

"Automating Intellectual Access to Archives." ANNE J. GILLILAND, issue ed. *Library Trends* 36:3 (Winter 1988), pp. 495-623. ISSN 0024-2594.

Until recently, the archival community's prospects for communicating institutional holdings through automated bibliographic networks seemed bleak, given the heterogeneous and conceptually complex nature of archival materials as well as the relatively small size, low profile, and consequently inadequate funding of most archives. Prospects have brightened somewhat with the increasing availability of inexpensive powerful microcomputers, commercial and custom-made software, and, perhaps most significantly, the development of the MARC AMC (Archives and Manuscripts Control) format which has become (at least in the United States) the standard for recording archival data. According to Anne Gilliland, the editor of this issue of *Library Trends*, even if an archives chooses not to adopt the MARC AMC format, it will have to contend with the format's inevitable effect on the expectations of both users and archivists for the storage and delivery of archival information.

Some of these effects are explored in a series of eight articles which attempts to situate automated access to archival holdings within the broader context of library and information systems. The articles focus on the practical, rather than the theoretical, aspects of developing and implementing automated systems, and are organized around three broad themes: education and planning; uses of the MARC AMC format; and microcomputer applications.

Lisa Weber and Anne Gilliland consider basic questions which should be addressed before any automation project is initiated. The resources which are currently available to educate archivists in the field of automation are identified by Weber, who points out that a recent survey by the Society of American Archivists named automation as a leading management training issue. Weber observes that archivists have paid "shamefully little attention to the needs of users" and sees the development of automated databases as a good opportunity for archivists to test their assumptions about user needs and to explore some long-standing issues (e.g., provenance versus subject based retrieval, the power of form and function vocabularies for retrieval). Anne Gilliland outlines, in a kind of annotated checklist, the steps to be taken in setting up an automated system, from selecting a planning team and identifying the functions to be automated, to preparing contracts for vendors, budgeting, and dealing with changes which affect both staff and users.

Steven Hensen, Thomas Hickerson, and Patricia Cloud focus, in their respective articles, on the uses of the MARC AMC format: as a data structure requiring specific cataloguing skills; as a tool for participating in automated bibliographic networks, such as RLIN and OCLC; and, finally, as an automated endeavour with significant cost implications. Steven Hensen's article is a detailed exploration of the differences between the assumptions underlying library cataloguing and those which are traditional to archival description. These differing assumptions may be expressed in a number of familiar dichotomies, such as item versus collective description, and physical versus intellectual description. Hensen then describes the ways in which his manual *Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts (APPM)* has attempted to reconcile these differences.

The creation of the AMC format, Thomas Hickerson suggests, has led to new ways of processing and disseminating archival information. He outlines the role played by on-line bibliographic networks such as RLIN and OCLC in the management and dissemination of archival information, and the impact these networks will have on participating institutions, as well as the advantages and opportunities they will afford. Patricia Cloud details the cost implications of adopting the MARC AMC format, "the new orthodoxy in archival automation." She describes the findings of a retrospective conversion study involving twelve repositories which investigated the factors affecting the creation time of MARC AMC records. The salient factors identified included the integrity of the finding aid used, authority work, and cataloguing problems. Using the survey results, Cloud identifies issues to be considered by institutions in evaluating the total cost of creating MARC AMC records.

Articles by Frederick Honhart, Theodor Durr, and Matthew Gilmore discuss the development and marketing of microcomputer based systems which have been designed for archival applications. Honhart describes MicroMARC:amc, a microcomputer based local system which supports the MARC AMC format. Durr examines software development for local applications with emphasis on TBMS (text-based management systems); while Gilmore discusses subject searching using OPAC (on-line public access catalogues) and evaluates the possibilities of call-number searching.

Given its explicitly stated focus on practical rather than theoretical questions, it may be unfair to criticize the issue for its lack of sustained debate about the differences between archival description and library cataloguing and the effect these differences might (or ought to) have on the archival community's participation in on-line bibliographic networks. Nevertheless, the entire issue's implicit acceptance of AACR2, *APPM* and MARC AMC as the definitive models on which to build archival automated systems should not go unchallenged, since such acceptance tends to pre-empt legitimate questions archivists need to ask about the appropriateness of these models. Interpretive manuals such as Steven Hensen's *APPM* travel some distance toward the reconciliation of library and archival descriptive practices, but disquieting differences remain and require further negotiation if archival communication is to become, in any real sense, a "full partner in the broader information community."

Also disappointing is the lack of analysis of the MARC format as a data structure for description. For archives, the primary advantage of the MARC format is to communicate information about holdings; it should not be mistaken for a comprehensive framework on which an automated system, accommodating all archival needs, can be built. An archives' communication needs will be satisfied as long as descriptive information can be made compatible with the MARC format.

Statements made by some of the writers also help to perpetuate a common misconception by blurring the distinction between a data structure standard (MARC) and data content standard (AACR2 or other descriptive standards). For example, Gilliland's assertion that "archives must also decide which descriptive standards to use, either in-house or MARC ..." confuses the difference between the format and the information that is input into the format.

These criticisms aside, the articles provide a useful introduction to automated access, covering a wide variety of issues ranging from education and planning to implementation. Key concepts and acronyms more familiar to librarians than to archivists — among them, retrospective conversion, AACR2, RLIN, and OCLC — are explained and placed in an archival context. The practical approach taken in most of the articles allows archivists unfamiliar with automation to imagine in concrete terms the effect automated systems will have on day-to-day archival operations.

Cynthia Lovering

National Archives of Canada

Heather MacNeil

Bureau of Canadian Archivists

Art History: Its Use and Abuse. W. McALLISTER JOHNSON. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988. 374 p. ISBN 0-8020-2620-6 \$45.00.

Professor Johnson's book is a highly personal reflection on the discipline of art history, its past and future, with large doses of down-to-earth, invaluable advice on writing, cataloguing, and conducting research. The author is eminently qualified for writing such a book. He teaches art history, has organized exhibitions, writes extensively, and has been chief editor of RACAR (*Revue d'art canadienne/Canadian Art Review*). Given the subject matter, one expects a dry, heavy presentation, but the writing is most often clear and frequently very witty. Occasionally, however, Professor Johnson falls into the very pitfalls that he criticizes: heavy use of language and lack of clarity.

The first four chapters on research, bibliography, writing, and university and public life are really separate essays and can be read in any order, while the last two on cataloguing theory and cataloguing practice definitely belong together. The essays alternate between such philosophical discussions as the aim of art history ("a questioning process, of ideas put forth by the material"), the attributes of a good art historian ("a highly developed sensuality put under the control and discipline of the brain"), and practical advice on such routine, but important, matters as bank charges for photographs, the accuracy of one's bibliographic notations, and checking the visiting hours of foreign institutions. We are reminded that photocopying is "the first step in self deception." One agrees with the counsel, but at times the book becomes a little tedious because the same advice is repeated in several chapters. For example, the chapter on university and public life, where this reviewer had expected a discussion of curatorial work and teaching, delivered another dose of admonition on writing and taking notes. Without naming names, the author is highly critical of much of writing in current art history because, as he wryly observes, "some writers have an extraordinary mastery of the literature unmatched by the ability to do anything intelligent with it."

He discusses the inadequate preparation students receive at university for work in the "real" world. Academic courses analyse and deal with masterpieces only, whereas most art collections are a mixture of good, mediocre, and even bad pieces. More-