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Reviews, Critiques, and Annotations

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Reviews, Critiques, and Annotations

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David B. Gracy II, Linda M. Matthews Jr., Clifford L. Muse Jr., Nancy J. Bryant, Anne Bartlow, and Robert M. Willingham Jr.

REVIEWS, CRITIQUES, AND ANNOTATIONS

Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis. By Richard C. Berner. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983. Pp. xv, 219. Appendices, glossary, bibliography, index. \$35.00.

Is this Richard Berner's legacy to the archival profession? It is inspired by lofty goals. "One of the objectives of this book," Berner writes in the Preface (xi), "is to form a perspective that provides a broader approach to archival problems--one that is based on a shared concern about common problems and that will result in reciprocal benefits for all professions and the different publics that each serves." By the title it promises to enrich the literature with an examination never before done. And it is the fruit and culmination of the thought of a practitioner active in the field for a generation.

Our height of anticipation for the intellectual feast is exceeded only by the depth of our disappointment in the fare. The writing, in the early chapters especially, is very difficult and, in many instances, a barrier to understanding. Throughout the book are pronouns that have no antecedents, or which do not agree with their antecedents. The text is tortured with passive voice that labors on for paragraphs at a time. Berner even seems to lose his own way, for many paragraphs contain sentences irrelevant to their theme. The last paragraph on page 38, for example, which reports Neal Harlow's observations on the "relation between

the card catalog and other finding aids," ends with the sentence: "Also he provided no rational basis for subgrouping." This gratuitous thought, totally unconnected to anything in the paragraph, leaves the reader first wondering what he missed, then puzzling over what thought the author really was trying to convey in the paragraph.

Contrary to the beckoning subtitle, this work is more tirade and horn tooting than analysis. The book is peppered with references to Berner's personal insight and achievement. Berner's idea of analysis leaves the reader gasping early and often. As the book opens (pages 3-4), after stating erroneously that the National Archives "invented" records management, Berner asserts, "Their experience had shown that it is the degree to which archivists control records management that largely determines the quality of an institutional archive." How, if the staff of the National Archives developed records management, it could do so on the basis of experience with records management defies understanding.

At the heart of the trouble with this volume is boundary and definition. Berner bounds his field and defines many of his basic terms in a manner logical only to him. Far from being the broad-ranging historical analysis of archival theory and practice promised in the title, this book, instead, focuses on arrangement and description. "All else in the archival world, except appraisal," he trumpets dogmatically on page 5, "is a matter of philosophy and attitude, or is part of a body of theory from another field."

For most of his terms, Berner provides a glossary, the core of which is the glossary compiled by a committee of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and published in the American Archivist, 37 (July 1974): 415-433. Without explanation, however, Berner chose not to include in his glossary at least two terms he uses frequently. One is his own hybrid term "inventory/guide," the other is the word "guide," which, to him, apparently is not a finding aid that gives summary descriptions of all the

holdings of a repository and is published for distribution outside the archives.

Berner's most paradoxical definition is that of the "subgroup." Berner defines the subgroup as a unit based in provenance--that is, a unit of records related by their origin from a common creator. A series, he asserts on the other hand, is a unit based solely on quirks of filing activity. Berner roundly attacks my manual for adhering to the definition in the SAA glossary, which recognizes the subgroup and the series both as being based on either provenance or filing activity. Evidently Berner is unconvinced of his own position, however, for the definition of subgroup that he includes in his glossary is word-for-word the very one presented in the SAA glossary.

Some have suggested that, if not analysis, perhaps the book's strength is as a reference work. Unquestionably, Berner has pulled together a great deal of data that required considerable time to assemble. But a reference work is more than data. It also must include a strong index. The indices included here omit too many references to be adequate.

No, Rich Berner's legacy for me will continue to be his outstanding articles: "Manuscript Collections and Archives: A Unitary Approach" (1965), "Description of Manuscript Collections: A Single Network System" (with Gary Bettis, 1969), and "Manuscript Catalogs and Other Finding Aids: What Are Their Relationships" (1971). These made significant, lasting contributions to archival literature.

David B. Gracy II
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A Modern Archives Reader: Basic Readings on Archival Theory and Practice. Edited by Maygene F. Daniels and Timothy Walch. Washington: National Archives and Records Service, 1984. Pp. xv, 357. Glossary, bibliography, index. \$12.00 in paper and \$14.00 in hardback from National Archives, P.O. Box 37066, Washington, DC 20013.

