

archival literature. The author introduces the subject of computers by pointing out that their successful implementation is dependent on the manual systems upon which they are based. The first step towards computerization may therefore involve a complete rethinking of existing manual procedures and for this reason, the author begins with a section on how to create and design effective archival forms to act as a guide in this exercise. The author then attempts throughout the book to detail where library and archive techniques converge with computer application and, more importantly, where they diverge. Although a case is made in the sections on processing and microcomputer applications for archivists to follow a library standard, the author admits that library formats such as MARC do not presently accommodate the uniqueness of the archival document and that the solution to this problem must await future software advances. In the meantime, archivists will have to chart their own course in selecting a computer package best suited to their needs. The chapter on microcomputers addresses this task.

Although primarily designed for archivists in small- to medium-sized institutions, the chapter on microcomputers provides a good starting point for all archivists planning to thrust themselves into the world of automation (or for archivists having automation thrust upon them). The section provides a basic explanation of how a computer system functions and offers an overview of the current state of the computer market. An outline is given of what archivists should look for when shopping for a computer system and what hardware and software features lend themselves to archival applications. The section on how microcomputers can be applied to specific archival functions, while useful, will probably be better understood after a brief hands-on encounter with the "narcotic toy" itself. The chapter concludes with idealistic speculations on how the computer will open new avenues of archival scholarship, and a more practical note on technical maintenance and security.

One of the more interesting aspects of this work is the author's ability to use Marshall McLuhan to interpret the philosophical implications of the computer age in a way that may cause many readers to view McLuhan in a more positive light. Unfortunately, it is the irony of this book that, due to its specialized medium, its message will not be widely received.

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**The Collected Writings of Louis Riel/Les Ecrits Complets de Louis Riel.** 5 volumes. GEORGE F.G. STANLEY, General Editor. Volume editors: RAYMOND HUEL, GILLES MARTEL, THOMAS FLANAGAN, GLEN CAMPBELL. Edmonton: The University of Alberta Press, 1985. Vol. 1: liii, 546 pp. Vol. 2: 1, 482 pp. Vol. 3: lii, 637 pp. Vol. 4: xlvi, 544 pp. Vol. 5: xvi, 360 pp. ISBN 0-88864-091-9 (set) \$250.00.

After a while, I know the Boys  
Will gather all my little scrips;  
Publish them as one of their joyce [joys]  
And as a tie of our friendships!  
To celebrate  
A true Prophet: Louis "David" Riel.

— Louis Riel (4-143)

Indeed they have. In these five solid books of *Collected Writings*, the boys have gathered together all of Riel's "little scrips" — just as he prophesied to his NWMP jailer while he waited for his death in the fall of 1885.

This impressive production is the result of the Projet Riel Project, the awkwardly-named academic enterprise undertaken by a team of seven scholars in the humanities (one co-ordinator, four volume editors, and two consultants) under the general editorship of the dean of Riel scholarship, George F.G. Stanley. The project (originally stimulated by the Western Canada Publications Project's efforts to identify documents necessary to the writing of western history) was funded by SSHRC and the University of Alberta from 1978 to June 1984 to locate, edit, and publish "every extant Riel document." Included are Riel's private and public correspondence, political and theological writings and pronouncements, diaries, poetry, and miscellaneous productions, whether in finished, draft, or fragmentary form. The total of 849 edited documents represents a considerably greater number of standard/variant texts, and certainly does not convey an accurate view of the labour involved in assembling them. The persistent note of self-congratulation in the editors' introductions suggests that even they are somewhat surprised at having survived the experience, and are eager to exact due recognition for it.

They shouldn't worry. Even readers jaded by the procession of noteworthy works on the Métis and their leaders that have appeared since the Riel Rebellion's hundredth anniversary in 1985 should respond with gratitude. Praise may be tempered in one way or another (as mine is below) but the fact remains that this work is a considerable achievement in a field of Canadian history not much blessed with a consensus on basic principles or much clarity of thought on sources.

The set consists of four volumes of documents written by Louis Riel, and one of reference material and indexes. They present the main body of documents in chronological order, divided up into three significant periods: 1861-75, from Riel's boyhood through the first uprising in the North-West to exile and the visionary experience in a Washington church that transformed his politics; 1875-84, up to his acceptance of the Métis invitation to return as a leader; and 1884-85, covering the last Rebellion and Riel's death. Volume 4 presents his poetry.

