

## BOOK REVIEWS

*Guide to the Smithsonian Archives 1978.* Archives and Special Collections of the Smithsonian Institution, Number 2. Washington, D. C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978. 298 pp. Appendices and index. Paperbound. Free; quantity limited.

In 1971, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the founding of the Smithsonian Institution, the Smithsonian Archives published a 72-page preliminary guide to its holdings. It was a useful introduction to those archival and manuscript materials in the institution that is often reverently called "The Nation's Attic."

The 1978 guide, now 298 pages, is a tribute both to the materials preserved by the Smithsonian and to the leadership of Dick Lytle and the other members of his Archives staff. The guide is a reminder to both governmental and non-governmental repositories that institutions must be committed not only to preserving original source materials but also to arrangement, description, and public service. The publication of a guide highlights the routine day-to-day archival work, which makes material accessible to potential users.

The 1978 guide includes all records and manuscript collections accessioned and prepared for general use in the Smithsonian Archives before June 1977. It does not include materials from the National Anthropological Archives or the Archives of American Art, which are in themselves major national repositories within the Smithsonian.

The guide's introductory information includes explanations of reference and reproduction services and even a suggested citation recommendation, and is useful in understanding the record group system endorsed by the Smithsonian. The record groups follow administrative structure, and the Smithsonian coordinates this

with a second numbering system to locate materials on storage shelves.

The guide has two main parts: records of the Smithsonian Institution itself, and special collections. The former comprise approximately 3200 cubic feet of records and are described on pages 1 to 132. This section of the guide focuses on institutional records including Office of the Secretary, Assistant Secretary, National Museum of Natural History, and related bureaus. The second section highlights approximately 1200 cubic feet of records, including the papers of James Smithson and other secretaries, "Other Papers and Records," and oral history projects. The "other papers and records" might well have been defined as manuscript collections. This unit has received much of the staff's time; the descriptions comprise well over 100 pages.

Persons using the guide may first want to explore one or both of the tables of contents for assistance in locating specific records. The user may also consult the "Selected Index," which has not utilized special subject indexing. The total index, however, comprises 25 pages in double columns. Two "form" appendices and a nine page "Collection Date Span" compilation are also appropriate and useful for researchers.

The key to the guide, obviously, is in the descriptive information. The descriptions usually entail from one to four paragraphs and outline the basic information necessary for research, including agency history or personal information, inclusive dates, volume, type of arrangement, existence of finding aids, and any notation of special conditions. The succinct descriptions will direct users to the most appropriate original source material.

This guide will be of interest to all researchers investigating the history of the Smithsonian Institution, as well as to historians of science and technology and the allied field of natural history. For archivists and curators the guide is an institutional publication which all of us might well emulate.

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*Preservation of Paper and Textiles of Historic and Artistic Value.* John C. Williams, editor. Advances in Chemistry Series, 164. Washington, D.C.: American Chemical Society, 1977. 403 pp. Bibliographical references and index. Cloth. \$43.75.

As the title page indicates, this volume is the result of "a symposium sponsored by the Cellular and Paper Division at the 172nd meeting of the American Chemical Society, San Francisco, California, August 30-31, 1976." There are 25 individual articles or contributions. With authors like Middleton, Cunha, Walker, Smith, Bear, and Fuller, the reader finds himself traveling in pretty good company. The topics for consideration include: deacidification, permanent paper, design of pulp for repair purposes, mass drying, preserving and repairing of textiles, and artificial aging.

After a preface by John C. Williams, the work is divided into three parts. The first is "Care and Preservation of Books and Manuscripts." Bernard Middleton begins this section with a practical and philosophical look at where library collections stand today, and makes suggestions for a preservation program. The second section, "Care and Preservation of Textiles," starts with Nobuko Kajitani's work on treatment of museum fabrics. Again, it serves as a practical and philosophical overview to the section. In the third section, entitled "Estimation of Permanence," a paper on testing methods by B. L. Browning from the Institute of Paper Chemistry, Appleton, Wisconsin, sets the tone for the ensuing articles, which feature chemical analyses of materials.

