

BOOK REVIEWS

Guide to the Microfilm Edition of the Jane Addams Papers. Edited by Mary Lynn McCree Bryan. Ann Arbor, Michigan: University Microfilms International, 1985. viii, 132 pp. Paper. \$35.00

Jane Addams was a formidable figure of international fame who is of interest to a wide spectrum of people stemming from the historian, sociologist, and feminist to young children. She was a woman of many facets: social settlement founder (Hull House, Chicago, 1889, with Ellen Gates Starr), suffragist, symbol of woman's achievement, peace activist (Nobel Peace Prize, 1931), social reformer, author, matriarch to family members, and confidante to many. Her ideas and actions significantly affected the development of social welfare policy in the United States and influenced the attitudes of peoples throughout the world. Jane Addams is the subject of numerous books, articles, and dissertations, yet her correspondence, diaries, speeches, and personal documents, scattered in a number of repositories and in private hands, remained unpublished. That she became the subject of the first women's microfilm project funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) and the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) attests to her stature. The editor, Mary Lynn McCree Bryan, is to be commended for undertaking the mammoth task of bringing together the 120,000 documents that appear on the 82 reels of microfilm so that comprehensive studies of Jane Addams and her influence on the era in which she lived can be made.

The Jane Addams Papers cover the entire period of her life, 1860-1935. Memorials to her and centennial celebrations of 1960 are also included. Bryan's detailed note on the preparation of the microfilm edition provides the reader with useful information about the search strategy and the selection process that determined the arrangement of the collected materials into five major sections. They are: 1) Correspondence, 2) Documents, 3) Writings, 4) Hull House Association Records, and 5) Clippings File. The editor then discusses the production of the microfilm edition, providing the rationale for the Addendum reels and their relationship to the main body of work. Of particular value to the reader is the citation note that explains the "how to" and copyright ownership. There is the usual listing of the symbols and abbreviations used in the guide and on the film, and a chronology of Jane Addams' life from childhood to death. To further correlate the latter to the microfilm, the chronology should have included events to 1960.

This guide fulfills its intent "to assist the reader in gaining access to the contents of the work." It does this through the Table of Contents and Reel Notes. The Correspondence and Writings reel notes are narrative in description, whereas the other sections mainly list the pertinent access points after an explanatory note. The reels in the Clippings File section are identified as

standard-sized and oversized clippings, which is irrelevant to the reader who lusts for subject and/or name information. Errata found at the end of each reel indicates that the editor painstakingly reviewed each frame of the microfilm. To conclude the guide, there is a Brief Reel List that repeats previous information, except for the Correspondence section. For the first time, the twenty-seven correspondence reels (1-26; Addendum 1-A) are broken down by year(s) for the convenience of the reader. A subject/name index that would have made this guide an independent reference resource is not present. Finally, let the reader beware: guide pages separate from the spine as it is read.

We have here an excellent piece of work that sets standards for others to follow. Bryan and the editorial staff are to be congratulated for this work as it preserves, in another format, Jane Addams' ideas and activities. The subject of the Jane Addams Papers "exemplify the old statement that, though all else may be transitory in human affairs, the excellent must become the permanent."

This effort was funded by grants from NHPRC, NEH and other private foundations. Swathmore College provided the core of materials on which the project is based, while the University Library of the University of Illinois was the host institution for the project. From 1975 to 1983 the project headquarters was located in the restored Jane Addams' Hull House, located on the UIC campus. Bryan and the editorial staff worked immersed in the ambiance of the former settlement house surrounded by Jane Addams' manuscripts and memorabilia. All in all, monies expended on the project were put to good use. We wish Bryan and Associate Editor Nancy Slote continued success as they work on the annotated edition of selected documents.

Mary Ann Bamberger
University of Illinois at Chicago

A Guide to the Oral History Collection of the Charles Babbage Institute. Edited by William Aspray and Bruce Bruemmer, with the assistance of Hassan Melehy and Thomas Traub. Minneapolis: Charles Babbage Institute, Center for the History of Information Processing, University of Minnesota, 1986. 110 pp. Index. Paper.

