

writes, “postal communications only incidentally had anything to do with the Post Office” (p. 149).

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“Titanic”: The Official Story, April 14-15, 1912. ARCHIVES OF THE PUBLIC RECORD OFFICE IN LONDON. London: Random House, 1997. 18 documents, 100+ p. ISBN 0-375-501150-0.

The Titanic Collection: Mementos Of The Maiden Voyage. ARCHIVES OF THE TITANIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY, TEXT BY ERIC SAUDER & HUGH BREWSTER. San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1998. 21 reproductions. ISBN 0-8118-2052-1.

With the world having just been washed over by the third wave of “Titanicmania,” the first having occurred immediately after the disaster, the second after the publication in 1955 of Walter Lord’s *A Night to Remember* and release of the subsequent film, and the third initiated by the discovery of the wreck by Robert G. Ballard’s Franco-American exploration team in 1985 (then whipped into tsunami proportions by James Cameron’s film *Titanic*), it is appropriate to examine some of the flotsam and jetsam of potential interest to the archival world which this last wave has produced. In *Down With The Old Canoe*, a study of the disaster’s place in popular culture, historian Steven Biel notes that when publishing on the SS *Titanic* one must question whether one should add to the flood of already available “stuff,” especially since by this stage most of it is essentially a reworking of previously known material. This same question must be asked of two recently published works: *“Titanic”: The Official Story* and *The Titanic Collection*, which are not exactly books, but “boxed collections” of textual items related to the sinking of the famous ship in April 1912. Those responsible for these sets are clear about why they created these products. In *The Titanic Collection*, Sauder and Brewster say their aim is to help readers “touch the past” and give them a “unique” and “first-hand impression” of what the great ship was like. *“Titanic”: The Official Story* states that “only by consulting original documents” can we find the truth and that they “will make history unfold in your hands.” Here the two collections largely succeed.

Such collections are not a new concept; perhaps the most widely known previous example is the once ubiquitous series of “Jackdaws” produced in the 1970s. However, what sets the two “Titanic” collections apart is that they attempt not only to reproduce the written content of their facsimile items, but also the texture and appearance of the originals. The presentation and produc-

tion values of the two are extremely high and done with an attention to detail not approached by the “Jackdaws.” These reproductions are not just photocopies.

The Public Record’s Office’s (PRO) *“Titanic”: The Official Story* was the first of the two collections to appear, its release obviously timed to coincide with Cameron’s film and the 1997 Christmas shopping season, while *The Titanic Collection* appeared on the shelves seemingly in time for Christmas 1998. *“Titanic”: The Official Story* is what one would expect from the Public Records Office. Its eighteen “documents” focus on “official” or government records and the selection is very good. Most come from the PRO itself, but the archives of Harland and Wolff (the builders of the *Titanic*) are also represented. These documents include: a “Certificate of Registry” and “Certificates of Clearance”; deck plans from Harland and Wolff; correspondence and statements relating to the disaster; and the reports of the two commissions of enquiry into the sinking (one British and the other, American). The British report alone is seventy-four pages long. There is also a photograph of a survivor being rescued by the *Carpathia*, sample returns of drowned passengers, a front page of the *New York Evening Journal*, and a statement of claim in the civil suit brought against the White Star Line.

However, this is only one side of story. If the PRO’s version tells the “official” story, the *Titanic Collection* gives us the private one. Here the two *Titanic* boxed collections complement each other extremely well. Surprisingly, the two sets do not overlap, which may not be entirely by accident. The only items which come close are two different Marconi radio-telegram distress calls from the *Titanic* received by ships in the area. If anything *The Titanic Collection* is even more realistic in look and feel than the PRO set, with special care taken with the thickness and texture of the reproductions. The collection even comes in its own miniature steamer trunk with a movable tray and faux metal fittings. The items are not called documents, but more appropriately “artifacts” or “mementos,” as many would not be considered strictly archival; as might be expected there are more such items than printed documents and records. The majority of these “artifacts” deal with the pre-iceberg *Titanic* and illustrate life on board for the wealthy passengers. Reproductions include ephemera such as luggage stickers (looking ready to be stuck on a trunk), White Star Line promotional material, menus, passenger lists, postcards, a music booklet, a boarding card, and a landing card needed by survivors when they landed in New York. The luncheon menu for the first-class passengers on 14 April included: “Egg à l’Argeteuil,” “Norwegian Anchovies,” “Soused Herrings,” and “Corned Ox Tongue.”

The documents in the two collections are simply fascinating, and if you have any interest in the *Titanic* phenomenon you will become immersed in them. Archivists have always known the attraction of original documents and these high quality facsimiles are the next best thing. To their credit, both sets

place the reproductions in context with a fine general commentary and more specific discussion of each document, which could make them good educational tools. Nevertheless, the ultimate goal of *"Titanic": The Official Story* and *The Titanic Collection* may not be primarily educational. At about \$35 to \$40 Canadian these sets are obviously intended to capitalize on the existing market of hard core *Titanic* buffs and dilettantes with money to spend, and to generate revenue for their producers. Can archives learn anything from this? Perhaps they can. Packaging archival facsimiles for profit has been done before, but few institutions are able to ride the coattails of a world-wide pop culture phenomenon. These sets show that expensive, high quality archival reproductions *can* be marketed to a mass audience, but that opportunity may be rare. So, if your archives does not have the equivalent of a *Titanic* in its vaults you may be unable to use this approach. Even still, individual archivists may find other ways to use these collections in everyday situations. At the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), I use *Titanic* reproductions to get the attention of students familiar with the *Titanic* disaster (or at least the movie), then move on to original documents relating to shipwrecks on Lake Winnipeg.

To answer Biel's question, do we need more stuff like this on the SS *Titanic*? No, probably not, but if it had to be done, it is fortunate that it was done as well as it was by the creators of the *"Titanic": The Official Story*, and *The Titanic Collection*. And hopefully, the person who starts by examining one of these collections under the Christmas tree, may, like the students at PAM, eventually progress onward into archival research and examining original documents at one of their local archives.

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Archives and the Metropolis. M.V. ROBERTS, ed. London: Guildhall Library Publications, 1998. 210 p. ISBN 0 900422 45 9 (soft cover only).

This book is a compilation of papers presented at the "Archives and the Metropolis" conference held in London, England, 11–13 July 1996. As the introduction by Derek Keene notes (p. 1), "The aim of the conference was to increase understanding of the role of these archives in metropolitan life and of the problems of providing for them. It was intended to explore the particular political, cultural, social, and economic contexts in which the archives have been created and maintained, throughout the world and from Antiquity to the present." The papers go a long way towards achieving the goals of the conference – particularly for the City of London, the focus of nine of the twenty-six papers. While most of the remaining papers are from European sources, Brazil, Egypt, Japan, and the United States are also represented. And many of the