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Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

MODERN MANUSCRIPTS: A PRACTICAL MANUAL FOR THEIR MANAGEMENT, CARE AND USE. By Kenneth W. Duckett. (Nashville: American Association for State and Local History, 1975. Pp. 375. Illustrations, appendices, index. \$16.00)

The literature on the care and feeding of manuscripts is scattered over the landscape in a variety of books and journals, few of them ostensibly about manuscripts. An authoritative descriptive summary has long been needed. Kenneth Duckett's *Modern Manuscripts* fills that need. Unlike many other works, this is not "prescriptive"; it does not set out to demand allegiance to the author's particular style or methodology. Instead, it draws together, through description and summary, the many and various practices hitherto found only after several hours of library research or several years visiting manuscript establishments across the country. Duckett has done this work--he has read widely, visited over fifty repositories to get a firsthand look at local problems and solutions, and compiled his observations superbly.

The author, archivist at Southern Illinois University, admits that this work has a number of limits, some he even calls flaws. It is a book of practice, he says, not theory; it is directed to the novice, not the expert; its basic unevenness compensates for gaps in the literature; and, he fears, it gives the appearance of suggesting far more roles for the manuscript curator than one can ever hope to fill. Some of these are not flaws, but virtues which make this book both enjoyable and informative. It is unusual to find this quality in what is basically a technical treatise, especially one with all the scholarly paraphernalia of notes, explanations, examples, bibliography, and glossary. Lacking the usual drab insistence of the how-to-do-it book, it is in some ways a very personal volume.

Beginning with a survey of the history of American manuscript collecting from Thomas Prince in the 1690s, Duckett's first chapter describes the growth and development of the present multitude of manuscript repositories. Subsequent chapters describe the possible varieties of organizational patterns, acquisitions techniques, procedures and ethics, and the care and conservation of manuscript materials.

Chapter five discusses the arrangement and description of manuscripts, followed by a description of the promises of automation, the computer, and microphotography. There is an account of non-manuscript materials often found in manuscript collections and repositories, with a close description of the various techniques for storage, preservation and access. A summary of the relationship between the curator and the user is followed by descriptions of the various kinds of public service, or outreach, programs that can be pursued.

An addendum to the text includes detailed plans for storage cartons and containers, a table of equivalents, a perpetual calendar (which, although useful, is not as concise as that found in some of the larger telephone directories), a directory of associations, publications, equipment, supplies and services, and a helpful list of common facsimiles often encountered.

The illustrations, pictures and drawings provide useful visual images, particularly of working areas and technical matters. Although sparse, they are well placed in relation to the corresponding text.

The notes to the text, even though at the end of the book, have been placed in a very useful format. The running head identifies the pages to which the notes refer, making it relatively simple to find the proper note from the text. Also included is a glossary based on that prepared by the SAA Committee on Terminology, and a five-page index. At the end of each chapter is a selected reading list, a good text-book device, which annotates recommended supplementary sources.

For all of its individual character, this is a book of few surprises. It reports current practices, even though varying, of a number of repositories. Its concentration on the state-of-the-art is very welcome, for here one can find the scattered practices of many repositories (at least those with any merit) drawn together in one convenient volume.

As a text of current practice, I suspect that it soon will become a classic and suffer the neglect that overtakes those works to which all pay homage but few read with any comprehension. Novices will be instructed from it, and later, no longer novices, will rediscover it and find themselves nodding agreement over every paragraph. The rest of the time it will sit on the shelf. This will be wasteful, but it is a common occurrence with a text that is so matter-of-fact that it becomes a pervasive part of everyone's professional consciousness.

There are several concepts discussed in this book that merit special attention. The chapters on manuscript collecting and the acquisitions program both deal with the ethical problems of the manuscript curator in the marketplace. Although avoiding facile solutions, Duckett does provide a comprehensive account from both the curator's and the dealer's point of view. Nevertheless, no matter the economics of the situation, the practice of some dealers of breaking up a manuscript collection into small groups to sell as separate parts is both unsavory and contrary to good manuscript practice. However, as in so many other situations, economic considerations probably always will prevail.

The chapter on care and conservation presents many practical techniques for the small repository. Some of these techniques, though appropriately qualified, are rendered in such detail that some will attempt them to the undoubted horror of the professional curator and conservator. Duckett cautions that "do nothing" is sound conservation advice and that, in any event, when something is done, it must be reversible. He also cautions that none of the techniques he mentions are to be practiced on the really rare items.

