

BOOK REVIEWS

Directory of Archives and Manuscript Repositories in the United States, second edition. National Historical Publications and Records Commission. New York: Oryx Press, 1988. 853 pp. Hardcover. \$55.

In 1988, the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) released a long-awaited revision of its 1978 *Directory*. The first edition was an ambitious compilation of information about U.S. repositories for researchers and archivists and filled an important need. The second edition updates or deletes some past entries and contains 1,400 new listings. Unfortunately, time has surpassed the information contained in the *Directory* and substantially reduced its usefulness.

NHPRC anticipated the first *Directory's* obsolescence and embarked to produce a second edition in the 1980s, but production was hampered by a reduction of the directory staff in 1981 as part of overall federal budget cuts. The remaining staff reordered priorities, and emphasized "basic, accurate data." Staff recanvassed responding institutions in 1983. In early 1986, telephone numbers were updated and checked against other directories. Minor revisions sent in by repositories were ignored in order to get the *Directory* completed. Revision of the data was cumbersome because it relied on SPINDEX, which did not allow for interactive editing of entries.

Anyone attempting to produce a repository guide lives with the expectation that the usefulness of the guide will be greatly diminished within three years. Unfortunately, by the time the NHPRC *Directory* was released, it was at least two years out of date, and it shows. A sample of Minnesota repositories demonstrates how quickly even the archives business can change. The Southeast Minnesota Historical Center is no longer at St. Mary's College, and its records were transferred to the Minnesota Historical Society in 1987. All of the phone numbers for the repositories at the University of Minnesota have changed. The Iron Range Research Center, which received an NHPRC grant in 1984, is not listed, nor is the Charles Babbage Institute. Time, not the authors, is largely to be blamed for this misinformation. Although there are some oddities (such as the omission of the Federal Archives and Records Center in Suitland, Maryland), the accuracy of the *Directory* is good for the time in which it was compiled. Yet, the overall consequence for researchers is that the time-sensitive data in the *Directory* will be a source of frustration, not information.

The second edition follows nearly the same format of the first. The *Directory* is arranged alphabetically by state, then by city, and by repository. I find this arrangement awkward, although it does work moderately well for researchers interested in local history. However, it ignores important institutional connections. Archival repositories at the University of Minnesota happen to be located in both Minneapolis and St. Paul, and it is annoying to

check both entries. I prefer the institutional arrangement in works like the *Directory of Special Libraries & Information Centers*. A repository index is provided at the end of the volume for those who are more patient about the use of reference works. The index provides entries for repositories under their common names (e.g., Yerkes Observatory) as well as their hierarchical names (e.g., University of Chicago, Yerkes Observatory). This is a nice feature.

The subject index has grown in size from the first edition, but it has not grown in usefulness. Subject terms were adapted from the language of the entries, and the result is an extremely uneven treatment of subjects in the index. Users should not expect subject headings to include all repositories with significant collections for any one term. For example, the only Wisconsin repository listed under the term "peace" is Marquette University, which should come as a surprise to those who have used social action collections at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin. Moreover, there is no logic to the entries under many subject subdivisions. The Social Welfare History Archives is listed under "Social Welfare—Agencies" but not "Social Welfare—Organizations" or "Social Welfare." The Immigration History Research Center is listed only in subdivisions for Europe, Germany, and the Middle East under the heading "Immigration and Emigration." This is, at best, a misrepresentation of the collecting area of an important repository on immigration. Finally, some broad topics are rendered useless by the large number of entries listed under them. There are approximately nine hundred entries under the term "women." I would think that most users would pass over such broad terms and proceed directly to the subdivisions.

NHPRC had hoped that the *Directory* would not only be embraced by researchers, but by archivists and patrons as well. Archivists interested in becoming less isolationist might use the *Directory* to craft cooperative collecting projects or create reference ties with allied repositories. Donors might use the *Directory* to "determine which institutions are most appropriate to receive certain materials." With the idiosyncrasies of the subject index and the obsolete information, this work cannot reliably be used to any of those ends. The need is still there, but such a volume must be produced in a timely fashion with a first-rate index.

One method of avoiding the automatic obsolescence of repository information would be to compile the data in national networks. The Research Libraries Group has discussed including repository information in the RLIN databases, but no action has been taken to date. The beauty of this potential system is that each member repository could alter data as it was superseded. The disadvantage is that its greatest use will come from member archivists; it is not nearly as accessible as a published volume generally available to other archivists, researchers, and donors. But that could change, and NHPRC could effect the change. A 1979 review of the first *Directory* made the same point, noting that a commitment to a system (at that time, SPINDEX) that "prints guides, but cannot be searched on-line, is folly."

