"'Who Will Read It?' A Critical Examination of Historical Dissemination Through UNB's Strax Affair"

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Contents

Preface

History is, according to Marriam-Webster, a "record of significant events (such as those affecting a nation or institution) often including an explanation of their causes."[1] More critical discussions of history often ask broader questions about the discipline, such as: "how do we make history," "what is history," "what can we do with history?" However, even if these questions were answered and historians started producing objectively "perfect history," a new question arises: who is history for? Essentially, in this fantasy where historians only create perfect analyses, the question of consumption remains. Is the weight of knowledge itself valuable enough to justify historical scholarship; in other words, is there any point creating a history book that no one will read? These questions are addressed differently by public and academic historians. As such, this essay is an analysis of the following questions: what is the relationship between academic scholarship and public history, and is there a way to combine the two in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

This analysis will tackle the above questions in two ways: first, through a case study—presented as a traditional scholarly article—and second, through a theoretical analysis of public history. Consequently, this examination is split into two distinct parts, an analysis of the University of New Brunswick's [UNB] Strax Affair, and a critical examination of how an academic analysis can be presented through a public history lens. The analysis of the Strax affair itself will utilize several methodologies including critical examinations of narrative and reading against the grain of clearly biased sources—notably the *Brunswickan* and Peter Kent's memoirs. The theoretical exploration of public history will first discuss public history itself and its relationship to academic

[1] *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s. v. "history," https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/history.

history, followed by an application of the theories explored in the context of a public history presentation of the analysis in this examination's first part—the Strax Affair.

In short, the following is a critical look at why history is divided into public and academic spheres. This analysis will question the division between academic history and public history, and highlight the absurdity of creating an entirely separate discipline within the field of history just to disseminate ideas. Essentially, this is an examination of how to thoughtfully disseminate history through application of both public history and academic history.

Part One: The Strax Affair

Introduction

The Strax Affair is a confusing moment in Canada's wider narrative of 1960s academic radicalism. Compared to well-known examples of radical leftism in Canadian universities—and around the world—during the late 1960s, the Strax affair is often relegated to a footnote. However, the Strax Affair was a flashpoint that altered both the course of UNB's development and the Canadian university community. Briefly, the Strax Affair directly led to the resignation of UNB's president, the further democratization of UNB's administration, and helped validate the Canadian Association of University Teachers (CAUT) censure system during its formative years. Furthermore, due to limited scholarship on the Strax Affair many sources on the subject lean towards biased narratives. As such, it is difficult to understand the broad strokes of what happened at UNB between September 1968 and September 1969. Therefore, this examination has two goals: first, to provide a general understanding of why a peaceful protest against student identification cards in September 1968 evolved into a nationally recognized controversy; and second, to examine the narrative themes that surround existing scholarship on the Strax affair—namely Peter Kent and the *Brusnwickan*'s coverage of the Affair. In short, this analysis will explain why the Strax Affair was not an issue of

Strax's personal politics, but instead a confrontation of UNB's intensely stratified administration headed by President Colin Mackay, followed by an analysis of biased narratives covering the Strax Affair.

The Structure of UNB Leading to the 1960s

A foundational understanding of UNB's structure leading up to the Strax Affair is critical for a comprehensive understanding of why a peaceful protest devolved into a national controversy. As such, it is first important to discuss UNB President, Colin B. Mackay—who headed UNB's administration from 1953 until June 1969.[2] Following a brief overview of Mackay's UNB career, a short description of 1968's *University of New Brunswick Act* will clarify the structure of UNB's administration immediately before the Strax Affair. Essentially, UNB underwent rapid, and radical, change in the 1950s and 1960s which fomented an environment where the Strax Affair not only occurred, but ignited further reform.

Beginning with Mackay's career, he is best known for turning UNB into a modernized teaching institution. Taking over UNB's presidency at just thirty-two, Mackay was the youngest president of a Canadian university ever appointed, as of 1953.[3] Over the next decade, through force of will and autocratic rule, Mackay grew UNB from a relatively small institution in a sleepy corner of Canada into a national contender on Canada's higher education stage.[4] However, while Mackay paved the way for UNB's future progression as a learning institute, he was anything but progressive in his leadership. Mackay was known for being a hands-on leader who personally controlled almost

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[2] Peter C. Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom : The 1968 Strax Affair at the University of New Brunswick*, (Halifax: Formac Pub, 2012), 31, 129.

[3] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 31.

