

Regional Collection: The D.B. Weldon Library Catalogue. Edited by S.L. SYKES. London: D.B. Weldon Library, University of Western Ontario, c1977. 3 v. (Microfiche copies are free upon written request. Send inquiries to Ed Phelps, Librarian, Regional Collection, University of Western Ontario, London, Ontario. N6A 3K7)

In Ontario, and undoubtedly elsewhere as well, there exists a mass of records kept by persons who do not know what to do with them, nor whom to contact to find out. Given this situation, it is not surprising that such basic records as assessment rolls, school board files and other records of municipalities and townships are all too often being thrown out simply to make room. The three-volume catalogue of the regional holdings in the D.B. Weldon Library (University of Western Ontario) underlines not only what has fortuitously been preserved, but also reveals some distressing gaps. Such catalogues provide more thorough and comprehensive coverage than do the entries in the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories*, which by their nature are mere samplings.

What of the catalogue as a guide to archival resources? From the outset it must be noted that the arrangement of the contents is rather disappointing, failing to follow the archival principles of provenance and *respect des fonds*. There is no need to harp on the fact that the archivist and librarian both handle information, but differ in their methods of organizing that information. An archivist, however, would not have used the same priorities in organizing the material as those evidenced in this work, and would thus have been better able to provide the optimum access to the fine regional historical collection in London which this catalogue does not.

This observation holds true particularly with respect to municipal records, where there is at best only a hint of how and under what jurisdictions the records were created, and of their historical sequence. For example, in the arrangement of Huron County records, the intermingling of offices and officials — in this instance, courts and court officials with county officials — forces the reader through the entire listing for the county to find out all that might interest him or her. There is a generally unsystematic and haphazard listing of records of boards of education. Teachers' payrolls are entered inconsistently (see Caradoc, Euphemia and Mosa Townships), at times turning up in the entries for inspectors' reports, at other times elsewhere. It is also in the board of education entries where the lack of hierarchy of records according to jurisdiction is most glaring. Minutes appear after registers and cashbooks, instead of the reverse. Even within the school registers themselves, there is a lack of uniformity; a reader would reasonably expect to proceed from School Section #1 through School Section #11, rather than skip from one to the other. Throughout, priority is given to the alphabetical listing of records, rather than according to function, making the work of the researcher much more difficult and time-consuming — time which a guide to resources should save.

The lack of attention paid to the provenance of records and the subsequent extremely subjective approach to the arrangement is disturbing. Is this the best method of providing scholars with access to records? Should we not reveal and reflect the basic progression of the creation of records through district, county and township, and within that by type of record? Then the corporate author index presented in the catalogue could, rather than being redundant, provide an additional means of access to the main body of the catalogue. This applies equally to private manuscripts (volume three). The nature of this volume forces an item-by-item search for different types of records. Another style of entry, coupled with the existing index, would have been much more useful.

In spite of the problems mentioned above, the catalogue is still a very exciting work. It does make accessible a wealth of material which has been preserved, and reflects the assiduous efforts of Ed Phelps to bring together such an extremely comprehensive regional collection. It also demonstrates that archivists must promote public awareness of local records so that a comprehensive retention and preservation of our heritage through records can be realized. The catalogue has provided a much-needed beginning in this process, and will undoubtedly stimulate others, whether in institutions or not, to continue this type of work. Stephanie Sykes and her team deserve our thanks for their initiative and effort.

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Basic Manual Series: Archives & Manuscripts. Edited by C.F.W. COKER.

Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1977. Members: \$12.00, Non-members: \$16.00 (Set of five); members: \$3.00, Non-members: \$4.00 (Each).

Appraisal & Accessioning. MAYNARD J. BRICHFORD. v, 24 p.

Arrangement & Description. DAVID B. GRACY II. v, 49 p.

Reference & Access. SUE E. HOLBERT. v, 30 p.

Security. TIMOTHY WALCH. v, 30 p.

Surveys. JOHN A. FLECKNER. v, 28 p.

Publications ought to be a top priority of archivists. Well-researched, intelligently developed and attractively written works generated by repositories and by professional associations reflect more than any other aspect just how competently and effectively we are practising our professed occupation. Often hamstrung by a shortage of funds and of sound management, archivists have given less thought than they should have to the virtues of publication. Largely, one suspects, the shadow of the massive documentary series has lingered too darkly on the archivist's doorstep. Such myopia is at last starting to be cured, as much within the ranks of the profession as among archival agencies and repositories.

Five years ago SAA President Wilfred Smith sensibly set up a committee on archival publications which concluded that a series of manuals "relating to major and basic archival functions" would meet a real need among archivists and manuscript curators. There can be little doubt that the literature of archival science is underdeveloped and even less doubt that Jenkinson and Schellenberg of themselves are far too raw for ready consumption. Equally, the likes of Bordin-Warner (*Modern Manuscript Library*) and Duckett (*Modern Manuscripts*) are of less direct use to the archivist than to the manuscript curator — a distinction which is well-made in the United States though neglected and obscured in Canada. The profession is also under distinct pressure to provide assistance to working archivists, especially given the absence of a graduate programme of archival education. In this context, therefore, the SAA deserves applause for rising well above the common denominator with these first issues of its *Basic Manual Series*. The five volumes are a credit not only to their authors, but to the profession as a whole. They demonstrate without exception the firmness and confidence of the archivist's grasp of his craft. Writing quality is uniformly high and an attempt is made to be discursive rather than didactic. Each volume contains pertinent bibliographical data for consultation and includes, where relevant, drawings, photographs, sample descriptions, forms, checklists and, in Gracy's volume, even an index.

The most instructional of the quintet is John Fleckner's manual, *Surveys*. He acknowledges that little has been written on planning and administering surveys (the