

because diplomatics transcends disciplinary boundaries. This volume deserves to be the cornerstone in the archivist's library, and should have an important place in the working libraries of historians and knowledge engineers. In its economy of thought and clarity of exposition, the volume, at 183 pages, is remarkably slim for a text of method. This book is not a millstone for students but a milestone publication for practitioners, academics, and students of other disciplines with interests in documentary communications. It deserves all of our care and attention and its methods deserve equally to be challenged, extended, and refined through applied research and through analysis of records in history.

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**Managing Electronic Records.** Second edition. WILLIAM SAFFADY. Prairie Village, Kansas: ARMA International, 1998. 196 p. ISBN 0 933887 77 9.

The proliferation of electronic records and rapid change in technology, William Saffady maintains, has necessitated this updated edition of *Managing Electronic Records*. The second edition is intended, as the original was in 1992, for records managers, archivists, computer specialists, and other professionals with responsibility for the management of information in their organizations. Its stated purpose is to provide a comprehensive discussion of records management concepts and their application to electronic records. As Saffady notes, the principal aims of the book are to provide an understanding of management issues associated with electronic records; the physical characteristics of recording media; the principles and procedures of inventorying and scheduling; and an understanding of methods of preservation.

The book begins with an overview of key issues, concerns, and definitions of various types of records and terms. Statistics on the proliferation of computers, electronic records, and Web-related electronic commerce during the late 1990s are provided to support the claim of the growing impact of these technologies. Saffady must be commended for not limiting his definition of electronic records simply to computer-generated data. His vision encompasses records created by audio and video technology as well as scientific instrumentation, foreshadowing the convergence of computer and communications technologies that have become forefront in the computer, cable, information, and entertainment industries.

On the principle that records managers "must be familiar with the physical and functional characteristics of magnetic and optical media to evaluate and recommend schedules," Saffady presents a chapter where he surveys the most important of these media. This section has been substantially modified since

the 1992 edition to include great detail on a plethora of formats, including new ones such as Zip drives, DVD, CD-R (recordable CD), and CD-RW (rewritable CD) formats. While reading and comparing the two editions, one realizes just how quickly technical innovation has mushroomed in the 1990s. Descriptions of the development and usage of text file formats (ASCII, EBCDIC, Unicode), markup formats (SGML, HTML), image files (JPEG), and file compressions are provided. These descriptions are packed with technical information; although this doesn't make for exciting reading, it may be important as a reference for the records manager or archivist who must unravel the alphabet soup of acronyms that is the computer world.

Next Saffady discusses the inventorying process. "Most records management concepts and program components," he states, "were originally developed for paper, however they are equally applicable to electronic records." This statement is the central pivot around which Saffady develops procedures of inventorying, scheduling, and maintaining electronic records throughout the rest of the book. He describes in great detail the application of established records management procedure to electronic records, focussing on the practical rather than the theoretical; as a result, he presents a step-by-step guide to electronic records management. The implicit assumption is that a well-organized and centralized records management model already exists in the organization to which electronic records can be appended. There is, however, no discussion in the book about seeking and establishing authority to place electronic records management under the responsibility of the records management/archives department, nor is there a discussion about archival involvement in policy development and electronic systems implementation to ensure proper record creation. Such upfront archival involvement is vitally important with electronic records owing to their ephemeral nature and their constant dependence on technology. Also missing from the book is a direct discussion on what actually constitutes a record. The importance of metadata and contextual information in maintaining proper and legally binding records should be an important part of any work that discusses electronic records.

Saffady also provides a very useful discussion on legally mandated retention periods and the admissibility of electronic records as evidence. All of the examples and statutes cited are American: American law seems to have been among the first to identify and rule on these issues, and American principles have been applied to the situation in other countries. Finally Saffady speaks to the issue of longer-term maintenance and retention of electronic records, particularly the preservation of vital records. Thus the four principal aims that he sets out to discuss – management issues, physical characteristics, inventorying/scheduling, and preservation – are all admirably covered but, as stated earlier, the reader must assume the existence of an established records management programme.

This book is of greatest use to the records manager who has a fully opera-

tional records management system for paper documents. Further qualifications are that a centralized information management culture exists in the organization and that the types of records maintained – as defined by function rather than format – are fairly standardized and limited. The book is a how-to manual for these kinds of institutions and a good reference of terms and concepts. For those institutions that do not follow this model, there is no discussion of theory or of other electronic records management models that can be adapted or applied to a diversity of organizational types.

For the archivist, there is no discussion of strategies for the collecting institution that is separate from the creator. Management of private records received on computer disks, for example, is not discussed anywhere in this book. This is not to say that important information cannot be extracted from this book. It most definitely can, but *Managing Electronic Records* should not be the sole source of information when considering the issue of electronic records. It should only be one of many reference works on the archivist's bookshelf.

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**The ANLA Resource Binder for Small Archives.** ASSOCIATION OF NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR ARCHIVES. St. John's: Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives, 1998–1999. 272 p. ISBN 0-9697466-2-8.

Producing a beginner's text in archival theory and practice is a daunting process. It must be accessible and easy to read and also explain archival theory and the practices common to all archival repositories. If the publication is too academic, it risks losing the audience of volunteers and paid workers in small archives desperate for a simple, readable guide to caring for their archival records. If the volume is too simplistic, it may overlook some of the nuances of archival theory, method, and practice for the sake of clarity and brevity, with an equally unsatisfactory result for working archivists.

The latest effort to produce an introductory text in archival theory and practices is the *ANLA Resource Binder for Small Archives*, published by the Association of Newfoundland and Labrador Archives (ANLA). The *Resource Binder* is composed of three sections: "Basic Archives," the curriculum guide for the ANLA five-day workshop in fundamental archival practice; "Untangling RAD [*Rules for Archival Description*]," ANLA's guide to archival description; and "Special Topics," which currently includes an article on monetary appraisal and the United Church of Canada's guide to records manage-