[4] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 31, 38-9, 43-6; David Frank, "A Turning Point in UNB History," *CAUT Bulletin* 60, no. 10 (12, 2013): 1. https://login.proxy.hil.unb.ca/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/trade-journals/turning-point-unb-history/docview/1477212485/se-2.

every decision made at UNB.[5] Not only was Mackay himself a, "'hands on and non-consultative … control freak'"[6]—according to Student Representative Council (SRC) President David Cox—but he also sat in the shadow of UNB's equally controlling benefactors: K. C. Irving and Lord Beaverbrook.[7] Essentially, during the 1950s and 1960s UNB grew considerably in size but maintained an archaic administrative system.

However, 1968 brought relatively radical change to UNB's administration with the passing of the *UNB Act* of 1968. This piece of legislature reworked UNB's entire administrative system, replacing the old University Council and old Senate with a new Board of Governors and new Senate. Previously, the university Senate was made up of senior academic administrators and members of the public, mostly appointed by the Lieutenant-Governor while the University Council was composed of more academic administrators, faculty deans, and some elected faculty—although faculty was outnumbered by administrators. Mackay was chair of both governing bodies under the old system. The new system, under the *UNB Act*, intended the Board of Governors (BofG) as the President's overseers, while simultaneously incorporating more faculty and student representation in the administrative process. The BofG's increased representation took the form of four elected faculty positions and one non-student rector who represented student interests. The senate on the other hand was intended to always have a faculty majority and oversaw all academic matters—with negligible student representation. In short, the BofG became the new key administrative body, besides the president, regarding UNB policy—and consequently the opponent for many of the groups participating in the Strax Affair.[8]

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[5] Paul W. Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s: Reflections on the 'Radical Campus' in Recent Historical Writing," *Acadiensis* 42, no. 2 (2013): 154. http://www.jstor.org/stable/24329557; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 41-3.

[6] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 41.

[7] Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 154; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 33-7.

[8] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 50.

Importantly, UNB students were following the radicalizing trends of 1960s academia even before Norman Strax appeared on campus. National student movements from across Canada found small but noteworthy footholds at UNB, including the Canadian Union of Students (CUS) and Canadian University Press (CUP).[9] The *Brunswickan*, as a member of CUP, was another notable connection UNB students had to wider radical thought.[10] Effectively, while small, the stage was set at UNB for radical leftist action in September 1968.

Put simply, by 1968 UNB had undergone immense change in a short period of time, with the combination of a growing faculty and conservative administration the match was struck for the Strax Affair to ignite. Furthermore, due to UNB's growth in the 1960s new faculty were hired at a rapid pace, with an average of thirty new hires per year between 1965 and 1968.[11] One of these new hires was Norman Strax. The increase in both faculty and students meant there was a higher chance for radical ideals to find their way onto UNB's campus—compounded by the already radical disposition of the university community around the world in the 1960s. As such, Norman Strax, a far-left leaning radical, was bound to cause friction when met with an authoritarian administration. Even if the *UNB Act* was slowly democratizing the UNB campus, progress was moving too slow for the fast-moving ideas of the radical left in the 1960s, increasing the likelihood of a collision between the authoritarian administration and liberal students and staff. Therefore, by the fall semester of 1968 the foundation was laid for turmoil on the UNB campus.

From Strax Case to the Strax Affair

It is important to separate the Strax case from the Strax Affair, although the two are undeniably linked. Essentially, the Strax case concerns the legal proceedings—both in New

[9] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 59.
[10] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*,67.
[11] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 45.

Brunswick courts and UNB's BofG—following the "Bookie-Book" demonstration in the Harriet Irving Library (HIL) and the subsequent Liberation 130 protest. The Strax Affair covers the ideological fight for representation against arbitrary academic rule, culminating in a CAUT censure and Colin Mackay stepping down as President of UNB. Intuitively, the Strax Affair was spurred directly by the Strax case, but the distinction between the two highlights the fact that the Strax Affair was not an inevitable product of the Strax case. In short, the following is an examination of why the Strax case evolved into the Strax Affair.

At the center of both the Strax case and Strax Affair is Strax himself; as such, a brief look at the eponymous subject of this analysis is relevant. Norman Strax was a Harvard graduate with a PhD in nuclear physics who was hired onto UNB's Faculty of Science in 1966 as part of the University's aforementioned rapid faculty expansion.[12] Strax's political ideology was far-left, falling very close to anarchism and libertarianism.[13] After participating in a protest during his time in Harvard, where he was assaulted by a police officer, Strax spent the rest of his life in conflict with organized authority—becoming more radical as the 1960s progressed.[14] Essentially, being educated in an American Ivy League University—the heart of leftist radicalism in 1960s America—Strax was far more liberally minded than many of his colleagues and students at UNB. Furthermore, Strax was an outsider among the wider Fredericton community, not only as an American leftist in a small conservative Canadian town, but as a Jewish person in a largely Anglo-Christian community.[15] Strax was primed ideologically for radical action, so when met with the autocratic rule of Colin Mackay, friction was to be expected.

