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Book Reviews

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BOOK REVIEWS

INVENTORIES AND REGISTERS: A HANDBOOK OF TECHNIQUES AND EXAMPLES. A Report of the Committee on Finding Aids. Edited by Frank G. Burke and David B. Gracy II. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1976. Pp. 36. Bibliography. SAA members, \$2.00; non-members, \$4.00)

Many jokes have been told about the work of committees, including the story of the ill-fated horse who, designed by a committee, emerged as a camel. Inventories and Registers: A Handbook of Techniques and Examples elicits no such derision. The Society of American Archivists Committee on Finding Aids has produced a useful and long-needed compendium of the basic record created by archivists.

A deceptively simple and splendidly organized work, the book sets out to describe present practices in archival description. A brief introduction defines and compares the seven components of the inventory and its manuscript counterpart, the register. There follows a discussion of the purpose, content and format of each component--preface, introduction, biographical sketch/agency history, scope and content note, series description, container listing, index/item listing--and from two to five examples of each. An all-too-brief bibliography is also included.

Although each section was written by a different author, the standardized format, along with careful editing by committee chairmen Frank G. Burke and David B. Gracy II, surmounts the usual unevenness of multi-author works. Some sections, especially those on the biographical sketch and the scope and content note, are stronger than others, but all contribute to an understanding of the process of analytical description. Some curators will find the section on series description disappointing, since no attention is given to the handling of groups arranged chronologically, a practice common for eighteenth and

nineteenth century private papers. And rather more space than necessary seems to have been devoted to container listing.

These are perhaps carping criticisms, but they demonstrate the one weakness of the Handbook. Although based initially on a survey of four hundred institutions during the planning stages of SPINDEX II, the present volume has focused on the problems and procedures at large repositories with large staffs who process large groups of manuscripts. Of the twenty-one models, for example, sixteen are drawn from state and national archives, state universities and state historical societies.

Curators and archivists at smaller repositories will be able to adapt these forms to their own use, editing and abbreviating as necessary. But to do so requires a grasp of the theory of processing and an understanding of the place of the inventory/register in the continuum of finding aids so ably described by Terry Abraham in Georgia Archive, II (Winter, 1974), 20-27. For most curators and archivists, this work is best used in conjunction with the more detailed analyses found in Kenneth Duckett's Modern Manuscripts, T. R. Schellenberg's Modern Archives, and similar longer works.

Frank Burke and his committee are nonetheless to be congratulated for providing archivists with a sound, simple, usable tool which will take its place on the basic reference shelf alongside the Basic Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators and Records Managers, also published by the Society of American Archivists. One looks forward with pleasure to future publications by the Society if they meet the standard established by these two works.

Southern Historical Collection

Ellen Barrier Neal

GUIDE TO THE MANUSCRIPT COLLECTIONS OF THE ATLANTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY. Compiled by D. Louise Cook. (Atlanta: Atlanta Historical Society, 1976. Pp. 160. Index. \$10.50)

The Atlanta Historical Society celebrated its fiftieth anniversary in 1976 by publishing a guide to its manuscript collections. The Guide, which is a much needed document for researchers whose interest is Atlanta, provides both an entree to 517 of over 800 individual collections and a means of assessing the success of an organization which was founded in 1926 "to promote the preservation of sources of information concerning the history of the City of Atlanta. . . ."

The Guide is divided into two equally important sections: a descriptive inventory of the collections (in alphabetical order by name of principal individual, agency, or association), and an index with headings for "proper names; names of organizations, titles of manuscripts, published works and newspapers; and for subjects." The descriptions of the collections are sufficiently concise to keep the book at 160 pages yet detailed enough to give researchers an adequate assessment of the contents. Each collection has an entry number, a dating of the time period of its papers, and an approximation of its volume, as well as a description which highlights documents and subgroups which the Historical Society staff felt were of the greatest research value. Now researchers can discover whether collections contain one reminiscence written fifty years after an event or a holographic account recorded at the time, printed programs of association meetings or minutes which reveal behind the scenes struggles, newspaper clippings in scrapbooks or correspondence which contains an insider's information.

