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## Book Reviews

Archie Motley  
*Chicago Historical Society*

Robert S. Martin  
*University of Texas at Arlington*

Gerald F. Roberts  
*Berea College*

Clifton H. Jones  
*Southern Methodist University*

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BOOK REVIEWS

A MANUAL OF ARCHIVAL TECHNIQUES. Edited by Roland M. Baumann. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1979. Pp. vii, 127. Paper. \$2.75.)

In 1978, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission (PHMC), with support from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC), conducted three workshops in archival techniques attended by 225 people from a wide range of state, private, and public archival institutions. The workshops served as the first systematic effort by the PHMC to provide instruction to people from agencies which had been unable to care for the manuscripts they had accumulated over the years or to make them accessible for research use. To reach people who did not attend the workshops, and to communicate with workshop participants a second time, the PHMC secured additional funding to publish papers from these workshops in A Manual of Archival Techniques.

Due to the format of these workshops and the limited professional expertise of many people who participated in them, the papers offered in the published version are all relatively brief (under ten pages each) and are primarily devoted to general accounts of archival procedures and practices rather than to their in-depth treatment. Beginning with Peter Parker's wry overview of the administration of historical records, through a case study of the mythical Yahoo Historical Society, the Manual considers arrangement and description of manuscripts; planning for users; security and space; conservation of historical materials; and sources of financial assistance from state and federal agencies.

Most of the papers published in the Manual are well done, capturing the essence of their subject matter in a manner suitable to the professional level of workshop participants and less experienced archivists in general. The better pieces include Elisabeth Betz's work on photographs, Leon Stout's comments on cartographic records, George Chalou's article on reference work, Willman Spawn's article on disaster planning, and Norvell Jones's advice on first steps in the preservation of paper objects. The four pieces on possible sources of funding (from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as well as the National Endowment for the Humanities and the NHPRC) are also useful, though rather abbreviated.

Several less successful presentations are also offered. Their chief defect lies in their unsystematic treatment of their respective subjects. The authors of this latter group of essays readily acknowledge that better treatments of their topics can be found in the Society of American Archivists' Basic Manual Series and in the works of Duckett, Kane, and others. Even so, they fail to provide the kinds of specific information (e.g., specimens of card catalog entries and sample agency forms) that are sorely needed by inexperienced archivists in the course of their work.

Since many of the techniques covered in this volume have been sufficiently explored in earlier publications, the Manual's main contribution lies in its service as a written record of the three Pennsylvania workshops. The volume will also serve to remind us of the commendable efforts of the PHMC in promoting the professional collecting, processing, and preserving of archival materials and in assisting with the education of those vested with the responsibility for the protection of our historically significant records.

Chicago Historical Society

Archie Motley



GUIDE TO THE RECORDS GROUPS IN THE PENNSYLVANIA STATE ARCHIVES. Edited by Frank M. Suran. (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1980. Pp. iii, 84. Index. Paper. \$5.)

Another in a series of guides to the Pennsylvania State Archives published by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, this volume provides a description of the provincial and state records housed in that repository. As such, it is a complement to the Guide to the Manuscript Groups in the Pennsylvania State Archives, compiled by Harry E. Whipkey and published in 1976; it will further be complemented by a similar guide to the county and municipal records housed in the Pennsylvania State Archives in a future volume.

In the present Guide a description is provided for each of forty-six record groups which, with few exceptions, have been established at the level of executive branch departments. For each record group a brief administrative history is given, followed by a listing of subgroups and series. The series title, the dates of the records, and a statement of the volume are given for each series. Researchers requiring more information are requested in the preface of this Guide to inquire concerning the more detailed unpublished inventories which exist for many record groups. A general index to the guide is also provided.

In the preface, the compiler indicates that "the Archives would have liked to have prepared a more comprehensive guide with full administrative histories and detailed descriptions of each record series, [but] the publication of such a finding aid was not possible at this time." In these days of economic retrenchment, an inability to fund comprehensive guides is not difficult to understand. One must nevertheless question the utility of a limited guide such as this.