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[12] Frank, "A Turning Point in UNB History," 1; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 12.

[13] Patrick, Webber, "'For a Socialist New Brunswick': The New Brunswick Waffle, 1967-1972," *Acadiensis* 38, no. 1 (2009): 78. http://www.jstor.org/stable/41501727.

[14] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 69-71.

[15] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 72-3; Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 154-5.

Importantly, Strax began his radical activism at UNB before the "Bookie-Book" event that sparked the Strax case. Strax first came under scrutiny when he took a contingent of UNB students to Washington DC for an anti-Vietnam war protest.[16] This episode sparked mild discontent from the wider New Brunswick community, with the *King's County Record* out of Sussex writing scathing articles denouncing Strax and the University for their involvement.[17] Strax and his followers, who referred to themselves as "Mobilization," were also involved in the "Freeze the Fees" protests carried out in March of 1968.[18] The "Freeze the Fees" demonstrations began as a protest against proposed cuts to Provincial Grants given to UNB—in turn increasing UNB student fees.[19] However, members of "Mobilization" shifted the scope of the protests: "declaring that the real issue was that the provincial government was under the thumb of K. C. Irving and … deliberately exploiting … workers and students."[20] As such, it is clear that both Strax and his small following of left leaning students were actively setting a trend of protest at UNB immediately prior to the Strax Affair.

"The Strax Case"

However, the flashpoint that set off the Strax case and Strax Affair was the "Bookie-Book" protests in September 1968. The action began with Strax and several members of the Fredericton branch of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) placing pamphlets around campus protesting the implementation of picture identification cards.[21] The SDS—which Strax was a member of—declared that the ID cards "[denied] the people of New Brunswick free access to the

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[16] John Oliver,"The Washington Report," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), October 26, 1967; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 70, 73.
[17] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 75.
[18] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 70, 76-8.
[19] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 70, 76-8.
[20] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 77.
[21] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 17-9; "SDS Opens Fire," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), September 24, 1968, 1.

campus and its facilities," and were a reflection of "the elitist, non-representative, and un-democratic composition of the Board of Governors."[22] Importantly, the SDS's accusations of underrepresentation were not entirely unfounded. Despite the aforementioned changes to UNB's administration, students were still severely underrepresented on the BofG and in the Senate, which was a major sticking point for many leftist groups on campus including the *Brunswickan*.[23] The implementation of campus security was another major reason for push back on ID cards, as many students worried that they would be unduly harassed if they refused to show campus security their ID.[24] However, the fact that ID cards were required to sign books out of the HIL was what finally sparked SDS action. As a protest against the new ID card system the SDS demanded to sign books out at the HIL without presenting their ID cards. When the librarian refused to accommodate their demands, the SDS members returned to the circulation desk with more books, eventually massing nearly three hundred items at the desk. Termed the "Bookie-Book" protest by an SDS pamphlet, the SDS's attempts to sing out books without ID cards continued for several days forcing the HIL to close early and eventually culminating in Strax's suspension by Mackay.[25] The preceding summary of the "Bookie-Book" action is purposely short, as the minute details of the protest are less important than the actions that followed: Strax's suspension and Liberation 130.

Of the two consequences from the "Bookie-Book" protest, Strax's suspension would go on to define the later Strax Affair. Mackay decided to suspend Strax on 24 September, 1968, four days after the "Bookie-Book" protest started on 20 September. However, according to the *UNB Act*

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[22] "SDS Opens Fire," *Brunswickan*, 1.

[23] Andy Wahl, "B of G Rejects Students' Plea for Voice," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), September 17, 1968, 5; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 50-1.

[24] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 23-4; ID Card Not for Security: SRC," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), October 1, 1968, 16.