Duckett's derivation of the word "bibliographic," as in "Bibliographic Control of Manuscripts," may bring a pause to those who have been seeking a term unladen with that word's present connotations. Although it may be futile to claim an archival origin for a term that is now filled with library images, it should give us all a better perspective on our "bibliographic" activities. Further in this chapter he strongly cautions the curator to "resist the temptation of the temporary." Many have learned from experience the perils of disregarding this maxim, for what is once done, even though incomplete, tends to remain in that state for years to follow. He also suggests modifications of the

archival concepts of provenance and original order to suit the requirements of manuscript processing. It may be a case of the exception proving the rule, but it is undoubtedly sensible to ignore this basic principle when one has determined that the original order has been irretrievably lost through prior neglect or mishandling. His narrative examples describing the processor in action admirably illustrate the complex variety of the judgments which are to be made.

In an excellent summary of current practice, techniques, procedures, and alternatives for manuscript description, Duckett astutely comments on the confusions resulting from the borrowings from both archival and library practice, neither of which are quite suited to the problems of manuscript description. As a final note to this chapter, he suggests a methodology which allows the preparation of institutional guides "as a by-product of the everyday process of arranging and describing the collections." This is an important consideration for those institutions which have been hesitant to begin a published guide because the burden of their every-day operations prohibits any extraordinary tasks.

In the chapter on information retrieval, Duckett indicates that the initial impetus of automated programs was for indexing at the item level. Economic considerations gradually forced a withdrawal to the folder level, then to the series level, and finally to the collection level. This has become such a slight improvement over manual systems that the repositories involved in this pioneer work are beginning to take a hard look at the adaptability of the machine to archives and manuscripts. The early promise apparently has not been sustained. This is not to say that machine technology, where financially feasible, may not find application in special projects.

Scattered throughout this volume are indications that, while this is, as advertised, a book of practice and not theory, it contains several significant conceptual foundations which need explication and examination in a stronger light. Practice both reflects and foreshadows theory, and perhaps this volume will assist in the development of a coherent theoretical platform for curators of manuscripts.

As a summary to the final chapter on public service, Duckett's last sentence also summarizes the entire work. He notes that the "scholarly hermit" has receded to the

stacks; in his place the modern manuscript curator must have a wide variety of technical and intellectual skills and also must be an active participant in the community of scholars, students, donors, and dealers that is now his milieu. Duckett's hope that this book will contribute to those skills and provide an awareness of the multitude of problems involved is admirably realized.

Washington State University

Terry Abraham

NORTON ON ARCHIVES: THE WRITINGS OF MARGARET CROSS NORTON ON ARCHIVAL AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT. Ed. and intro. by Thornton W. Mitchell. (Urbana: Southern Illinois University Press, 1975. Pp. xxi+288. Index. \$10.00)

In this volume of writings of Miss Norton, we have gained another valuable link in the chain of pragmatic guidelines which supplement those writings dealing with archives generally at the national level. The writings, now brought together from many sources and skillfully edited and updated by Thornton W. Mitchell, a practitioner of stature in his own right, provide the profession, and especially state archivists, with a sound reference text.

The regrettable fact is that those who should read the volume will not. Although theory and practice are delineated admirably in the book, the force of events and the trend in many states through government reorganizations have failed to enhance the state archives. There is nothing in this text which will resolve the dilemma that too many state archivists face today--that of survival in a jungle of systems analysts, program and budget planners and data processing dynasties.

Even the most dedicated state archivists have but little time for the practice of traditional archival theory, or can pursue a long-range, enduring program. Too much of their time is absorbed in being surveyed, being analyzed, and repetitively preparing involved justifications for continued existence. Substantive programs and services for which the archives exist have become secondary. Perhaps this book will serve to remind all of us that there is a proper goal and justification for such programs.

The great value of this text is that we now have for the first time a practical manual for state archival theory and practice. It should be invaluable as a teaching tool.

University of Denver

Dolores C. Renze

THE NEW GUIDE TO THE DIPLOMATIC ARCHIVES OF WESTERN EUROPE.

