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Welcome and Greetings from the Deans of Arts and Graduate Studies

On behalf of the Deans of the Faculties of Arts and of Graduate Studies I have both the honour and distinct pleasure of welcoming you to this international symposium inspired by UNESCO's Memory of the World Program and organized by this university's Student Chapter of Association of Canadian Archivists in conjunction with the School of Library, Archival & Information Studies here at UBC.

It is indeed an honour for me, with the strong concurrence of both Dean Nancy Gallini and Dean Barbara Evans, to acknowledge the fundamental importance of Archivists and Librarians to the sustaining of knowledge dissemination and development in the academy. You are essential partners in all aspects of our teaching and inquiry, and certainly our mentors in adapting to new modes of media of pedagogy and research.

Furthermore, the School of Library, Archival & Information Studies is a veritable star within the firmament of UBC's rich galaxy of advanced learning. SLAIS has won this high renown through its innovative curriculum and analyses of the increasing complexity of data acquisition, and of means both to preserve and to comprehend its value. We now confront, as will be discussed in this symposium—itsself testimony to the international connectivity and repute of the School—at one and the same time, a plethora and a paucity of information and thereby Memory.

Forgive me an aside at this juncture about the extent to which we live by acronym. SLAIS hardly articulates the sophistication of its pedagogic practice, but then again I serve as Associate Dean in FoGS which hardly articulates the discernment we bring to the conduct of graduate enterprise across the campus!

At this point I want to expand briefly on the kinship of academic purpose we faculty share with Archivists and Librarians. Before putting that into a more personal perspective, I would note with particular pleasure that the appointment of Librarians and Archivists—and not only from UBC but preferably also from Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa—as Research Fellows attached to academic departments or units in their subject area has been proposed for UBC. I for one very much hope that this idea becomes a reality expanding farther across the professional fabric of knowledge preservation and processing.

I, in company with my faculty peers, owe much to my archival and library colleagues. I see, for just a single local example, our University Archivist, Chris Hives, among the audience. Chris and his associates have on many occasions assisted me to undertake more comprehensive and effective research, most recently on the fascinating cultural politics at work in the development of the initial architectural plan for this campus.

Indeed, I owe my first significant refereed publication – the base metal as it were of academic survival (!) – to a kind archivist responsible for the Muniments Room at the Church Commissioners office in Westminster, London. It had, a few months before my visit as an uncertain scholar of middle-modern architectural history, suffered a flood. He had saved many

drawings and been intrigued by two almost complete sets of kindred schemes for new churches; apparently he had shown them to several other researchers to little avail. My interest was that remarkable Act of Parliament of 1818 in the Houses of Parliament to vote the unprecedented sum of one million Pounds Sterling so as to fund the construction of numerous churches especially toward the social pacification of the rapidly expanding industrial towns of Britain. Thanks to this archivist I was able to demonstrate that these schemes were the respective work of the architects John Nash and Robert Smirke, whom you will readily remember as designer of the Regents Park development in west London and of the British Museum. Since then, I have benefitted consistently from the close knowledge that Archivists and Librarians have of their collections: for all such collections, being as this Symposium reminds us, are fundamentally as much social as technical, organic as mechanical; hence the remarkable range of cultural discussion awaiting us today.

By contrast, I was among the last to use the Foreign Office Library, not far distant from the Church Commissioners, but in Whitehall. It contained remarkable secondary material on what was formerly denominated the Middle East. Some addressed the good, bad and indifferent aspects of British policy during the 1920s and 1930s with respect to the areas now forming Iran and Iraq. In retrospect, it seems that such memory might have been mobilized to frame a more sophisticated policy in that troubled region than has pertained in more recent times.

Thus, it is truly an honour to convey greetings from the Deans of Arts and Graduate Studies at the opening of this symposium “Preserving the Memory of the World”.