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Strengthening New York's Historical Records Programs: A Self-Study Guide. New York State Archives and Records Administration, 1989. 157 pp. Glossary. Paper. Available from the State Archives and Records Administration, Cultural Education Center, Room 10A75, Albany, NY 12230.

Do not be misled by the title of this book. Although it was published by the New York State Archives and Records Administration specifically for use by historical records repositories in that state, there is much in the volume that repositories of all types, regardless of their location, will find useful. The *Guide* is designed to be used by records officers and administrators who seek ways to improve the management and administration of their holdings.

The publication is divided into six sections: Introduction, Essential Elements of Historical Records Repository Programs, Fund-Raising, Cooperative Approaches for Administering New York's Historical Records, Where to Turn for More Help, and a Glossary of Terms. The title of the volume bills it as a "Self-Study Guide," and it is just that. Sections two through four each are subdivided into relevant topical discussions followed by numerous self-study questions that allow readers to see how their programs measure up to an ideal (hypothetical) repository.

Section two, "Essential Elements of Historical Records Programs," is the longest and probably the most useful section of the *Guide*. Twenty-three essential elements have been identified as being "necessary for minimally acceptable historical records programs." (p. 3) These elements cover general administration of a repository as well as identifying and preserving historical records, making them accessible, and advocating a historical records program. The format of this section is particularly helpful. Each element is treated separately with a definition followed by the purpose of the element and its benefits. Most useful are "examples and explications" that accompany each element. For both nascent and well-established repositories the examples provide reassurance that there is a right way to do things and that other repositories are working to standardize various practices.

Section three of the *Guide* covers fundraising. Nothing particularly new is introduced here, though it should be noted that the emphasis is on raising money from private sources rather than the public agencies that usually come to mind. The self-study questions in this section are excellent; answering them provides a systematic approach to the enhancement of meager internal budgets from external sources.

The last of the three substantive self-study sections covers cooperation and how that factor in appraisal, preservation, reference, etc., will allow tight budgets to be stretched even further. Like the previous section, this one is useful because it provides an organizational framework that records officers can work with in order to encourage cooperation.

This volume is important on two levels. On the day-to-day level, the answers to these self-study questions provide archivists and other records administrators with a useful measure of their work. They will reveal the strengths and weaknesses in a given program and provide direction for the repository. On another level this guide could, and hopefully will, be illuminating to the administrators to whom records officers report. Many of those administrators have only the vaguest notion of what a records program is and what caretakers of those

records do. Perhaps this guide will be a useful way to inform them of the vital role played by historical records programs and the employees that make them work.

Richard Cox (now with the University of Pittsburgh School of Library and Information Science) wrote the majority of this book. A professional fundraiser, Judy Hohmann, wrote the section on that topic. Together they have fashioned a useful evaluative tool. For the experienced archivist there is little new in the *Guide*, but that is not the point. What the book does provide is a conceptual framework that allows its users to measure the effectiveness of their programs. In a systematic way it asks the questions that we intuitively understand need to be answered. It is a well written and logically arranged volume that will be useful to a variety of staff members at all types of historical records repositories.

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A Manual for Small Archives. Association of British Columbia Archivists, Small Archives Committee. Burnaby, B.C.: Association of British Columbia Archivists, 1988. Index. 213 pp. Looseleaf in binder. Available from the Society of American Archivists: \$40 to members, \$45 to nonmembers.

Despite its title, this is *not* a manual for small archives. As the preface explains, "it is designed to help persons in small archives, with limited access to training, with few employees, with restricted finances and time. It attempts to explain archival principles and practices, offer guidelines and suggestions for various archival activities, and provide information on available resources." The *Manual* therefore compounds, sadly, the stereotype of archivists in small repositories as *ipso facto* nonprofessional. Judged as a primer for untrained custodians of archives and manuscripts collections, however, the *Manual* remains badly flawed and even redundant.

The work comes in a three-ring binder, with chapters marked by tabbed dividers. The binding is problematic (pages tear as they snag on the binder rings), but does permit easy location of chapters, and the book is well indexed—important features because its organization is somewhat confusing. Chapters one and two cover starting an archives, and locating and making use of resources. The next four sections are on archival functions: appraisal and accessioning, organization/arrangement, description, and conservation. Then come five chapters that refer to types of materials most commonly found in archives: textual records, visual records, maps and architectural drawings, sound recordings, and "other." Back to functions—records management, reference—a chapter on "computers," appendices consisting of a glossary of archival terms and lists of suppliers, and a bibliography.

The argument presented in the introduction notwithstanding, the organization of the manual involves a great deal of useless repetition. The chapters on types of records all refer the reader to the functional chapters, and the abbreviated arrangement and description discussion within the record type chapters are virtually identical (including the uniform omission of "women" and "families")

from the suggested subject authority list). In any event, why are all the functional chapters not grouped together—is reference indeed (as the chapter order implies) a secondary activity?

