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## Book Reviews

Gayle P. Peters  
*NARS Regional Archives*

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BOOK REVIEWS

The National Archives: America's Ministry of Documents, 1934-1968  
by Donald R. McCoy. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina  
Press, 1978. Pp. ix, 437. Illustrations, chapter notes, bibliography,  
index, \$19.00.)

Donald R. McCoy presents a significant work that historians and archivists may consult with profit. He has written a fine study of the institution that began as the National Archives and continues as the National Archives and Records Service. Ignoring the struggle to establish the National Archives, the author describes in a straightforward manner the beginning and administrative development of the organization to 1968. Though he digresses occasionally to explore the ramifications of the obstacles, decisions, and policies faced by the institution, the book is hung rather neatly on the tenures of the first four Archivists of the United States. Only in the final chapters does the treatment of subjects and topics within that framework become too loosely structured.

The focus remains on the institution; the book is not merely a series of biographies like many institutional histories. Dr. McCoy presents the problems and politics experienced in the early years of the National Archives: the heavy influence of the academic community, especially the American Historical Association, in selecting the first two Archivists; the difficulties in creating useful administrative structures; the professionalization and training of American archivists; and the reluctance of federal agencies to surrender their records. He then explores the National Archive's contributions to the war effort in the 1940's, its influence on the International Congress of Archives, and its change in status as part of the General Services Administration after 1949. A discussion of the added dimensions of NARS in the 1950's and 1960's follows: the Presidential Libraries, records management and paperwork management, the work of the National Historic Publications Commission, the expanded duties of the Federal Register, and the burgeoning microfilm and machine-readable archives programs.

It would probably suffice to find a book that does so much and does it rather well. But the author goes beyond a study of the National Archives as an institution to throw light on the development of the archival/records-keeping professions. The scant biographical information for many individuals mentioned in the work, a source of irritation at first reading, can be seen as evidence of the scarcity of archivists and of the youth and communal consciousness that our profession still

possesses. McCoy also raises some disturbing points which reflect not only on the National Archives and archival profession, but also upon American values in the twentieth century. Accounts of inadequate funding and other evidence of public and governmental indifference to the National Archives abound in the book.

However, it is not my intention to imply that the work is without flaw. The tendency to hop from topic to topic in later chapters has been mentioned. The author lamentably chose to close his study in 1968 and we are left with only tantalizing allusions (but no detailed examination of) events past that date--the establishment of the regional archives system, the reference service explosion following the Bicentennial and Roots, the complex and protracted maneuverings for the papers of Richard Nixon, the impact of the Privacy Act of 1974, the amended Freedom of Information Act and Executive Order 11652 requiring massive declassification of records, and the renewal of the "independence" movement in the late 1970's. It is also quite clear that Dr. McCoy sympathizes with the goals and problems of the National Archives and does not always avoid the temptation to apologize for errors in judgment or lapses in effective energy. Moreover, his syntax tends to be somewhat ponderous.

Yet these shortcomings are minor. Dr. McCoy's scholarly and incisive study will prove a valuable contribution to the history of America's ministry of documents and the American archival profession. Both the veteran archivist and the novice will benefit from reading it.

NARS Regional Archives

Gayle P. Peters

Manuscript Solicitation for Libraries, Special Collections, Museums, and Archives by Edward C. Kemp. (Littleton, Colorado: Libraries Unlimited, Inc., 1978. Pp. 208. \$18.50.)

Edward C. Kemp, an Acquisition-Special Collections Librarian for the University of Oregon, has drawn on twenty years of experience in manuscript and book solicitation to provide representative policies, procedures, and problems in the art of courting the potential library donor. This is a field for which useful literature has been lacking. Most of us who shoulder solicitation responsibilities have been forced to rely on common sense, instinct, trial and error, and at times blind luck to build research collections for our institutions.

The column contains brief chapters on such practical topics as planning a solicitation program, potential collection specialties, materials to solicit, sources of donation, and maintaining donor interest. Much of what the author suggests is sound advice which will serve the solicitor well if he adapts the procedures to his individual circumstances. Chapters devoted to a municipal music collection and the papers of authors and illustrators of children's books provide procedural suggestions which can be utilized for innumerable specialties.

