

Anyone wishing additional information about this conference can contact me at the National Map Collection, Public Archives of Canada. A full report based on more than forty hours of tape-recorded proceedings is being submitted to this journal for the next issue.

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The Add. MSS. System — PABC

On January 1, 1975 the Public Archives of British Columbia inaugurated a new system of cataloguing manuscripts. All material catalogued since that date has been listed in a new catalogue. Material described by the old method will be recatalogued, but until the recataloguing is completed, researchers will have to consult both the old and new catalogues, which are located together in the reference room.

The major disadvantage of the old system was the way it treated larger collections. Although each unit was kept together physically on the shelves, the series and items of which it was composed were catalogued individually without a description of the unit as a whole. This made it easy to assign subject headings to specific parts of a collection, but difficult both for the Archives to produce descriptions of its holdings and for researchers to cite PABC materials with reasonable brevity.

At first we had hoped to correct this fault by recataloguing only the larger collections in order to provide general descriptions and finding aids. However, problems such as overlapping or conflicting subject categories and a very cumbersome numbering system led to the conclusion that the recataloguing of the entire manuscript collection would be more efficient. The manuscript group system was rejected because most units were too complex to fit into a single, narrow subject group. Furthermore, the use of broader categories would result in lengthy listings which would tend to defeat the purpose of having groups. It was decided, therefore, to adopt an additional manuscripts (Add. MSS.) system.

In the Add. MSS. system, units are simply given successive numbers — Add. MSS. 1, Add. MSS. 2, and so on. A later addition to a unit already held is not integrated with that collection, but is assigned a new Add. MSS. number as it is catalogued. The unit is then brought together by means of the card catalogue in which title cards are filed alphabetically. Both title and subject cards bear appropriate cross references when a single finding aid covers two or more additional manuscripts.

Because many units consist of single items or of material which can be made accessible by brief descriptions, the catalogue card has been retained as the basic means of description. The information on the cards is similar to that which appears on a Union List of Manuscripts form. Title cards, mimeographed so that subject headings based on the Library of Congress list can be added, are interfiled with subject cards. In the case of larger collections, subject cards direct users to a specific volume or finding aid page. Shelf list cards, identical to the title cards, are filed in numerical order and provide a straight listing of PABC holdings. Eventually, these cards could be reproduced for distribution to researchers.

Each unit bears two numbers: when material is received, an accession number is assigned and entered in an accession book by an archivist; an Add. MSS. number is assigned when catalogue cards are prepared by a typist. This use of two numbers provides two levels of control. The accession number, which can be used for preliminary listing and for temporary shelving, is especially useful for dealing with a backlog. The Add. MSS. number brings together units which were separated under the old system and is used for final shelving. Since material is not necessarily catalogued or shelved in the order of receipt, shelving by Add. MSS. number provides for more efficient storage.

As material is recatalogued, the old cards are withdrawn. The old numbers are entered on the new accession control records, and Add. MSS. numbers are entered on the old shelf list cards. The old subject and main entry cards are retained to ensure that material cited under the old system can be found easily in the new catalogue.

The recataloguing of the whole collection will undoubtedly be a lengthy process and researchers may be inconvenienced during the period of transition. We hope they will feel amply compensated, since they should find the new system easier to use, the descriptions of units more helpful and the citing of PABC materials more straightforward.

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Microforms and Their Application to Map Collections

Microforms may provide the only solution to the problem of conserving our cartographic heritage. Large maps and documents are the least likely to survive of all archival material on paper. Because of their size, storage is difficult. It is virtually impossible to remove many maps from any type of storage facility without damaging them. The high cost and rare expertise