[25] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 18-9, 26-9; "SDS Opens Fire." *Brunswickan*, 1; Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 153-4.

the President needed approval from the BofG when suspending a member of faculty, as such a meeting was scheduled for 28 September 1968. At this meeting, the newly appointed faculty members on the BofG requested that an investigative committee provide evidence to the BofG before they approved Mackay's decision to suspend Strax—a request that was granted. As such, it appeared that due process and the new democratization of the BofG were working as intended; unfortunately, Mackay applied for a court injunction against Strax, ordering him to leave campus shortly after establishing the investigative committee. Mackay's appeal to the New Brunswick judicial system essentially invalidated the BofG's investigative committee. In short, Mackay exercised his autocratic leadership style and political connections to instantly remove Strax without allowing any investigation into whether Strax's actions warranted removal. [26]

Mackay's desire to remove Strax from campus was directly tied to the second result of the "Bookie-Book" protests: Liberation 130. After being suspended, Strax refused to vacate his office in Bailey Hall 130—a protest that several students joined him in. After Mackay's injunction forced Strax to leave campus, many students opted to stay in his office calling themselves Liberation 130. This protest functioned as a miniature anarchist commune on UNB's campus and was a "who's who" of left leaning students. The general demands of Liberation 130 were to have Strax reinstated and the BofG radically reformed—as they felt the Board was inherently corrupt. Importantly, it is crucial to distinguish between SDS members and Liberation 130, because the occupiers of Bailey 130 were not united under a single ideological banner. The occupation of Bailey 130 was arguably the most polarizing event of the Strax Affair and was the turning point between the Strax case and the Strax Affair.[27]

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[26] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 17-8, 29, 83-4, 86-7

[27] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 29-30, 83, 97-8, 102-4; "Admin Suspends Strax; Protest Sit-in Continues," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), October 1, 1968, 3; Ip Se Dixit, "The Final Solution to the Strax Problem," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), October 8, 1968, 7.

"The Strax Affair"

Moving forward, from roughly late November until the end of the 1968-69 school year Strax had a negligible impact on the Strax Affair; instead, activist groups like CAUT, the Association of University of New Brunswick Teachers (AUNBT), and the SRC used the Stax case as leverage in pursuit of various forms of administrative reform at UNB and in Canadian academia. Most notably, the CAUT recognized the dangerous precedent set by Mackay in using New Brunswick courts to circumvent faculty rights, and enacted a censure on UNB.[28] Similarly, UNB's SRC called Mackay and the Board of Deans to count for their use of police force in disbanding the Liberation 130 movement—a dazzling show of strength from a progressive student organization against an archaic administration.[29] Essentially, Strax's protest against structured authority had snowballed into wider questions of representation for both faculty and students.

Beginning with the CAUT, the problem that UNB presented to the organization was in how faculty are dismissed through Canadian University systems. Strax's own political beliefs were irrelevant to the CAUT position, what was important to the CAUT was the fact that a faculty member had been suspended without notice, and when their suspension was brought before a board of peers and superiors for review, a university president undermined due process by appealing to an extra-university judicial system. If uncontested, the Strax case set a dangerous precedent for Canadian universities, as it proved that a strong-willed President could circumvent a democratic administrative system. Therefore, the CAUT demanded that Mackay and the UNB administration agree to binding arbitration from a CAUT committee on the issue of Strax's suspension.[30]

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[28] Michiel Horn, "Postscript: Academic Freedom Since 1965," In *Academic Freedom in Canada: A History*, 309-49. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), 313; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 148-9.

[29] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 128.

[30] Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 155; Peter C. Kent, "Conflicting Conceptions of Rights in UNB's Strax Affair, 1968-1969," University of New Brunswick Law Journal 44 (1995): 90; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 137-8, 157-9.

Furthermore, in the eyes of CAUT the injunction against Strax turned his suspension into a dismissal.[31] UNB refused binding arbitration from the CAUT.[32] As such, the CAUT dug their heels in and enacted a censure on UNB on March 15, 1969.[33] Not only was the CAUT censure successful in forcing UNB to submit to binding arbitration, it signalled a transformation for the CAUT from a proponent for "bread and butter" issues concerning salary and benefits into a defender of faculty rights regarding fair treatment from university administrations. In short, the Strax Affair was a formative case for the CAUT that defined its role in the landscape of Canadian universities.

Similarly, the SRC used the Strax Affair to question UNB administrative authority and bring the president and Board of Deans to account for their actions regarding Liberation 130. Essentially, after Mackay used the Fredericton Police to remove Liberation 130 protestors on Remembrance Day weekend 1968, the SRC demanded a justification for the administration's use of force in ending a peaceful protest.[34] Initially, the UNB admins resisted the SRC's demands, but eventually they provided a written statement and agreed to a meeting with the SRC.[35] While the actual products of the SRC's meeting with president Mackay and the Board of Deans on 8 December, 1969, were negligible—amounting to Mackay explaining that the Fredericton Police were used to remove students because they were trained for that type of intervention—the symbolic significance of a student council forcing UNB administrators into a meeting they did not want to attend was incredibly significant.[36] Essentially, by forcing an autocratic president and reluctant

[31] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 137; "Censure: the Facts From All Sides," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), March 10, 1969, 3.

