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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

THE ORGANIZATION OF INTERMEDIATE RECORDS STORAGE. By A. W. Maabs, with the collaboration of Guy Duboscq. (Paris, France: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 1974. Pp. 75. Illustrations, tables. \$3.30)

The records center has always been, and will continue to be, one of the most important elements of a good records management program. As a repository for semi-active and inactive records, it provides many of the economies and efficiencies that justify full-scale records programs. Thus, literature that provides evaluation criteria and operating benefits for such a facility is of considerable use to the practicing archivist and records administrator. Published in pamphlet format, *The Organization of Intermediate Records Storage* most definitely meets this requirement. It is applicable to large, as well as small, records facilities. Prepared under a contract between UNESCO and the International Council on Archives, and authored by A. W. Maabs, Records Administration Officer of the Public Records, London, in collaboration with Guy Duboscq, Director-General of the Archives de France, this publication provides an interesting and informative review of intermediate records storage (records center) concepts on an international basis. Information for the study, which is recommended by the authors as a manual, was gathered through a questionnaire distributed to a number of countries and responded to by twenty-six. The text generally follows the structure of the questionnaire, and the inclusion of the questionnaire in the appendix gives the reader an opportunity for personal comparison.

Following an introductory section which outlines the general principles of records centers, as well as their need and operations in responding countries, the publication covers: structure and equipment of records centers; staffing; procedures for retirement of documents; treatment of records in a records center; elimination of documents in a records center; procedures for transfer from records centers to archives; and, in a concluding section, the values of such a facility. The answers to the questionnaire are

considered in each case, sometimes in a summation format, sometimes on a country-by-country basis. In addition to the questionnaire, the appendix also includes plans for a records center to be constructed at Fontainebleau, France; a photo of racking (shelving) in the Intermediate Repository at Hay, United Kingdom; Federal Records Center facility standards in the United States; and a specimen of disposal schedules from the United Kingdom.

The Organization of Intermediate Records Storage offers valuable guidelines for the establishment of a center, but it is not a "how to" manual. It would have been of more value if it had presented some sample layouts of modern records centers, detailed specifications on housing and shelving equipment, and control systems. Comparative analysis of techniques is not made. Facts are presented as collected by the authors, and the interrelationships of the different operating elements of a records center are not taken into account.

Due to authorship, the study is also archivist oriented, maintaining that all centers should be under the control of an archival agency and personnel trained in archival management. The term "records manager" appears only once or twice in the entire work. It is this reviewer's feeling that the lack of an international understanding of records management, rather than a subrogation on the part of archivists, is the cause of this circumstance. The study is primarily government oriented, thus eliminating from view many of the new techniques in records center operations advanced by private industry. There is much to be gained by archivist and records manager alike from a comparative analysis of practices. I am certain the area of computerized controls and the problems of documents in *new* forms (covered by the questionnaire but not in the text) would have been given more consideration had both disciplines been involved.

As a study to promote the use of intermediate records storage (records centers) and to outline the factors to be considered in planning a records center, this addition by UNESCO to its archival series is a most valuable contribution, and its authors deserve our thanks for their efforts.

Lockheed Aircraft Corporation

William Benedon

PICTURE INDEXING FOR LOCAL HISTORY MATERIAL. By Karen Diane Gilbert. (New York: Library Research Associates, 1973. Pp. 36. \$2.45)

Once concerned mainly with the written document, or the printed page, archivists and librarians find themselves today faced with a new challenge. They are called upon in this visual age to administer picture files, to preserve and unlock for use visual documents that once were considered of but marginal interest. No wonder then that the last few years have seen the emergence of a new specialty. Picture librarians have found a fertile field, both in the publishing industry and in the libraries of industrial firms sustaining picture archives. One of their basic tasks is the development of efficient retrieval systems, that is, to find ways to make visual materials accessible with all possible speed.

Few libraries have foresightedly worked along these lines. The Newark Public Library is one of the few. Its Local History Index permits library users to track down pictures of the city's past by way of a card index that has been kept up to date for many years. Ms. Gilbert's booklet describes lucidly both the history and system of classification of the index. Proceeding from general city views to buildings and down to the minutiae of architecture, the Newark Index seems to provide the user with a unique panorama of this history-drenched locality.