Receipt of a guide to an archival collection has always been a pleasant event. Few are published, and very few of those are at all up to date. New archives, in particular, tend to procrastinate in publishing a guide, perhaps overwhelmed by the work involved, or feeling that the newly-formed collection is not yet deserving of a full-fledged guide.

Publication of a guide is not only a major undertaking, but also instantly subjects the collection to critical evaluation. Programs may issue flashy brochures promoting their holdings, mission, or facilities, but these do not subject a collection to the rigorous review that a guide does.

Any guide is inevitably laced with idiosyncracies. Despite reference to "accepted format" by those who would like to believe one exists, there is none in any specific sense. One expects to find certain information, and with as little

difficulty as possible, but format is largely in the hands of the compilers. They, of course, have at hand a bewildering array of previous attempts for guidance. Published guides run the gamut from the excellent to the irritating; everything from layout to typeface and indexing stimulates something in that range of reaction from the guide user.

The guide to the oral history collections of the Charles Babbage Institute is a fine first effort for a new and exciting program. It is easily readable and attractively packaged, while retaining the very definite idiosyncracies of the institution and the collection it covers.

The CBI was founded in 1978 to document the "evolution of the digital computer and modern electronic communication technology." Located on the campus of the University of Minnesota, it collects papers, records, oral history and related data on the computing industry and its leaders. It is refreshing to see that the CBI collection has included oral history from its inception, and that the goals of the oral history program, to supplement and indeed fill gaps in the written record, is clear in statement and in practice. The CBI oral history guide contains information on more than 140 interviews, with an index to names and subjects, and extensive introductory material.

The introduction itself states the parameters of the collection quite clearly, with major narrator qualifications evident. A second introductory section, entitled "Oral Histories Produced by CBI" is a brief apologia for oral history, which includes a series of five "interrelated elements" that the authors believe are controversial. Since they deal very straightforwardly with research value, effective use of oral history, the need for informed interviewers and interview focus, and the goal of making tapes readily available for research use, one cannot be sure where the controversy lies. Any major oral history program would subscribe to these aims. They are well stated and certainly appropriate guidelines for an oral history collection.

The guide itself is relatively easy to use. Interviews are listed alphabetically by name of narrator, and the index refers one to each interview by that name. The use of underlined names to signify interviews with more than one narrator is a bit unnecessary, and the notations on interview or tape length are unclear since the tape times and transcript page notations do not always appear to have much in common.

The narrators in this relatively new project already represent a fascinating cross section of those involved in the development of computers and communications technology. Generally they fall into one of five areas of inquiry developed by the CBI staff: 1) technical development and management within the U.S. computer industry, 2) computing in academic institutions, 3) the role of the U.S. government in computer development, 4) the international computing field, and 5) the relationship between mathematics and computing. The interview summaries are helpful, with enough detail to provide potential researchers with plenty of information on each tape.

In general this volume is a useful addition to the small collection of major oral history guides. It details the growth of a young and impressive program documenting the leading edge of technology. It is encouraging to see oral history used carefully, consistently, and in concert with an archival program. The CBI guide gives important evidence of the necessity and the value of such a union of function. CBI's leaders deserve credit for this foresight, and encouragement

to follow this guide within five years by a second that will cover the total collection to that time.

James E. Fogerty
Minnesota Historical Society

Preservation of Historical Records. Committee on Preservation of Historical Records, National Research Council. Washington, D.C.: National Academy Press, 1986. 112 pp. Clothbound. \$17.95.

This useful book addresses the preservation needs of the non-intrinsically valuable documents of the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), which has over three billion items in its charge. The immensity of such a task led NARA to seek the advice of the Committee on Preservation of Historical Records, composed of authorities from diverse technical and academic fields. The members most familiar to those involved in archival preservation are Norbert S. Baer, Alan R. Calmes, Peter G. Waters, and George B. Kelly, Jr.

Though intended as a response to the problems of a specific repository, the information contained here is of value to anyone concerned with archival or library preservation. Topics covered are environmental standards, paper composition, photographic film, magnetic recording media, and optical disks. The initial chapter presents the general recommendations of the committee, including proposals for mass treatment and archival copying; subsequent chapters support and enlarge on these statements. The concluding pages contain a model decision tree guiding the reader through varying options for treatment as determined by condition and expected usage. There are also an index and a glossary.