A Modern Archives Reader was produced for the purpose of providing a convenient compilation of basic readings in the theory and practice of archival administration for use in the Modern Archives Institute sponsored by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). The editors, both former directors of the institute, planned the reader as a collection of useful readings for all students of archival administration, in any program. In that aim, they have most certainly been successful. Since most of the articles frequently assigned in archival courses are no longer available in reprints or any other handily available form, this volume will be welcomed by instructors and students alike and will have a place on every archivist's book shelf.

Many of the articles in this well-organized and attractively produced collection are classics in the archival literature. What a pleasure it is to find in one volume Ernst Posner's article on archival development since the French Revolution, Theodore Schellenberg's essay on appraisal of modern public records, Schellenberg's and Oliver W. Holmes's writings on archival arrangement, and Sir Hilary Jenkinson's reflections on his profession, alongside later excellent pieces by Leonard Rapport, Gerald Ham, and others. All are fine; some are indispensable. The collection of articles and other writings is divided into nine topical sections, following a usual and familiar progression for a course in archival administration (generally, history and theory, records management, appraisal, archival acquisition, arrangement--including photographs and aural and graphic records--description, reference, public programs, and "establishing priorities").

Three or four articles have been selected on each topic. Instructors in archival courses vary in their readings selection, of course, and some might have made different choices on several of the topics. Some might not have included the information bulletin from NARA on the preparation of inventories at the National Archives; others might have excluded Katharine Brand's description of the place of the manuscripts register at the Library of Congress. The editors' rationale for their choices is clearly laid out in the introduction, and it is a very valid one. Happily, the selection is of high caliber and chosen with care to focus on specific principles and issues of universal interest. Few will quarrel with individual choices in the collection, though some may regret the lack of space to add other articles. A useful essay on archival terminology, a glossary, and suggestions for further readings on each topic are included.

The editors have cast a wide net in archival, library, and other special topic publications, such as National Archives information papers and bulletins. While journal articles from the American Archivist predominate, as they should, it is pleasurable to note that four articles come from regional archival journals (two each from The Midwest Archivist and Georgia Archive, now Provenance). We may at times bemoan the dearth of incisive and important contributions to archival theory in recent times, but certainly the contemporary articles published here have contributed significantly to the growing solid bibliography of archival development and practice.

While any book is only as good as its content, books whose excellent contents are also well packaged deserve special mention. This is an attractive book. The typeface is easy to read, the margins sufficient, and the design pleasing. To find a book of this quality and value for a reasonable price is indeed satisfying. Oh, that it had been printed on acid-free paper!

Books of readings inevitably become obsolete, but a goodly portion of the articles in this volume will

be classics and required readings for years to come. Instructors in archival education, and indeed all archivists, will only wonder how we got along without it.

Linda M. Matthews
Emory University

Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives. Compiled by Debra L. Newman. Washington: National Archives Trust Fund Board, 1984. Pp. xix, 379. Photographs, index. \$13.00 in paper and \$18.00 in hardback from National Archives, Dept. 406, P.O. Box 37066. Washington, DC 20013.

Debra Newman's Black History: A Guide to Civilian Records in the National Archives will be mandatory reading for individuals researching in the area of black history. The guide, the latest in a series of specialized supplements to the general Guide to the National Archives (1974), catalogs extant black history source documents at the National Archives created by nonmilitary agencies of the federal government.

In her introduction to the guide, the first of the supplements centering on American black history records, Newman warns that the listed records are those that were identified through existing finding aids. Acknowledging that there are probably undiscovered, isolated files and documents remaining in the voluminous civilian records, Newman states categorically that the guide is not a comprehensive listing of every document pertaining to black history among the civilian records. Notwithstanding this caveat, Newman's archival achievement is obvious as one peruses the substantial list of record groups in her table of contents. It clearly demonstrates the thoroughness of Newman's work. The 141 listed record

groups represent approximately seventy percent of the total number of civilian record groups at the National Archives.

Consisting of over 1200 numbered descriptive paragraphs, the guide is basically a compilation of data gathered from scattered sources. Arranged by record group, its most salient feature is the descriptive paragraphs. They contain information such as series title, dates, quantity, record type, and arrangement scheme. They also frequently highlight specific documents within a series, identify important subject areas within a series, and provide suggestions to facilitate the researcher's practical use of the records. Combined with concise and informative histories of the civilian agencies explaining their organizational relationships with black people, the descriptive paragraphs will serve as superb guideposts directing the researcher to relevant source documents without expending unnecessary research time and money.

