access to a printout, can you still require the data?" That was a huge issue and [remained] an issue at various points in time. But I think it all began whether grants and contracts produced Federal records.

HULL: And the answer is? in the case of contracts, yes, and grants, no, except hasn't a decision recently been made about, I haven't understood this, that data collected under grant is subject to FOIA?

BROWN: I am not familiar with that.

HULL: I thought it was a decision recently related to some tobacco litigation?

BROWN: I don't know, I'm not familiar with that.

HULL: We'll set that aside. In my mind I always considered you a subject area expert in that area and in Census generally and I see where that's come about. How would you describe the intellectual and institutional value of the records with which you work? I think that's an interesting question, I'm not sure how to interpret it though? How would you describe the intellectual and institutional value of the records with which you work?

BROWN: Well, I'm going to take it very broadly. The records of the Center for Electronic Records cover 130 different agencies across the board. I think that's what has been most interesting about working for the Center. In electronic records, you move from one topic to another! That's the whole question about subject area expert. Yes, I worked a lot in the Census, but I was also taking in a lot from the National Institute of Education and other things of that nature. And the fact that it is so broad in terms of subjects, I think, is what gives it its value. Granted I think it may be somewhat shallow. With few exceptions, we're not very deep. Census would be one of them [the exceptions] where we are fairly deep. But generally speaking, we have -- I think -- have identified the basic data and the basic agencies. I think that's the importance of our holdings.

HULL: And just as a side comment, unfortunately due to limited resources I think there are certain areas that we could get a lot deeper in

BROWN: Oh, I do too.

HULL: But it's really the resources it comes down to, doesn't it?

⁵ *Forsham v. Harris*, 445 U.S. 169, 182 (1980)

BROWN: Right, it's the resources internally and the willingness of the agencies externally to cooperate with us. If you find an agency with a records officer that's willing to work with us, then we can do great things. If you don't have that records officer, data administrator, or program official who doesn't want to work because it's too much trouble, whatever, whatever, whatever, then we will never get a depth to the records that we have.

HULL: Linda Henry also submitted some questions. So earlier today in the session you did for the ADP [Archivist Development Program] training you may have heard these already.

BROWN: We never got to them

HULL: I think they bear repeating.

BROWN: We never got to those questions.

HULL: Oh, OK, well, the first one was what was the most important thing you learned that you would like to pass on to new electronic records archivists? It says electronic records archivist, but it could really be any new NARA archivist?

BROWN: The important thing, I mentioned earlier I believe, about electronic records is not the technology, but the intellectual importance of understanding the content of the records and coming to some sort of understanding intellectually of what you're dealing with; their provenance, the reason why they were created, how the agency used them. The technology should be secondary. One of the things we were talking about earlier was the diversity of the workforce in the archival staff. One of the things that we added was IT people on the Archival Service Staff. I think that is very important because if the archivist can figure out the intellectual problems and challenges, then the IT person is there if there is a new technical issue. The IT person can come to bear [on the problem].. As I said in that paper on website appraisals,⁶ merely the fact that we can preserve something doesn't mean its worth preserving. The important thing is: "Let's worry about if we can preserve it only after we determine whether or not it's worth preserving."

HULL: Something that I've learned from you certainly is that the technology will take care of itself ... the dependencies. I mean, we are committed to taking things and preserving things in a hardware and software independent format, but there are cases where that's not really possible, but certainly if the need is great enough the technology can be tooled to read, to interpret, to process, whatever we may have preserved, so ...

BROWN: We took in a lot of stuff from the 9-11 Commission that will be a technological challenge. So long as we have intellectual control over what it is, we will be able to solve the technology issues if we're willing to spend the money. Possibly for the 9-11 Commission, future generations may be willing to spend the money. So yes, I agree,

⁶ Archival Outlook, need article citation

technical dependencies may not necessarily take care of themselves, but we could be able to take care of those dependencies.