[32] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 136-8, 148; "CAUT Complains Re Suspension." *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), October 15, 1968 3; "Discussion Anyone?" *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), October 15, 1968, 4.

[33] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 157-9.

[34] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 115.

[35] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 118, 125.

[36] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 128.

Board of Deans into a meeting, the SRC demonstrated, through the Strax Affair, a newfound degree of student influence in UNB's political environment.

Ultimately, the Strax Affair came to a close when the UNB BofGs accepted the CAUT's terms on 20 March, 1969. The CAUT and BofG went back and forth over the summer of 1969 to determine exactly how certain stipulations of the CAUT's terms were implemented, most notably the removal of the injunction against Strax. While UNB appealed to have the injunction removed, the judge who passed the injunction refused to reverse his decision unless new evidence was presented that changed the circumstances of the case—determining that UNB's deal with the CAUT was not a significant enough development. Eventually, the CAUT censure was lifted on 18 July, 1969. Strax's contract with UNB was not renewed after June of 1969 and he officially ceased working at the institution on 1 July, 1969. By September 1969 the Strax Affair was over, although it had left an undeniable impact on both UNB and the greater community of Canadian universities.[37]

The final two points relevant to this survey of the Strax Affair are the fate of its two catalysts: President Colin Mackay, and Norman Strax. Beginning with Mackay's resignation, the president announced his intention to quit his position as president at the University on 19 December 1968. It is undeniable that the Strax Affair pushed Mackay towards resignation, although it would be unfair to cite it as the only reason for Mackay's disillusion with his role at UNB. In Peter Kent's *Inventing Academic Freedom,* the author cites a private conversation he had with Mackay in which:

> [Mackay] explained that the University had changed with the … *University Act*. It had become a much more consultative institution … and he did not feel that [it] was the university he was used to working with … 'I'm not a good democrat,' he told [Kent] … the new university government required a president who would function well as a committee man.

[37] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 175, 176, 179-80, 181; "Censure Lifted." *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), September 12, 1969, 2.

However, some UNB administrators felt that Mackay's announcement was meant to evoke a vote of confidence from the BofG. If Mackay was attempting to garner a vote of confidence, he was unsuccessful, as a BofG committee headed by K. C. Irving advised the BofG to accept Mackay's resignation—which they did. Whether the Strax Affair was directly responsible for Mackay's resignation or not, 1969 marked a radical transition period for UNB, which had just survived a nationwide controversy, reworked its entire administrative system the year before, and was now searching for a new president for the first time in sixteen years.[38]

As previously mentioned, Strax himself had a negligible effect on the Strax Affair after October of 1968, however he remained the central topic for the political bodies using the Affair as a soap box.[39] Unfortunately, the injunction against Strax passed in December 1968, meaning he was guilty of trespassing on the UNB campus and inciting dissident ideas in the eyes of New Brunswick Courts.[40] Furthermore, Strax never received the arbitration he was promised by the CAUT, as his legal defense refused to appear for hearings until his injunction was lifted. However, the period of arbitration expired before the injunction against Strax was lifted.[41] In an article titled, "Conflicting Conceptions of Rights in UNB's Strax Affair, 1968-1969," Peter Kent poetically summarized Strax's struggle, saying: "[Strax] was an ephemeral phenomenon, pursuing one of the many doomed causes of that fascinating decade [the 1960s]."[42] As such, Strax effectively cut ties with UNB and spent the next ten years in Fredericton living on a small property on Fredericton's North Side. Eventually, Strax accepted a position teaching at a University in Indiana and left Fredericton behind.[43] In

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[38] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 129-33.
[39] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 96.
[40] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 135-6.
[41] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 186.
[42] Peter C. Kent, "Conflicting Conceptions of Rights in UNB's Strax Affair, 1968-1969," University of New Brunswick Law Journal 44 (1995): 91.
[43] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 186, 201-3; Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 155.

contrast to the CAUT and SRC, who lobbied for Strax, Strax himself gained essentially nothing over the twelve months following the "Bookie-Book" protests.

Narratives

Having discussed the Strax Affair itself, it is now relevant to touch upon some of the narrative themes in sources concerning the Affair. The most prevalent scholarship regarding the Strax Affair was written by Peter C. Kent and is arguably the most reliable secondary source on the subject. The second main source of information on the Strax Affair is the *Brunswickan* archives, as the events of the Affair were covered extensively from September 1968 to September 1969. However, both of these sources are subject to both explicit and implicit bias.