A major strength of this book is its willingness to make specific recommendations. Though in some cases the suggestions could derive from common sense, they are given considerably more weight because they are, in fact, based on sound research and analysis. On occasion this leads to rather daunting technical references (e.g., on p. 66, “. . . in magnetic disks, a 200-Å-thick layer of Co-Ni may be used, compared with magneto-optical disks that have a 150-Å-thick layer of Co-Fe-Tb . . .”). This is unusual, however, the majority of the report is clear and readable.

The chapter on the environment contains, to a large extent, information with which many people will already be familiar, though the documentation and detail exceed what is normally found. Not only are sources and effects of pollutants discussed, but also options for purification systems and monitoring. The recommended standards contain no surprises, but there is a fresh observation on the beneficial environmental effects derived from boxing.

The chapters dealing with the nature of paper and photographic film as archival media lead into what is one of the more interesting conclusions drawn from the work of the Committee: “The materials and technical problems inherent in the use of magnetic and optical storage media and the lack of suitable standards for archival quality make their use as preservation media

for archival storage inappropriate at the present time." Even considering the capability for re-copying of information, according to the Committee, the lack of suitable standards, coupled with current expectations for hardware obsolescence, support, for the time being, a continued reliance on paper and microfilm. Chapters on magnetic media and optical disks reinforce this contention, as well as the assertion that the disk's advantages of rapid access and data manipulation are not strongly relevant to archival needs. The Committee does emphasize, however, that NARA should monitor the progress of alternative information-storage systems, and promote the development of standards for them.

Another notable recommendation of the Committee concerns the viability of mass treatments. The Archives is advised to concentrate on environmental controls and protective enclosures. Since its holdings represent a composite of many different types of documents which would require an enormous amount of time to separate and test, "NARA should not undertake a mass deacidification program at this time but should monitor the development of deacidification processes." (p. 84) A logical alternative, as suggested in this book, is that the federal government require the use of permanent/durable papers for its records of permanent value.

Judith Fortson-Jones
Hoover Institution

A Guide to the Modern Literary Manuscript Collection in the Special Collections of the Washington University Libraries. St. Louis: Washington University Libraries, 1985. 115 pp. Appendixes. Paper. Available free from Curator of Manuscripts, Special Collections, Campus Box 1061, Washington University Libraries, St. Louis, MO 63130.

The collection of modern literary manuscripts at Washington University grew out of the mind and heart of William Matheson in 1964. Matheson envisioned a well-defined, carefully developed collection of twentieth century literary publications and manuscripts which would complement and support the instructional and research efforts of the university. After a careful review of existing collections of twentieth century literature, Matheson and his advisers created a list of 46 authors whom they considered to be "(1) . . . to some degree neglected or underestimated, and/or (2) on the threshold of greater recognition, and (3) not . . . already extensively committed to another library" (page 6). Following that same set of criteria, the list has since been expanded to include 115 names.

While the collection grew through gifts and donations in the 1960s, material received on deposit during the 1970s began to cause administrative concerns in the 1980s. In an effort to convert some of the deposits to gifts, Washington University applied for and received funding from the Title II-C (Strengthening Research Library Resources) program of the United States Department of Education. With funds from that grant, the manuscripts staff of the library

converted a number of deposits to gifts, processed those materials and others, and developed the *Guide* which is the subject of this review.

Seventy-six individual collections of literary manuscripts are described in the *Guide* as are three additional groups of material from the Washington University Archives and Research Collection. The entries are arranged alphabetically in the *Guide* and include birth and death dates for the principal person in the collection, a general identifier (author, collector, editor, etc.), inclusive dates for material in the collection, the number of items in the collection, a note on access to the material, and a narrative description of the contents. A bibliographic note is included so researchers can conduct preliminary research prior to using the manuscript collection. Most importantly, the amount of material for the significant literary figures represented in each collection is identified. The number of items related to a specific individual is noted in the guide entry as is a coded description of the type of material (letters to, letters from, manuscripts by, audiotapes of, proof matter by, and journals or notebooks by the person listed). The individual entries are, then, complete and comprehensive. Several guide entries run three pages or more; most run about one-half to three-fourths of a page.

