

chaque fonds avec les conditions de communicabilité spécifiques à chaque série de documents.

Il s'agit en somme d'un guide pratique qui a non seulement pour objectif de décrire les documents mais aussi de présenter leur évolution et leur valeur historique dans un cadre archivistique dont l'articulation est claire et précise. Ce guide permet au lecteur de comparer notre expérience et nos pratiques archivistiques avec celles des Français et constitue, de ce fait, un ouvrage intéressant et un bel exemple à imiter pour la diffusion des documents relatifs à la justice.

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Electronic Records Retention: An Introduction. DAVID O. STEPHENS and RODERICK C. WALLACE. Prairie Village, Kansas: ARMA International, 1997. 131 p. ISBN 0-933887-69-8.

The authors of *Electronic Records Retention: An Introduction* state that the book is introductory rather than definitive, and that their objective is to provide a methodology for developing and implementing retention and disposal strategies for electronic records. Although the focus of the book is the scheduling, thus appraisal of electronic records, archivists may find this book disappointing. The authors' definitions of "electronic records" and "electronic records series" are problematic, and they draw little from the archival literature on electronic records.

Electronic Records Retention: An Introduction is targeted at American records managers working in organizations that have large information technology departments. The authors' methodology for scheduling electronic records places a heavy reliance on interviews with staff in such departments, and pays little attention to talking directly with users of computer systems to determine what functions have been automated and what records held within computer systems are needed by users. There is little discussion of what to do if faced with computer applications that have been developed by a consultant who is no longer available or if working for an organization that does not have an information technology department and has installed "off-the-shelf" software.

The authors' focus is on the development of retention schedules for databases. Using basic principles for electronic records retention that apply primarily to databases, they largely ignore the textual documents (word processing files, electronic mail messages) and spreadsheets found in personal computers and office automation systems, characterizing them as unstructured records

that “do not lend themselves to analysis and retention schedule development by application/record series.”

Overall, the authors tend to lose sight of the fact that this is a book about electronic records. So much of the book is given over to explaining basic records management principles and techniques, that at times it reads like an introductory records management manual. Apart from discussing storage media and data management tools currently available, and providing advice on interviewing staff in information technology departments, the authors offer little explanation as to what makes scheduling of electronic records different from scheduling paper records. Perhaps most critically, an underlying assumption of the book is that records managers should confine themselves to appraising and scheduling records created by *existing* computer applications. There is no mention of the need for records managers (and archivists) to involve themselves in computer systems at the design stages to ensure that records management functions are built directly into systems.

Finally, the book is very narrowly focused on American records management, and does not mention the work being done on electronic recordkeeping issues by archivists and records managers in other countries (in Canada, Australia, and Europe, for example). In ignoring, largely, the role of archivists in the appraisal and preservation of electronic records, it also reflects the marked division in the United States between the records management and archival communities. Even the section entitled “Archival Appraisal: Selecting Electronic Records for Permanent Retention” (which appears immediately after a discussion of preservation strategies developed by the archival community) does not suggest that records managers should work with archivists to appraise electronic records.

Although some nuggets of information can be gleaned from the book, *Electronic Records Retention: An Introduction* addresses few of the issues that archivists have raised in recent years concerning the appraisal and preservation of electronic records. Archivists seeking information on the appraisal and scheduling of electronic records would do better to consult other sources, such as the *Proceedings of the DLM-Forum on Electronic Records*, published by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities in 1996. This provides a general discussion of issues pertaining to electronic records. For practical advice on managing and preserving electronic records, two additional sources are the *Guidelines on Best Practices for Using Electronic Information*, also published, in 1997, by the Office for Official Publications of the European Communities, and *Models for Action: Practical Approaches to Electronic Records Management & Preservation*, published by the Center for Technology in Government (New York, 1998).

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