Following an abstract, each article states a problem, explores it thoroughly, and ends with a summary or conclusion. Because of this format, the work may be read on several different levels. The reader benefits from the amount of knowledge he or she brings to it. Familiarity with Cunha or the word of the Barrow labs would be most helpful, but to plumb the articles' depths thoroughly, one needs to be well versed in chemistry.

Most of the authors who discuss problems of paper are aware of the massive number of books and manuscripts in library collections that are in trouble. Smith and Wheeler relate their success with mass deacidification, and there are several articles dealing with drying of wet and flood damaged material.

Since my work deals mostly with paper and books, I found the first section of the book to be the most interesting. However, since

books and manuscripts are made from a variety of materials, many of the articles on textiles made points applicable to library and archival collections. Nobuko Kajitani's article, "Care of Fabrics in a Museum," for instance, mentions many techniques that carry over into the handling of paper. Kajitani offers a good definition of preservation versus conservation, and his comments about keeping and handling fabrics are applicable to manuscripts, books, and especially maps.

As a conservator, I noticed that this book is nicely bound: well rounded and backed, good turnins at the edges and corners, sewed-in signatures, cased in with equal squares on the boards, and covered with a good grade of text cloth. The publishers have evidently taken pride in their product.

A glossary of terms would have been helpful for the general reader. Some of the authors have a penchant for compound sentences that tend toward convolution. This is occasionally annoying and time consuming, but the book gives a good idea to any reader of where we are and how far we are able to go in this preservation business.

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*Archives & Manuscripts: Exhibits.* By Gail Farr Casterline. Basic Manual Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1980. 70 pp. Appendices and bibliography. Paper. \$5.00, members; \$7.00, others.

As Casterline points out in the introductory chapter of this sensible and concisely written manual, it took the Bicentennial of the American Revolution to involve large numbers of archivists in exhibit planning and preparation. Although archival materials have often been featured in the exhibits of agencies that care for papers and records, such displays have not always satisfied the viewer who wants to learn and the curator who wants to educate. The documents themselves have too often fared the worst, because

of improper mounting and display in hazardous exhibit sites. This manual addresses the archivist's interest in improving public outreach with the abiding concern for preservation of the original materials.

In keeping with her own concern for "an orderly procedure . . . for handling the myriad tasks in a logical order," Casterline takes the exhibitor step-by-step through the time-consuming stages of planning and development, with special attention to conservation requirements, design situations, appropriate techniques, and coordination of exhibits with other programs. There are sections on evaluating the condition of the materials, exhibit catalogues, publicity, traveling exhibits, loans and insurance, exhibits and the copyright law, and evaluation and record-keeping. Suppliers of equipment, sources of supplies, and suggested further readings are enumerated in the text, footnotes, appendices, and in the bibliography, which is usefully arranged by subject.

Nearly half of the text (25 pages) is devoted to design and technique, with particular advice on how to make manuscripts look as interesting as they really are. Topics covered include cases, panels, and other display structures; photoreproductions and facsimiles; layout; and labels. Commensurate with its importance, the section on mounting techniques is the most precise portion of the manual. The conservation aspects are again at the forefront where they belong, in the detailed explanations of backing and proper support, creating props, and methods of matting, framing, and glazing; special attention is given to mounting photographs. Of the 36 very good drawings and photographs in the manual, 26 illustrate this section.

The theoretical and practical problems posed by exhibit work are discussed in an engaging manner throughout the text. On motivation: "Do not feel compelled to produce exhibits simply because other institutions have them. It should be a positive decision, made with fairly specific goals in mind." On impact: "The subject of the exhibit, its placement, and the quality of its design and execution are more important than size in determining effectiveness." On viewers: "Enthusiastic as you may be . . . do not underestimate the difficulty of creating an audience." On locating and selecting the material: "Never minimize the significance of the search or its difficulty." On estimating costs: "Nothing squelches

creativity faster than a balance sheet; there is much to be said for developing the concept first and then figuring out how to fund it." And on the archivist's creative role:

Imaginative exhibitors who know their collections can identify many worthwhile subjects that no one has thought to study, either because the subjects are outside the realm of traditional scholarship, or because their past experiences as curators have made them sensitive to certain kinds of relationships.

