This is without a doubt a thought-provoking book. Despite the scepticism that may greet the study results, the strength of this book, as with so many of Cox's works, lies in its assessment of the need for further research. Many of the disquieting issues raised earlier are addressed by Cox in the conclusions of the chapters where he makes recommendations for further areas of study. On position descriptions, he notes that "[an] examination of position descriptions alone is a very limited view of archivists' work with electronic records" (p. 93) and calls for broader research into the staff needs of state archives using a number of techniques employed by human resources managers and vocational or occupational psychologists, all of which might help shed new light onto archival staffing requirements (p. 94). Cox also notes that with job advertisements, the "first noticeable problem in conducting such job advertisement analysis is the lack of context of other studies on the archival profession. There are virtually no other such studies...that provide a basis for comparison with bench-marks for change and progress in general characteristics of the individual archivist and archival institutions" (p. 128). He goes on to suggest a need to find out where archival institutions which have been successful in establishing an electronic records programme have actually recruited their staff, and perhaps conduct a study of archi-vists' attitudes towards computers to determine why it has taken so long for the profession to respond in a practical fashion to electronic records (p. 130).

Only with careful and thoughtful analysis of past practices, failures, and successes can any profession hope to develop in order to meet future challenges; the archival profession is no exception. With the rapid development of information technology and electronic records, we will clearly be entering uncharted waters for many years to come. *The First Generation of Electronic Records Archivists in the United States* may be just the first of many steps on a road of professional self-analysis which could offer direction and guidance for electronic records; it might not be the right one or the definitive one, but it is a step in the right direction.

Note

1   Terry Cook, "Easy to Byte, Harder to Chew: The Second Generation of Electronic Records Archives," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991-92), pp. 202-16.

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Preserving the Present: Toward Viable Electronic Records. T.K. BIKSON and E.J. FRINKING. The Hague: SDU Publishers, 1993. 170 p. ISBN 90-399-0498-7.

This study was commissioned by the Dutch National Archives and the Ministry of Home Affairs to promote improved electronic records management in the Dutch government. The work was a response to concerns about the impact of new informa-tion technologies on the creation and management of records and the threats to their long-term retention and use. The study's intent was to lay a foundation for the devel-opment of policies to guide electronic records management practices in government agencies.

The work was based on extensive research in current literature as well as on inter-views with Dutch Government staff. A research team conducted site visits in Canada, the U.S., Germany, and Sweden to evaluate strategies being developed in those coun-

tries to address issues and problems related to electronic records management. The inquiry probed the impact of technological obsolescence and distributed information and communication environments on electronic records within three interrelated areas--technology, organizational context, and archives and records management. The book is presented methodically in a well structured report format, with a useful executive summary and detailed chapters representing each major activity in the project (the conceptual framework, research procedures, literature review, interviews, working visits, conclusions, and recommendations).

This study reinforces the challenges to electronic records management as reported in previous studies of the World Bank, the United Nations, the IMOSA project, and Bikson's own work on organizational behaviour for the RAND Corporation. With respect to the Netherlands, the authors identify the need for stronger legislation to support electronic records as evidence of transactional activity, calling specifically for the inclusion of electronic records as valid legal evidence. They appeal to archivists, records managers, and information specialists to work cooperatively in the development of better tools for proper management of electronic records. And finally, noting that current methods are inadequate for preserving viable electronic records through time, they call for "the articulation of new approaches that better suit today's interactive information environments" (p. 17).

One of the most interesting aspects of the book is the insight it provides into the behaviour of records creators and the implicit questions that are raised about compliance and accountability in electronic environments. The authors discovered situations where officials did not comply with legislative guidelines of freedom of information and archives acts. For example, some employees believed that "rules related to printed versions of electronic mail and fax are known not to be followed, and new rules should not be expected to make a big difference" (p. 47). Accountability cannot always be relied upon to ensure that record creators follow corporate policies and procedures. Manoeuvring in organizations where control has been met with resistance, hostility, or indifference has dogged archivists and records managers before. The issue of compliance (how to ensure compliance) will be amplified as decentralized information environments supersede traditional paper systems. Regulation and control of electronic records by creators may depend more on rules that are built into software applications and on commonly accepted standards of social and corporate accountability that are embedded in organizational cultures, rather than on individualistic archival mission statements.

While emphasizing the need for archives and records managers to refocus their energies in cooperative directions, Bikson and Frinking are also aware of the problems that this poses for organizations. Noting that it "is frequently recommended that records and archives management functions should be considered in the design of new information systems and applications" they observed in Dutch agencies that "this rarely happens" (p. 65). In fact, there "surfaced a sizable number of instances in which document management applications were being developed by individuals with technology and information systems expertise, without any participation by records managers or archivists" (p. 65). This gap, a function of the image of archives as post-hoc collection agencies, probably reflects the reality in most organizations, particularly small and medium scale commercial activity.

The study of the Dutch government reveals how issues surrounding electronic records management reflect societal pressures, limits, and attitudes as much as relations between archivists, records managers, and information specialists. The report emphasizes the central importance of having strong legislative frameworks in place to maintain accountability and compliance and leads us to question how well archives would function without these mechanisms operating in our favour. This book should also serve as a reminder of how difficult it will be for archivists to apply post-custodial archival approaches and practices in the practical world of organizational behaviour.

Newcomers to electronic records management will find in this book a rich survey of material from which to begin their own inquiries. In addition to the discussion of the limitations of traditional records management principles, the study contains a useful summary of the most important literature on electronic records. A lengthy bibliography is included, as are the interview protocols used for the site visits and their findings, which are reproduced as appendices. Those who are researching the field and planning their own programmes will benefit from the approaches, policies, and strategies outlined here.

The Dutch National Archivist and a senior government official praised the study for providing a basis for an electronic records policy. We can but look forward to a sequel for a progress report on what actions have been taken.

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The Principle of Provenance: Report from the First Stockholm Conference on Archival Theory and the Principle of Provenance, 2-3 September 1993. KERSTIN ABUKHANFUSA and JAN SYDBECK, eds. Stockholm: Swedish National Archives, 1994. 207 p. ISBN 91-88366-11-1.

In his *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1990), American archival educator James M. O'Toole notes that the mid-twentieth-century promise of computerized information retrieval caused some American archivists to ask "did the idea of provenance have any meaning any more?" (p. 73). At about the same time, says Swedish archivist Erik Norberg in the book under review, some European archivists "severely questioned" the "validity" of provenance in their initial response to issues raised by the computerization of communication (p. 8). In the United States and Europe, however, as well as countries such as Canada and Australia, the centrality in archival administration of knowledge of the origin of records has received resounding reaffirmation in recent years. *The Principle of Provenance* is an important European statement of this reaffirmation. The book is a compilation of the twelve papers given at the First Stockholm Conference on Archival Theory and the Principle of Provenance. The authors are among the leading archivists in nine European countries. Unfortunately, only a few of the contributors (Michael Roper, Peter Horsman, and Angelika Menne-Haritz) are well known to archivists outside Europe. The authors gathered in Stockholm in September 1993 on the occasion of the 375th anniversary of the founding of the Swedish National Archives. On the day after the conference, a special seminar was convened in order to continue the discussion. A summary of the seminar discussion provides the book's final chapter.