The inclusion of detailed information on the type of documents available for individual literary figures makes this guide a most useful research tool. The cumulative index which permits a researcher to determine which collections contain material on a specific individual is especially useful.

This *Guide* represents something of an ideal in the preparation of summary finding aids. It includes detailed information on the contents of individual collections in a manner that is meaningful and useful to those interested in working the collection. It does not, and cannot, provide detailed subject access to the collections, but a researcher is able to determine the amount and the nature of the material at Washington University for specific individuals. Access to the works of individual authors is possible through the index and the selective listing of material within specific collections. The staff of the Modern Literary Manuscript Collection is to be commended for a job well-done.

Gordon O. Hendrickson
Western Historical Manuscript Collection-Kansas City

The WPA Guide to Minnesota. Compiled and written by the Federal Writer's Project of the Works Progress Administration, with a new introduction by Frederick Manfred. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985. 539 pp. Indexes. Paper. \$9.95.

The WPA Guide to Minnesota, like thermal underwear, jumper cables, and mosquito repellent, should be mandatory equipment for survival in Minnesota. Originally compiled by the Federal Writers' Project of the Works Progress Administration in 1938, the guide packs an astonishing range of information in one volume. Without reproducing the entire table of contents, it would be impossible to indicate the full scope of the work, but some of the topics covered are climate, geology, the Indians, history, government, immigration, industrial

development, labor relations, education, religion and the arts. And that is only Part I! Part II consists of brief descriptions, marvels of compression, complete with street maps of the major cities and towns of Minnesota. The distinctive character and history of each city is drawn in sharp and vivid prose that reads like a nonfictional *Lake Wobegon Days*. Readers will discover, for example, why streets in St. Paul zigzag at unreasonable angles while those in Minneapolis follow a more rational grid pattern. They can also find where to play polo in St. Paul, what taxi and bus fares are, what radio stations are available, and where to go for the State Gallery Rifle Matches — all as of 1938. The tours laid out at the end of each description are still useful, offering a splendid way to get a feel for the historical development of the city. The last section of the book consists of tours covering major portions of the state using the same technique to describe smaller towns, natural features and points of interest. While still useable, the reader is well advised to follow the advice of the editors of the new edition and take along a modern road map. Despite its age, though, the *Guide* makes delightfully informative reading for anyone with an interest in the state.

Such is its broad appeal, but the *Guide to Minnesota* has a specific value to archivists. The fact that it is fifty years out of date, while perhaps troubling for the general reader, is a great boon to those with a professional concern for the state's past. Over a hundred writers labored for nearly three years with the aid of the Minnesota Historical Society, the department heads of the University of Minnesota, and the State Department of Education to distill this one volume from what the director of the project called "an avalanche of facts, actual and near." In doing so, they produced a richly textured self portrait of the state, a snapshot of Minnesota as they saw it at a specific point in time. Despite minor errors of fact brought on by the rapid pace and scale of the project, the *Guide* emerges as an important historical document in its own right. While not intended as a scholarly reference work, it nevertheless stands as an invaluable tool for providing a context for the countless diaries, letters, government and business records, and other documents that have survived from the past.

Perhaps the most remarkable aspect of this work is that it does not stand alone. WPA guides were prepared for all 48 states. As Frederick Manfred points out in his graceful introduction to the present edition, some of these are regarded as first-rate pieces of literature. Taken as a whole the entire series, good, bad, and indifferent, stands as a monument of American self awareness. It may be unnecessary to point out that it is also a monument to government intervention in preserving our historical and literary heritage, but it is certainly that. In an age where we all eat at McDonald's, shop in identical shopping malls, and listen to our news read in accentless Network English, it is a salutary reminder that each state is unique and has its own story to tell. Some of these state guides have already been reprinted. One can hope that all eventually will be. The Minnesota Historical Society chose well in bringing out a new edition of the Minnesota guide with an updated bibliography as part of their Borealis reprint series.