*Archives & Manuscripts: Exhibits* is the most thoroughly organized and prepared account of the subject to date and certainly the most attractively produced item in the SAA Basic Manual Series.

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*A Manual of Archival Techniques*. Edited by Roland M. Baumann. Harrisburg, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1979. 127 pp. Appendices and bibliography. Paper. \$2.75.

In 1978, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission sponsored a workshop on basic archival techniques. The workshop was geared toward the individual who is in charge of an archival program that operates on a small budget and with little or no professionally trained staff. More specifically, the workshop faculty was instructed "to address itself to the problems of local historical societies and to provide ground-level techniques and inexpensive solutions to them."

The manual is a compilation of fifteen papers (averaging six pages each) read at the workshop. As one would expect of a discussion of the basics, the following topics are included: arrangement and description of textual, photographic, and cartographic records; reference; security; storage; disaster planning; preservation; and assistance through grants. What transforms this publication into something unique is its sensitivity to the problems of its intended audience.

The authors seem to truly understand and appreciate the circumstances under which many local historical societies operate. Almost without exception, they speak directly to the needs of these institutions. When discussing archival theories and goals, the authors attempt to explain them in a manner that will be meaningful to the untrained. When addressing methodology, they offer suggestions that tend to be practical and inexpensive. In addition, alternative approaches to a problem are frequently offered. The custodian is encouraged to study the alternatives, to consult additional literature, and then to select a solution that best suits his/her individual shop.

The practical and helpful approach that flows throughout the manual is exemplified in its final section. Here the reader is introduced to the two major federal assistance programs: the National Endowment for the Humanities and the National Historical Publications and Records Commission. The structure and emphasis of each program is clearly outlined, arming the potential grant applicant with the knowledge of where and how to seek assistance for a specific project. For those in Pennsylvania an added bonus is provided by the inclusion of two short articles on the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Public Committee for the Humanities in Pennsylvania. In light of the needs of local historical societies, this section alone makes the publication invaluable.

Worth mentioning as another of the manual's strengths are its references to additional professional literature. The text is interspersed with citations to books and articles that the reader is advised to consult for a more detailed treatment of the subject under discussion. Also included is a short but well selected bibliography which is arranged by subject. Most of the sources are either standard works or from prominent professional journals and are therefore readily available.

Given the fact that this is presented as a basic manual and not an inclusive statement on archival methods, omissions can be expected. Indeed, there is one major omission that seems obvious to those who work with local historical collections. The manual fails to discuss administrative tools which, if used, can help ensure uniformity in the components of an archival program. It must be recognized that one of the most overwhelming problems of a local

historical society is understaffing. As a result, the custodian is constantly jumping from one activity to another, depending on the immediate needs of the program. This can easily lead to inconsistencies in administering the myriad elements of the archives unless the custodian systematizes with such tools as forms and an operations manual. Unfortunately, this subject is overlooked.

Overall, however, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission should be commended. It has succeeded in producing a manual that should prove to be extremely helpful to the trained as well as the untrained custodians of local history collections. Their particular problems have been addressed; ground-level and inexpensive solutions have been suggested. And while there is no index, the book is easy to use. If used in conjunction with other professional literature, adequate guidance is provided for developing and maintaining a good program.

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*Guide to Manuscript Collections in the National Museum of History and Technology.* Archives and Special Collections of the Smithsonian Institution, Number 3. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1978. 143 pp. Index. Paperbound.

The Smithsonian Institution encompasses some of America's best known museum collections. The fact that one of its components, the National Museum of History and Technology, holds a remarkably rich collection of manuscripts, photographs, and printed ephemera is much less expected and even less known. The publication of the *Guide to Manuscript Collections in the National Museum of History and Technology*, compiled by Richard V. Szary of the Smithsonian Archives, is intended to acquaint a larger public with some of the Smithsonian's documentary holdings. This *Guide* is the third volume in the series, "Archives and Special Collections of the Smithsonian Institution;" two earlier volumes described the holdings of the Institution Archives.