Much thought no doubt has gone into the development of this system. Categories, divisions and subdivisions are clearly defined. Procedures have been established from which the indexer is not to stray. Such rules are indispensable to keep this index within bounds and diminish the danger of creating vacuous categories apt to be lost in the shuffle.

Although one cannot question the usefulness of this index, I have my doubts whether picture librarians today should follow its procedures. To maintain it requires expertise and sound picture judgment--not to speak of the considerable typing chores necessary to keep abreast of new acquisitions.

How much better off we would be if we could help the picture researcher not only by providing a written reference (which can be misleading), but also by actually

showing him the picture itself. And luckily, we can. Our photographic age has put at our disposal methods of micro-filming or xeroxing pictures inexpensively and effectively. These photographic techniques bring the searcher eye to eye with the picture, saving him and the picture librarian the time in handling a multitude of volumes, often quite unwieldy.

I am reminded of an incident from Homer's *Iliad*. When a rusted spear lodged in the knee of Patroclus (I have a visual index card of this in my own Archive), the Greek army surgeons adduced that the rust itself would act as a healing agent and cure the prostrate hero. Taking a rather bold vault from this incident, I conclude that our age, which has swamped us with photographs and all sorts of images, has at the same time provided us the means, in the form of new microfilming methods, to handle the avalanche with dispatch and economy.

As one who has practiced picture indexing for many years, I applaud any systemic survey such as this book presents.

The Bettman Archive

Otto Bettman

THE CARE OF HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS. By Per E. Guldbeck. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1972. Pp. xvii + 160. Illustrations, appendices, bibliographies. \$5.50)

The care and keeping of collections is a principal responsibility of a curator, whatever his title. Archivists, historians, and records managers frequently encounter problems involving the preservation of paper, photographs, and three-dimensional objects. The records-keeping profession is well aware of the techniques used to insure the proper preservation, from creation to storage, of paper and photographs. We lack knowledge, however, of the best ways to preserve three-dimensional objects. Frequently we encounter these as a result of our involvement in records. We should, and can through this book, equip ourselves with enough knowledge to perform preventive maintenance until a specialist can be called in.

The Care of Historical Collections is subtitled "A Conservation Handbook for the Nonspecialist," and that is what it is. It is divided into three parts. Recognizing that "conservation is an attempt to prolong the life of objects," the author in the first part deals with the health and safety of collections. The need for adequate storage space, both as to size--for handling existing collections and any acquired later--and as to protection from environmental extremes, is given priority. The concerns of storage security, fire protection, and environment are developed. Climate considerations and controls to correct them are covered in discussing the problems of humidity, sunlight, ultraviolet rays, atmospheric pollution, and bacterial action.

The second part of the book deals with the preliminaries of conservation and specifically covers the aspect of research on the artifact and the setting up of a workshop to perform the necessary conservation work. Research on the artifact is necessary to determine its historical value. The section on the workshop covers the physical workroom, equipment, safety, and records (i.e., keeping a record on each artifact and procedures performed on it).

In the third part, the author deals specifically with problems in the care of, and corrective measures for, paper, wood, leather, ferrous objects, copper and copper alloys, tin, pewter, lead, gold, silver, ambiguous silvery-looking materials, textiles, ceramics, glass, bone, ivory, and teeth and stone. Basic guidelines are given for performing first aid on each type of material. The author cautions curators to recognize the limits of their knowledge and call in a specialist when necessary.

Although there is no index, the subject is presented in a format that makes the absence of an index not a detriment to using the book. Four appendices dealing with adhesives, abrasives, brushes and paints, and a glossary of selected chemical names round out the book.

The author has done a commendable job in reducing the "how to" to a basic minimum. The addition of a bibliography after every section allows the user to consult special reference works on each subject. After administering first aid, one can learn what steps will be necessary should major surgery be required.

Virginia State Library

Louis H. Manarin