Other noteworthy attributes of the guide are the occasional inclusion within descriptive paragraphs of information relating to the destruction of records and the identification of record groups to which access may be restricted due to legal and/or other restrictions. Newman shows her professionalism and concern for the researcher by including this important data. Researchers primarily interested in audiovisual records relating to black history will find the guide's audiovisual appendix, which identifies record groups containing photographs, sound recordings, and films, a quick reference tool for locating such items. In addition, the guide's alphabetized index, with its numerous entries and cross-references, will unquestionably help to expedite archival searches for relevant records.

Artistically, Newman's guide is most appealing. Its printing style allows easy reading, and its format is not difficult to understand. Black history photographs dispersed throughout the guide indicate pictorially the wealth of black history records one will find at the National Archives. However, if

there was a conscious effort to coordinate photographs with record groups, few of the thirty-seven photographs seem appropriately placed. For example, the picture of children kneeling at worship on page 95 seems unrelated to Record Group 56, General Records of the Department of the Treasury. Picture captions are self-explanatory and informative.

In summary, Newman has produced an exceptionally fine guide, easy to read and understand. It is a most significant contribution to the National Archives subject guide literature. Increased scholarly interest and research activity in records relating to black history at the National Archives should naturally develop as a result of the publication of Newman's outstanding work.

Clifford L. Muse, Jr.
Howard University

Museum Archives: An Introduction. By William A. Deiss. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1984. Pp. 37. Photographs, bibliography, appendices. Paper. \$4.00 to SAA members, \$6.00 to others.

William Deiss's Museum Archives: An Introduction is the third and most recently published in the Society of American Archivists's (SAA) series of introductions to archival work for particular settings. The manual is carefully and thoroughly researched, well written, and adequately supplemented. It represents a conscientious and methodical approach to the whys and hows of museum archives.

Deiss carefully states his case for museum archives. He argues sensibly that a museum's records have intrinsic historical and administrative value

and briefly outlines methods and procedures for instituting an archival program.

What this reader questions is the audience which the manual purports to address, that is, "not to archivists, but to museum professionals with little or no archival training." As David Gracy suggests in the introduction, this volume must properly be augmented with readings from the SAA's Basic Manual Series. However, it is simply not possible for anyone to become an archivist in a vacuum, without benefit of specialized professional coursework and training.

Even a trained and experienced archivist will find the processing of a museum's records a difficult and puzzling challenge; the passage of time and administrations, and perhaps politics, takes a serious toll on the integrity of the records. The work purports to be written for museum professionals, and yet, it speaks "archivese." Perhaps it is intended for museum staff and trustees, to convince them gently of the need to hire a professional archivist to deal with their records--and to help them prepare a grant or other documentation in this regard. In fact, most museums do not have the resources or the interest in the documentation of their own institutions to provide the impetus for getting their own house in order. They are often too involved in building and exhibiting their acquired collections to realize the significance and validity of conserving what is their own most primary documentation.

The manual would be more useful to the museum professional if it were to include in the appendix a list of suppliers and approximate costs of supplies and equipment; a more complete glossary and section on forms; basic grant information (sources, addresses, brief guidelines); suggestions on budgeting and processing time frames; and other information to aid in planning.

It should not be assumed by museum trustees and staff that the project of processing their own archives is one that can be treated lightly and accomplished simply. With a few revisions and

additions, the manual could be of substantial value to the profession in preserving the past and preparing for the future.

Nancy J. Bryant
MSL International, Ltd.
Atlanta, Georgia

Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide. By Joan K. Haas, Helen Willa Samuels, and Barbara Trippel Simmons. Cambridge: Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1985. Pp. 96. Photographs, bibliography, index. Paper. Distributed by the Society of American Archivists, 600 South Federal Street, Suite 504, Chicago, Illinois 60605. \$7.00 to SAA members, \$9.00 to others.

Inspired by the Joint Committee on Archives of Science and Technology (JCAST), Appraising the Records of Modern Science and Technology: A Guide ably fills a gap in the literature of archival appraisal. A concise and well-organized manual, the guide provides sound advice for archivists charged with the responsibility of appraising the vast records of post-World War II science and technology.