Ed. by David H. Thomas and Lynn M. Case. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1975. Pp. 400. Index. \$10.00)

This updated and expanded reference work--the first edition was published in 1957--should be welcomed not only by historians, but also by archivists and manuscript curators whose concept of reference service and whose sense of professionalism are not bound by the limits of their particular repository and its holdings. Included are revised chapters on Austria (Arthur J. May and Marvin L. Brown, Jr.), Belgium (Daniel H. Thomas), Denmark (Edgar Anderson), France (Vincent Confer), Germany (Fritz T. Epstein), Great Britain (Keith Eubank), Italy (Vincent Ilardi and May L. Shay), The Netherlands (D.P.M. Graswinckel and Willard A. Fletcher), Norway (Florence J. Sherriff and Daniel H. Thomas), Portugal (Manoel Cardozo), Spain (Lino G. Canedo), Sweden (Raymond E. Lindgren), Switzerland (Lynn M. Case), and Vatican City (Raymond L. Cummings). Included also are brief accounts of the Archives of the United Nations (Robert Claus), the League of Nations (Yves Perotin), and Unesco (Luther Evans). New chapters include those on Finland (Kent Forster), Greece (Domna Visvizi-Dontas), Luxemburg (Willard A. Fletcher), and brief notices on the International Labour Organisation and the International Telecommunication Union (Mme. G. Perotin). A chapter on "Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs" has been omitted from this edition.

In general, each chapter contains: a brief history of one or more major archival repositories in a particular country; a summary description of major holdings with emphasis upon their arrangement ("classification"); information on archival administration, including the names of current officials; a statement of regulations governing access and use of records and papers; an indication of microfilming or other copying facilities; indications of major reference works available at a particular repository and information on the

most useful nearby libraries; and even suggestions on convenient lodgings for the visiting scholar. Most chapters conclude with a select bibliography of published finding aids, documentary publications, and other references. But these essays and listings vary in length and usefulness from the well-organized ones following the chapters on Norway and Portugal to the unorganized and even unalphabetical list of 89 items following the chapter on Spain. While the text is plagued with a number of typographical errors, the book concludes with a thirty-two page index that is quite adequate to a reference work of this type.

Notwithstanding its considerable merits, this publication poses two major problems to this reviewer. One relates to its intent and scope, the other to its execution. The work is not confined--and to be at all useful it could not be confined--to the formal "diplomatic archives" of western Europe, i.e., to archival repositories usually attached to foreign ministries that contain only the permanently valuable noncurrent records of these ministries and their predecessor agencies. Thus, in many of the chapters the emphasis is upon the general state or national archives. In several cases, however, this is not the approach that was used. The entire chapter on France, for example, is devoted to the Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with no mention of the Archives de la Guerre, and reference to the Archives Nationales only to mention consular records before 1793, its hours, and its location relative to convenient lodgings. However narrowly one may choose to define diplomatic history, it would seem that the other holdings of the Archives Nationales would be of some value to the student concerned with the political, social, and economic context out of which foreign policy developed and in terms of which foreign relations were conducted. The work is at times either more--or less--than a well-defined guide to "diplomatic archives," depending whether the reader focuses upon only those records and papers produced in the course of and documenting diplomacy, or upon those of research value for the study of diplomatic history.

Most of the historians who wrote chapters obviously have done research in the archives they describe. They are usually thoroughly familiar with the publications of and about the repositories involved, and they are in an excellent position to evaluate facilities and services from the user's viewpoint. But in a number of instances, it appears that the tunnel vision that enables them to mine most effectively a particular vein in terms of their specialized research

interests is not identical with the breadth of vision and the detachment necessary for a balanced and judicious survey of the total resources of a repository. In this respect, the chapters written by archivists Visvizi-Dontas, Graswinckel (with Willard A. Fletcher), Claus, and the Perotins deserve particular attention. In the final analysis, however, much of the substantive content of every chapter represents a rewrite by historians of information supplied by former or current archival and library staff members, those "patient and accommodating partners in research," as they are referred to in the Preface. However anonymous it may be, it is gratifying to have the partnership acknowledged.

Unesco

Frank B. Evans

ADMINISTRATOR'S MANUAL PRESERVATION/RESTORATION OF DOCUMENTARY MATERIALS. By John J. Newman. (Vincennes: Society of Indiana Archivists, 1975. Pp. 17. Appendices, bibliography. \$1.00) (Order from Society of Indiana Archivists, c/o Thomas Krasean, Lewis Historical Library, Vincennes University, Vincennes, Indiana 46591.)

Indiana State Archivist, John Newman, read and traveled before creating a preservation facility in the Indiana State Library. For his *Administrator's Manual Preservation/Restoration of Documentary Materials*, he has apparently condensed his experiences and offered his notes, in a rather rough form, to novices in conservation.

The book reads as notes organized in an uneven outline and contains many typographical errors. The absence of pagination and an index create initial difficulties for the user, but the limits of the book enable one to locate information quickly.