The Index to the Guide provides an excellent cross-referencing of the listings in the descriptive inventories; there are, for example, thirty-six entries under "Atlanta, Civil War." The main weakness of the Index is its subject classification: its listings are limited and several of those which are included are inadequate. For example, under "Crime," there is no reference to the Fulton County Criminal Court Records which include docket books from 1882 to

1959; and under "Architects," there is no mention of W. H. Parkins, whom the Guide describes as "one of the city's leading architects." On the whole, however, the Guide is a useful research tool which will be supplemented in the future by a guide to the extensive photographic collection of the Society.

The publication of its Guide should have been a time for the Atlanta Historical Society to promulgate its plan for the next fifty years of collection. The progress in the most recent five years has been remarkable: the archives has moved into new and modern facilities of Walter McElreath Hall, the staff has been enlarged, and efforts have been undertaken to attract the personal papers of many prominent Atlantans. Yet the Guide missed an opportunity to lay out the archival plans for the future with a statement of an accessions policy which would seek to correct the weaknesses of the present collection. There are, for example, no papers from Mayors William B. Hartsfield (1937-1962), Ivan Allen, Jr. (1962-1970) or Sam Massell (1970-1974), all of whom have headed city administrations since the founding of the Historical Society. There is also a scarcity of material on blacks in Atlanta, a shortcoming which is the result of the system of segregation which affected all aspects of life in Atlanta. The Historical Society should have announced its intention to strengthen its collection in these and other areas. So too, in addition to its proposed guide to the photographic collection, the Society should have unveiled a plan for providing updates of its holdings in the event that the next hardcover guide must wait until 2026. The Society has been successful in its purpose of "the preservation of sources of information concerning the City of Atlanta"; it can only be hoped that the next fifty years will see a systematic program of collection which makes the organization even more successful.

Georgia State University

Timothy J. Crimmins

SPINDEX II AT CORNELL UNIVERSITY AND A REVIEW OF ARCHIVAL AUTOMATION IN THE UNITED STATES. By H. Thomas Hickerson, Joan Winters, and Venetia Beale. (Ithaca: Cornell University Libraries, 1976. \$3.00)

It may always remain a paradox that archivists working in the special field of archival information retrieval and archival automation have never spent a great deal of energy communicating the results of their research and experience to fellow-archivists. In such a special world where so many new developments are taking place and tools and techniques are changing so quickly, such communication is vital to everyone involved. It is impossible to expect that a few sessions at annual meetings and the work of a few in committees of the Society of American Archivists and the International Council on Archives can remedy satisfactorily the many information problems which most archivists and archives administrators have been facing when dealing with archival automation.

In publishing SPINDEX II at Cornell University, Hickerson, Winters, and Beale are taking a step in the right direction. Not only do they report on their particular experience with SPINDEX II at Cornell University, but they also examine the system in the broader context of the North American experience in archival automation. After a quick review of a number of attempts and various alternative solutions to applying automation techniques to facilitate the work of the archivist and produce improved finding aids, the authors provide the reader with a short account of the development of SPINDEX II, before specifically dealing with their own experience in using it at Cornell University for the production of detailed finding aids to their collections of University Presidents' papers. This last chapter is especially valuable since it includes a detailed report on the specific system application at Cornell and a discussion of the usefulness of the various program fields for their projects. A fourth chapter entitled "Today and tomorrow" examines the variety of contemporary developments in the field provided by such systems as PARADIGM, NARS A-1, PROSPEC, BRISC and MRMC as well as a different use of SPINDEX II by the South Carolina Department of Archives and History.

Considering the number of existing parallel undertakings, it is quite appropriate to agree with

the authors' plea for more cooperation between institutions sharing a need for automation. As stated in the introduction, such "cooperation" is crucial for the efficient usage of computer assistance.

