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## Reviews

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## REVIEWS

*Research and the Manuscript Tradition*. By Frank G. Burke. Lanham, MD and London: Scarecrow Press, Inc., and Society of American Archivists, 1997. Bibliography, index. 310 pp. Hardcover, \$52.50.

Reflecting on over twenty years of experience as a practicing archivist and as an archival educator, Frank Burke provides a unique resource to researchers and archivists alike with his book, *Research and the Manuscript Tradition*. Neither textbook, nor manual, *Research and the Manuscript Tradition* is a behind-the-scenes tour of archival history, theory, and practice written to initiate neophyte researchers into the world of archives and manuscripts repositories. Burke targets his book at researchers rather than archivists in an attempt to "rectify the gap in research education and training . . . because researchers are not likely to become familiar with texts on manuscript use in their career, whereas archivists are."

Working with the premise that researchers who understand the rationales behind collecting, arrangement, description, reference, et cetera will be better able to utilize the collections of an institution, Burke explains the nuts and bolts of archival work. Burke acknowledges the idiosyncrasies of these nontraditional information centers, conceding that to the uninitiated collecting policies seem arbitrary and finding aids, both print and electronic, appear to be complex and

inaccessible. He then systematically demystifies the functions and products of manuscript collections and repositories. Taking each aspect of archival work in turn, Burke explains why the archivist does what she/he does and what benefits researchers derive from these efforts. He addresses the governing tenets of arrangement, description, reference, collecting policies, law and ethics.

*Research and the Manuscript Tradition* is a well-written, carefully arranged diagram of archival theory and practice. Burke addresses each issue concisely and eloquently, with emphasis on real-life examples. Burke tells the researcher what to expect from a reference interview, how to use electronic media to track down collections, and how to maximize research time once at a repository. Whether or not its intended audience, novice researchers, will read the book cover to cover, understand the complexities that professional archivists easily digest, and benefit from the information is another question all together. At times the book provides more detail on specific segments of archival work than a novice would need to know or be able to synthesize. For example, is it important for researchers to know the mechanics of FirstSearch beyond the caveat, "Warning, consult a trained professional"? Those occasional tangents contribute to the inclusiveness of the book, but may detract from its usefulness to novices.

This is the book that archivists wish all researchers would read before walking through the reading room door. Clearly, patiently, and thoroughly, it preempts questions such as Why is this collection restricted? Or how do I find related collections? However, this is not the type of book to sit on a shelf at the reference desk; rather, it should be required reading in undergraduate and graduate historical research methods classes. While some of the material or topics may be too esoteric or of little immediate concern to them, notably the section on law and archival ethics, it provides a solid foundation to students taking those first tentative steps into

the archives. Although Burke argues that archival students have access to other texts and professional guides during their education, this book is a worthwhile addition to a first-year bibliography.

Although this book is hard to categorize being neither reminiscence, nor guidebook, nor manual, it makes a valuable contribution to both archival and historical education. *Research and the Manuscript Tradition* provides the bibliographic instruction for manuscripts repositories that students badly need and for which archivists should be eternally grateful.

Susan E. Dick  
Processing Archivist  
Georgia Historical Society

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*Editing Historical Documents: A Handbook of Practice.* By Michael E. Stevens and Steven B. Burg. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press and the American Association for State and Local History, 1997. Illustrations, bibliography, appendices, index. 265 pp. Hardcover, \$49.00; softcover, \$24.95.

As the authors of this timely and accessible handbook relate in their preface, documentary editors have traditionally been reluctant to codify their practice. Only relatively recently, with the formation of the Association for Documentary Editing in 1978, have editors gained a venue in which to discuss their methods of practice. A guide and an annotated bibliography prepared for the association are essential works to anyone embarking on a documentary edition. Nonetheless, this newest publication, *Editing Historical Documents*, whose authors bring with them a wealth

of experience, fills a void by providing not only a clear discussion of the various conventions but also examples that illustrate how current, mostly larger, historical editions have applied the different styles of editorial principles to a broad sample of documents held at various archives and libraries in the United States.

The book is organized into nine well-arranged chapters preceded by discussion of the field of documentary editing that may have been more forthright in its discussion of funding issues in light of disagreements among archivists and historians over what types of projects better preserve and make accessible the documentary heritage. The first chapter serves as an insightful overview of the important decisions editors face when setting out to define the goals of an editing project, taking into consideration the types of sources, intended audience, and size and breadth of an edition. Chapter 2 addresses the fundamental challenge of selecting and arranging the documents for a selective or comprehensive edition and optimum presentation. The text here is filled with examples, although it is in the next seven chapters, which discuss decisions about the style of transcription, annotation, access and indexing, front and back matter that the examples reproduced from current editions serve their greatest purpose by allowing the reader to examine various methods in practice.