The *Manual* makes some other curious judgments about content selection. “Some archival issues, including conservation techniques such as deacidification or fumigation and appraisal activities such as weeding or sampling, are beyond the scope of this manual. Anything less than a complete analysis would be misleading and a disservice to the reader.” Such a statement is at least debatable as regards weeding and sampling which, for a physically small archives, are crucial issues. And the *Manual* commits the kind of disservice it seeks to avoid in discussing conservation of photos, appraisal (it mentions administrative value, but not evidential or informational value), and access restrictions. On the other hand the book does not discuss problems arising out of the undocumented backlog found in many small archives; the very substantial issue of how to arrange and describe the almost inevitable flood of single item accessions; copyright in relation to a collection’s incoming letters; or the original negative as the “archival” photographic image.

The *Manual* does provide many useful caveats and encouragements to non-professional archivists. It is written in a highly accessible style. The sample forms are generally excellent. And most of the content is perfectly sound. But for a book that may be the only education received by nonprofessional archivists, the lapses and mistakes that do occur are more significant than they might otherwise be. And as the bibliography makes clear, the *Manual* is based heavily on SAA’s basic manual series, with relatively few dramatic updates. The question arises, then, whether the untrained curator would not be better off simply purchasing the SAA manuals. The answer is probably yes.

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“Audio Preservation: A Planning Study,” Final Performance Report, NEH Grant PS-20021-86. Compiled by the Associated Audio Archives Committee, Association for Recorded Sound Collections. 1988. 860 pp. Bibliography, appendixes. Looseleaf. \$42.95. Available from Elwood McKee, 118 Monroe St. #610, Rockville, MD 20850. Check payable to Association for Recorded Sound Collections.

During 1986 and 1987, the Associated Audio Archives Committee of the Association for Recorded Sound Collections carried out a project, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, to gather information about the conservation, preservation, and restoration of archival sound recordings. The project culminated in this 860-page final report, which includes the methodology, findings, and recommendations of the investigators as well as an abundance of general information on audio archives and preservation not previously available in a single reference work.

The six investigators on the project team gathered much of their data from detailed questionnaires completed by thirty-eight major U.S. and foreign sound

archives. The report contains the raw data collected from the questionnaires as well as reports and recommendations of the investigators. Topics discussed in the report include storage and handling, technical aspects of audio preservation; documentation (of artifacts, preservation transfer copies, etc.), disaster planning, and legal issues. The report also includes an enormous bibliography, a glossary of terms, lists of standards, and, perhaps most importantly, recommendations for future research in this field.

Since little research has been done to date on the subject of audio preservation, the value of the report lies as much in the many gaps and needs that it exposes as in the compilations of "recommended current practices" that it puts forward. Archivists will undoubtedly find disturbing the current weaknesses relating to preservation of archival audio materials.

The investigators found a "clear and urgent need to preserve our surviving heritage of sound recordings," but no organized plan or guidelines for such preservation. Important elements that the researchers found missing include a proven archival medium for preserving the sonic content in preservation transfer copies, and agreement on re-recording standards and documentation. Other weaknesses include a lack of research and standards on basic storage and handling practices for audio materials, and a lack of educational opportunities and training programs for audio archivists and technicians. The report presents numerous topics for future research as well as proposed guidelines for establishing preservation priorities.

This report is intended by the writers to be a working draft rather than a polished "handbook" or guide to audio archives. It is therefore a rather complex document. From a practical standpoint most "hands-on" archivists will find certain portions of the report more useful than others. The sections relating to storage and handling, establishing preservation goals and priorities, use of the MARC AMC format for noncommercial recordings, legal aspects, and education and training for sound archivists will be especially useful. Some contributions of the investigators include lists of "current recommended practices," or descriptions of procedures and policies of major sound archives. The 325-page bibliography and the glossary of audio-related terms are outstanding resources.

This report is a welcome addition to the small body of literature available on audio archives, one that belongs on the bookshelf of every archivist who has custody of audio materials.

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The High Technology Company: A Historical Research and Archival Guide. By Bruce H. Bruemmer and Sheldon Hochheiser. Minneapolis, Minn.: Charles Babbage Institute, University of Minnesota, 1989. 131 pp. Illustrations, appendixes. Paper. Available from the Society of American Archivists: \$10 to member, \$15 to nonmembers.