The three main topics covered in the book are cleaning, flattening, and deacidifying. The amount of detail offered for one dollar is impressive. As these are the areas of most interest to beginning conservationists, the thorough coverage will be very helpful. The section on flattening is particularly good. Newman describes what to expect in a bundle of documents, offers solutions to possible problems, and even includes a method for maintaining provenance while scattering documents around a preservation lab. He will deserve credit for many documents saved from untutored ministrations.

Newman deals with two methods of deacidification, aqueous and nonaqueous, emphasizing safety. He treats the lamination versus encapsulation question with only brief lists of arguments for and against, but does provide in the appendices a procedure for encapsulation. Other appendices include a list of five "conceptual terms" and a list of supplies, but for what the reader is never told.

Despite a poor format and uneven levels of information (for example, Newman defines "dust" but assumes the reader is familiar with the term "titration"), this is a helpful book and will be welcomed by beginners in the field. Since it never could be used as the only literature in a conservation lab, Newman includes a brief, annotated bibliography of standard works. But this book is unique because Newman carefully leads the novice conservationist through each procedure. It will help a beginner with immediate problems to overcome fear at potential chemical reactions and thus to take action. The book will cushion the transition from treatise to practice.

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Archives

Delinda Stephens Buie

CONSERVATION AND RESTORATION OF ARCHIVE MATERIAL. By Yash Pal Kathpalia. (Paris: Unesco, 1973. Pp. 231. Illustrations, appendices, bibliography. \$6.60)
(Order from: UNIPUB, Box 433, Murray Hill Station, New York, New York 10016)

The unnecessarily harsh review of this book in *Studies in Conservation*, 20 (1975), 36-39, was not warranted. The volume is not without shortcomings--what attempt to introduce a highly technical subject on a world-wide basis to non-technical readers could be? That reviewer, apparently more interested in an opportunity to display his own erudition than in an objective evaluation of a significant addition to the literature in a relatively new branch of conservation, overemphasized typographical errors, presents his (the reviewer's) opinions as unqualifiedly accepted tenets of conservation when often they are not, and faulted the author for not including in the book some conservation information that was unavailable to the author when he was preparing the text. One also wonders about the objectivity of a review that caustically criticizes

a publisher's editorial policy and takes Unesco to task for choosing a scientist (even though in this case a scientist with broad experience in conservation) to write a book about a subject that is based on science. It must be mentioned too that the review did not give well deserved credit for the author's success in accomplishing the assigned task to "provide archivists and librarians responsible for manuscript collections with a survey of methods, techniques and materials employed in conservation and restoration of library materials." The key to the importance of this book is that it is a good survey presenting much material, some of it controversial, to the archives profession on the basic assumption that those for whom it is intended are highly competent professionals who are fully capable, when facts are available, of making their own decisions in conservation management.

The book is well worth having. It is not a panacea, but it is another source for the information that archivists and public records administrators need to do their jobs. Contrary to the previously mentioned review's contention that Mr. Kathpalia encourages unnecessarily extensive and often drastic treatment of archival materials, the tenor of the book is one of caution, with proper emphasis on the importance of the education of curators and administrators in conservation management and workshop training for technicians. The ten chapters cover the constituent materials of documents, causes and control of deterioration, principles of repair, cleaning deacidification, problems peculiar to document restoration, archives buildings, work rooms, recovery from fire and water damage, environmental control and storage considerations, and some general comments on audio/visual materials. The text is well organized, and although there is unfortunately no index, the material is presented in such a manner that, with the aid of the table of contents, one can use it conveniently for reference. The information in the appendices is of little interest to American readers. The addresses of suppliers, for instance, are predominantly European, but that is logical considering Unesco publications are used to a great extent by those in newly emerging countries in other parts of the world. The historical review in the introductory chapter is particularly well worth reading, as are the chapter on the principles of repair and the all-too-brief comments on palm leaf and birch bark document preservation.

To summarize, this book, which is not without fault, is a significant addition to the professional archivist's

library of conservation guidance. If used as another source of information on this rapidly developing aspect of archives management, it could be of much help to archivists and public records administrators in the establishment of the "in-house" conservation programs so necessary to minimize the alarming deterioration of the records of our heritage.

