

The papers of the Symposium will be available in published form from the Office of Continuing Studies by late December 1977. Plans for next year's Symposium have already begun and the planning committee welcomes suggestions concerning possible topics and papers. In this connection, contact T.A. Crowley, Department of History, University of Guelph, Guelph, Ontario.

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Revision of the Main Entry Cards at the Provincial Archives of Alberta

Researchers working at the Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) have undoubtedly encountered the "yellow cards" — the main entry index to all holdings except maps, sound recordings, films, or major photograph collections. Not only did calling them yellow cards indicate a lack of standardized professional terminology; more to the point, the cards clearly needed a major revision since inconsistency in the nature of the information shown and the format in which it was presented was a long-standing source of annoyance to researchers and staff alike. A card might, for example, say only "Alberta Society of Artists — Records" and give the accession number. A researcher had no indication of the nature, extent, or dates of the collection; the reference archivist had no idea whether he would find the collection in the oversize cabinets, on the shelves, or on a reel of microfilm. For researcher and archivist alike, adequate main entry cards are essential, since they are the principal means of access to a collection. This is doubly true when shortages of professional staff delay for some time the preparation of a detailed inventory.

After deciding to undertake the revision, the first step was to ensure that all the cards describing private manuscript collections accessioned after 1 January 1977 were done according to a standard format. (For various reasons, current government records are not included, but the card system adopted is designed so that it can be applied to government records as well). Each card was to include the following information:

1. *Accession Number*. Because all collections in the PAA are stored in the order of their accession number, that number is essential to locate a collection. As well, the same accession number refers to the entry in the accession register where basic information about the collection is recorded, and to the accession file where any correspondence about the collection is kept. In short, without the accession number it is very difficult to locate the collection itself or information about it.
2. *Location Symbol*. Although a collection cannot be located without knowing its accession number, more information is required since its exact location depends on its provenance, size, and format. For example, all government records are stored on the second floor stack area. With only an accession number, and no indication that a collection is in government records, a lot of time could be wasted looking for the collection in various places on the first floor. In addition, small collections (less than 12 cm in extent) are stored in Hollinger boxes placed at the end of the accessions for that year; again the accession number alone is insufficient to locate the collection. Finally, different types of documents are stored separately; for example, a collection containing correspondence, maps, large posters and tape recordings would be located in four places. An archivist was never certain of having located all parts of a collection.

To deal with these problems the following symbols were designed, each representing a different location: B — Blueprints; C — Cabinets; E — End of year; F — Cine film; G — Government records; M — Maps; Mi — Microfilm; O — Oversize; P — Phonotape; R — Rolled; S — Shelves; T — Top.

Various combinations of the symbols are placed in the upper right corner of each card. The most common combinations used are:

- BC — Blueprints in cabinets
- BR — Blueprints rolled on racks
- GO — Government records in oversize cabinets, government records area
- GS — Government records on shelves
- GSE — Government records on shelves at the end of the year
- MC — Maps in map cabinets
- MCT — Maps or atlases on top of map cabinets
- MR — Maps rolled on racks
- OC — Oversize cabinets
- S — Shelves in boxes or loose
- SE — Shelves at the end of the year

The location of the largest portion of the collection is given first, for example, if there are 20 cm of material on the shelf, three posters in the oversize cabinet, and one map in the map cabinet, the symbols will be given in this order: S, OC, MC.

3. *Main Title.* In most cases, the main title will be the name of the person or body creating the records. In cases where this information is not known or is irrelevant, the main subject becomes the main title.
4. *Description.* Every effort is made to record as much detail as possible about the contents of the collection. If necessary, some biographical information is added. For example, the main entry card for the Alberta Society of Artists now reads:

73.67 Alberta Society of Artists
Minutes, newsletters, constitution, and miscellaneous
correspondence of the Alberta Society of Artists. Also
contains minutes of meetings of the Canadian Artists
Representation.

5. *Dates.* The outside dates of the items in a collection are recorded if known; if not, "n.d." or dates in square brackets are used.
6. *Extent.* In most cases, the extent is recorded in centimetres or metres of shelf space. Very small collections are measured in pages when this seems more appropriate.
7. "*See inventory.*" The addition of this notation means that the inventory binders contain a detailed description of the collection, thus enabling the researcher to isolate particular items.
8. *Cross references.* Cross references to significant persons, places, or subjects mentioned in the collection are prepared using a standard master vocabulary based on the Library of Congress headings.

A typical card prepared according to the new format now reads as follows:

S

70.154 CASSELMAN, CORA TAYLOR (1888-1964)
Correspondence, news clippings, photographs,
government documents, personal documents, pamphlets,
and miscellaneous material dealing with the life of Cora
Casselman, first woman Liberal Member of Parliament,
n.d., 1900-1964. 1.2 m. See inventory.

1. Casselman, Frederick C.
2. Women — Associations
3. United Nations

A cross-reference card looks like this:

S

WOMEN — ASSOCIATIONS

70.154 Casselman, Cora Taylor (1888-1964)

Correspondence, news clippings, photographs, government documents, personal documents, pamphlets, and miscellaneous material dealing with the life of Cora Casselman, first woman Liberal Member of Parliament, n.d., 1900-1964 1.2 m. See inventory.

The enormous task of revising the cards prepared since 1963 was lessened by the fact that accessions consisting solely of maps, plans or blueprints, sound recordings, films, and photographs put in the "A Collection" (a composite collection created by the PAA, containing particularly significant photographs) did not require main entry cards because there are separate indexes for each type of medium. In addition, consideration is being given to establishing a record group system for government records, and pending that decision, no revision of the cards for government records will occur at this time. Nevertheless, cards for more than two thousand accessions of private manuscripts remain to be revised.

The human resources to undertake the job arrived as part of our complement of summer employees. Two persons were hired to work on main entry cards — one had worked at the PAA during several summers in the past and the other had completed the Archives Course offered at the University of Alberta Summer School. Armed with some general instructions, they set to work on the accession register, going through it accession by accession. Each number was accounted for, whether the card was revised or not, and there is now a master list of the cards which have been revised and a list of those accessions requiring detailed inventories. Naturally, the project turned up a number of oddities, including collections containing such items as tea towels commemorating Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee, cigarette papers, and tubes for old radio sets. These were promptly transferred to the Provincial Museum. As well certain collections "temporarily misplaced" have come to light.

Each card was checked by the Senior Archivist for completeness of information and for consistency in its cross references. As the new cards were typed and filed, the old ones were discarded, producing a vastly improved reference tool. We have also converted the extents of our collections to metric measurement and have weeded out non-archival material. We now have the means to go ahead with the systematic preparation of returns for the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories*, an area in which we have been remiss because of a lack of staff. Moreover, a detailed inventory for each collection will not be required since many collections are now adequately described on main entry cards. The investment of time and effort was more than worthwhile. And we have taken one small step toward standardization of terminology — we no longer call them "yellow cards."

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Archives of Ontario Computerized Land Records Index

Land records are among the most commonly used documents in archives. For municipal, county, provincial, and national jurisdictions, they can disclose where, when and how settlement took place, and are consequently basic sources for