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Reviews

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Reviews

Archival Information: How to Find It, How to Use It.
Edited by Steven Fisher. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2004.
Index. 180 pp. Hardcover, \$69.95.

Research necessitating the use of archival materials can be a daunting task for general researchers. Although most people have some familiarity with using libraries for study, many are unfamiliar with the concept of archives, especially the process of conducting research in those repositories. *Archival Information* provides an introduction to archives and the various resources available for a selection of topics.

This resource is a much-needed addition to the sphere of general reference publications pertaining to archival collections. Fisher begins with a short summary of what one can expect when visiting an archival repository, including archival terminology, archival etiquette, rules and regulations, and a brief treatment of copyright. This section of the book will be especially useful to those who are new to using archival materials.

Each of the book's eleven chapters covers a popular research subject area and is written by a member of the archival profession with a specialization in that field of study—American government, genealogy, science, religion, women's history, moving image and sound, fine arts, performing arts, sports, business, and the military. Stated by the author as an objective, the best resources for each area are included. The bibliographies list both print and online sources. In addition, the major libraries, museums, and historical societies collecting within each field are noted.

The chapter on American government archives gives a brief overview of the kinds of materials one can find in local and national governmental repositories and provides a listing and contact information for each of the nineteen National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) records centers. It also includes contact information and a holdings summary for all fifty of the state archives.

Russell P. Baker, author of the chapter pertaining to genealogical archives, reviews the procedures involved in genealogical research, reiterates appropriate reading room behavior, and emphasizes the need to prepare before visiting a repository for research. This chapter is a good starting place for the beginning genealogist and an excellent resource for archivists who need to point such researchers in the appropriate direction.

Although the treatment of each topic is not exhaustive, this publication is intended to be an introduction and succeeds at that point. An excellent resource for general researchers, the work will be useful in repositories and libraries alike.

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The Civil War Research Guide: A Guide for Researching Your Civil War Ancestor. By Stephen McManus, Donald Thompson, and Thomas Churchill. Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2003. Bibliography, appendices. 115 pp. Softcover, \$9.95.

As the train heads for River City, Iowa, at the beginning of *The Music Man*, drummers sing about the necessity of knowing the territory. That song could be the theme of this book, in which a Pennsylvanian, a Marylander, and a South Carolinian team up to discuss territory that genealogists and other researchers interested in Civil War unit-level history need to know. The writers aim to de-mystify genealogical research for Civil War ancestors with this “nuts-and-bolts” approach to a process that, they promise the reader, relies more on common sense and good organization than on arcane knowledge. The book grows out of their independent realization that investigating an individual Civil War soldier often necessitates researching that person’s military unit, their experience in meeting each other, and their decision to pool their knowledge and work together on a history of an obscure Union infantry regiment, the 18th Massachusetts.

Reliance on experiential learning gives the book some strength. The authors organize their work topically and lard their text with examples and sidebars (mostly containing some tidbit of fact or process gleaned from their experiences and almost invariably about the 18th Massachusetts). It offers handy appendices, including sample letters and forms for keeping up with information and research locations. It makes a virtue out of ignorance by promising beginners a reasonably good, though elementary, methodological outline, and it reminds readers of the necessities of flexibility and consistency in approaching subject and sources. Finally, the authors include electronic as well as print sources. They are careful to include caveats that the Internet is a constantly shifting source for which a good search engine is a must (preferably one with weighted results like Google) and that information obtained from the Internet is always suspect since there is no authority control.

Sadly, the authors’ reliance on experience researching a Union regiment produces more flaws than strengths. The process of researching ancestors who were soldiers involves, like the conflict itself, two sides. Predicating the book on their own limited experience seemingly caused the authors to emphasize Union sources at the expense of Confederate ones. The best example is their inclusion of information on the Union’s Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) but exclusion of data on both the United Daughters of the Confederacy (UDC) and Sons of Con-

federate Veterans (SCV). While perhaps not a concern to researchers of Massachusetts ancestors, others will find that border and most southern states provided men to both armies. Individuals sometimes enlisted in or were reorganized into different units (or even into different armies), which could mislead genealogists using the authors' "unit approach." In addition, the authors' research slants the guide toward unit history to an extent that often minimizes the potential search for individuals, such as prisoners of war.

