

Forging History - The Detection of Fake Letters & Documents. KENNETH W. RENDELL. Norman and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994. 171 p. ISBN 0-8061-2656-1.

It is seldom that the appearance of a book will have focused the attention of its readers on an issue of such paramount importance to the archival profession as the forging of historical records. Few other concerns attract the same attention of historians, archivists, curators, private collectors, and other custodians of documentary materials as does the question of authenticity and credibility of recorded evidence in their care. To protect their institutions against the acquisition of fake documents was, and will always remain, one of the most fundamental and onerous responsibilities of archivists and other guardians of historical manuscripts and records.

The appearance of Rendell's *Forging History* is a timely reminder of this responsibility. A spate of clever fabrications that have recently caught the headlines have also magnified the archivist's concern for the authenticity of new acquisitions. The danger of fake documents finding their way into holdings of established repositories has always been real, indeed, predictable. New forging techniques have perfected the imitations to a point that some are almost undetectable.

Kenneth Rendell is eminently qualified to deal with this subject. He has researched the field, written many articles, and presented numerous papers and lectures at meetings of professional groups. He developed sophisticated methodology and scientific techniques, and put them to practical use. Being a historian, manuscript dealer, and expert authenticator, he is continuously and actively involved in detecting forgeries and unmasking their creators. Rendell's reputation is unrivalled on this continent.

If nothing else, *Forging History* should inspire and motivate archivists to develop and make use of professional expertise in the field of authentication. The knowledge and techniques of this branch of science are so manifestly important in archival work that they must be considered as indispensable attributes of all archivists, but especially those involved in acquisitions. In this book, Rendell has gone a long way to reinforce this contention. Moreover, there is a recurring message in it: an alert to all buyers of historical records to be continuously critical of suspect acquisitions, particularly those with altered text and controversial statements. All those who come into contact with such documents will benefit by having *Forging History* at their side as a handy reference tool.

The book itself is a compilation of ten articles, each representing a distinct subject, each piece forming a separate chapter in the book. Of the ten, seven chapters deal with specific issues of detection of forgeries; the remaining three provide readers with details of activities of the more notorious forgers. Earlier versions of these articles had appeared in professional journals, as well as in Manuscript Society's *Autographs and Manuscripts: A Collector's Manual*. Some had also been read at meetings of learned societies or given as lectures at seminars or workshops. The present compilation represents important revisions in the treatment of the subjects, often incorporating new advances in scientific methodology.

The articles fall into two categories: those dealing with historical criticism, both internal and external, and those recounting the misdeeds of infamous forgers, their

motivation, methods, techniques, and ultimate downfall. There is an eclectic but fascinating coherence between the two categories. The accounts of the frauds are used effectively to illustrate and exemplify the thorough but often dry chapters on methodology and techniques. Rendell, an accomplished compiler and writer, skillfully weaves the dour, scientific data with the more sensationalized examples of the perpetrators' frauds. This blend of abstract and applied evidence enhances the readability of *Forging History* and its didactic message.

Moreover, there is a logical sequence of presentation which betrays Rendell's archival orientation. For example, he systematically identifies all stages in the creation of records and highlights the main components in this process. He dwells extensively on materials used in writing, typing, printing, and graphics. He scrutinizes the characteristics of paper and parchment, pens and pencils, typewriters and other copiers, and devotes special attention to the development and the use of ink. The significance of "reptile's skin" in magnified ink deposits, blue fluorescence from ammonia hydrochloride, "feathering" of new ink on old paper, and numerous other suspect characteristics that are detectable in forged writings are extensively discussed and exemplified.

To acquisition and custodial specialists the value of *Forging History* is immensely enhanced by graphic illustrations of samples of authentic and forged writings. There are over 440 depictions of signatures, fragments, and complete letters and documents, many of them highly magnified. They are particularly revealing when authentic script is placed beside the forgery. Experienced archivists and novices alike will find these comparisons exceedingly useful. They are particularly important in determining autopen and other machine-written signatures. It has been known that unauthorized intruders used autopens to legitimize fake texts of letters for fraudulent purposes.

Rendell has singled out several infamous forgers for close scrutiny of their fabricating methods and techniques. Some, such as Konrad Kujau (Hitler diaries), Mark Hofmann (Mormon forgeries), and James Maybrick (Jack the Ripper diary) are each given full chapters. Others equally notorious are mentioned throughout the book and their techniques are identified and exemplified. Among them are: William Henry Ireland, Joseph Cosey, Thomas Chatterton, Major George Gordon Byron, "Antique" Smith, Denis Vrain-Lucas, Robert Spring, and Charles Weisberg. Many of their forgeries still appear on the market, and archivists should be aware of their existence.

While Rendell has gone to considerable depth in his treatment of forgeries, it was manifestly impossible for him to cover the entire domain of authentication. Nor was it his intention to provide us with a definitive textbook on that vast and complex field. Such work would have required countless hours of painstaking research, analysis, and compilation, clearly a major undertaking even for such prolific a writer as Rendell. Still, in *Forging History* Rendell has laid the basic and solid foundation for any future studies that he himself, or any other person inspired by him, may decide to do. In this context, the selective bibliography of over one hundred titles that he compiled as an appendix should help those wishing to follow in these footsteps.

Ultimately, the underlying message in *Forging History* is Rendell's challenge directed to all of us to join him in studying and understanding the mysterious and dangerous but fascinating world of forgeries.

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A Guide to the Collections of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario. NICK G. FORTE, comp., GABRIELE SCARDELLATO, ed. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1992.

A Bibliography of Canada's Peoples, Supplement 1, 1972-1979. ANDREW GREGOROVICH, comp. GABRIELE SCARDELLATO, ed. Toronto: Multicultural History Society of Ontario, 1993.

Canada's Ukrainians, Negotiating an Identity. LUBOMYR LUCIUK and STELLA HRYNIUK, eds. Toronto: published in Association with the Ukrainian Canadian Centennial Committee by the University of Toronto Press, 1991.

Since its founding in 1976 by a group of academics, civil servants, librarians, and archivists, the Multicultural History Society of Ontario (MHSO) has undertaken a number of major research projects in the field of ethnocultural studies. According to Gabriele Scardellato, the role of the MHSO is that of a "transmission belt" to process information on Canadian ethnocultural groups and make it accessible to both professionals and non-professionals in the form of publications, conferences, and exhibits. A number of projects were initiated, including the preparation of comprehensive guides to the MHSO research collections.

The first volume in this series was *A Guide to the Collections of the Multicultural History Society of Ontario*. In the Introduction, Gabriele Scardellato outlines the history of the MHSO and its collections policy and traditions. The major goal of the MHSO programme is to acquire and preserve the record of the ethnocultural experience in Ontario. With this objective in mind, the MHSO, in cooperation with community leaders and interested researchers, acquired originals and copies of archival material from various ethnocultural groups from across Ontario. This volume lists the photographic, manuscript, oral history recordings, and related collections of the MHSO processed to the end of 1987. The references include some published material. Most of this material is now deposited in the Archives of Ontario.

Cooperation with the Archives of Ontario has led to the standardization of MHSO archival references and descriptions. The collections are presented according to ethnocultural group, with some qualifications and exceptions. Smaller ethnocultural groups have been organized under more general headings such as South Asian and Latin-American collections. With the demise of the Union List of Manuscripts, which was a very useful research and reference tool for archivists, this volume contributes in a large measure to providing a substitute for those interested in Canadian ethnocultural studies.

The MHSO also initiated the series, *A Bibliography of Canada's Peoples*. The goal of this series is to list all publications that refer to ethnocultural groups or with