

Managing Archives and Archival Institutions. JAMES GREGORY BRADSHER, ed. London: Mansell Publishing Limited, 1988. 304 p. ISBN 0-226-07054-9 (U.S.).

Managing Archives and Archival Institutions is an ambitious attempt to update T.R. Schellenberg's influential *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques*, published in 1956. In this sense, *Managing Archives* is a "sequel" to *Modern Archives* for, as Frank B. Evans maintains in the foreword, although the principles and practices advanced by Schellenberg have been successfully adapted by archival institutions in North America, subsequent technological and conceptual changes in information management now limit the continuing usefulness of his initial study. *Managing Archives*, accordingly, sets out to discuss the management of archival information and institutions from a variety of functional perspectives specific to the late twentieth century.

As general editor of the handbook, James Gregory Bradsher has enlisted seventeen American "archival specialists" (eleven from the National Archives and Records Administration) to produce a book covering the "whole scope" of archival administration suitable for use by "all archivists and all institutions" as well as by professionals on the periphery of archives management, such as information managers and records creators themselves. Canadian readers will notice the distinctly American tone of both the articles and the 700-entry bibliography.

Although only chapter divisions are made, the handbook falls naturally into four sections. The first three deal with the treatment of archival records, and the fourth with institutional management. An introductory section discusses the history of archives and records management. The second section reviews the basic archival activities of appraisal, arrangement, and description, and their application to public records, personal papers, cartographic, architectural, audio-visual, and machine-readable archives. A short section on oral history techniques and reference services provides a bridge to a group of articles discussing archival ethics, preservation, security, public programs, exhibits, management, and archival effectiveness.

The topics themselves are nothing new; a glance through *Archivaria* and *The American Archivist* evidences ample consideration of each in the modern context. The value of *Managing Archives*, however, according to its editor, is that it coordinates and unites basic readings on archival theory and practice. The organization and focus of the essays reflects Bradsher's sensitivity to the conceptual unity of the varied processes which constitute archives administration. All archivists, both those new to the profession and those with more experience, will find the handbook useful.

The essays are introduced by Bradsher and Michele Pacifico, who write on the history of archives in Europe and North America, a topic essential to any understanding of the nature of archives. Although it remains overshadowed by Posner's sensitive exploration of the subject, three areas are covered well: the historical origins of the function of the record in society, the concept of "public" information, and the legacy of European archival innovations. This article provides a context for the more practical articles which follow.

As mentioned above, the practical perspective given to the topics of "appraisal," "acquisition," and "arrangement and description," is not revolutionary in

Managing Archives, and neither is the consideration given to special media, technological implications, reference problems, and conservation. The orientation and content of the articles simply fulfils the volume's purpose to serve as a handbook with broad application to both large and small institutions.

One thing all archivists will appreciate is the emphasis in the last quarter of the book on institutional management, an area of archival work certainly not taught in archival education programmes and historically neglected by the profession. Michael Kurtz's discussion of the archival manager, whose critical role requires "a variety of skills that at first glance seems disparate", and Bradsher's elucidation of the frustrations which confront institutional management, are pertinent and useful to all practitioners.

The problem that *Managing Archives* encounters is common to all projects attempting to be all things to all people: too often the intricacies and problems of archival theory and principle are glossed over for the sake of simplicity. For instance, the widely-disputed issue of when a "record" becomes an "archive" is resolved in little over a page as a difference between European and American archival *practice* and *terminology*. The very nature of archival records and the process of records creation are left untouched, leaving the reader dissatisfied. Another issue which is simplified is the importance of administrative-historical-documentary study to appraisal, arrangement, and description. It is one thing to say that the study of administrative history is useful for archival work and quite another to explain how archivists may understand the effects of change on the creation and formation of archives and relationships among the parts of a whole body of archives. Bradsher tells us that "records are ... becoming more complex, reflecting the inherent complexities of the entities and individuals they document" (p. 254); as the custodians of these records, archivists must be educated to deal with these complexities.

These are only three areas where the general approach used in the book may be problematic. Specialists in media, such as cartographic, architectural, machine-readable, and audio-visual archives, as well as archivists knowledgeable about privacy and the acquisition of personal records, will question the scant consideration accorded their areas of specialization.

Manuals which re-evaluate archival practices in the context of technological advancement are naturally useful, but archival theory in the most fundamental sense cannot be reinterpreted to suit every generation of records creators and custodians of records. Nor can a handbook of this size and scope be expected to deal with every issue archivists encounter in their work. Despite the few places where this general approach prompts one to ask more questions than it answers, this reviewer's final verdict is that *Managing Archives* is a useful basic text for archivists at all operational and administrative levels. It should make a welcome addition to the archivist's bookshelf.

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