HULL: What was your most, I'm moving on to the next question, what was your most important contribution to the program?

BROWN: The diversity of the background of the staff.

HULL: I agree. What was the high point of the program? Or of your career, you can do either one or both. What was the high point?

BROWN: Probably when Ken said that he would like for me to become the head of the Archival Services Branch of the Center for Electronic Records. Because I really think that ...

HULL: That was the high point of your career?

BROWN: Yes, the high point of my career, I think we had some problems. And I think we also had some successes. I think I made a contribution, particularly starting off in those first ten years.

HULL: And the high point of the program, what do you think that was?

BROWN: I would say probably the most significant part of the program was when Everett Alldredge [head, Office of Records Administration, 1955-May 1971] had the foresight to start it. I mean, it had a rough start getting started. That may not be the high point, but I think that what Ev Alldredge did during that time has probably not been adequately documented -- of how he labored to get the program started. The high point, probably, I would say, was the fact that we successfully responded to every court challenge presented to us by the PROFS case. And the final line was the case was dismissed in 1994, Then the subsequent GRS 20⁷ case was filed against us, and we won that case by a mile. I mean it was just a slam dunk for us. We successfully staved off two very serious legal challenges in the early to mid-90's.

HULL: Well, knowing Linda as you do, we have the other side of the coin, the low point of your career and of the program?

BROWN: Obviously, the RIFs of '82. We knew that individuals were going to suffer; we knew that the program was going to suffer, and we knew that the Archives as an agency was going to suffer.

HULL: And of your career?

BROWN: Probably working for the Documentation Standards Staff

⁷ *Public Citizen v. Carlin*, 184 F.3d 900 (D.C. Cir., 1999).

HULL: Oh really?

BROWN: Because it was not a pleasant experience

HULL: It sounds like you had a great, challenging mandate? But, just not enough resources.

BROWN: Not enough resources and the personalities involved between Peggy [*sic* Patti] and Jim Moore. That was not a nice situation to be in. Because there were so few of us, it's not like you can run and hide some place. It was very up close and personal, constantly.

HULL: The last question listed here, is, this is going back, I think, to our earlier discussion of training really, but what do you believe are the most important qualifications to be an electronic records archivist?

BROWN: I would say a willingness to learn new things. And that means a willingness to ask questions -- even if you think you should know the answer. Because one of the things -- since I stayed around long enough -- I could tell people, "I'm sorry, I don't think I understand what you're saying" about a technical issue. And I think people need to be able to admit that they don't know what they don't know, admit it, ask questions and learn something. And I think an attention to detail [is also an important qualification.] I think those would be the two key points. When you look at it, it may be those would be the two key points for any archivist.



HULL: Yea that's true. I have two more questions, if you're done with that. The first is, and this is another electronic records focused question, electronic records and how we've fit into the broader agency over the years. And this question has to do with description. I noticed in your vita, you developed descriptive standards and things like that, but it seems from my perspective as an archivist who has done a lot of retrospective work on our earlier descriptions that in the early years, we seemed to diverge some from the NARA descriptive standards, is that a fair assessment? Or, how was or was not electronic records integrated into the larger NN management of holdings? I think you know where I am going and this is more of a mechanical reporting 14044s and accessions, and tabulating our holdings, and description, and that whole ...

BROWN: Tabulating our holdings, oh God! <laughter>

HULL: As we've come back full circle now that we're counting logical data records again. ...

BROWN: Well, back in the 70's when we first began to describing records, you had two things going on. You had NARA adopting the NARS A-1 system where we would describe series of records on 6710s, 6710As. And then, as I said, at that time, the paper world was divided into two worlds, military records and civilian records. And so we would describe our military records in our holdings because that was when Don Harrison

was bringing in all the Vietnam material. We would send them [the descriptions] down to military, and they would not approve them. So we would change them. Then we would start describing civilian records and send them [those descriptions] down so that they would reflect the standards from the military side. But the civilian people were not describing the records according to the same standards as the military units and vice versa. There were two different approaches. And the other non-textual units -- motion pictures, sound recording, still pictures -- were heavy into item-level description. They could care less about these [discussions about describing] series.

