

**Manuscript Inventory No. 1: Additional Manuscripts 1-350 and Microfilms A-1-661.** Edited by FRANCES GUNDRY. Victoria, B.C.: Provincial Archives of British Columbia, 1976. 70 p. Free.

**Inventory of Manuscripts in the Public Archives of Nova Scotia.** Halifax: Public Archives of Nova Scotia, 1976. 703 p. \$15.00.

**A Guide to the Manuscript Collections in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick.** ANN B. RIGBY. Fredericton: Provincial Archives of New Brunswick, 1977. iii, 159 p. \$3.00.

Almost a decade has passed since the Archives nationales du Québec published its *Etat général des archives publiques et privées du Québec*. The publication within the last year of inventories of the manuscripts of three provincial archives is a major event, being a tardy second sign of maturation on the provincial archival scene.

On the Pacific coast, the Provincial Archives of British Columbia has produced its first manuscript inventory since adopting the additional manuscripts system in 1975. *Manuscript Inventory No. 1* describes Add. MSS. 1 to Add. MSS. 350 (originals and flat copies) and microfilm collections A-1 to A-661.

The entry for each collection includes its Add. MSS. number, title, outside dates, nature (original or copy) and extent. For individuals, their location and most important occupation are also given. A short paragraph describes the composition of the collection. The presence of a finding aid, where one exists, is indicated, and the whole is concluded with an indication of the source and date of acquisition. Use of the inventory is rendered easier by a title index at the back.

One difficulty with the additional manuscripts system is that it makes rapid consultation of inventories virtually impossible. While the relatively small number of collections described in this inventory makes it possible to skim all the entries fairly rapidly, in future, as the number of collections grows, a comprehensive nominal and subject index based on the entry descriptions will become imperative. Already it would have been useful.

Not to be outdone, on the Atlantic shore the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, as a follow-up to its *Preliminary Short Inventory* of 1972, has produced a truly remarkable general inventory of its holdings, designed "to be sufficiently comprehensive so that it can be used both by researchers working in the PANS to request material and to others who wish to determine the relevancy of the PANS holdings to their own research requirements." Nova Scotia specialists will henceforth be rolling in clover.

The Nova Scotia Archives holdings are divided into Manuscript and Record Groups (MGs and RGs) to the majority of which the inventory provides separate introductions. These, unfortunately, vary widely in quality from group to group. The introduction often describes the historical background of the group and in some cases provides bibliographical references and notes on finding aids available in the Archives. For most of the MGs and RGs the descriptions themselves consist of "finding aids," the nature of which vary with the organization of the RGs and MGs, ranging from shelf lists to alphabetical lists. The description of RG 12 "Census Records," for example, lists the census returns by year and refers researchers to their location in RG 12 or elsewhere with sufficient precision to enable them to order the material. In RG 15 and RG 16, however, one is confronted with the oddity of introductions to groups the contents of which are virtually undescribed. It is like the presentation of an absent speaker.

One fairly serious defect in the inventory is what can only be described as the enigma of RG 1 "Bound Volumes of Nova Scotia Records for the Period 1624-1867." This record

group exists physically (there are more than 470 volumes of it) and yet its contents are described in detail only under other RGs, most notably 2, 6, 11 and 12. Unfortunately, the introductions to RG 1 and to the other RGs explain neither why this is so, nor what the connection is between RG 1 and the other RGs. There is some archival mystification here and only after considerable head-scratching does one begin to piece together the puzzle. Better introductions and a healthy injection of cross-references would be appreciated.

Considering that this inventory is already more than seven hundred pages long, one feels rather like Oliver Twist asking for more gruel when the idea comes to mind that an index would greatly facilitate consultation of this book, if for no other reason than that it *is* more than seven hundred pages long.

Any criticism, however, must be judged almost petty given the care and work that have gone into the preparation of this invaluable research tool. The publication of this inventory will be welcomed as well by malicious archives course students. For years, unhappily deprived of inventories from other archives, they have had to limit their sniping to the organization of the Public Archives of Canada; the PANS now obligingly lines up with the PAC as a target in the annual turkey shoot.

Ann Rigby's *Guide to the Manuscript Collections in the Provincial Archives of New Brunswick*, while less voluminous and less extensive in scope than that of the Public Archives of Nova Scotia, will be no less useful in its sphere. Here is virtually absolute uniformity of format (based on that of the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories*) and clarity of presentation. The collections, at least for the purpose of description in this inventory, have been divided into four groups: Papers of Individuals and Families, Business Papers, Church Records, and Papers of Organizations and Government. Their actual physical arrangement appears to be otherwise, but is not clearly described in the introduction to the inventory. Despite the fact that the collections are listed alphabetically within these groupings, Ms. Rigby has seen fit to complete her work with an index, a gesture bound to be appreciated by all who use this guide.

On the evidence of these three publications, apart from the apparent requirement of sea water for the production of provincial archival inventories, a pertinent observation is that these inventories reflect the profound impact which the *Union List of Manuscripts (ULM)* is having on Canadian archives. Both the Nova Scotia and New Brunswick inventories acknowledge a debt to the *ULM* either for inspiration or for the provision of a format. Archives as well as researchers are benefiting from the former's self-imposed obligation to complete their returns. Assuming that the *ULM* can continue to plant the seeds of activity across the country, we may well see inventories sprouting like spring flowers in the near future; but it may require a little sea water in the interior.

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**Preliminary Inventory: Additional Manuscripts.** Edited by SHEELAGH DRAPER. Vancouver: City of Vancouver Archives, 1974-77. 4 v. illus. \$13.00.

While many well-established repositories, including my own, are still talking about a publications programme, the City of Vancouver Archives has been quietly producing a series of inventories to their Additional Manuscripts Collection.

These four volumes, though not without their problems, are a practical and attractive addition to the corpus of Canadian archival literature. The entries give sufficient detail to allow researchers to establish quickly whether or not each collection is of use to them. The brief biographical or historical sketches included in most major entries provide a context for