Chapter 3 provides an introduction to the general principles of transcription and is followed by a chapter that delves into the details of various styles of transcription, including the various forms of "expanded transcription," which is the style most frequently employed by editors of historical editions and covered further in Chapter 5. Similar to the style of the introductory chapter on transcription, Chapters 6 and 7 provide the reader with an overview of annotation methods and many examples of how annotation styles may be instructed by, among other things, the intended audience of the edition. The book continues with a brief chapter on

indexing and concludes with instructive advice on what to include in an edition's front and back matter.

Clearly cited facsimiles presented throughout the book are drawn from over one hundred book and microform editions and illustrate the application of editing practice to various types of documents, including handwritten, machine-created, illustrations, and foreign language text. In sum, this handbook offers both new and experienced editors who are intending to reach either a more general or academic audience with samples of various methods at their fingertips, which previously editors had to gather painstakingly on their own.

I do have some quibbles. This handbook spends only a few paragraphs on the role of electronic editions, and thus does not provide the guidance on this topic that its authors claim in the introduction. Nor do the authors provide enough information about the Modern Editions Partnership, which is developing important standards for creating electronic texts for CD-ROM and the Web. Nonetheless, while the electronic environment will provide new tools, the editor's fundamental role will not change. This handbook will guide present and future editors to achieve the clear and consistent style in their work that the authors of this book have clearly achieved in theirs.

Anke Voss-Hubbard  
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*Lest We Forget: The Passage from Africa to Slavery and Emancipation.* By Velma Marie Thomas. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1997. Illustrations, facsimiles, appendix. 32 pp. Hardcover, \$29.95.

Thomas's *Lest We Forget* is not the particularized, scholarly tome of professional writing replete with sociological analysis. It is accessible by readers of all ages. This is not a history of African Americans but is instead a historical examination of the crime of slavery and the injustice and suffering that institution wrought. It is a representation through facsimile artifacts and documents of the voice and experience of the enslaved person. The tone of this book is compassionate rather than bitter. The author makes clear her relationship to the subject by the repeated phrase—"my people"; nonetheless, her work resonates with the findings of the rich historiography of the past thirty years devoted to American slavery.

The plea for "balance" in today's society creates a risk of not hearing the voice of the slave with compassion. In the case of American slavery, the willingness of the reader/scholar to embrace compassion leads to historical understanding. In the minds of some, this compassion violates balance by separating the issue of slavery from a more general history, particularly when a publication is directed at a young or general readership. By opening up to Thomas's voice for early American slaves, we learn something and enrich ourselves. This voice is sorely needed, even in the large and sympathetic body of historiography devoted to this subject.

Narrow studies of slavery often miss its global context, but this book locates slavery squarely in a world order guarded by an exploitative system of colonialism. An example of this is a circa 1450 map of Africa. When the reader pulls a sliding blind, this map of Africa becomes the segmented, arbitrary possessions of 1880. Though broad in scope, I find nothing in

this book to contradict the general consensus of professional historians.

Thomas's work is an unusual book of special interest to the archival community. Not another tome of standard historiography, it is a portable exhibit between hardcovers. Of special interest to the profession is its reliance on creative facsimiles of documents to convey its message about American slavery. In contrast to standard works in which the documentary source is obfuscated in a cryptic citation, the author imaginatively replicates the documentary and material evidence of slavery and presents it in a full focus for the reader.

Beyond being a good introduction to the history of the crime of slavery, this book is also a work by which the student can see the sources of history and understand something of how published history is forged. Archivists are forever looking for ways to exhibit delicate holdings without compromising their preservation. Many good examples exist in this book of effective facsimiles that convey the texture and patina of real documents. The use of facsimiles and three-dimensional construction in this work focuses the subject in a way unknown to any except those who work daily with historical documents.

A good example of this use is the construction of a tobacco tin. The reader opens the "tin" and removes from it the manumission paper of a freed slave. The paper is a beautiful facsimile, which conveys the experience of real documents. It instills the reader with some of the discernible reverence that its original owner must have borne. In reproducing this artifact, Thomas achieves accessibility unknown in professional history where it likely would have been reduced to a footnote.

The use of facsimiles and three-dimensional constructions in this work makes the subject concrete. Thomas's aesthetic response to the document is a rich one. She recreates the striking experience of encountering a forgotten fact in a



crinkled, stained document. The fact is then evocatively presented in the replicated artifact. The effect is far more arresting than that of academic abstraction.