Scott Jessee
Control Data Corporation

The Black Women in the Middle West Project: A Comprehensive Resource Guide, Illinois and Indiana. By Darlene Clark Hine, Patrick Kay Bidelman, et.al. West Lafayette, Ind.: Purdue Research Foundation, 1986. 238 pp. Appendixes, indexes, and bibliography. \$5.00, available from the Indiana Historical Bureau.

"If you want the history of a white man, you go to the library. If you want the history of black women, you go to the attics, the closets, and the basements." This quote by Alta Jett sums up the rationale behind the Black Women in the Middle West Project. NEH funded the eighteen-month project to address the historical neglect of black women in Indiana and Illinois by collecting, cataloging, and preserving their photographs and documents. Alta Jett, and hundreds of other volunteers like her, donated their time to promote the project, contact donors, process collections, and deliver material to the five cooperating repositories: Chicago Historical Society, Illinois State Historical Library, Calumet Regional Archives, Northern Indiana Historical Society, and the Indiana Historical Society. They were joined by a small project staff, located at Purdue University.

The happy marriage of volunteers, academics, and other professionals represents the greatest success of this project. Together they promoted an impressive level of public awareness of black women's history. The numbers speak for themselves. Over 1,000 people participated in some aspect of the project. Regular mailings were sent to 5,000 individuals and institutions (the project spent \$5,000 on postage alone). Two hundred stories appeared in over 100 different publications including major features in *History News*, the *OAH Newsletter*, and *Essence Magazine*. The project also produced a prodigious paper record of its own, in the form of press releases, progress reports, brochures, a publicity kit, a collector's manual, a poster, even "business" cards for use by the volunteer project representatives. And, of course, the *Comprehensive Resource Guide*.

The *Guide* is divided into five chapters, an epilogue, three appendixes, and three indexes. The first two chapters present papers on "The Significance of Black Women's History," and transcripts of addresses by three of the black women who shared their experiences with attendees at the eight conference/workshops in the summer of 1984. Chapters three and four provide entries to the material collected. Chapter five offers biographical sketches of project participants. The epilogue provides a pictorial review of the project, mixing shots of participants with selections of historical photographs and documents acquired by the project. Unfortunately, the poor photoreproduction process used in the *Guide* diminishes the impact of these images. The appendixes include a copy of the *Collector's Manual*, the "Project Participant Biographical Information Form," and a list of project participants. The indexes provide basic access to the collections and biographical entries.

The Black Women in the Middle West Project succeeded in its objective to collect and preserve historical materials. Volunteers acquired "hundreds of cubic feet of new collections." In addition, they secured biographical information on the donors, including statements on life, attitudes, and philosophy, which will help future researchers place this material in a personal context. The range of donors, and the materials they chose to preserve, provide a

wonderful cross-section of black women's experiences. They confirm the continuing existence — and struggle against — racism. They reflect the contributions black women have made in many areas. And they offer ample evidence of the centrality of religion, family, community, and sharing in many black women's lives.

These patterns are revealed in the types of materials donated. Instead of the letters, diaries, journals, and records associated with white men's collections, material acquired by the project consists of newspaper clippings, photographs, church and convention programs, club bulletins and yearbooks, letters of appreciation, certificates and awards, anniversary programs, birth and marriage certificates, and obituaries. Not only will these collections offer archivists and researchers primary source materials previously unavailable, but they should also provide them with a greater appreciation for the variation in patterns of paper documentation.

As an archivist, I do have one criticism of this guide. Because collections did not pass through the project office, the staff had to rely on information provided by the volunteers or cooperating institutions to compile entries. Unfortunately this resulted in descriptions that, in the words of the staff, were "timely rather than definitive." Collection entries emphasize biographical data rather than the contents of the material itself. More attention should have been paid to consistent reporting of basic collection descriptions. Certainly this lack is in part understandable because the materials await arrangement and description by the receiving institutions. In part, the reliance on volunteers to sort and inventory the material proved to be the weakest link in the process. A review of the *Collector's Manual* seems to confirm this. The "Collection Recording Form," "Inventory Systems Sheet," and the accompanying instructions are complicated and out of step with the rest of this excellent training manual.