HULL: They did their own thing

BROWN: They [military division and civilian division] did their own thing, but we were the only unit who was involved with describing series of records that had to conform to both of them. What we did was to point out that there was no standardization or no descriptive standards within the agency. The other thing that we did -- and one of the problems that I see this echoing back now as we go into ERA -- in the 70's was to try to describe records only once in their lifecycle and that would be at the time of scheduling and appraisal. And these would be on 6710As. You had the appraisal archivist writing out 6710As for all of the paper records, and we would do the same for the electronic records. Now within the files, you will see volumes of 6710As of records [that] have never been accessioned, have never come in. Since we were writing our own descriptions, we sort of liked what we did. But the custodial units did not like what the appraisal archivists in the Office of the Records Centers were doing. So whenever they would get something in, they would just throw out the previous description and redo it themselves. <laughter> So you had, at this point, three or four different descriptive standards emerging. With that effort going on, you also had at that same time period Sue Dodd and the whole effort of cataloguing machine-readable records.⁸ And this evolved into a *Proposed Federal Standard for the Cataloguing of Machine-Readable Records*. [sic] [*Proposed Standards for Bibliographic Entry and Abstracts of Federal Machine-Readable Data Files*.] When we began following that standard for some of our holdings, we were describing the same records twice. Sue could never quite figure this one out, "Why are you describing the same records twice?" I said, "Well we need to follow the NARA standards that don't exist. And we had to follow the Federal government standards that are emerging." And those were always a "proposed" standard. And so that's why you have during that 70's period a multitude of different attempts to describe records.

⁸ Dodd, Sue A. *Cataloging Machine-Readable Files: An Interpretative Manual*. Chicago: American Library Association. 1982; Dodd, Sue A. *Computer records and the National Archives: An Assessment with New Directions*. (Unpublished Consultant Report, 1986-7).

HULL: But what resulted was the *Catalog of Machine-Readable Records*.⁹

BROWN: Right

HULL: Which was a NARA publication

BROWN: Right

HULL: Sponsored by NTIS?

BROWN: No, that was something separate.

HULL: That was something separate?

BROWN: The Catalog was a National Archives Trust Fund Publication.

HULL: Which was a finding aid to our holdings. Interesting. Because then, I guess, it wasn't until the Format-X and -Y came along that NARA had a descriptive standard

BROWN: Yes, that's when we tried to develop one -- with the X- and Y-Formats.

HULL: Which we did and we followed, OK, very good, that helps quite a bit. The other question of course is the inevitable, ERA. As your career came to a close at the end of June, you could see ERA off on the horizon, I believe, and so, what as you now leave the electronic records program, how so you see what you're leaving behind evolve or become a part of the ERA effort?

BROWN: I think that my experience with electronic records since 1976 is that we've always evolved based upon earlier experience. The automation of our verification process through AERIC [Archival Electronic Records Inspection and Control Utility] was merely the automation of the manual process that we were doing. The ability to verify email within AERIC is based upon the verification of data files, structured data files. And so I hope and I think, given the fact that you have Ken and Fynnette [Fynnette Eaton, Chief, Technical Services Branch, Center for Electronic Records, 1989-ca. 1996] there, ERA will be based upon [our experiences].... And for that matter Mark Conrad, Bob Chadduck ...

HULL: ... Adrienne Reagins and Sharon Smoot and ...