*Lest We Forget* is a magnificently produced and visually stimulating book. The cover bills it as a "three-dimensional interactive book with photographs and documents from the Black Holocaust Exhibit." It does not disappoint. Given the importance of slavery to the history of Georgia, I can think of no repositories in this state, which could not benefit from this special publication. For repositories, patronized by students and lay readers, it is paramount.

Dale L. Couch

Georgia Department of Archives and History



*A Guide to the Richard B. Russell, Jr. Collection.* Edited by Sheryl B. Vogt. Athens, GA: The Richard B. Russell Foundation, Inc., and the University of Georgia, 1997. Illustrations, appendices, bibliography. 87 pp. Softcover. Contact repository for copies.

As an introduction to the career of an important regional and national politician and as an archival descriptive tool, the new *Guide to the Richard B. Russell, Jr. Collection* from the Richard B. Russell Library for Political Research and Studies at the University of Georgia Libraries is a successful publication. At a time when the archival community is placing great emphasis developing EAD for detailed finding aids, it is encouraging to see the continued value of summary guides to collections. The Russell Library has produced a new model guide.

Richard Brevard Russell, Jr., born in 1897 in the small town of Winder, Georgia, gave fifty years of public service which began in 1921 with his election to the Georgia House of Representatives and ended with his death in 1971 after thirty-eight years as a powerhouse in the United States Senate. The high regard in which he was held by his colleagues is reflected by the 1972 renaming of the Old Senate Office Building in Washington, D.C., as the Richard Brevard Russell Senate Office Building.

Russell's first elected position was to the Georgia House of Representatives at the age of twenty-three. Four of his ten years there were as its Speaker; in 1930 Russell was elected governor of Georgia. Upon the death of Senator William Harris in 1932, Russell ran for and was elected to the United States Senate, becoming the nation's youngest senator at age thirty-five. His freshman appointment to the Appropriations committee paved the way for a powerful future in the Senate. He later chaired that committee as well as the Committee on Armed Services. Advising presidents from Roosevelt to Nixon, Russell influenced national security and other areas of national policy during the Great Depression and the New Deal through the Vietnam War.

The printed guide to the Richard Russell Collection is the culmination of a process that began in 1958 with an initial deposit of several boxes of files in Georgia, steam rolled with the 1971 transfer of forty-five tons of the senator's papers, and reached a milestone with the opening of the collection for research in 1977. Along the way, the Russell Foundation was established and the Georgia General Assembly passed legislation to assist with the funding of the Russell Library. Similar to the Dirksen Foundation which had been created to establish the Everett Dirksen Library at Pekin, Illinois, the Russell Foundation and the Richard B. Russell Estate supported the growth of the Russell Library as a major center for research in political history and public policy. The library now houses over one hundred collections, and the Foundation

endows a Russell chair in history at the university. Other institutions can only envy the support of such a foundation which funds special programs and this fine new guide.

The *Guide to the Richard B. Russell, Jr. Collection* provides the traditional components of a summary guide: biographical essay, collection note, collection outline, series descriptions, and supporting appendices such as a chronology and a list of committee assignments which give further context for the collection. The handsomely illustrated publication also includes a bibliography, a list of interviews in the related Richard B. Russell Foundation Oral History Project, and a useful "subject-subgroup/series index" which helps a researcher access the collection. What the guide offers that is of special interest to practicing archivists as well as practical researchers is a history of the collection and the Russell Library as a repository, and functional information on the library's policies and procedures which will help researchers plan visits to use the collection. Edited by Sheryl B. Vogt, archivist and department head of the Russell Library, the *Guide to the Richard B. Russell, Jr. Collection* is a welcome addition to a healthy group of guides to congressional collections and a new model for archival guides in general.

L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin  
University of Delaware Library

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*Congressional Papers Management: Collecting, Appraising, Arranging and Describing Documentation of United States Senators, Representatives, Related Individuals and Organizations.* By Faye Phillips. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company, 1996. Illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. 208 pp. Hardcover, \$38.50.

Editorial Note: This review was first published in the 1996 issue of *Provenance*. Technical and proofreading errors caused the omission of several lines in the final copy. The review is reprinted here for the benefit of the reviewer, the author, and our readership.

