

**'Every Requisite Information': Contextual Provenance in the Records of the
Commissioner's Office of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1884-1910.**

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This thesis explores the societal, administrative and recordkeeping contexts which influenced the creation of the records of the Commissioner's Office of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1884-1910. The primary archival methodology in this study relates to the exploration of a record's context of creation, an approach which seeks to determine all facets of the provenance of the record.

Chapter one details the history of the principle of provenance and contextual theory in archival thought, tracing its formative origins in the nineteenth century down to the postmodern approaches of the 1990s. The chapter outlines the different aspects of contextual exploration, including societal, administrative, recordkeeping and custodial histories. Chapter two explores some aspects of the societal and administrative histories of the Commissioner's Office. The chapter sets the office within the context of Canadian business history of the late nineteenth century, as well as pointing to the HBC's roots in British colonialism. Chapter three looks at another aspect of contextual analysis, recordkeeping practices within the Commissioner's Office. Through the examination of various Commissioner's Office records, the study attempts to show how the societal and administrative contextualities have influenced the creation of the office's records. Finally, the conclusion demonstrates how contextual analysis can be applied to archival practice, in particular through the Archives of Manitoba redescription project (known as Keystone) for the holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. Contextual analysis of records has proven to be a crucial tool in this project. Thus, archival theory asserts its practical place in the archives.