The book's experiential basis produces other flaws of omission. Most importantly, the authors ignore potentially significant sources. Small academic libraries often have valuable archival collections that will not appear in the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (NUCMC). The religious press (particularly for mainline religions and arguably more so for their southern branches) is a rich source for letters or descriptions from chaplains and other adherents that appear nowhere else. Winifred Gregory's *American Newspapers 1821-1936* lists newspapers published during the era and indicates where copies were available in 1937, while David J. Eicher's *The Civil War in Books: An Analytical Bibliography* offers a more recent look at the kinds of resources the authors mention in their "Suggested Books of Interest" section. Instead of referring to either of these sources, the authors cited the much older *Civil War Books* by Allan Nevins et al. Lack of an index is the last obvious flaw—though a minor one, given the book's table of contents, short chapters, and overall brevity.

The collaborators named their book *The Civil War Research Guide*, but there are other, better guides to Civil War and genealogical research. The concise introduction to process and sources, particularly electronic ones, might be more appropriately named *A Civil War Research Guide*.

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004. Appendices, index. 291 pp. Soft cover, \$49.00 (SAA member price \$35.00).

When I first heard that DACS (*Describing Archives: A Content Standard*) would be replacing APPM (*Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts*) as the national standard for archival cataloging rules, my response was “Oh, no—not a new standard to learn!” After all, my professional career as an archivist began the year APPM was published, and I had learned my APPM directly from the master. As I discovered more about DACS, however, I realized that it represents a natural next step in the evolution of archival description, reflective of and motivated by the rapid growth of technology, the recognition of the need to create and incorporate international standards, and a desire to get away from a bibliographic model of description. Things have certainly changed over the past quarter century!

DACS, as a response to change on many fronts, represents the consolidation of a number of national, international, and electronic data standards for archival cataloging and finding aids. While it is strongly based on APPM, it also incorporates EAD (*Encoded Archival Description Tag Library*), since archivists now need consistent rules for creating finding aids as well as cataloging records in an electronic environment. It retains a relationship with MARC 21 and AACR2 and expands in scope to include the International Council on Archives standards, ISAD (G) (*General International Standard Archival Description*) and ISAAR (CPF) (*International Standard Archival Authority Record for Corporate Bodies, Persons, and Families*).

To fully understand the importance and extent of DACS as the new United States standard, it is useful to know its history. DACS began with meetings in 1996 and 1999 between American and Canadian archivists to discuss reconciling their two national standards, APPM and its Canadian equivalent, RAD (*Rules For Archival Description*), with international descriptive standards, specifically ISAD (G) and ISAAR (CPF). The initiative was furthered with the first meeting of CUSTARD, the Canada–US Task Force on Archival Description, in July 2001. After the second meeting, a set of guiding principles was created and is reproduced in the preface of DACS.

In January 2003 a draft of the new standard, under the working title *Describing Archives: A Cataloging Standard*, was finished and revised by CUSTARD members and external reviewers. At this point, Task Force members acknowledged that significant differences still existed between US and Canadian practices, but discussions to reconcile them continued until July 2003. Unable to create a satisfactory resolution, CUSTARD members agreed to disagree, acknowledged that progress had been made and standards were now closer, and parted on friendly terms, expressing the wish to continue future discussions.

The Canadian Committee on Archival Description (CCAD) decided to continue using the draft of DACS, with some changes, to revise RAD. Work on RAD2 continues, and those interested in its progress should go to the CCAD website, part of the Canadian Council of Archives site (<http://www.cdncouncilarchives.ca/archdes.html>). After further editing, the Society of American Archivists published the new American standard in April 2004, retaining the working title of the document.

