

popular religious brotherhood and sisterhood that he describes. His conclusions about the seigneurial system are equally suspect. Few would agree with him that the seigneurial system produced excellent results in terms of colonization or that "by 1700 the banks of the St. Lawrence and the Richelieu were completely occupied." (p. 110)

Such disagreements aside, *Dreams of Empire* clearly marks an auspicious beginning to the new Public Archives series. This handsome and useful volume is also a bargain at its current price.

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Les archives au XXe siècle. Une réponse aux besoins de l'administration et de la recherche. CAROL COUTURE and JEAN-YVES ROUSSEAU. Montréal: Université de Montréal, 1982. vi, 491 p. ISBN 2 89119 026 2 \$28.00 pa. (Available from the Services des archives, Université de Montréal, C.P. 6128, succursale A, Montréal, Que., H3C 3J7 tel. 514-343-6023).

Les archives au XXe siècle is quite simply a manual of archival principle and practice presented in a careful step-by-step fashion. It is preoccupied with the controls necessary to provide archival information. Nineteen chapters organized into three broad sections take the reader through the tried-and-true mechanisms of inventorying, scheduling, storage, retrieval, and destruction on one hand, and acquisition, arrangement, description, diffusion, and conservation on the other. There are chapters on legal restraints and available technology. Scattered throughout are tables, diagrams, and samples of control and description forms. A lengthy glossary of terminology has been gleaned from twenty-one sources — including the 1964 edition of Elsevier's *Lexicon*. Some thirty-one pages of well-selected articles provide the novice with mainline reading on all the above mechanisms.

Carol Couture and Jean-Yves Rousseau modestly claim to provide their Quebec colleagues with a *raison d'être* and a tool with which to practise their profession. They adopt the 1979 UNESCO definition of archives as "l'ensemble des documents, quelles que soient leur date ou leur nature, réunis élaborés ou reçus par une personne physique ou morale, publique ou privée, pour les besoins de son existence et l'exercice de ses tâches." And they sensibly argue that the management of records for administrative and for research use, at whatever stage in the continuum from creation to disposition, constitutes the substance of the archival craft. *Archivistique*, an admirable term for archivists anywhere, is given clarity of expression in this work which reaches well beyond the *cahier* of readings put together by their predecessor at the University of Montreal, François Beaudin. His compilation of 1975, titled *Archivistique québécoise* lacked the clarity and single-mindedness which is perhaps the principle virtue of Couture and Rousseau's work. In spite of the Quebec and French milieu from which it comes, *Les archives au XXe siècle* is not especially *québécois* at all, but a universal plan for applying sound archival theory. Couture and Rousseau frequently refer to international archival literature for support. On that score, a good deal of credit is deserved.

Despite these merits *Les archives au XXe siècle* promises much more than is

delivered. The first section ("Archives et Société") is weak and insipid. It never gets close to the enormity of its title and loses itself in a slight listing of micrographic, video, and computer resources. Curiously, these resources are not revisited as applications in the succeeding sections. The second section ("Archives et Administration") is exhaustive on specialized details of what used to be called basic records management; and the third ("Archives et Recherche") dwells in some reflection on the significance of the *fond* and the principle of *provenance* before tackling acquisition methodology, the variety of finding aids according to preferred levels of description, and the means of preserving and diffusing information. None of this, however, finds a philosophical context. It is plainly not the authors' intention to move much beyond the straight and narrow path of instruction they embark upon. Much mention is made of global views and the information explosion — and doubtless this manual hopes to offer something of an infinitely adaptable tool with which to come to grips with "modern" information systems. Yet the contents are curiously traditional and give but a passing nod to current developments. In some ways, *Les archives au XXe siècle* is behind its time; publication in the mid-1970s would have been more appropriate. The 21 x 14 cm format is cramping too and doesn't allow for the spread of graphic work which is crucial to well-produced manuals. On this aspect in particular, it compares unfavourably with the now-famed SAA Manuals series. One wonders, additionally, just how useful the extensive section (181) pages on technical archival terminology really is. It overpowers the rest of the text which, in any case, often incorporates a great many of the phrases and labels in a more meaningful context. A separate and subsidiary volume employing dictionary style, with derivations and historical explanations, could have been afforded each entry even more attention, and would surely have been desirable.

While the value of *Les archives au XXe siècle* as a training tool on archival methodology is undoubted, the book is dour and dry. Long exposure to its many indented pages, clogged with fragmented sections and sub-sections, engenders a pervasive ennui. Perversity does prevail. Despite the authors' admirable earnestness and clarity of purpose, the reader cannot but yearn for some leaven and a little seasoning.

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A Peculiar Kind of Politics: Canada's Overseas Ministry in the First World War. DESMOND MORTON. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982. xii, 267 p. ISBN 0 8020 5586 9 \$22.50.

How dull, a reader might think, to have an account of Canada's participation in the First World War that promises to be nothing more than an administrative history of a short-lived ministry whose tale took about thirty pages in Colonel G.W.L. Nicholson's *Canadian Expeditionary Force, 1914-1919*. But *A Peculiar Kind of Politics* is not that kind of book at all. Although he does live up to the dust-jacket promise to tell the "inside story" of the "administrative management" of the CEF overseas, Desmond Morton has also given us a compelling, well-researched, and superbly written study of the politics and the personality clashes that shaped the