The nucleus of the NMHT's manuscript collection was formed primarily from three sources: 1) in-house reference files created and maintained by each division to document objects in the collections or as background material for exhibits, 2) papers that accompanied artifact acquisitions, and 3) "orphaned" manuscript collections, i.e. those rejected by other repositories as being out of their scope. This last category includes papers of inventors, engineers, and others involved in scientific and technical endeavors. Recently the NMHT curators embarked on a more systematic program to acquire this type of material through the establishment of a Document Collections Committee.

One might ask why a museum would enlarge its mandate to include the development of a manuscript collection. Brooke Hindle, director of the NMHT, attempts an answer in his "Forward" to the *Guide*. Manuscripts, Hindle contends, describe or substitute for artifacts, providing them with a fuller "human dimension" by helping to explain their social and intellectual context. Further, they "offer a key for scholars most used to using written sources to the use of the artifacts themselves which have far more to offer as sources than has been widely perceived." Publication of the *Guide*, then, marks an important step in fostering an interpretive interplay of artifactual resources with their written and photographic counterparts.

The extent and diversity of the manuscript materials that have been acquired by the National Museum is surprising. The majority of the 357 collections described here relate chiefly to science and technology, but popular culture, community and family life, business, politics, and military history are also well represented. The excellent index draws attention to holdings one would not normally expect to find at the NMHT, such as a collection of Mexican war posters and the papers of the first U.S. Consul to Siam.

Richard Szary's descriptions of several hundred collections is remarkably comprehensive, given the paucity of internal finding aids available to assist him. His succinct entries include each collection's title, span dates, volume, biographical or historical background, physical description, arrangement, status of finding aids, and restrictions on or special conditions of use. In order to facilitate coordinated use of manuscripts and photographs with the artifacts they relate to, it would have been useful to have included

more information on provenance, although this would probably have been impossible since many of these collections were no doubt acquired before the Institution adopted systematic record-keeping practices for this type of material.

The staff of the National Museum of History and Technology is to be commended for its insight into the value of manuscripts to a museum program. Providing researchers interested in these collections with reference assistance is certain to conflict with other curatorial responsibilities, such as preparing exhibits; therefore potential users will have to make arrangements with appropriate museum staff well in advance of their visits.

The *Guide to Manuscript Collections in the National Museum of History and Technology* provides excellent entree to a fine collection of heretofore underexploited manuscripts, photographs, and printed ephemera. Its publication should encourage scholarly exploration of a wide range of original sources for the history of science and technology as well as for the broader field of cultural history.

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*Ontario's Heritage: A Guide to Archival Resources, Volume I: Peterborough Region.* Edited by Victor L. Russell. Cheltenham, Ontario: The Boston Mills Press, 1978. 113 pp. Appendices and index. Paper. \$6.95.

In the spirit of local cooperation and initiative, the Toronto Area Archivists Group is to be commended for attempting to produce guides to the records of the Province of Ontario. Volume I of what is projected to be a 15-volume series covers the Peterborough region, comprising the counties of Haliburton, Peterborough, and Victoria.

The main body of the guide provides listings of records found in municipalities, educational institutions, religious institutions, and private clubs, businesses, or associations. In addition, Appendix A briefly surveys records relevant to the area that can be found in repositories outside the Peterborough region.

Although any guide to archival resources has potential value, this particular guide is flawed not only structurally but also by its provinciality. There are several mechanical or structural flaws that damage the over-all impact of the guide.

The lack of even a limited subject index certainly lessens the use potential of the collections listed. Furthermore, the arrangement of the guide itself is somewhat confusing. For example, many of the entries include what are obviously internal classification numbers without, however, explaining what they are. A case in point are the entries from the Peterborough Centennial Museum, which include in parentheses what appear to be record group designations (e.g. County of Peterborough [MG2-9]). Also, the addresses of the institutions surveyed could just as easily have been placed in the body of the guide itself instead of establishing a separate location index. Finally, there is a lack of consistency in reporting. Except for the entries of the Trent University Archives, no mention is made in the guide of the quantity of any of the collections, either in number of items or in linear or cubic feet. The lack of any kind of measurement is a serious flaw in a guide designed to aid researchers.