New England Document
Conservation Center

George M. Cunha

CONSERVATION ADMINISTRATION. Ed. by Robert C. Morrison, Jr., George M. Cunha and Norman P. Tucker. (North Andover, Mass.: The New England Document Conservation Center and the Library of the Boston Athenaeum, 1975. Pp. 351. Illustrations, tables, charts. \$12.00)

Conservation Administration reports the proceedings of the 1973 Seminar on the Theoretical Aspects of the Conservation of Library and Archival Materials and the Establishment of Conservation Programs, a meeting sponsored by the New England Document Conservation Center and the Library of the Boston Athenaeum. The proceedings were edited from twenty-one oral presentations contributed by nineteen lecturers.

Smaller institutions will be particularly interested in George M. Cunha's chapter, the "Tripartite Concept of Conservation," which emphasizes the regional approach to conservation, using his New England Document Conservation Center as a model. With a qualified staff and adequate facilities, the regional approach appears to offer a sensible solution for preservation, restoration, and disaster services beyond the financial and technical capabilities of the majority of libraries and archives. In addition to actual treatment, the regional center can conduct inspections and organize educational programs to further more responsible and effective in-house conservation.

Anthony Werner's paper is an excellent summary of the causes of paper deterioration: physical, chemical and biological. The presentation is easily understood, despite inclusion of some elementary chemical equations. Indeed, it should be required reading for responsible administrators. Werner points out that the effect of acidic impurities is the most significant single factor in the deterioration of paper. The pH scale, frequently used in describing the characteristics

of paper, indicates the concentration of acidity or alkalinity in a dilute homogeneous solution. In paper, the measure "does not have the same precise significance" As an empirical relationship, however, the pH determined by placing a drop of deionized water on the paper to be tested and measuring the pH of this minute solution is a very practical way to describe whether "that paper is prone to acid attack." Deacidification is truly one of the most important preservation treatments. The article summarizes current treatments and concludes that while the ideal method is yet to be developed, significant progress has been achieved ". . . and the stage has almost been reached when libraries and archival repositories may consider the question of mechanizing the process of deacidification, so as to speed up the process and to reduce the costs."

Two chapters by Vincente Vinas are devoted to some rather technical, atypical approaches to restoration treatment. His discussion of the Vinyector machine, designed by the Madrid (Spain) National Centre's Restoration of Books and Documents Department, to "execute the entire restoration process (disinfection, washing, stain removal, bleaching, deacidification and consolidation and repair of tears and missing parts)" offers an exciting possibility that should be explored and evaluated by mass treatment activities. In another presentation, Vinas describes the Madrid restoration procedure for parchment and vellum. The processing technique, which was presented to the Seminar as a motion picture film, is informative, but the treatment procedure is probably beyond the capabilities of the small workshop. The stabilization process, using long immersion of the parchment or vellum in a polyethylene glycol bath will be of interest to advanced laboratories.

It is disappointing that the substance of Hubbard W. Ballow's presentation on photographic conservation was not included because his paper was given as an illustrated lecture. There is obvious need for practical information on proper conservation for photographic and associated materials, a need of growing concern as libraries and archives recognize the significance of the photographic medium as collection material. An annotated bibliography is provided, with emphasis on microfilming.

Libraries and archives should recognize that they may sometime face the serious problem of mass water damage resulting from a disastrous fire, flood, windstorm or

earthquake. The edited papers of Peter Waters, Cunha, David J. Fischer, Richard Shoulberg and Eleanor MacMillian report on problems and treatments associated with disasters at St. Louis, Corning, Philadelphia (Temple Law Library) and Biloxi. These accounts, ranging from a relatively small museum in Biloxi to the massive holdings of the Records Center at St. Louis, present a wealth of information for disaster planning. Fischer, for example, suggests that a "value-distribution" be made for all holdings, rating in categories from "must be completely restored" to those that could be discarded. Institutions that undertake this kind of disciplined advance evaluation will be better prepared to meet problems associated with disaster, "regardless of what disaster may take place."

The remainder of the proceedings covers reports of conservation activities at the Smithsonian Institution, Rhode Island Historical Society, Wyoming State Archives, University of Minnesota, Mormon Church, Harvard Library System, and comments on training in England and at the British Museum. Robert Organ's paper, "Organization and Management of Conservation Programs," sparked a dialogue of sixty pages ranging from questions of climatology and fumigation, to data recording and retrieval.

The proceedings record a rather practical appraisal of the present state of technical and administrative library and archival conservation. While it appears that considerable progress has been made during the past decade, there is obviously much more to be accomplished. Further progress will require the administrative heirarchy to become more intimately associated with the complex nature of preservation responsibility. *Conservation Administration* can serve as a valuable reference for this purpose.

Greenfield Village and
Henry Ford Museum

Edward R. Gilbert