

colleagues who, Burke claims, in "agonizing over the method of dividing up the manuscript universe, devised a formula worse than the disease." Burke's experience again comes through unequivocally in the acquisitions section of his piece on "Materials and Methodology." There he compares the collecting procedures for books, manuscripts and records and draws a distinction between librarian, manuscript curator and archivist based on the dimension of records control from origin to fate. He neatly hurls the bolts of an argument which disrupts many a gathering of the archival clans:

It could be argued that if the entire range of archival responsibility is not being exercised, then the person performing archival duties is not a fully functioning archivist. Just as complete library service has to include determining acquisition policy, acquisitions, cataloging, and reference service, so complete archival service has to include prearchival records activities. Without that function the archivist foregoes primary control over the appraisal, retention, and disposition process, since such decisions can be made by others, prior to sending corporate records to the archives.

The rest of *Archive-Library Relations* contains a good deal of common sense. Even given the highly politicized atmosphere of American public life, the great emphasis upon the lobby and the image, the power of law and of litigation, and the constant vivacity of movement and talk, the Canadian archivist cannot but be impressed by efforts being made in the United States toward cooperation in the information fields. Whatever the unbounding optimism south of the border, the principle on which the book is predicated cannot be dismissed by Canadians. Miriam Crawford's chapter on "Social Responsibility" sounds a welcome note by showing that "a sense of responsibility to society is one of the distinguishing marks of a professional." She naturally points to issues of prime archival concern, such as the ownership of papers of public officials and access to personal records and classified information sources, while interestingly and very properly dealing with social responsibility in terms of competitive collecting and depository distribution. As for an archives under library management, surely that is undesirable by any yardstick, even accepting Clark's belief that "the success of this arrangement depends to a large extent on the attitude of the library administrator." Broad remarks on professional communication across the disciplinary frontiers can only be greeted as motherhood and apple pie.

If Canadian archivists see their reflection in this pool of American tradition and faith, they should not be altogether surprised. The library hegemony here is not generally as strong outside universities, but the main issues are exactly the same as indeed they are in the United Kingdom and most other British-influenced nations. The Association of Canadian Archivists' vigorous embrace of archival education and of national issues affecting the use of archival materials ought to allay the kind of criticism brought of his American colleagues by Frank Burke, and confirm the new directions addressed by Miriam Crawford. Perhaps Robert Clark may be confounded in Canada if librarians will in future stand alongside archivists rather than lean over them.

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Records Retention. WILLIAM E. MITCHELL. Rev. ed., 10th printing. Evansville, Ind.: Ellsworth Pub. Co., ©1976. 74 p. \$10.00. (Available from the publisher, Box 3162, Evansville, Indiana 47731, U.S.A.)

Records Retention by William E. Mitchell, a Certified Public Accountant, is a reference manual on scheduling and disposition of records generated by American businesses. It is designed to serve as a practical guide for the disposition of records common to most

businesses, regardless of size, in compliance with either the letter or the intent of a multiplicity of federal and state regulations controlling retention periods.

In the introduction the author reiterates the accepted rhetoric in support of establishing and adhering to realistic retention periods. The recognized benefits derived from a systematic approach to records scheduling, to which he alludes, have been articulated so often that they now stand virtually unchallenged. Mitchell estimates that approximately 80 percent of the records currently retained by business from seven to fifteen years should be disposed of after three years, four at most. He utilizes comparative statistics and relevant extracts from government regulations to reinforce his contention that a rationalization of and reduction in the length of retention periods are absolutely essential if businesses are to achieve the benefits which accrue from systematic records scheduling.

Recommended retention periods for such common series of corporate records such as accounting, personnel, and purchasing are proposed in a descriptive schedule resembling a modest business version of the Federal Government of Canada's General Records Disposal Schedules and the Alberta Administrative Records Disposition Guide. While this sample schedule identifies the financial and statutory requirements governing retention periods, it neither differentiates between active and interim records centre storage nor adequately reflects, or even acknowledges, the archival perspective in determining final disposition. Except for certain types of records which are designated for permanent preservation—company charters, certificates of incorporation, constitution and by-laws, board of directors minutes and resolutions, patents, trademarks, audited financial statements, general account ledgers, and stockholders' records—everything else is scheduled for indefinite retention or destruction. The former is not an acceptable final disposition and the latter does not take into account the concept of selective retention by an archives for potentially historical records. The author is justified in his criticism of imprecise retention periods contained in some government schedules, but is guilty of the same fault in employing the phrases, "while useful," "while active," and "current" in his suggested retention periods.