Given the nature of the publication and the intent of its authors, it seems almost irrelevant to criticize them for not offering lengthier treatment of the many problems they mention without delving into them with more details. The twelve appendices provide the specialist with most of the essential details of the Cornell application, including excerpts from their processing procedures manual, the technical appraisal, and cost data. Although the non-specialist may find the report interesting, it may prove of little practical use; it would have been quite useful to add to the description of concurrent systems a few comments on the negative and positive aspects of each. The authors' refusal to criticize other systems makes the nonspecialist wonder why SPINDEX II was chosen at Cornell University over other systems.

The reader will agree that those points are minor in comparison to the qualities of this overview of SPINDEX II. The publication is well presented in an inexpensive format which, although fragile, no doubt helped keep costs down. It is hoped that this example may be followed by other users of automation techniques in the near future.

Public Archives of Canada

Marcel Caya

A GUIDE TO WRITING HISTORY. By Doris Ricker Marston. (Cincinnati: Writer's Digest, 1976. Pp. 258. Bibliography, index. \$8.50)

Doris Ricker Marston may be an unfamiliar author to archivists and professional historians, but she has been a successful free-lance writer for thirty-five years and has published literally thousands of articles, sketches, short stories, newspaper and magazine features, brochures, and a historical novel for young people. She returned to school midway in her career, long enough to earn a master's degree in history in her native New England. In this

book she addresses those who are interested in writing historical material, but who may get "bogged down in the intricacies of professional research." Her concluding remark in the Introduction, that she hopes a few readers will "learn to write about our precious American heritage with confidence and joy," suggests the level of her intended readership and the obvious verve she brings to the subject.

The Guide is a compendium of suggestions and examples for the novice writer of popular history, covering the selection of a topic, the varieties of research material and places to find it, the use of oral history, audiovisual material, and personal experience. Marston also devotes chapters to the different types of historical writing: features and short articles, poetry and short fiction, biography, nonfiction, local and regional history, and history for young people.

Admittedly a book should not be reviewed for what it is not, but rather for what it is. This book is written for the amateur historian and budding writer who will more probably not be dependent on his published writing for a living but will pursue it as an avocation. For such a person, without a professional background and graduate education, the volume will spark ideas and kindle interest. Yet even so, Marston may not have covered the ground as thoroughly as she should have. The chapter on job opportunities for writers of history seems altogether too optimistic and casual. Federal and state government jobs involving historical writing are not easy to secure, and many of them are now going to unemployed historians with graduate degrees and writing and research experience, not to neophyte writers.

Drawing largely from her personal experience, Marston has occasionally generalized too much or selected her examples too frequently from specialized or local publications unknown or inaccessible to general readers. Lacunae worth noting include her failure to mention the Bettman Archive as a possible source for illustrations in her chapter on "Illustrating Your Work," her oversight, in discussing sources of popular culture and audiovisual material, of the massive collections at the Center for Theater Research housed at the State Historical Society of

Wisconsin, and her omission of Hamer's Guide in a section dealing with manuscript collections. The author also mistakenly suggests that state libraries lend directly to the public through the mails, a practice that is far from uniform. Some repositories might challenge her assertion that the Massachusetts Historical Society, next to the Library of Congress, "has the most important collection of American manuscripts. . . ."

It is nevertheless interesting to read the work of someone who after nearly forty years of writing for the public still communicates a contagious enthusiasm for her subject. Any amateur will profit from reading the Guide, especially as a companion to Thomas E. Felt's Researching, Writing and Publishing Local History. There is little, however, that will benefit the trained archivist or historian.

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WILBURT SCOTT BROWN, 1900-1968. (United States Marine Corps Museum, Manuscript Register Series No. 8, 1973. Pp. 99)

JOSEPH HENRY PENDLETON, 1860-1942: REGISTER OF HIS PERSONAL PAPERS. (History and Museums Division, Headquarters, United States Marine Corps, 1975. Pp. 232)

Students of American military history in general and Marine Corps history in particular will be interested in these manuscript registers published by the Corps' History and Museums Division, formerly the Museum Division.

