

levels. That observation is not intended to detract from the contributions of these authors, but to encourage future volumes to prove the ratio reflected in this publication to be the rarity that it should be. Future volumes might also expand the represented perspectives beyond governmental examples to include instances from corporate, non-profit, academic, and other domains.

Nancy Y. McGovern
Cornell University

Selected Essays in Electronic Recordkeeping in Australia. JUDITH A. ELLIS, ed. East Malvern, Victoria: Bookaburra Printing Pty Ltd, 2000. 187 p. ISBN 0-947219-15-3.

Reading this book reminded me of the age old question: what does an archives do? Produced by the Australian Society of Archivists, one would assume that this book was intended for an archival audience. And indeed, this assumption is confirmed in Shauna Hicks' Chapter 1 introductory essay, when she notes that the intended audience of the book is "recordkeeping professionals working within organisations such as private companies, state and federal government agencies, churches, schools and universities, and federal, state and local government records management authorities and archival institutions, including collecting archives" (p. 1). However, depending upon the level of involvement of the archives in record-keeping, and more specifically institutional, electronic record-keeping practices, the material discussed in this book may not be appropriate.

Hicks offers further introduction to the essays by stating that they have "brought together the most up to date information and advice in an introductory and practical way. The essays have been written with the [recordkeeping] practitioner in mind, as so much of the existing literature has been written from highly technical and theoretical perspectives and assumes familiarity with the subject..." (p. 1). And the introduction is correct – the essays do offer a very practical, step-by-step discussion of how to implement an electronic record-keeping system, from the beginning stages of explaining the necessity for the management of records to a final case study on the implementation of an actual system.

Stephen Yorke's essay "The Electronic Recordkeeping Environment" (Chapter 2) discusses the "why of recordkeeping, in the belief that this will make readers increasingly receptive to the 'how' of electronic recordkeeping" (p. 5). The essay then moves through definitions of electronic record-keeping and particular issues such as technological change and the information technology and communication revolution, which have significantly changed the nature of record-keeping.

“Imperatives for Effective Electronic Recordkeeping” by Helen Smith (Chapter 3) is a worst-case, “gloom and doom” case study of a company where the need for electronic record-keeping is not effectively argued and the company ends up going out of business because it cannot produce the necessary records and is therefore repeatedly subjected to litigation and fined. Chapter 3 serves as an effective cautionary tale for those that may not consider an electronic record-keeping system essential, although the ultimate reasons for the end of the company (i.e., the repeated fines) may not apply outside Australia.

“A Project Plan” by Bernadette Bean (Chapter 4) presents a “detailed plan for a project manager to lead an organisation through in order to implement an electronic recordkeeping system successfully. The methodology commences long before shopping for software, and does not end with the final installation of user software.” Within this plan is an understanding that the “organisation’s business drives the scope and direction of the project rather than allowing information technology or even recordkeeping requirements to dictate the way an organisation does business” (p. 31).

Karen Skelton’s discussion of “Designing an Electronic Recordkeeping System” in Chapter 5 considers the need to determine and specify the requirements. The essay identifies the steps to create a design plan, following the DIRKS (*Designing and Implementing Recordkeeping Systems*) methodology; discusses the importance of metadata; addresses the difficulty of maintaining authentic electronic records in an electronic environment; and then analyzes the use of appraisal criteria in system design and the difference between an off-the-shelf system and one designed internally.

Simon Davis’ Chapter 6, “Implementing an Electronic Recordkeeping System” focuses on the issues associated with implementing record-keeping ideas in an electronic system, with an emphasis on the specific implementation steps, including: the roles and responsibilities of those involved in the project; testing, migration and conversion strategies; training and documentation, and different roll-out strategies.

Chapter 7, “Management of Electronic Records over Time” by Justine Heazlewood, provides an interesting examination of the special issues related to keeping electronic records into the future, and may be of interest to those not involved solely in the record-keeping aspect of electronic records. The essay effectively explores two main points: first, that preservation and long-term management of electronic records should be part of record-keeping and should be established before the electronic records are created; and second, that there is a difference, at least when it comes to electronic record-keeping, between the medium and the message (Marshall McLuhan notwithstanding). The long-term management of electronic records is based on the need to access the records and preserve their authenticity and integrity. With regards to the medium and the message, the medium is “the storage medium on which the electronic record is stored,” whereas the message “is the elec-

tronic record itself” (p. 98). Both of these need to be migrated into an accessible format.

David Roberts’ “Making Electronic Records Accessible” (Chapter 8) focuses on the issues associated with making electronic records available, both within and beyond the boundaries of the organization. This is one of the weaker essays of the book because of its primary focus on “electronic gateways” as the solution to all access problems – surely there must be other potential solutions? However, Roberts does argue effectively the need for metadata to maintain record accessibility, and the continuing dependence on technology for electronic records.

Chapter 9, “A Case Study” by Tom Hotchin, examines the successes and failures in the implementation of an electronic document and customer contacts system at “the Council” – an organization which is not further identified.

Taken together, *Selected Essays in Electronic Recordkeeping in Australia* offers a good description of the steps to implement an electronic record-keeping system. Little duplication occurs between the essays, except in the explanation of metadata, which is understandable given the importance of this information at various stages of record-keeping. The glossary offers good basic definitions of record-keeping terms, and the bibliography shows a good selection of international sources on electronic record-keeping. The legislation and metadata standards referred to throughout the book are solely Australian, a logical situation given that the collection of essays is intended primarily for an Australian audience.

However, the overall usefulness of this book to some archivists is difficult to determine. If you are an archivist that is responsible for implementing an electronic record system and you are not sure what your steps should be, definitely use this book. If you are an archivist that gives record-keeping advice, you can safely recommend this book to those responsible for implementing an electronic record-keeping system. Yet, if you are an archivist that is not responsible for either of these functions, this book may not offer as much immediately useful information as other sources.

Cara Downey
Library and Archives Canada

Les archives électroniques : une mémoire orpheline ou en mutation?
Actes du 4^{ième} symposium du GIRA, Archives nationales du Québec (Montréal), le 22 mars 2002. GROUPE INTERDISCIPLINAIRE DE RECHERCHE EN ARCHIVISTIQUE. Montréal : Groupe interdisciplinaire de recherche en archivistique, 2002. 157 p. ISBN 2-9807798-0-6.

Since its formation in 1988, le Groupe interdisciplinaire de recherche en