When preparing a guide for external publication, editors should never assume a level of knowledge that is inconsistent with that of the general public. This is particularly true in preparing a geographically-based survey. Since the volume at hand deals with only three counties, brief county histories would have been both helpful and relatively easy to produce. Also, the addition of a map detailing the specific area covered by the volume as well as the location of all the cities and towns surveyed would have been helpful.

The suggestions and criticisms presented here are offered not to denigrate the volume reviewed but more in the spirit of offering suggestions for the remaining fourteen volumes in this series. Because of the scope and magnitude of the series, *Ontario's Heritage: A Guide to Archival Resources*, growing pains and possible false starts are unavoidable. This is a commendable project and one that should be continued. The problem as exemplified by the first volume is not with the content but the format. With some needed editorial changes, the series should fulfill its mission in a professional manner.

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*Manual for Accessioning, Arrangement, and Description of Manuscripts and Archives.* Seattle: University of Washington Libraries, 1979. 55 pp. Appendices. Paper.

*Winthrop College Archives and Special Collections: A Manual of Policies and Procedures.* By Ron Chepesiuk. Rock Hill, South Carolina: Dacus Library at Winthrop College, 1978. 67 pp. Appendices. Paper. \$2.00

In recent years a number of archives and manuscript collections have shared their policies and procedures with colleagues by publishing and making available their procedural manuals. Like many of the others, these two recent manuals are from college or university archives.

The manual of the University Archives and Manuscript Division of the University of Washington Libraries is devoted to policies and procedures concerning the accessioning, arrangement, and description of their collections. The manual is used by staff and students as a "daily guide" for assigned work, and is divided into two sections entitled "Theory" and "Practice."

Part one describes the five levels of arrangement (accession, subgroup, series, folder, and item) and the three types of cumulative indexes (name, subject, and chronological) that are used to describe the materials. The "Practice" section is a step-by-step guide to all of the tasks the archivist performs for any one collection, and is designed to answer any questions he or she might have about the mechanics of processing by attempting to predict what sorts of materials and problems will be encountered. It is liberally illustrated with examples of the various forms and worksheets to be used, and the descriptions of procedures are fairly clear and understandable.

The manual of the Winthrop College Archives and Special Collections outlines policies and procedures for all of its operations, which is an ambitious undertaking. It is addressed to the staff and graduate students, and is complete to the point of including a glossary, job descriptions, samples of every form and worksheet used in the archives, and a copy of the archives brochure. The manual is divided into sections concerning general guidelines, the archives collection, the manuscript collection, the oral history program, the book collection, and general office procedures. Like

the University of Washington's, the descriptions of policies and procedures in this manual are detailed and fairly clear.

The procedures outlined in both manuals are for the most part common to most archives. Readers will nod their heads in agreement with procedures that are familiar and accepted, and they will applaud policies that seem particularly helpful (this reader liked the use of processing worksheets by both institutions). They may take exception to some procedures not customary in all archives, such as the stamping of all documents by the University of Washington Archives Division, and the collecting of faculty publications at Winthrop College Archives. The only addition that could be suggested for either manual is an introduction for readers unfamiliar with the archives, which would briefly describe the scope and volume of the collections.

The main value of publications such as these to the field is in the sharing of experiences and procedures, which permits the dissemination of innovative techniques to other institutions. One lesson that is apparent is the value of having such a manual, published or not, in each archives for the use of staff to insure that the best procedures are established for that institution and that they are uniformly followed.

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is available in microform.**

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*Richard M. Kesner* has been university archivist and director of the Archives of Appalachia, East Tennessee State University, since 1978. This article is based on a paper presented at the fall, 1980, meeting of the Midwest Archives Conference in Milwaukee. He has also authored a paper conservation primer and an annotated bibliography on the role of computers in archives; in progress is a study of the role of microcomputers in libraries and archives.

*Glen A. Gildemeister* is the director of the Regional History Center at Northern Illinois University, DeKalb. His paper, originally presented at the fall, 1980, meeting of the Society of American Archivists, draws in part on interviews with persons responsible for hiring in a number of archives in Wisconsin, Illinois, and Ohio.