Each of the four volumes includes a short and very general introduction by Stanley (the General Editor); a more detailed introduction by the volume editor, placing the documents in their historical context and giving some information on the archival sources (largely free of in-depth interpretation); the edited documents themselves, numbered in chronological order; appendices and addenda containing undated, unidentified, and irregular documents; and finally, very extensive "Textual Notes" reproducing the deletions and variant readings from those of Riel's jumbled drafts that were not considered important enough to mention in the main notes. (The labour of combing out readable texts from drafts and fragments was obviously considerable.) The individual documents are presented under a headline giving title (or recipient name) and date. The texts are clearly laid out and the lines numbered. Notes to each item identify the original source document (describing its context and physical condition where relevant). They provide copious information and informed speculations on individuals, events, and places mentioned. One reviewer has, however, noted that biographical information is inconsistently distributed among the reference volume and the notes. Only the most minor of changes have been made to Riel's eccentric spelling and punctuation (where the text is in his own hand), following conventions which are explained in detail in Volume 5.

The last volume is a farrago of reference material. It includes Stanley's essay on the project's history, methodology, and terms of reference; an essay by Roger Motut on Riel's literary language and its relationship (or lack thereof) to the Métis vernacular; a family tree; a striking assemblage of Riel family photographs; a detailed chronology of Riel's life; six simple reference maps of significant places in Riel's life and in the Métis territory generally; an indexed bibliography of major published works and dissertations focussing on Riel (which, it has been noted, has some curious omissions); and a biographical index of personal names mentioned in the documents, in which the information on Métis individuals is of particular interest.

The whole collection is quasi-bilingual: each document is presented and annotated in the language in which it was written (quite often in English). Stanley's short prefaces are in both languages, but the volume editors' summaries are in the language of their choice (three English, one French). The reference volume is an uneasy mixture of dual and unilingual texts and captions. Anyone lacking a working knowledge of both French and English will probably not find this work of general use. The brief introductions lead the reader efficiently into major groups of documents in each volume; extra background is offered in the full and extensively cross-referenced annotations to the individual documents. If one reads the documents in sequence, one is reminded that this is a work of an essentially biographical nature. It focuses exclusively on one man, however engaged he was in the politics and religion of his people. The records created by Riel as public man are not severable from those strange documents of his complicated and troubled inner life.

The records in the three main volumes include everything Riel wrote, beginning with his New Year's greeting at age sixteen to the lady of Terrebonne, patroness of his family, and ending with the last note ("Louis Riel — pray for me") slipped to his NWMP guard as he went to the scaffold. In between there is family, political, and spiritual correspondence; political speeches, tracts, and memoirs; many theological notes, essays, and prophecies — now ordinary, now extravagant and self-absorbed as his disturbance came and went; texts of interviews; diaries; and a blizzard of fragments left behind as he hurried to produce yet another draft of a letter to a key correspondent, or to write out and exorcise yet another of his troubling visions or anxieties. We cannot always see external historical events through these "little scrips." It is more useful to follow themes — such as Riel's developing idea of himself as an "aboriginal" person and of the Métis as having something we would now call native title, or his interestingly ambivalent attitude towards the Indian tribes. Those not familiar with recent writing on Riel's spiritual life will be struck by the complexity of his personality, even as imperfectly revealed on paper: a man with great emotional energy, a good mind (when not clouded with his intense idiosyncratic visions), and strong paternal feelings toward his people.

Volume 4 (*Poetry*) enriches this personal picture. It assembles all of Riel's known poems, amounting to double the previously available corpus in his only book, *Poésies religieuses et politiques* (Montréal, 1886). Stanley makes the broad claim that Riel is "the first of Canada's native people with any claim to be included among the now substantial group of Western Canadian [literary] authors." (4:xxv) But both he and Campbell are justly cautious in evaluating the literary worth of Riel's poetry. Campbell conscientiously points out both its technical limitations and its lapses in emotional tone. At the same time he argues in his introductory essay and annotations that a reasonable part of the collection is of real value. It reflects "the humanistic side of Riel" — the links between his activities

in the world and his inner spiritual development — and has occasional outcrops of real artistic merit.