BROWN: It will be based upon the practical experience that the agency has had dealing with electronic records for the last 35 years now. And I think that ERA will succeed in a number of its goals. Whether it succeeds with, you know, any format, anytime, anyplace, anywhere ... I don't know if that's possible. But will we be able to manage the basic

⁹ *Catalog of Machine-Readable Records in the National Archives of the United States*. Washington : National Archives Trust Fund Board, National Archives and Records Service, General Services Administration, 1977.

formats? I think ERA probably will be able to do that. The technology is there, and all we have is to make certain Lockheed Martin finds it. I think it will be a partial solution

HULL: Well that concludes all of, those are all the questions I have. Is there anything else you'd like to say for the record here?

BROWN: I don't think so.

HULL: Tapped you out. What time is it? Gees, we've gone for over an hour and a half. Well thanks so much Tom. I really appreciate it.

JRC

NN3 - NAA - 08 - 001

Gift of Historical Materials of **Thomas Elton Brown** to
The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA)

1. In accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and subject to the terms and conditions hereinafter set forth, I, **Thomas Elton Brown** (hereinafter referred to as the Donor), hereby give, donate, and convey to the United States of America, for eventual deposit in the National Archives of the United States (hereinafter referred to as the National Archives), the following historical materials (hereinafter referred to as the Materials):

- Recording (DVD media) of an oral history interview with **Thomas Elton Brown** conducted on September 12, 2006, by Theodore J. Hull on behalf of the National Archives Assembly Legacy Project.
- Transcript of an oral history interview of **Thomas Elton Brown**, conducted on September 12, 2006 by Theodore J. Hull on behalf of the National Archives Assembly Legacy Project.
- Letter from National Archives Assembly Legacy Project Lead Susan Abbott to **Thomas Elton Brown**, dated June 21, 2006, inviting **Thomas Elton Brown** to participate in an oral history interview for the Assembly's Legacy Project.

2. Because the Materials were generated in connection with the National Archives Assembly Legacy Project-an oral history project designed to capture the institutional memory of retiring NARA staff-the Donor stipulates that the Materials be accessioned into the National Archives and allocated to the donated historical materials collection of the National Archives Assembly. This collection is designated as NAA and is entitled, Records of the National Archives Assembly.

3. The Donor warrants that, immediately prior to the execution of the deed of gift, s/he possessed title to, and all rights and interests in, the Materials free and clear of all liens, claims, charges, and encumbrances.

4. The Donor hereby gives and assigns to the United States of America all copyright which s/he has in the Materials.

5. Title to the Materials shall pass to the United States of America upon their delivery to the Archivist of the United States or the Archivist's delegate (hereinafter referred to as the Archivist).

6. Following delivery, the Materials shall be maintained by NARA at a location to be determined by the Archivist in accordance with the provisions of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, and provided that at any time after delivery, the Donor shall be permitted freely to examine any of the Materials during the regular working hours of the depository in which they are preserved.


7. It is the Donor's wish that the Materials in their entirety be made available for research as soon as possible following their deposit in the National Archives.

8. The Archivist may, subject only to restrictions placed upon him by law or regulation, provide for the preservation, arrangement, repair and rehabilitation, duplication and reproduction, description, exhibition, display, and servicing of the Materials as may be needed or appropriate.

9. The Archivist may enter into agreements for the temporary deposit of the Materials in any depository administered by NARA.

10. In the event that the Donor may from time to time hereafter give, donate, and convey to the United States of America additional historical materials, title to such additional historical materials shall pass to the United States of America upon their delivery to the Archivist, and all of the foregoing provisions of this instrument of gift shall be applicable to such additional historical materials. An appendix shall be prepared and attached hereto that references this deed of gift and that describes the additional historical materials being donated and delivered. Each such appendix shall be properly executed by being signed and dated by the Donor and the Archivist.


Signed:
Donor



Date: December 4, 2007

Pursuant to the authority of Chapter 21 of Title 44, United States Code, the foregoing gift of historical materials is determined to be in the public interest and is accepted on behalf of the United States of America, subject to the terms and conditions set forth herein.

Signed:


Archivist of the United States

Date:

11/15/08