This volume is less a "Comprehensive Resource Guide" and more a written record of the Black Women in the Middle West Project's philosophy, methodology, and very real accomplishments. It should serve as a model to guide future collecting initiatives which involve a heavy volunteer component.

Anne R. Kenney
Cornell University

A Guide to the Records of Minnesota's Public Lands. By Gregory Kinney and Lydia Lucas. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1985. 121 pp. Bibliography. Paper. \$8.00

This guide describes Minnesota records which document the acquisition, sale, and management of its trust fund, railroad grant and related lands, in addition to the state's federal land survey and the initial transfer of federal public land title to the state or to private parties. In all, the guide characterizes transactions pertaining to nearly 9,000,000 acres of land which are documented in approximately 800 cubic feet of records primarily created by four agencies. It is improbable that a precise acreage count will be accomplished, because

not only do state and federal figures differ, but there is dispute over what constitutes land under some of the definitions.

Minnesota's land records are dispersed among several state and federal agencies, and this guide does an excellent job of consolidating this data for the researcher. Within state government, land records are held by the State Land Office, State Auditor, Conservation Department, Natural Resources Department, and the Secretary of State. Many other state agencies created records which document land activities and which may interest the researcher: Attorney General, Drainage Commission, Forestry Board, Immigration Board, Iron Range Resources and Rehabilitation Board, and the Timber Commissioners Board. Federal records pertaining to Minnesota territorial and state lands were created by the U.S. Surveyor General and the U.S. General Land Office. The earliest survey of Minnesota land was directed by the U.S. Surveyor General of Iowa and Wisconsin. Congress moved the surveyor general's office to St. Paul in 1857, and it inherited the territorial survey work completed from 1848 through May 1857.

This guide is divided into four sections by the agencies which created the majority of the records: the State Land Office, the State Auditor's Land Department, the U.S. General Land Office, and the U.S. Surveyor General. Following an introductory discussion of the types of public land found in Minnesota and the laws which governed them, each section is introduced by a historical/administrative sketch of the major state and federal offices which generated the land records. Series lists, alphabetized by key word in the title, precede the more detailed sketch of the records themselves. The series entry also delineates span dates, volume, containers, related records, finding aids, and subseries listing when such information is available. The guide also contains summaries of records relating to land records which are located in other state agencies.

There is not any index to the guide but undoubtedly researchers using Minnesota land records will welcome this compilation. All of the records described in this guide are located at the Minnesota Historical Society. Current records of administrative value, however, remain housed in the Department of Natural Resources; these records are transferred to the State Archives when they are no longer needed on a daily basis by the agency.

William G. Myers
Ohio Historical Society

Guide to the Records of American Crystal Sugar Company. By David Carmichael, Lydia Lucas, and Marion E. Matters. St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society, 1985. Illustrations, index. 100 pp. Paper.

This volume contains all of the elements that should be included in every good finding aid, as well as some elements which one does not normally see in them. Any archivist would expect to see a scope and contents note, a historical introduction, and a description and listing of the records, and that archivist would not be disappointed. A researcher, however, might well be equally interested in the detailed table of contents in which each of these thirty-eight

series is identified by name; in the detailed index for the finding aid in which people, places, subjects, types of materials, and numerous other details are listed; and in the selection of pictures chosen from the voluminous number of photographs included in the records. Thus, this extraordinary finding aid will be very useful to both researchers and archivists at the Minnesota Historical Society. Both new and experienced archivists would benefit from examining the finding aid and using it as a model to follow in preparing similar documents for large collections of corporate records.

The records of American Crystal Sugar Company are eighty percent of the whole collection. Logically, then, their description takes up the major portion of this finding aid. For each series there is a good description. The descriptions always include types of records, amount of material, and dates. In some instances, certain types of unusual materials are described or defined so that uninitiated users can understand what is included. Particularly significant events or activities recorded in the series are also highlighted. These descriptions are followed by folder and volume listings.