The guide, based upon traditional appraisal principles and practices, is structured around a clear, systematic description of the component activities of the scientific and technological process. The authors chose this manner of organization in the belief "that demystifying science and technology will encourage archivists to collect more actively in these areas." For each activity and the records documenting it, there is a description which includes helpful definitions, followed by discussions of appraisal considerations. The appraisal discussions are concluded by one or several

examples of appraisal decisions.

The guide reflects the authors' experience--science and technology in academia--but care is taken to make the appraisal considerations and examples applicable to science and technology in government and industry. In addition to the description of the scientific and technological process and the resultant documentation, the guide also discusses the records documenting the personal and professional activities of scientists and engineers.

The strength of the guide lies in its clear, concise manner of explanation. The authors have succeeded in relating much of the complexity of the scientific and technological process in terms understandable to the nonscientist. Particularly useful is the table of scientific and technological activities and their records, which effectively summarizes the text's descriptions. The guide also includes two appendices. One is a directory of science and technology history centers excerpted from an article by Clark A. Elliott. The second is a bibliography of selected readings. The guide is indexed and generously illustrated.

The guide is a well-written and well-designed addition to the literature of archival appraisal. It deserves a place on the reference shelf of all repositories of scientific and technological records.

Anne Bartlow
Georgia Institute of Technology

Antiquarian Bookselling in the United States: A History from the Origins to the 1940s. By Madeleine B. Stern. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985. Pp. xviii, 246. Bibliography, index. Cloth, \$29.95.

"I think it will be less trouble to you to wish there that you had brought more, than to fret at the want of a market for too many." So advised John Dunton's father-in-law in 1686 as Dunton set forth for Boston and a life as bookseller. The Mathers and a fledgling Harvard College, among others, were all the better for his venture.

So begins the "book business" in what would become the United States and so also begins Madeleine B. Stern's history of bookselling on our shores. A bookseller herself, Stern is well versed in economic, sociological, and social facets of the antiquarian book trade. Much of her enthusiasm for her chosen field of endeavor is visible on these pages as she chronicles a fascinating history of personages, cultural attitudes, and literary luminaries.

Arranged geographically by major cities (and concomitantly chronologically), the narrative moves from Boston to Philadelphia and New York, thence to Chicago and the Pacific Coast with several stops between. Chapter 9 treats "Cities of the South," though none in Georgia merit consideration. Lastly, Chapter 10 discusses the "Lone Stars," those dealers of note who were perambulators of the American scene both physically and spiritually. An excellent bibliographical essay and thorough index complete the work.

In her invitation, Stern likens booksellers to "ghosts"--those individuals "whose transactions as intermediary between source and market are seldom preserved." The metaphor is perhaps a bit fanciful, but quite accurate in its basic promise. This book becomes the foundation for the first in-depth treatment of antiquarian bookselling in America through the years of World War II. Stern is wise to accept this chronological line of demarcation because since that time the business of bookselling has changed and expanded dramatically, not always for the better, but clearly in differing directions that the George Smiths, Robert Dodds, and Charles Heartmans of those earlier eras would hardly recognize or approve.

This work is a history of the American reading

and collecting public as well as the seller and scout. Stern profiles numerous antiquarian booksellers and their wares. The Caxtons bought for a pittance, the sleuthing out of the ultimate American rarity, the wanderings of Parson Weems and his biographical fancies all parade through these pages. Through these tales, anecdotal and scholarly, the collecting interests of three centuries of American buyers and the entrepreneurial exercises of sellers come alive. Stern's book is a fine social history and, between the lines, a good analysis of the intellectual development of America as well.

For librarians and archivists this volume approaches the thrill of perusing a manuscript filled with the names and actions of old friends. It is both nostalgic and educational. From Henry Stevens and Frank Glenn to Lathrop Harper and the Dawsons, libraries, too, have been major beneficiaries of their shrewdness and dogged determination. To read of its history is to gain a greater appreciation of the antiquarian bookselling and the social and intellectual climate surrounding this phenomenon. It causes us to realize our inseparability. We, too, are a part of the history of antiquarian bookselling in the United States.

Stern has published an admirable study of this important subject in a scholarly and authoritative manner. It is indispensable in its field.