The editors do not emphasize the fact that few of the poems (indeed much of the other writings) were revised for publication or public circulation by Riel himself; this should have been noted. Unfortunately, no indication could be found among the seventy-four pages of notes on textual variants, of which poems were published in his posthumous 1886 book. The selection would surely have cast an interesting light on the reactions of both Riel's family and his readers to his *oeuvre*.

Now come the serious questions, for archivists at any rate. First, where exactly did these documents come from? And, is this collection really complete? This is not as easy to answer as one would like it to be. Much of the trouble comes because one essential item is missing among the book's critical apparatus — a *simple list of archival collections consulted*. Stanley's introduction indicates that manuscripts were found in "over forty" archival repositories, but the archives abbreviations list gives forty only. Contemporary newspapers are also cited as a major source of texts where originals have been lost, but there is no list of titles used. The references for individual documents do give excellent and extensive bibliographical information, but these are fragmented. In an inconspicuous footnote (5:22), it is revealed that Flanagan and Rocan did publish a separate "Guide to the Louis Riel Papers" (*Archivaria* 11, Winter 1980-81, pp. 135-69), but this was at least three years before the end of the project, and is nowhere clearly referenced in the present volumes. It was needed *with* the set: it improves our understanding of what the collections are *as collections* — why Riel's papers ended up where they did, and how they were used to support, prosecute or memorialize their subject. To take only one minor aspect of this problem: the authors are conscious of the pietistic nature of some of the collections they used, of the fact that some of the texts were manipulated when published by others than Riel, and of the public fascination with Riel "relics." Surely the readers of these volumes should have at hand the explanations of why some of these collections exist and why they are in their present forms.

I do not think that the absence of an archival list is just a specialist's complaint. The methods by which the editors collected their documents may be open to question. According to Stanley (5:5,7), a list of documents was established in the first instance from existing bibliographies; in a second stage the editors corresponded with "hundreds" of regional and local repositories in Riel's territory, as well as with private collectors; and in a third, they advertised in selected forums. The documents collected do indeed represent all the expected archival repositories in Canada (the National Archives, the provincial archives of Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Quebec, numerous Catholic diocesan, episcopal, seminary, and other archives, and appropriate university, thematic, and local history archives across the country) as well as in the United States (including NARA and various local, state, and university archives of the regions where Riel spent his years of exile). However, the description of how the editors actually rounded out their research is somewhat vague. Did the authors trust their correspondents to provide them with everything they had? No archivist (and we trust few historians) would consider research by mail a completely reliable method: there is unfortunately no guarantee that the person on the sending end is representing accurately the state of his or her collections. Ultimately, there is no substitute for research in person. The contrast between this apparent trust of intermediaries and the painstaking attention given to the texts once acquired is striking. Knowing the collections better might have avoided such archives-assisted errors as

Volume 1's attribution of certain documents (e.g. 1-041, 1-045, etc.) to the National Archives' "Riel Papers" (MG 27 I F, vol. 1): these are actually direct duplicates of originals in the same institution's Dewdney Papers (MG 27 I C 4) and are so labelled on the microfilm (though not in the ARC inventory). At least one reference to Department of the Interior records (3-026) is either taken from a secondary source or from outdated unchecked research notes, as it omits a volume reference that has been standard since the mid-1970s. A few apparently specific references are to records the location of which is left a mystery (eg. the Parks Canada and NARA references, 3-095). This having been said, it must also be pointed out that a random check of documents through the volumes against their originals showed that the accuracy of the transcriptions may be relied on for all practical purposes.

Another problem created by the absence of an archival key is that it is difficult to use the volumes while working from the documents themselves. For instance, many of the individual documents in the stew of rebellion correspondence and personal notes that forms the prosecution evidence collected by the Department of Justice (ARC, RG 13 B 2) are undated and/or untitled; thus, they can be matched with entries in the books only by a tedious process of elimination. In the same collection (reel C-1228, vol. 804, pp. 147-156) there is a unique set of partly translated speeches in Cree, apparently in Riel's handwriting. He could have uttered them himself (e.g. as 3-049 or 3-052?) but nothing in the volumes helps one to tell if he did so. This reviewer unwisely tried a further test by seeking out the "narrative by Louis Riel," described in the ARC inventory to RG 7 as a document defending his claim to amnesty, sent by the Governor-General to the British Colonial Office in April 1874 where it was used as a basis for the eventual amnesty decision. (see ARC, RG 7 G 21, vol. 2 (2), file 12, p. 12292, and MG 11, CO 42, vol. 727, pp. 545 ff.) It took half an hour to locate the document through a chain of elementary references in simple ARC finding aids, and fifteen minutes more to identify it as an English translation of item 1-188. The delay might have been much reduced (assuming that this item was examined by the authors) if a key to the individual collections reviewed for the book, or even a first-line index, had been provided.