In 1973, the Division produced a register to the papers of General Wilburt Scott Brown. General Brown's papers are housed in fifty-three folders and three packets, are primarily correspondence, memoranda, and speeches describing his service experiences.

Martin K. Gordon, compiler of both registers, lists the key subject areas in the Brown papers as

his service tours in Nicaragua, on board the Pennsylvania, and in Korea; and his ideas and writings on armed forces unification, the cold war, amphibious warfare, artillery doctrinal development, and military schools after World War II.

The most fully developed subjects, however, pertain to Brown's post-World War II activities. From 1946 to 1949 he was both a student and instructor in the Naval Section of the Air Command and Staff School at Maxwell Field, Montgomery, Alabama. He taught amphibious warfare and fire support coordination with air support, two subjects upon which he came to be recognized as a leading authority. This position in America's Air University provided Brown a rare vantage point from which to view the intensive inter-service rivalry of the postwar years. His study of this rivalry led him to advocate the integration--but not the actual unification--of the three military services.

In 1975, the Division, now located in Washington, D.C., published a register to the personal correspondence of General Joseph Henry Pendleton. Though the exchange of letters begins in 1881, the first significant segment concerns Pendleton's service in the Philippines in 1909-1912, and in Nicaragua in 1912. The next notable segment of papers describes his experiences as Commander of the 4th Marines in the Dominican Republic in 1916. The correspondence also documents Pendleton's continuing interest in Dominican developments long after his service there.

The bulk of the Pendleton material, however, pertains to his work with the development of the Base and Recruit Depot at San Diego between 1919 and 1924. It was Pendleton's lobbying efforts in Congress and at Marine Corps Headquarters that made the base--later named for him--a reality. A corollary concern espoused by Pendleton throughout his career, the preservation of the rights of the Marine Corps against what he perceived as Navy neglect and aggression, is particularly articulated in this segment.

Both publications have a foreword, a preface, a table of contents, a table of arrangement, a biographical sketch, a descriptive inventory, a

chronology of the subject's life, and a bibliography of articles and books about the Marine Corps, some written by Brown and Pendleton. The descriptive inventory follows the strict chronological arrangement of the papers, describing--sometimes extensively--many of the individual letters, reports, and other documents.

The many in-depth descriptions of selected documents, which comprise the strongest feature of the registers, do tend to make them selective calendars rather than registers. The chronological arrangement and the length of the descriptive inventories--Brown's covers 89 pages, Pendleton's 224--make an index necessary if subject information is to be found quickly. Unfortunately, neither register is indexed, which constitutes the biggest weakness of both publications. The researcher is told, for instance, that Pendleton corresponded for many years with two other Marine officers and with the revolutionary leader Desiderio Arias about developments in the Dominican Republic. He is further informed that Pendleton was an ardent Single-Taxer and drafted a single-taxation plan for the Dominican Republic. Without an index, however, searching through the collection for such specific information would be painfully slow.

The researcher will also find the registers deficient in two other respects, the first of which is the lack of specific data on volume. The Pendleton register states that the general's papers cover sixty-six years of Marine Corps history in seventy-one folders, but it does not state exactly or even approximately how many leaves, items, or linear feet constitute these seventy-one folders. Folder 2 of the Brown papers, as another example, requires seventeen pages of description, but the reader still does not gain a clear understanding of the volume of documents being described. Both registers would have been improved by the inclusion of either an approximate leaf or item count by folder or a linear measurement by folder or year.

The registers also suffer from a lack of a precise dating methodology. Each register has a set of dates on the cover, but they are the respective birth and death dates of Brown and Pendleton, not the

span dates of the papers. In fact, the chronological scope of the papers can be determined only by checking the tables of arrangement. The number of items within a given time period, a type of information of even more concern to researchers than chronological scope, can be determined only by tedious searching through the descriptive inventories.

Even with the flaws just mentioned, these two registers are solid finding aids, because of their excellent descriptive inventories, their lengthy and well-written biographical sketches, and their extensive bibliographic entries. Both publications should give impetus to the study of America's most glamorous military arm.

Southern Labor Archives

Robert Dinwiddie