

leading." (p. 3) This sounds like a lazy author or a clumsy edit! Great detail on these types of topics may be unnecessary, and dangerous for the amateur and his records, but an enquiring reader deserves more than this simple brush-off and a recommendation to consult the bibliography or a qualified conservator.

The appraisal section should also have emphasized more strongly the importance of evaluating records in context. A cash book may ordinarily have little archival value, but if it is the only remaining item from a particular period, individual or organization then its relative value changes. Similarly, the archivist must also learn to develop foresight. What is not valuable today may achieve new value in the future. These points were not made strongly enough.

Conservators, records managers, and professionally-trained archivists may also take exception to a few minor points. The *Manual* suggests the sponging of maps to eliminate creases, the identification of originating departments on the outside of record storage boxes, and the creation of clippings files from local newspapers. While the authors do not recommend these questionable practices, it might have been advisable not to mention them.

Nonetheless, *A Manual for Small Archives* is a commendable effort. The format should make updates of the text, bibliography, index, and glossary relatively simple and it is to be hoped that the A.B.C.A. (or a larger organization) will work towards a second edition.

**Ann ten Cate**  
Region of Peel Archives

**The Research Collections at McMaster University Library.** CHARLOTTE A. STEWART and CARL SPADONI, co-compilers. Hamilton: McMaster University, 1987. viii, 100 p. ISBN 0024-9270.

**A Guide to the University Archives and Special Collections. Personal Papers and Private Records.** CHRISTOPHER L. HIVES and LAURENDA DANIELLS. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1988. ix, 210 p. ISBN 0-88865-189-9 \$20.00.

These works are guides to the archival collections of McMaster University and the University of British Columbia. A very interesting aberration in the style of guide we have come to expect, the McMaster publication takes the form of an issue of *Library Research News* which was the Library's contribution to the University's centennial year. It describes both the archival and rare book collections held in the William Ready Division of Archives and Research Collections, thus reflecting the University's long-standing tradition of housing rare books together with archives. Descriptions of sixty-one collections are organized into sections emphasizing such interests of McMaster University Library as business and labour, Canadian literature, music, peace, and war, science, medicine, and technology. Within these sections, the collections are arranged alphabetically by title. Each unit includes cross-references to other collections of possible interest to the researcher, and an alphabetical index to titles leads one directly to individual collections.

A brief examination reveals that McMaster has catholic tastes in collecting. From microfilms of the *Archivo general de Centro America* to the letters of Franz Liszt, from the national files of the Canadian Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament to the drawings of the Hamilton municipal waterworks, one cannot help but be somewhat bemused by the breadth of the collection. As the guide states, however, "These nationally and internationally recognized research collections are essential to the wide variety of academic programmes and research interests of a university of McMaster's stature." (p. vii) The archives of McMaster University itself, like those of other older and larger Canadian universities, are but a small component of the entire collection.

More traditional in format, the University of British Columbia publication is a finding aid which describes 344 university archives collections and 703 private manuscript collections. The private collections document the "economic, political, ethnic, labour, literary and educational history of British Columbia and Canada." (p. vii) Consequently, one finds the records of the Reliance Motor and Machine Works Company as well as records of the UBC School of Nursing. Three letters from Albert Einstein keep company with the private papers of Earle Birney. The descriptions conform where possible to AACR2 and are based on MARC AMC standards. They are arranged alphabetically within five sections; the first four — administrative records, personal papers, organizations and projects, and miscellaneous collections — concern university archives, while the fifth covers Special Collections — personal papers and private records. A subject index and a name index give access to the individual collections.

In comparing the two guides, one is immediately struck by the lack of standards in the McMaster guide. Not only have the general standards of AACR2 or of Steven Hensen's 1983 manual *Archives, Personal Papers and Manuscripts* not been employed, but there is also little consistency between descriptions. The entry for the records of the Aluminum, Brick and Glassworkers International Union, for example, does not include the extent of records in the collection. The description of the Doug Fetherling Papers includes the extent of the papers, but neither the creator's birth date nor the dates of creation. In contrast, the UBC guide carefully supplies all the information needed to establish the context of each collection: the creator/creating agency, birth and death dates if available, the type of record, the dates, the biographical/historical significance, the scope/contents of the collection, and its extent.

It is essential, in comparing these two publications, to distinguish between their purposes. The McMaster guide has been produced as an introduction, for researchers and patrons of the McMaster University Library, to the main collections in the Archives. Its publication as an issue of *Library Research News* ensures that it will reach a broad audience. It is readable, enjoyable, and invites one to browse. Should it then follow the rigid, more technical format of the UBC guide? This debate raises the questions, "What are the functions of guides?" and "Who uses these guides, and how do they use them?" Canadian archivists agree that standardizing finding aids among institutions will accommodate researchers so that travel between institutions will not mean having to learn idiosyncratic information sys-

tems at each stop. Yet, can we really say that the standards we are now formulating for guides will directly benefit our researchers when we have little idea of how these tools are used in the first place? Use studies may cause us to revise our notions of what constitutes a user aid. The possibility exists, however, that the computerization of finding aids will solve such problems. The UBC guide, interestingly enough, states that it "serves as a window into a data base which is more accurate and up-to-date than a printed version can ever be." (p. vii) It also notes that there are a large variety of access points which exist only for the database that can be used to facilitate user searches .

The form of future guides is important at the present time as we face a kind of "twilight zone" in which some archives have automated their finding aids and some have not, in which some have databases which permit remote searching and some have not. Until most archives are linked by computer, users will have to depend on hard-copy guides. One of the most obvious problems is that they are quickly outdated. Additions to collections can only be noted by reissuing the guide or by distributing emendations. Because of the cost of publishing and distributing updated editions, it is naturally beneficial to ensure that a guide is as accurate as possible at the time of publication. The descriptions should therefore be as accurate as possible. Yet, to provide accurate descriptions, archivists must have in-depth knowledge of the collections they are describing. Can this objective be achieved without first producing an inventory of the contents based on the arrangement and description process? This question has implications for the Bureau of Canadian Archivists' Working Group on Descriptive Standards, which is operating on the premise that finding aids should proceed from the general to the specific. Their reasoning, one imagines, is that archivists should have firm control over their entire collections, rather than produce detailed finding aids for a few collections. The UBC Archives has, in fact, processed fully eighty per cent of its university collections, according to the 1985 *Canadian University Archives Survey*. The percentage of McMaster's total collections represented by that institution's guide is unknown, but it is noted that the descriptions were derived in the main from finding aids. What, then, should come first: fond-level descriptions or file-level inventories from whence the fond-level descriptions are taken?

The McMaster and UBC guides make interesting reading for an archivist. Both institutions have elected to keep archives in close proximity to rare books and special collections. Both collect in the subject field of labour and trade-union archives. Both have collected Canadian literary archives. The similarities of the two institutions make their different approaches to the production of their guides much more striking, and furnish one with food for thought.

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**The Quiet Revolution: Managing New York's Local Government Records in the Information Age.** NEW YORK LOCAL GOVERNMENT RECORDS ADVISORY COUNCIL. A Report to the Governor, Legislature, and Commissioner of Education. Albany, 1987, iv, 26 p.