Without specialized knowledge of the collections equal to that of the editors themselves, one cannot of course say that the collection *is not* complete. However, "new" things surface in old archival collections embarrassingly often, whether through acquisitions, more extensive research in peripheral collections, or reform of inadequate finding aids. No one should rule out the possibility of finding a few more items of *Rieliana* (yes, the authors do use this term) even in established collections. "Missing" originals may also surface for the large number of items printed from copies. Among likely sources of new documents are the dispersed and still imperfectly understood records of the Department of the Interior, records of the British government at the PRO not yet filmed for consultation in Canada, and papers of private collectors not only in North America but also Britain and France. Stanley's claim that Volume 4 contains "all [of Riel's poems] still in existence" (4:xxvi) is surely a misprint, as the French version of the text suggests.

The set of books (half-boxed in matching board) is physically solid and pleasantly designed. The layout is generally speaking clear, and the voluminous notes adequately set off. I would perhaps criticize the cluttered title/date lines which head each item: these are informative but not easy on the eye. The poetry texts in particular deserved to be more gracefully set off.

So, here it is: a weighty, comprehensive, and expensive work of scholarship, one of the only documentary collections of personal writings ever published for *any* Canadian public figure, and one of the few scholarly document collections of any kind published on a Canadian historical topic in the last decade. Was it worth it? To put this question is to raise a much broader question: are documentary histories in general worthwhile? If they are, should we not invest our time and money, and the talents of our most careful scholars, in assembling collections of broader interest (say, a documentary history of the Métis in general, or of the two western uprisings in particular) rather than on lone personalities — however crucial to historical action, however unique as authors, however fascinating to the general public? Should the effort not be directed to making the contents of the more inaccessible archives more generally available by funding archival finding aids for use by all scholars, rather than for producing reprints of whole documents of uncertain overall interest?

As an archivist (but one not trained in the first instance in a historical discipline) I can give only the personal opinion that insofar as I understand the state of historical and archival scholarship, the present project *was* on balance necessary, and was done so well as to lend respectability to any similar enterprise in the future. It deals with a person who is the focus of wide popular, as well as academic, attention — food for sustaining continuing financial interest. It sets a standard of archival editing and comprehensiveness that future students of western history should not be able to ignore. However, *The Collected Writings of Louis Riel* remains a specialized and an expensive work of reference. At the present price it will surely not be bought by many scholars or all libraries: these may instead decide to invest in more items from the lengthening shelf of standard or outstandingly controversial secondary works on western Canada and the Métis. If Riel's writings do not sell reasonably well (for example, if they cannot appear as moderately-priced paperbacks) will other publishers be discouraged from similar ventures and fall back to sagas on the level of *Company of Adventurers*? These are questions not easily answered. In the meantime, this particular set can certainly be recommended as one of the basic works of reference on the history of western Canada.

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**Bibliography of Newfoundland.** AGNES C. O'DEA, compiler. ANNE ALEXANDER, editor. 2 vols. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1986. xx, 1450 p. ISBN 0-8020-2402-5 \$175.00 cl.

In its last years of office, the British-appointed Commission of Government that administered Newfoundland from 1934 to 1949 contemplated raising Memorial University College, founded in 1925, to the status of a degree-granting institution. This step, however, was not taken until after Newfoundland became a province of Canada, and the creation of a full-fledged university remains a notable accomplishment of the long-lived government of J.R. Smallwood. He indeed considered the university one of the building blocks of the new province and lavished money on it, only to find in the end that Memorial bred some of his fiercest critics. But such is life, and Smallwood, a keen student of history, no doubt appreciated the irony.