The series descriptions are sparse in the extreme; some information on types and forms of records should have been provided. In addition, a more standard description of volume, which is here expressed in terms of boxes, cartons, or file drawers, would have been preferred. While a table for converting these measurements to cubic feet is provided, one would normally expect the repository to describe its records in more routine fashion.

To a researcher unfamiliar with the history and structure of the Pennsylvania state government, the Guide is bewildering rather than helpful; and the index is of little assistance in sorting out the history of the various changes in agency structure and title. One can only find, for example, that the Department of Public Instruction (of which the present State Archives was once a part) has been subsumed into the present Department of Education in the very last sentence of the administrative history of the successor agency. In addition, the index is of no help at all in finding records by type. If one is interested in maps, for example, one must approach these records through the provenance of the producing agency, which is a tricky business at best. The same may be said for photographs.

With the exceptions noted above, the compiler of this Guide seems to have succeeded in producing what he set out to do. However, in a period when technology opens a vista of much greater detail in finding aids, rather than less, and consequently much better capabilities for the efficient storage and retrieval of information, one is chagrined to see the production of a guide of such limited utility to the general researcher. One hopes that it will not forestall the production of the more comprehensive work envisaged in the author's preface.

The University of Texas  
at Arlington

Robert S. Martin



SYSTEMS AND PROCEDURES EXCHANGE CENTER: SPECIAL COLLECTIONS KIT 57. Prepared by the Office of Management Studies, Association of Research Libraries. (Washington, D.C.: Association of Research Libraries, 1979. Pp. 107. Illustrations, sample forms. Paper. \$7.50 ARL Members and SPEC Subscribers/\$15.00 others.)

For several years the Systems and Procedures Exchange Center (SPEC) of the Association of Research Libraries (ARL) has been collecting and making available current information on management practices at research libraries in the United States. In the form of kits, each compilation is a collection of documents, reports, and forms dealing with a specific management topic. In the past there have been kits produced on such topics as collection development, acquisition policies, library instruction, preservation of library materials, theft detection and prevention, and microform collections. Special Collections Kit 57 deals with current problems and trends in the administration of special collections departments.

Special Collections Kit 57 lists first the statistical results of the SPEC survey, reporting on the staffing, size, and expenditures of eighty-six ARL members. The documents and forms that follow are divided into four categories. There are eight on collection development policies, five on use policies, four on facilities and housing, and six on fostering support/use. Some of the institutions represented by documents and forms are the University of Tennessee, Iowa State, Princeton, Stanford, the University of Cincinnati, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Brown, Yale, Emory, Duke, and the University of Wisconsin.

The SPEC survey reveals that special collections operations in academic and research libraries today are being forced to reduce rather than expand their activities. Whereas in the 1960s, the rising college or university was often characterized by the expansion

of its archives, manuscript, and rate book collections, the late 1970s witnessed a growing retrenchment. The report states:

A fundamental concern of special collections units as they attempt to respond to a tightening economy and increased emphasis on accountability is justification of the high costs of acquiring, cataloging, preserving, and storing materials that are of national importance but are difficult to support at a local level. It is becoming more difficult to maintain and expand subject strength collections based solely on past collecting patterns.

It would appear that this is true of university special collections, as well as those of small colleges.

Certain statistics reported by the survey are depressing. For example, of fifty-four libraries reporting on environmental controls, only eighteen are considered adequate; of sixty-eight reporting on space for collections and work areas, again only eighteen are adequate. Furthermore, it hardly comes as a surprise to learn that "bibliographic control continues as a prime concern," because of the time requirement for cataloging special materials, the existence of backlogs of unprocessed records/manuscripts, and the pressures on special collections staffs for reference service: waiting on researchers, surveillance of users in reading rooms, and handling reference requests by mail and telephone.