Beginning with the more explicit of the two, the *Brunswickan* was an unabashedly left leaning publication during the 1960s. As a member of the CUP, the *Brunswickan* was intimately familiar with the rapidly radicalizing atmosphere of student journalism in Canada, no doubt colouring their coverage of the Strax Affair. Furthermore, it is unsurprising that many articles regarding the Strax Affair were unflattering for the UNB administration, as some members of the editorial team running the publication were sympathetic to Strax's cause and the SDS. The most obvious Strax supporter at the *Brunswickan* was Tom Murphy, who not only suggested the Liberation 130 occupation, but also wrote an article calling out New Brunswick Courts, earning him a contempt of court charge along with his editor John Oliver.[44] However, Kent does note that Oliver appears to have attempted to present the Strax Affair objectively, although the young editor was not prepared for the massive influx of news the Strax Affair spurred, leading to fluctuation in the *Brunswickan*'s quality control.[45] Undeniably the *Brunswickan* is a biased source, however as a

[44] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 29, 134-5; Tom Murphy, "Spades Down," *Brunswickan* (Fredericton, NB), December 3, 1968, 9.

[45] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 135.

primary source—if handled with care and a critical eye—it is invaluable for understanding the minutia of the Strax Affair.

Similarly, Peter Kent's accounts of the Strax Affair, in 1995 and 2012 respectively, are laced with less obvious bias and narrative intentions. Kent is, as Paul W. Bennet describes, "far from a distant, objective observer," in the Strax Affair.[46] Although, commendably, Kent does explain his involvement with the Strax Affair at key points throughout his narrative, most notably when referencing private conversations with President Mackay—such as when Mackay announced his resignation.[47] It is safe to assume Kent does not bend information intentionally, although it is likely he does omit information. An easily noted omission from Kent's narrative is Strax's Judaism.[48] Kent does mention that Strax is Jewish at several points in his narrative, although there is very little explicit mention of antisemitism during the Strax Affair. It is possible Kent's omission of antisemitism is a reflection of reality; however, Kent does mention many faculty members disliking Strax prior to the Strax Affair, and later references are made to the word "Jew" being thrown around by faculty on campus in reference to Strax.[49] It would not be surprising for a small, conservative, Christian community during the 1960s to have some antisemitic prejudice. However, antisemitism is only a single example of possible omissions to fit a more "clean" narrative—and an example admittedly based on conjecture. The point of this critique is that Kent's works should serve as memoirs and pseudo-primary sources rather than scholarly secondary sources when discussing the Strax Affair.

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[46] Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 154.
[47] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 7, 130.
[48] Bennett, "Campus Life in Canada's 1960s," 154-5; Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 72-3, 113.
[49] Kent, *Inventing Academic Freedom*, 113.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the Strax Affair signals a turning point at UNB and the wider Canadian University community. The Strax Affair was the result of—and catalyst for—radical changes to UNB's administrative structure and representative equality. Strax himself and the ideals he espoused were less important to the effects of the Strax Affair than the questions his protests raised. The core of the Strax Affair is the relationship between university administrators, faculty, and students. If a faculty member exercises their right to express a political opinion—through means that admittedly disrupt university operations—does their university's administration have the right to terminate their employment? The resounding response at the end of the Strax Affair was: "no." Not only did UNB metaphorically leave the "old order" of administration behind after the Strax Affair, it physically turned over a new leaf, electing a new president and affirming that both faculty and students had more democratic power than any previous point in UNB's history.

Part Two: Historical Dissemination

The Question

Having examined the Strax Affair as a case study, it is time to tackle the questions presented in the preface to this analysis: what are the differences between public history and academic history, and how can the two be combined in a meaningful way? The following exploration will follow three threads: the imperative to disseminate history, the relationship between academic and public history, and a theoretical application of the conclusions reached in discussion of the previous two points. As such, the following will use the above analysis of Strax Affair as an example for understanding the abstract concepts to follow.

Importantly, the following discussion will avoid use of the first person, however it is relevant to acknowledge my own biases and values as an author before continuing with this

examination. As an undergrad scholar, I am hugely influenced by philosophy and the methods used by philosophers to disseminate their ideas. It would be disingenuous not to mention the influence of existentialism and absurdism on the following analysis, particularly in discussions on imperatives to disseminate and the innate value of knowledge. Essentially, I believe that values are fabricated by our (humanity and/or Western society) choice to give them value—which does not detract from that value in any way. While these influences are not explicit, they do implicitly inform the construction of the following analysis. Furthermore, through exposure to the Social Sciences, most notably anthropology, I am intrigued by the practice of stating authorial bias before an examination. As such, I am convinced that stating my bias in this paragraph does not devalue this analysis, but instead provides readers with a better understanding of the following points—with clear understanding being my highest goal in my own scholarship.