The information will be invaluable for the novice, the beginning curator, and the embryonic manuscript program, but the professional experienced in solicitation work will find little with which he or she is not already familiar. The curator may recognize numerous practices which he assumed originated with his own solicitation effort, and it may come as quite a shock to some to realize that their long-treasured confidential modus operandi is standard procedure at the University of Oregon and presumably elsewhere.

Unfortunately the author frequently fails to provide adequate depth to prepare the beginning curator for his task. Greater emphasis should have been placed, for example, on the budgetary foundation required for the acquisition of large quantities of records. It is simple enough to suggest the preservation of business records with only a passing reference to the bulkiness and space requirements for their storage. To the uninitiated curator attempting to build a small local collection, it will come as a traumatic experience to receive hundreds of cubic feet of dirty, silverfish-infested mill records only to realize that it may be years before a researcher expresses even passing interest in their existence.

Most disconcerting to the manuscript curator, however, is the author's failure to distinguish between manuscript and book solicitation. In a book entitled Manuscript Solicitation . . . an inordinate amount of space, including an entire chapter, is devoted to solicitation of books and other non-manuscript materials. Without a doubt the

manuscript solicitor should be cognizant of the book and journal needs of his library and should seek to improve the library resources at every opportunity. This function should be secondary, however, and Mr. Kemp could have provided a more meaningful manual for the manuscript solicitor had he concentrated on the topic as represented in his title.

Director, East Carolina Manuscript Collection  
East Carolina University

Donald R. Lennon

Business Archives: An Introduction by Edie Hedlin. (Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 1978. Pp. 28, microfiche card. Paper. \$6.00 (\$4.00 to SAA members.)

This succinct and informative booklet is directed not so much to the professional archivist as to the substantial numbers of American businessmen who have begun to explore the concept of company archives. Edie Hedlin, until recently corporate archivist at Wells Fargo Bank, has drawn on her own experience as well as that of archivists at International Harvester, Eli Lilly and Company, the Ford Archives and elsewhere, to explain to business executives the rationale for an archives and to provide the basic information required by company personnel responsible for establishing the operation.

The booklet begins with a summary of the services which an archive can provide and some suggestions about the position of the archive in the corporate structure. Basic physical requirements, including space, equipment, environment and security, are covered along with appraisal standards and the efficient transfer of records.

Dr. Hedlin points out the problem in piecing together a meaningful picture of a company's history based solely on "cancelled checks, invoices, early advertisements, and a picture of the first company picnic," and notes that a records management program will greatly facilitate the work and efficiency of a company archive. This point may deserve more emphasis, since effective records management and firm executive support determine whether the archive documents the history of its corporation or is simply a well-meaning but haphazard collection of non-essentials.

Pocketed in the back of the booklet is a tremendously helpful microfiche card which contains a good representation of forms used by several different business archives to control the accumulation, organization, retrieval and use of their records. The booklet also includes a selective reading list and points to the SAA Business Archives Committee as a source of further information.

A further development of Dr. Hedlin's Ohio Business Archives Manual by a subcommittee of the SAA Business Archives Committee, the booklet was published with the assistance of the Business History Foundation and resembles the SAA Basic Manual Series in physical appearance. The change in title from Manual to Introduction reflects the author's concern that the publication not appear to be a comprehensive handbook of operations for business archives. Subjects such as appraisal, arrangement, description, storage, and conservation are covered only in summary, and there is no mention of automation systems, a subject of rapidly increasing importance to business archives.

Moreover, since the booklet is intended principally to sell the idea of business archives, some of the more intriguing and vexing issues in the field such as access policies, confidentiality, and the legal requirements on business records are prudently omitted. At least a brief discussion of these issues would perhaps have been helpful to those using this booklet in an attempt to start their archives program out on the right foot.

A person charged with setting up an archive in a corporation will find this booklet of great help, and it will be essential to those who have not had any experience or training in archival work. Furthermore, many businesses whose archives are struggling to meet basic standards will find a most useful checklist in the guidelines set forth here.