For archivists, Special Collections Kit 57 inevitably invites comparison with the Society of American Archivists' Forms Manual. In this regard, the SAA manual is larger, more comprehensive, and covers many more facets of archival operations than does Kit 57. Although it serves as a good introduction to special collections work, especially for those persons involved in developing policies and procedures for



their institutions, Special Collections Kit 57 actually whets the appetite for more. For example, one wishes for the inclusion of explanations of copyright and analyses of legal problems associated with deeds of gift. On the other hand, Kit 57 does provide examples of attempts at rare book definition and statements of policies on rare book collecting, problems that many libraries, both large and small, have struggled with over the years. For those persons charged with administering a special collections department comprised of rare books, archives, and manuscripts, the section on "Roles and Functions," or collection development policies, probably will prove to be the most useful part of Kit 57.

All in all, it is a useful and worthwhile compilation and one which many librarians, archivists, and curators, particularly those engaged in establishing, reviewing, and revising special collections programs, will refer to again and again.

Berea College

Gerald F. Roberts

MANUAL FOR ACCESSIONING, ARRANGEMENT, AND DESCRIPTION OF MANUSCRIPTS AND ARCHIVES. Prepared by University Archives and Manuscript Division, University of Washington Libraries. (Seattle: University of Washington Libraries, 1980. Pp. 55. Appendices, sample forms. Paper. \$5.)

The University of Washington Library's recently expanded Manual for Accessioning, Arrangement, and Description of Manuscripts and Archives is an in-house publication devoted to a detailed consideration of University Archives rules and procedures. However, the Manual also lays a broad and coherent foundation for the general handling of archival materials and manuscripts. In a comprehensive manner, this volume carefully examines both the theory and the practical



application of methods for the maintenance of essential collections. While one may question the validity of the author's specific prescriptions, few archival manuals offer such a complete overview of procedural needs and practices.

Though this work may be of greatest use to those establishing university or college archives programs of their own, the Manual is also of more general interest as a theoretical and professional statement. This volume is in effect both a summation and an addendum to various archival publications prepared by Richard C. Berner, director of the University of Washington program since the early 1960s. As one might expect, the Manual consistently respects generally accepted archival practices and theory. It also illustrates the practical aspects of Berner's own methods of accessioning and processing, and in this regard invites criticism.

Berner advocates a unitary approach to the treatment of both archival and manuscript collections, an approach which fails to take into account the inherent differences between these two very different types of materials. The author's treatment of collection description in particular is adversely affected by his unitary perspective. The Manual, for example, discourages narrative description of collection contents. The absence of narrative description is certainly acceptable for organizational archives, where record volume is often a limiting factor. However, without the flexibility that a narrative approach offers, finding aids to manuscript collections would provide only partial access to their contents. Admittedly, there is the danger of personal bias in a narrative approach in collection description. However, the benefits to be gained in terms of greater user access to the intellectual contents of the collections in question far outweigh this limitation.

One of the most interesting discussions in the Manual concerns the procedures employed in deciding the level at which a collection is to be processed (e.g., collection, series, folder, or item level). While the author does indicate that a given collection may be processed at any of these levels as its contents dictate, he argues that one should not vary the level of description within a particular collection. As before, Berner's approach suffers here from its inflexibility. Why not treat the more important components of a collection to a detailed level of processing and description while treating less significant materials more generally?

Another problem with this volume is its addenda, which represent one-third of the Manual. Here the author devotes considerable space to a discussion of corporate and subject terms germane to the description of the University of Washington repository's holdings, but of only limited applicability elsewhere. As a general format, however, the addenda thesaurus may prove useful as the basis for further considerations by others in the field of archival description. Perhaps the Library of Congress Guide to Subject Headings might also serve as an example in this regard.

To be fair, one must acknowledge that this Manual was not designed as a profession-wide guide, but rather as an in-house tool. The author has certainly done his university a service by writing it. To archivists outside of the University of Washington system, the volume's greatest value is realized when reading it in conjunction with Berner's earlier publications. As a corpus of works, they offer a sound illustration of the practical application of archival theory.

DeGolyer Library  
Southern Methodist University

Clifton H. Jones