Having examined the background, the remainder of this review will focus on the document only, and not the standard. The preface promises that “those accustomed to using APPM will have little difficulty adopting this new standard.” While this reviewer agrees, there are certainly differences in structure, content, and scope. For example, DACS is divided into three sections: (1) Describing Archival Materials, (2) Describing Creators, and (3) Forms of Name; APPM is divided into two sections: (1) Description and (2) Headings and Uniform Titles. Data elements are also newly organized in some cases. Many of the old APPM notes (1.7) have been placed in new conceptual areas, and some are in new chapters. Fortunately, the volume provides crosswalk tables in the appendix to help users reorient themselves to the new locations of familiar APPM rules.

Even though DACS contains almost all of the content of APPM, several areas that deal with bibliographic description are omitted in DACS. Parallel titles and bibliographic series are not discussed, since these concepts are not relevant to archival cataloging. This omission reflects just how much archival cataloging has evolved in recent years. APPM was developed to re-

place the fourth chapter of AACR, and as the first departure from this standard, it followed the bibliographic model more directly. Now that DACS is replacing APPM, archival catalogers have had over twenty years to move away from this bibliographic model and develop idiosyncratic rules that more precisely describe archival materials.

DACS has expanded beyond the boundaries of APPM in several significant ways. While APPM dealt specifically with catalog record creation, DACS is broader in scope and, according to the preface, "can be used to create any type or level of description of archival and manuscript materials, including catalog records and full finding aids." Also, while APPM was designed to be used with MARC, DACS may be used with a number of output standards. Since it is "output neutral" and some output formats specify a preferred order, DACS does not define the order of data elements.

The volume begins with a preface that concisely but thoroughly outlines the history of the development of DACS, its relationship to other US and international standards, and the ways it compares to and differs from APPM. In addition, it includes the eight archival principles that form its basis and an overview of archival description, which discusses access points and tools. By the time the reader finishes the preface, he or she has a thoughtful, historic, philosophical, and practical orientation to the new standard.

The statement of the principles that came out of the CUSTARD project is described in the preface as "a concise articulation of the nature of archival materials and how that nature translates into descriptive tools." In fewer than five pages, the authors and editors have simply but elegantly distilled the essence of archival materials and description in words non-archivists can understand.

The heart of the volume is the twenty-five data elements. These have been newly organized into the following sections: purpose and scope, exclusions (as appropriate), sources of information, and general rules. Commentaries are included, when necessary, to give extended definitions or instructions for further clarification. As with the second edition of APPM, examples are given to illustrate the general rules. Each data element ends with examples of EAD and MARC 21 encoding. This additional structure and guidance will be welcomed by the unfamiliar user.

The volume ends with a set of four extremely useful appendices. The first is a glossary of terms and a bibliography of sources used to create the definitions. The second appendix is a list of companion standards, including (1) specific format content standards (e.g., graphic materials, sound recordings), (2) thesauri (e.g., *Art & Architecture Thesaurus*, *US MARC Codes*), and (3) data output standards (e.g., EAD, MARC 21). The third appendix consists of crosswalk tables, showing the relationship of DACS to APPM, EAD, MARC 21, ISAD(G), and ISAAR(CPF). The last appendix gives examples of full EAD and MARC 21 encoding for four different collection types: personal papers, family papers, organizational records, and artificial collections. There is also an example of a MARC record for a single manuscript item.

Throughout, the writing is clean, concise, precise, and direct; it avoids excessive jargon and clarifies rather than obfuscates. It is a shining example of what good technical writing should be, and this reviewer thanks the authors and editors for the obvious care that went into crafting the language of the document. They took considerable pains to ensure that users could make the transition from APPM to the new standard with the least amount of trauma by including a grounding preface; a standard structure for the data elements; additional commentaries to clarify definitions, contexts, and applications; examples to illustrate the general rules; MARC 21 and EAD encoding examples; and the vital table of crosswalks.

This volume is impressive for several reasons. First, it clearly reflects the growth and maturation of American archival descriptive standards and practices over the past quarter century. Second, it seamlessly combines national, international, and electronic standards with descriptive practices that have become the common practices in the community. Third, it is presented in a way that makes the new standard immediately accessible and straightforward to use.