Like many twentieth century American corporations, the American Crystal Sugar Company was created by the merger with, and acquisition of, several other companies over a period of years. This is reflected in the arrangement and description of the papers. Series twenty through thirty-two are records of thirteen of these acquired companies. In each case, the relationship between American Crystal Sugar Company and the other firm is detailed in a brief note, then the records are described and listed.

The final six series are various records grouped according to type, such as annual reports of other sugar companies, contracts, photographs, newspaper clippings, and miscellaneous.

Benjamin Franklin noted that wise men learn from the mistakes of others while fools hardly ever learn, even from their own errors. It seems to me that wise archivists can also learn from the successes of others. Thus, many archivists could probably learn something about how a good finding aid should be created by examining this one, even if few archivists or archives would need a copy in their own reference collections.

Charles R. Schultz
Texas A&M University

Company Archives: The Survey of the Records of 1000 of the First Registered Companies in England and Wales. By Lesley Richmond and Bridget Stockford. Brookfield, Vt.: Gower Publishing Company, 1986. 593 pp. Name, place, and subject indexes. Hardcover, \$94.50.

Company Archives is the result of a four-year survey project made possible by a grant from the Economic and Social Research Council to the Business Archives Council of the U.K. In undertaking this mammoth project, the Business Archives Council had three major objectives: first, to compile a general register of business archives held by the oldest existing firms; second, to help

ensure the preservation of records which might otherwise be destroyed; and third to encourage research in those archives.

The companies surveyed were identified from a list resulting from the Companies Acts of 1856 and 1862, which required public or joint stock companies to register with the Board of Trade. All companies surveyed were registered between 1856 and 1889. The range of business activities covered by the original companies was extensive but predictable, while the contemporary firms vary remarkably in size and activity from small independent companies to global holding companies. The companies surveyed were selected because they are the oldest surviving companies — and therefore had a greater likelihood that records would have survived — and because these companies were unlikely to have been covered by other national surveys. While the original list included 1200 companies, the survey was completed for 674 of the “core” companies, those responding to the survey. Approximately 1000 additional institutions associated with or subsidiary to the core companies were identified and surveyed as well.

Entries in the book represent summaries of the actual records surveys, which were often quite extensive. Included in each entry for a core company are: the company name, registration date and number; its current business address; principal activity; brief history of the firm; location of the records; summary lists of records of the core company and its subsidiaries; and a reference section giving citations to relevant publications. While the entries vary greatly in detail and length, this is reflective of the size and variety of the records holdings of the companies. Great care has been taken to try to standardize entries so that record types are listed similarly in all entries.

Core companies are listed in chronological order of registration dates. For purposes of the guide, each company was given an entry number as well. A guide like this must be well indexed, and this one is exceptional. The name index includes names of all companies, individuals, and records locations. The place index includes towns and counties in the British Isles and countries worldwide, from Aberdeen to Zimbabwe. And the subject index includes business activities, commodities traded, and other subjects mentioned in the history sections. There is a two page guide to index conventions which must be read, but once mastered the guide book is extremely easy to use.

The Business Archives Council should be proud of accomplishing their objectives. This register of archives of the oldest firms in England and Wales covers the spectrum of business activity, and will undoubtedly prove quite valuable to a wide variety of researchers worldwide including business, social, and economic historians, local historians, biographers, and geneologists. Though this survey was never intended to be a definitive guide to all U.K. companies (it excludes defunct companies and younger firms), it can be used as an indicator of the types of records that should be available. It can also be used as a guide to a more conscious effort to identify and save those records most representative of current business activity.

An underlying assumption of the project staff was that the mere knowledge of the existence of archives in private hands will lead to their continued survival. The Business Archives Council has made a major contribution in publicizing the existence of a vast quantity of records previously inaccessible because their existence was unknown. The Council has also assumed additional responsibility

for maintaining the guide and subsequent changes of locations of records collections. We must certainly applaud our British colleagues for their ability to carry out this project. We can also be grateful for the information now available, and we should certainly encourage emulation of this model project.

Anne Van Camp
Chase Manhattan Archives