The High Technology Company grew out of the concern of the Charles Babbage Institute (CBI) over the difficulty historians and archivists have in doc-

umenting the large high-tech companies. These companies are driven by rapidly changing technology, rely heavily on research and development, and generate a large amount of technical records. CBI's experience showed a clear need for a more detailed model of the organization and practices of high-tech businesses to prepare the archivist or historian faced with the task of preserving the history of these companies. The guide presents a generic description of industrial activity in a high-tech environment and introduces a technique called a documentary probe for obtaining general historical and documentary information about the development of specific products in the industry.

In the guide, seven business functions are analyzed: planning, basic research, research and development, production, marketing, sales, and product support. Legal, financial, and other support services are also covered but in a more cursory manner.

The discussion of each of the seven functions is divided into three sections. The first section presents an overview of the function and describes the activities within it. The second section is a description of documentation typically generated by the activity. The third section provides additional observations on the difficulties in documenting these industrial activities and assesses the historical value of the records generated within each function. Real-life examples from high-tech industries, primarily the Control Data Corporation, are used throughout the work to illustrate the points being made.

The final part of the guide describes the process of conducting what is called a documentary probe and illustrates the technique with several case studies of products developed by the Control Data Corporation. The probe technique originated with work done by the American Institute of Physics at the Department of Energy Laboratories. As defined by the authors a documentary probe is a product study that generates diverse historical, organizational, and documentary information from all facets of a company to aid in the selection of historically valuable records. This involves using prior research, interviews, records surveys, and the descriptions of industrial activity covered in the first part of the guide.

Don't be scared off by the emphasis on high-tech companies. The guide is a basic, very readable introduction to the way any business operates and the documents it creates. Anyone involved with business records will find this guide helpful, although it has the most to offer for the archivist or historian just beginning to come to terms with documenting business organizations.

The section on documentary probes, however, should generate continued discussion within the profession as to their usefulness and application in documenting other businesses. The authors promote the use of the probe technique because they believe that the traditional approach to documenting a company beginning with a records survey does not work with high-technology industries that create voluminous records and have products with short life spans. The primary weakness of surveying, in their opinion, is that it is focused first on extant records, not on historical issues. Probes reverse that emphasis by developing a picture of what should be documented even before records are examined.

When assessing the validity of the probe technique one has to keep in mind the intended audience of the guide—historians and archivists on the outside of a particular corporation seeking to preserve the history of a specific product or development within that corporation. The documentary probe may be less use-

ful to the corporate archivist faced with the long term organization and preservation of the records of a company. It also remains to be seen how this approach applies to companies other than product-oriented high-technology firms.

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Managing Business Archives. Edited by Colleen Pritchard. Canberra, Australia: Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated, 1987. 56 pp. Paper. Available from the Society of American Archivists: \$10.00 to members, \$12.00 to non-members.

This is a compilation of papers on the basics of business archives that were presented at a 1986 seminar conducted jointly with the NSW Special Libraries Section of Australia and the Australian Society of Archivists. The seminar was intended to address the Australian business community's growing need to know how to care for and preserve their institutions' archives. Many of the basics of starting archives and caring for them were discussed, including records appraisal, arrangement and description, and conservation techniques, as were practical tips on how to sell the idea of an archives program to management and how to get one started.

The keynote address cites the advantages and uses of corporate archives and rightfully points out that the most extensive use of business archives is in the area of public relations.

The appraisal section is quite general, emphasizing "that a considered, well researched appraisal decision is infinitely preferable to leaving these decisions to chance." It also stresses the differences between archives and libraries, the need for very close relationships between archivists and records managers, and the need to know the organization's structure, function, and administrative history in order to make good appraisal decisions. A records appraisal checklist is included, which could be useful; but the list is merely a guideline, a fact that should have been made clearer.

The arrangement and description paper is well done and is hedged by the statement that no overall classification scheme can possibly be applied to all the various records in any one archives. A section dealing with numerical coding systems for records groups, series, etc., is well-documented and instructive. Author Pemberton's "Five Points to Remember in Creating Numbering Systems" is concise and straightforward.

The two papers, "Selling the Idea of a Business Archives Programme" and "How to Make a Start and Where to Find Help" are well done although they often overlap, a problem when papers written independently are brought together in book format. Also, these two papers are positioned at the end of the volume, which seems illogical. They might have been more appropriate immediately after the introduction. The sections outlining the "selling factors for the archival sales person" and the "activities needed to sell the idea of an archives" were instructive and underlined the importance of the archivist's credibility, visibility, and empathy with management's position when planning and selling the concept.

Because most of these papers were presented by and to Australians, those dealing with appraisal of legal records (Australian law) and archival agencies have their limitations for American audiences. The balance of the information contained in these, however, is general enough so that it is quite applicable to institutions outside Australia.

Managing Business Archives is a good supplement to other resources in the field, including business archives workshops, SAA basic manuals for beginning archivists, and visits to established business archives and local historical societies.

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