Describing Archives: A Content Standard is a fitting successor to the excellent precedent set by APPM2. It is the result of an amazing amount of extremely thoughtful teamwork by a number of Canadian and American archivists. The authors and editors have managed to bring order out of growing chaos by combining, distilling, and simplifying a complex group of standards—and they made it user-friendly.

I would suggest that DACS, like Douglas Adams's fictitious *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, be inscribed on the cover in large, friendly letters with these reassuring words: "DON'T PANIC!"

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Managing Archival & Manuscript Repositories. By Michael J. Kurtz. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2004. Illustrated, index, suggested readings. 260 pp. Soft cover, \$49.00 (SAA member price \$35.00).

Managing Archival & Manuscript Repositories by Michael Kurtz is a recently published volume in the Society of American Archivists' Archival Fundamentals Series II. It replaces the Series I manual by the same title, authored by Thomas Winstead and William Nolte in 1991. Kurtz's well written and organized work is an improvement over the earlier publication, although it does contain some of the earlier work's characteristics and content. A notable difference is the more open-ended approach and the less proscriptive and manual-like tone of the current publication.

The Kurtz version introduces recent advances in the social and managerial sciences as they apply to work in medium-to-smaller archival and manuscript repositories. Advances in the fields of communication, personnel management, organizational theory, technology planning and management, and project management are included, making this a book that every archivist and manuscript curator with management responsibilities or aspirations will want to read and own for frequent reference.

Managing Archival & Manuscript Repositories is an up-to-date guide to management theories and concepts, such as the principles of managing and administering fiscal resources, staff, technology, and facilities. This is not a business school management text. It is lively and well written, with practical discussions of real issues faced by every manager in an archives

or manuscripts program. The book includes a multitude of useful illustrations and sample forms that keep the reader interested. It is focused enough to guide even the novice managers toward sound practices and procedures. Among the most valuable features of the work are the short annotated bibliographies at the end of each chapter that direct users toward vetted sources for more depth and detail.

The book is divided into thirteen chapters and includes shorter sections on management literature, web sites, and professional associations. A concluding note addresses how the archival manager can best keep skills well tuned and current.

The first four chapters establish and discuss the environment and the management principles that modern repository managers must keep in mind to give their work cohesion and structure in actual practice. They outline the challenges a repository will face, the tools used to address them, and the vision that a successfully managed organization must develop and hold.

Techniques and procedures in managing inanimate resources are found in chapters on planning and reporting, project management, and information technology. All are provided within the context of unique and specialized functions of a historical records repository. This discussion does not set an archival or manuscript repository apart from commercial enterprises, but rather demonstrates similarities in management principles and practices for the improvement of institutional effectiveness and efficiency.

The living resources of an organization and their proper stewardship receive attention in discussions of human resources and communication. Readers are reminded that the most expensive and valuable resources of any repository are also the most difficult to lead toward the common goal of institutional success. The failure of a supervisor to use fairness, leadership, and clear communication results in the predictable and costly loss of institutional knowledge and hard-developed expertise.

The more traditional sections of the book look at management of facilities and budgets. Building new facilities, as well as remodeling and repurposing existing facilities for more efficiency, are considered. Various types of budgets and methods of budgeting are outlined, along with an analysis of the appropriate and practical uses of each style.

The final chapters on fundraising and public relations constitute a real contribution to the professional literature. Though the search for grants and donors is not a new concept in historical repositories, useful literature guiding the new manager in this direction was all but non-existent a few years ago. Kurtz's discussion of how to search for and cultivate donors, and how to present the archives and manuscript programs in the best light, is excellent. The author recognizes that it takes both the large institutional picture and practical, well seasoned advice to make progress at breaking the cycle of archival poverty and repository invisibility.

Managing Archival & Manuscript Repositories is an extremely useful resource for the new manager or the seasoned administrator who needs to sharpen skills or bring them up to date. I can think of no other volume on management that is written with more clarity and fluidity than this one, and I recommend it without reservation or qualification. The bibliographical essay at the end of each chapter makes this publication worth the price of purchase alone.

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