The Imperative to Disseminate

History is a written medium, despite advances in recent scholarship to include non-literary sources. As such, the question that begs answering is: who will read history? However, upon reflecting on that question another rises: is it a historian's duty to worry about who will read their work? The following section will attempt to provide an interpretation of the above questions, with the ultimate conclusion being that historians do have an imperative to disseminate their work.

The first problem proposed in the above statement is who will read history. Which prompts the further question, does history need to be read to have value? This analysis is predicated on the idea that history's value comes from its use. The argument here is not that history is purely utilitarian, however, if a book is written that no one will ever read, and the author dies, that

information essentially stops existing.[50] Even if the work is published and physically exists, if it is irrelevant or inaccessible, it effectively becomes non-existent in the wider community of individuals interested in history—whether academic or not. As such, for historical information—whether scholarly or public—to exist, and therefore have value, it must be consumed by other people. Having established the need for history to be consumed, the question that remains is: does the historian have a duty to facilitate that consumption?

The above issue can be simplified into a question of the form that historical dissemination takes, and the accessibility of that form. If history is meant to be read by everyone, should it be accessible to everyone? Interestingly, modern academic scholarship generally implies that history is not meant to be read by everyone. Modern scholarship is cloaked in jargon and often hidden behind prestigious pay walls. In fact, modern scholarship has generally disregarded public accessibility, instead opting to create a closed community of scholars writing to each other.

However, an offshoot of scholars in the 1970s began defining a second philosophical community within the historical discipline: public history. Public historians believe that, "historians should provide interpretation that is accessible and not abstract … offered in an approachable way that encourages people to test their own assumptions and try on different ideas and perspectives." Public historians generally work in contrast to the general sentiments in academic history, which often focuses on the immersion of a single author in a specific topic. The proliferation of single authored work in academia often results in the "curse of knowledge" where an individual is an expert in a subject, but is unable to help others connect to that subject. Again, if information cannot be connected to a wider audience, and the author suffering from the "curse of knowledge" dies, then

[50] This is an example of existentialist theory at work. The most basic tenant of Jean-Paul Sartre's existentialist theory is that existence proceeds essence, meaning that something exists before it has value. Thus, if history effectively does not "exist" it cannot have any value.

their knowledge ostensibly disappears. Consequently, an ideological divide exists between "academic historians" and "public historians."[51]

The Divide

The previous section established a divide between academic scholars and public historians; the following section will question whether that divide is productive or reductive. Unfortunately, this discussion does not, and possibly can not, provide a definitive answer to the above question. However, it is my personal opinion, as a scholar, that division only serve to hinder the free flow of ideas and knowledge, thus I am of the opinion that any division of scholars within a discipline is reductive. The following will attempt to explore the above ideas in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

First, it is relevant to play "devil's advocate" for the division of public and academic history. A leading argument against the merging of academic and public history is third party interest. Public history, by its nature, is funded by third parties motivated by interests outside the abstract value of knowledge. Because history, as Robert Kelly describes, "…is thought to produce things which are interesting, which are essential to the human spirit, but which are not immediately useful," it requires outside interest to justify funding its dissemination.[52] As such, public history is often laced with bias and narratives that have an ulterior motive in mind.[53] However, this discussion is concerned with exploring theoretical frameworks within history, not the social structures exterior to history—although it is undeniable that social structures affect an individual historian's thought process. In short, there is an argument to be made for separating public history in an effort to remove

[51] Marianne Babal, "Sticky History: Connecting Historians with the Public," *The Public Historian* 32, no. 4 (2010): 77-8, 81; Marko Demantowsky, "What Is Public History," in *Public History and School: International Perspectives*, ed. Marko Demantowsky, (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018) 9.

[52] Robert Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," *The Public Historian* 1, no. 1 (1978): 17.

[53] Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," 18; Demantowsky, "What Is Public History," 5.

third party bias from academic historical analysis, however, that argument is largely thwarted if one considers the third parties involved in funding academic research centres—the most obvious being governmental bodies.[54]

Another oft cited argument used against public history is its proximity to amateur, or "armchair," history. While it is true that amateur historians tend to gravitate towards public history and its digestibility, that proximity has no impact on the character of public history itself. In fact, public history purposely seeks out individuals in the space between "academic" historians and the interested public as they try to generate genuine curiosity in the historical field.[55] Public historians target interested groups because those interested groups will get their history "fix" somewhere else if they do not—usually from non-historian authors, journalists, and filmmakers.[56]

The above discussions have had two functions, explicitly they have debunked general opposition to public history merging with academic history, and implicitly they have provided examples of the value public history provides to the historical discipline. As such, it is now worth considering how academic scholarship and public history could meaningfully merge.