Faye Phillips's *Congressional Papers Management* is an important and ambitious but flawed work not susceptible to easy categorization or emphatic judgment. Phillips offers this volume as "a critical companion" to the records management publications of the House and Senate historical offices, and to the 1992 *Documentation of Congress* (to which she was also a contributor), to assist archivists in repositories that have made a commitment to acquire, catalog, and make available one or more congressional collections. The book has five chapters: one each on collecting, appraising, and arranging and describing congressional papers; one on "Guidelines for Arrangement and Description"; and one on "Sampling and Electronic Records." Phillips has included many sample forms and an up-to-date bibliography of writings on congressional papers.

There are basically three types of repositories which care for and about congressional collections: 1) those that specialize in congressional and other public affairs collections, 2) those that actively collect congressional papers as part of a larger geographic and topical mandate, and 3) those that—deliberately or accidentally—acquire at most one or two congressional collections largely out of keeping with the rest of their holdings. The curators in these three types of repositories have distinct (though not entirely separate) needs

when it comes to furthering their education in the management of congressional papers. By structure and content, *Congressional Papers Management* seems to be a cross between a beginners manual for those new to congressional collections and a processing manual for paraprofessionals employed by geographic and special-focus repositories.

Phillips has published *Congressional Papers Management* at a time of increasing turnover in congressional delegations and when more and more repositories are receiving their first such collections (and begging for help). In the face of this increased need, the book seeks to provide one-stop-shopping for curators of congressional papers collections, extensively summarizing general archival works on collection development and arrangement and description. Particularly in the chapters on collection and appraisal, Phillips provides a good synthesis of a growing and complex body of writing on congressional papers while properly adding her own assessments in clear but discreet terms. She gives welcome prominence to the need for a collecting policy for congressional papers. The two chapters on arrangement and description are based on policy and finding aid examples gathered from other repositories and extended summaries of basic manuals on archival processing. The fourth chapter includes extensive references to conservation problems.

As an introductory manual *Congressional Papers Management* has at least three important weaknesses. First, it does not set the management of congressional collections in the larger context of a repository's other collections. While there are indeed aspects of modern congressional collections that distinguish them from other collections, the book treats them as if totally unrelated to the equally massive records of a modern social service agency or business or religious congregation or labor union. This conceptual narrowness is reflected in the fact that, with the exception of the first arrangement and description chapter, Phillips cites virtually no literature that is not specifically about congressional papers. While this

is noticeable in the chapters on collection development and appraisal, it is positively crippling in the chapter on sampling and electronic records.

Second, and related, the vast majority of the specific examples cited in the book (particularly in the two arrangement and description chapters) are of papers of collections that should better be looked at as exceptions rather than rules. Richard Russell, Sam Nunn, Mike Gravel, Hubert Humphrey, and Frank Church are in no way "typical" members of Congress (not even "typical" senators), and the decisions made about their papers should not be taken as typical or standard. The result of this bias is to give the impression that "correct" processing of congressional papers is far more detailed than (or, many archivists would ever, should be) is the case. One specific example (p. 147) are the directions for item ordering and item weeding Press Files: "if item arrangement is more time-consuming than the repository can afford, then only remove the duplicates. . . ." Removing duplicates, however, is itself often more than the repository can afford, and depending on the extent of the duplication, it is quite possible that the space saved by searching for duplicates is worth less to the repository than the staff time taken to search for them.

Third, if the book is intended to be a fairly comprehensive manual, why are there not chapters on conservation and on reference and outreach? A conservation chapter, in particular, would have made sense given the extensive repetition (series by series) in the arrangement and description chapters of admonitions on dealing with audio-visual material, oversized material, and deteriorating boxes and folders. Why include documentation policy but little discussion of deeds of gift? (Viewed instead as a processing manual for paraprofessionals in larger institutions, *Congressional Papers Management* does not really need these extra chapters, and also does not need its current chapters on collection development and appraisal.) Most disappointing,

for a 1996 imprint, is the section on electronic records. This thin section (6 pages of 181) ignores the abundant writing on electronic records not specific to congressional offices, and begs for a more detailed examination of the content, structure, and function of the current Senate systems and some words about the more common software being used in House offices.

So this is a useful but flawed book. It is probably most valuable for those curators without much experience managing congressional papers (though it sets standards that are unrealistic for many of them) and as a teaching tool for use by supervising curators at repositories specializing in congressional collections (where by definition a higher level of resources per collection have been available to congressional papers). Curators at repositories who view and treat congressional collections as a fairly routine segment of much broader appraisal and processing activities will find Phillips's fine synthesis of appraisal issues of most interest. Curators with responsibility for congressional collections owe it to themselves to read through this book at least once and to make the decision to purchase a personal or institutional copy on the basis of that direct assessment.

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