Traditionally, government regulated the retention of business records primarily for taxation purposes, but Mitchell emphasizes that with the advent and strengthening of sundry social, employment, and related legislation, business is compelled to maintain additional records which have to be available for inspection by various government departments and agencies responsible for administration and enforcement. Since this assorted legislation was introduced and revised by different jurisdictions over a period of time, there is a definite lack of uniformity in retention periods. Consequently, Mitchell's explanations of these fragmented government regulations are extremely useful in assigning retention periods. He effectively dispels the myths surrounding these regulations, especially those concerning the various Statutes of Limitations.

The chapters on tax, payroll, government contracts, and miscellaneous regulations are particularly well documented and offer practical applications of retention periods. In an interesting chapter on handling classified records, Mitchell concentrates on the implications of security legislation and the levels of classified information while presenting a detailed account of the procedures involved in the storage, transmittal, reproduction and disposition of classified material.

In the second to last chapter, he devotes sections to microfilming and its disadvantages, records centre layout and techniques, filing equipment, and measures to ensure the protection of vital records. Even though these sections include some worthwhile advice, such as it is not economical to microfilm hard copy unless the originals are to be retained for at least seven years, the subjects receive much better coverage in a variety of specialized records management publications. Regrettably, this chapter contains some rather disturbing references about records centres and archival considerations. For instance, I suspect it would

be difficult to convince a qualified records manager that "burdening some clerk with keeping inventory records on a current basis of what is coming in and out of the [records centre] serves no purpose per se." An offhand comment that "those few records which have to be kept permanently could similarly be fenced off," which incidentally is his very first remark in the manual that even remotely relates to archives, is discouraging to say the least.

Mitchell is at his best in delineating and interpreting the myriad government regulations which dictate retention periods, but unfortunately in the concluding chapter he does not exhibit a comparable level of expertise in discussing the design and implementation of a records scheduling programme. I realize that this manual is limited in scope, but his view of what constitutes a records retention programme is narrow and unbalanced. He seems to ignore the fact that records retention is an integral component in a coordinated records management system. Furthermore, his approach reveals an alarming lack of awareness and appreciation of the business archivist's role in such a programme. This is not to say that all his ideas and proposals about who should perform the records management function, where it should be situated in the organizational structure, how it should develop and what it should encompass, should be completely disregarded. On the contrary, some of his suggestions are quite sensible, especially those in connection with tailoring the program to suit the size of the business. What is good for General Motors is not necessarily good for Shapiro Brothers corner grocery.

Mitchell insists that programme costs should not exceed benefits, but ironically two paragraphs later he rejects the value of statistics on space and equipment released through scheduling, which is perhaps the most reliable means of quantifying savings that offset programme costs. Some of his comments are anathema to archivists and records managers. For example, he casually dismisses the need to compile an inventory of inactive records. "To be thorough, the contents have to be examined. What point is there in such an exhaustive task, when half the material will subsequently be disposed of?" He also contends that "once 80% of the facts are known, the other 20% must be assumed and action taken. Otherwise, the person responsible will trivialize the programme into oblivion." It is evident from the tenor of these remarks that Mitchell has adopted the stereotyped business attitude of getting on with the job without taking into account the consequences and long-term requirements. His true colours are clearly shown: "Certainly old records will be uncovered; they will be quaint and interesting and in some remote way have some use, . . . but what cash value is really at hand?"

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Archives and Other Special Collections: A Library Staff Handbook. SISTER MARY JANE MENŽENSKA. New York: School of Library Service, Columbia University, 1974. viii, 87 p. forms. \$3.00 (Available from the School of Library Service, Room 516, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y. 10027).

The purpose of Sr. Menženska's volume is "to provide guidelines for the staff of a small college library with special collections," with an emphasis on archival materials. On the assumption that most small libraries will have few professional librarians to spare for the organization, cataloguing and preservation of special holdings, Sr. Menženska posits the inevitable remedy: the professional librarian in charge of these collections must wear three hats—librarian, curator and archivist. Furthermore, part-time, usually untrained students,