The most obvious way public and academic history could merge is simply through communication, a process that is occurring slowly over time.[57] If public historians were actively engaged—or more deliberately engaged—in academic research centres, many of the issues concerning third party bias in public history could be mitigated. Admittedly, most national museums are funded by the same bodies that fund research centres, however, the academic prestige that research centres carry often helps mitigate some of the more egregious instances of forced

[54] Kelley, "Public History: Its Origins, Nature, and Prospects," 18.
[55] Babal, "Sticky History," 80.
[56] Babal, "Sticky History," 82.
[57] Babal, "Sticky History," 79.

narratives.[58] Furthermore, public history's association with "armchair" historians could be further mitigated by proximity to the aforementioned prestige of an academic institution, which would emphasize a focus on scholarly conventions. Additionally, for academic history, closer association with public history would open channels of dissemination for scholars in their already oversaturated and competitive discipline. Instead of academics competing for limited space in academic journals or publishing deals, they could also disseminate research through presentations, exhibits, and other forms of public history. The expansion of the job market for both academic and public historians is possibly the most compelling argument for increased collaboration between public and academic historians. The above suggestions are only a selection of many possible benefits that could arise from closer collaboration between public and academic history.

Presenting the Strax Affair

Finally, the following is a brief application of the theory I have outlined throughout this exploration. The academic history case study I will use in this example is the article on the Strax Affair presented in the first half of this paper. To apply theories of integrated public and academic history, an outline for how the above article could be turned into a public history presentation serves as an unabstracted example of an abstract theory.

The first challenge facing public history is space. Written articles can explicitly explain information through the text of the article and footnotes; by contrast, presentations are incredibly limited in the space they provide for explicit analysis. As such, it is imperative to find ways to portray information through non-written means. The most obvious way to portray non-written information in a presentation is through visuals, although presenters have access to other creative

[58] For more on forced narratives and public history see MacMillan's *Dangerous Games*, particularly discussions of the Canadian War Museum in Chapter 3 and Chapter 7.

ways to display information. For instance, instead of describing the minute details of relationships between Strax, the CAUT, SRC, and SDS, a presenter can give the impression of that complexity by explicitly stating that Strax had variable relationships with the main players in the Strax Affair. Additional information on Strax's relationships in the Strax Affair could be presented in the form of a graphic showing Venn diagrams of where various actors in the Affair overlapped ideologically, and where they did not. While the exact details of Strax's relationships with different actors in the Affair are not portrayed through the above means, the important ideas that those relationships play in understanding the Strax Affair are communicated—those ideas being: Strax's personal political beliefs did not align with, and were largely irrelevant to, the larger problems concerning the Strax Affair.

The danger that accompanies a public history presentation is the possibility of "flattening" or simplifying a complex topic. As such, there are two major ways that a presentation of the Strax Affair could mitigate a flattening effect. First, the presenter—assuming they are adequately knowledgeable—could reiterate the complexity of certain points throughout the presentation. Again, a presentation simply cannot present all the raw information an academic article can, but it can acknowledge foreground that complexity with language like: "this topic is incredibly complex, with many acting characters." Another specific way a presenter could reiterate complexity is with conceptual questions such as: "what was Strax's role in the Strax Affair," or, "how did the CAUT and SRC acknowledge, or ignore Strax's personal political views?" Open questions turn the audience into an active participant in the dissemination of public history, while respecting their intellectual agency and maturity. The second way a presentation of the Strax Affair could respect the complexity of its topic is by offering a substantial period for audience questions at the end of the

presentation. Both of these methods highlight the complexity of the Strax Affair without attempting to simplify it or put ideas in "layman's" terms.

In short, a presentation of the Strax Affair is entirely possible without sacrificing any of the complexity inherent to the topic. A major point in this discussion is that minutia does not equal complexity or understanding. Consequently, a thoughtful presentation implementing the methods discussed in this section would preserve the complex analysis of the Strax Affair presented in this examination's first part. Essentially, it is possible to disseminate academic history thoughtfully and meaningfully through public history.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this analysis of public history has questioned why scholars produce history, who they produce it for, and how it should be produced. The point of this theoretical analysis is to highlight the absurdity of a divide between public and academic history, as both factions within the historical discipline share the same mandate: to discuss, try to understand, and reconstruct the past. Moreover, this exploration has also pointed out the ways public and academic history would benefit from a closer relationship, most notably an expansion of the field by validating public history and providing more options for dissemination available to academics. As such, on the question of whether a closer relationship between academic and public history would be productive or reductive, the answer *based on this analysis*, is a resounding: productive.

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