Archives  
The Coca Cola Company

Janet Pecha

Local History Collections: A Manual for Librarians by Enid T. Thompson, (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1978. Pp. 99. Illustrations, appendix, bibliography, index. \$5.75 (\$4.25 to members. Paperbound.)

This book "is designed to define the materials of local history and to give very simple advice on how to deal with them." It is based on a handbook produced for an Englewood, Colorado, Public Library program for which Thompson was a consultant. Her background includes work in public libraries in the West, a position with the State Historical Society of Colorado, and an editorship with Museum Bulletin.

The book is paperbound and attractively printed on heavy paper. The actual text is only 72 pages and includes chapters on the materials of local history, legal responsibilities, conservation, processing, services, training volunteers, and "special projects" -- including oral history, local government documents, exhibitions, current materials, and a file of "resource persons." There is a lot to be said on any of these subjects, and Thompson's attempt to say so much in so few pages has resulted in a prose style as stuffed as a Thanksgiving turkey.

The author could have organized her material differently. A longer first chapter dealing with the initial basic policy decisions would have been useful. There are many good thoughts on collecting policy here, but they are scattered throughout the text. Also, it is not always clear which readers Thompson is addressing--librarians as stated in the title, or members of the volunteer historical associations mentioned in her introduction.

Some inclusions--the address of the American Library Association, for example-- are odd in a very short text directed to professional librarians. The chapter on materials is the longest in the book and deals with twelve types from books to tape recordings. Thompson stresses newspaper and photographs and provides especially detailed information on processing photograph collections. But there are also some odd omissions. Although most librarians find that genealogists are the greatest users of local history collections, the Federal census is not mentioned, and there is little discussion of genealogical materials or services.

The bibliography is eleven pages long, divided by topic, and lists a wide variety of sources; articles from Special Libraries and AASLH Technical Leaflets predominate. However, the list appears haphazard, rather than the result of an organized search and review of the literature. It includes items through 1977, but several entries date from the 1950's. A quick look at the two latest volumes of Library Literature reveals a number of recent works on the same subjects which are not cited, including AASLH's own publication, Researching, Writing and Publishing Local History (1976).

Having quibbled thus far, let me emphasize that there is an incredible amount of information packed into these few pages. The reader who skims through this book will learn about the wide variety of local history sources, the problem of acid-free storage, the need for deeds of gift, copyright problems with unpublished materials, and the very important dictum that, if you can't help your fragile materials, at least don't harm them. There is even a recipe for wheat paste tucked neatly into one margin. This book will be of great help to the librarian in a small or medium-sized public library, particularly if she or he is conscientious enough to follow up on the references given.

There is no other book which meets this need. This book would be a good addition to library school reading lists since the subject probably will not even be mentioned in the usual classes. Local History Collections would also be a great present for a struggling acquaintance in a small town library.

Genealogy and Local History Librarian  
Southwest Georgia Regional Library  
Colquitt-Thomas Regional Library

Anne G. Foshee

Paper and Leather Conservation: A Manual by Paul Mucci provides detailed, step-by-step "how-to" instructions for paper repair, dressing leather bindings, mixing and using a variety of pastes, and deacidification, along with a history of paper, technical notes on chemicals and equipment needed, a list of suppliers, and a brief bibliography. This volume, edited by Mary Boccacio for the Mid-Atlantic Regional Archives Conference, will be equally useful for archivists who maintain their own conservation facilities and those who want to make effective use of outside conservators. Copies are available for \$3.00 from Ms. Boccaccio, McKeldin Library, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.



Faye Gamel has compiled a concise, temptingly illustrated and well-indexed guide to the extensive photographic collection of the Atlanta Historical Society. Atlanta Images (Atlanta Historical Society, \$1.00, softcover) includes a useful explanation of the Society's cataloging and retrieval system as well as brief descriptions of 115 groups containing 8200 photographs and a topical, geographic, and proper name index. Even archivists with little interest in Atlanta history will enjoy this slim volume and perhaps profit by its example.