Robert M. Willingham, Jr.
University of Georgia

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Computer Crime, Abuse, Liability and Security: A Comprehensive Bibliography, 1970-1984. Compiled by Reba A. Best and D.C. Picquet. McFarland & Company, Box 611, Jefferson, NC, 28640. \$33.00.

1700 entries cover: books, periodicals, journal

and newspaper articles, reports, symposia, case notes, and federal documents. The liability and security sections should be of particular interest to archivists joining on-line systems and establishing data bases.

Guidelines for Records Appraisal at Major Research Facilities, by Joan Warnow; A Study of Preservation Documents at D O E Laboratories, by Joan Warnow, et al.; and Files Maintenance and Records Disposition: A Handbook for Secretaries at D O E Laboratories, by Jane Wolff. SAA, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, IL, 60605. \$3.00/set for members; \$5.00/set for others.

Although designed for Department of Energy (DOE) Laboratories, this set of three booklets has usefulness for all archivists working with management and policy records. In addition, the Files Maintenance handbook gives practical guidelines for establishing and using filing systems and for proper records disposition.

Manuscripts: The First Twenty Years. Edited by Priscilla S. Taylor. SAA, 600 S. Federal, Suite 504, Chicago, IL, 60605. \$29.00 to SAA members; \$35.00 to others.

Comprised of articles first published in the Manuscript Society's journal (1948-1968), this 450-page anthology is a useful text for the novice collector--offering advice on pricing, methods of collecting, warnings on forgeries and mistaken identities, and suggesting acquisition policies.

Writings on Archives, Historical Manuscripts and Current Records, 1979-1982. Compiled by Patricia A. Andrews and Bettye J. Grier. National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC 20408. Free, from NARA's Central Information Division.

An annual edition of this publication is planned compiling a comprehensive bibliography of current archival literature.

Committee on the Records of Government Issues: Final Report. Chaired by Ernest May for the Council on Library Resources (CLR), the American Council of Learned Societies (ACLS), and the Social Science Research Council. Available from CLR, 1785 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036.

Completed a year ago, the study concludes that federal level "responsibility for ... records and recordkeeping is fragmented and ill-defined," that the officials responsible for creating records should be made accountable for ... the preservation of those records...." The committee specifically recommends that the functions of NARA be expanded and that public awareness of and access to the nation's documentary heritage be increased.

"Archimarks" (Archival bookmarks, 2" x 4", in sets of 8). Order from Mary Boccaccio, Joyner Library, Eastern Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834.

These defy description, but since levity is hard to find in the archival world, the enterprise should be noted. The 'budget axeing' view would make a good

poster...

Technology Assessment Report: Speech Pattern Recognition/Optical Character Recognition/Digital Raster Scanning. Prepared by NARA's Archival Research and Evaluation Staff (Publication # D013). Association for Information and Image Management, 1100 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910. \$18.00, covers shipping and handling.

Technologies that will be used to convert paper holdings to electronic storage form are examined here. The review is for nontechnical readers and assesses strengths and weaknesses of each system.

Spec Kit 113/April 1985: Preservation Education in ARL Libraries. Office of Management Studies, Association of Research Libraries, 1527 New Hampshire Ave. NW, Washington, DC 20036. \$10.00 for ARL members; \$20.00 for others.

Thirty-five ARL members with growing preservation programs contributed samples of preservation policy statements, staff training materials, reader and donor information, and descriptions of exhibits. The focus is on the care and handling of books, film, and other media. Glossaries, line drawings, and flow charts accompany the text.

"Problems in Archives Kits." Position Descriptions: Records Management and Micrographics; State/Local Government and Historical Societies; College and University Archives; and Federal and

Miscellaneous. SAA, \$5.00 each for members; \$10.00 for others.

Four new PAKS, which assist in designing position descriptions, have been prepared by Sylvia Burck. Each contains an array of position classes and selected bibliography.

The Wages of History (AASLH Employment Trends and Salary Survey). Charles Phillips and Patricia Hogan. American Association for State and Local History, Nashville, TN. \$10.00.

This comprehensive description of state and local history salary ranges is organized by regions. General hiring trends and the experience and education required by listed institutions are featured.

James Merrill, Poet. Washington University Libraries, Campus Box 1061, St. Louis, MO 63130. \$4.00.

An exhibit catalog including printed materials and manuscripts from Washington University's Modern Literature Collection, this thirty-two page booklet is well designed and includes a list of selected references and an index.