

some of the articles to be more reflective by freeing them from the clutches of graceless lists of names and titles, while at the same time, offering precise reference to such important works as the *Union List of Manuscripts in Canadian Repositories* and the *Guide des sources d'archives sur le Canada français, au Canada*, which are nowhere mentioned.

The establishment of the *centres de recherche* is of particular interest to archivists since in all cases these institutions have also become specialized documentation centres. With the exception of Alberta, the English-Canadian provincial archives have either neglected to acquire Francophone collections or have been neglected by researchers. The result is that the *centres de recherche* have become the archival repositories of the Francophone minorities. Even the Archives nationales du Québec, which, among provincial archives, is in the vanguard of regional collecting, has been beaten to the private collections of the Trois-Rivières region, where Claude Lessard suggests they be left to the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières. But if the public archives have neglected the Francophones, there seems little doubt that the researchers have also neglected the public archives. The Public Archives of Canada is full of material relating to the Francophone minorities, a fact barely mentioned. Indeed, the absence of a report on material relating to the Francophone minorities at the Public Archives of Canada is another evident *lacuna* in this collection.

One particularly interesting contribution, however, is Paul-P. Chassé's passionate portrayal of the almost desperate situation of French America and of Franco-American studies. The contrast between the gloom of Chassé's article and a certain spirit of excitement and confidence which characterizes the great majority of articles is striking and heartening. Once again there is a parallel with the new militancy of the FFHQ, now charged with a desperate energy. Whether the enthusiasm of beginning a great project, to which *Archives et recherches régionales au Canada français* testifies, can be maintained, or whether it will wither in despair, will be determined in large part by the ability of Canadians, French and English, to recognize the value of the Francophone minorities and to reverse the tide of assimilation. Failing this, the only publications to issue from the research now so boldly begun will be obituaries on extinct societies.

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Man the Builder: An Illustrated History of Engineering. J.P.M. PANNELL.
London: Thames and Hudson, c1977. 252, [4] p. ill., maps, ports. \$14.98.

A Voice From Afar: The History of Telecommunications in Canada.
ROBERT COLLINS. Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd, c1977. 304 p.
ill., ports. ISBN 0 07 082536 X \$14.95.

Neither of these two books is about archives, but do not be dismayed. For those individuals inclined towards serious thought about why archives exist, and why they are archivists instead of antique dealers or plumbers, these books could have considerable impact.

J.P.M. Pannell's *Man The Builder: An Illustrated History of Engineering* is a survey, from Rome to the present, of six significant areas of civil engineering and construction: roads, rivers and canals, railways, docks and harbours, water supply and public health, and bridges. It is primarily, but not exclusively, English in its emphasis. It will bring a few surprises to the initiated and provide an admirable introduction to

others. Pannell is a good antidote to the view that engineering history is too technical for all but the specialist and so devoid of human interest that there is little point in trying to understand it. Among other things, he makes it clear that not all engineering decisions are based on mathematical calculations alone. Individual engineers have their own assumptions and predilections that they will go to great lengths to defend. Philosophers and politicians usually do their laundry in public and so the whole neighbourhood knows about it. Engineers are notoriously private. The combined efforts of archivists and historians may make their decisions more public and less mysterious.

Robert Collins' *A Voice from Afar: A History of Telecommunications in Canada*, while very different from *Man the Builder*, also illustrates that interesting and informative history can be written starting with technology and working outward. One can approach Canadian history through the medium of technology and technological change. Beginning in 1846, the year of the first Canadian public demonstration of the electric telegraph and running up to the present, Collins argues that the wire and other means of telecommunication were responsible for "weaving the fragments of colony into a nation." (p. 33) This is a welcome addition to the versions of the growth of Canada that we are normally fed. All of the usual elements are there: Confederation, the force feeding of railroads, corruption, political interference, national and local disasters, bad business deals, neglected heroes, and the failure of the public and their elected representatives to see what was significant and what was not. But there is more, such as the suggestion that the real folk heroes of Canadian history include the telegraph lineman. There is also an awareness that Canada has had an important part to play in both developing and implementing communications technology, which in turn has had great impact on Canadian life. By looking at some familiar events from the point of view of communications technology, Collins has shown how we might gain alternate perspectives on Canadian history.

So this reviewer, an enthusiastic inhabitant of that suburb of hell known as the history of engineering, has found two books that have kept him amused for a few evenings. What has that to do with archives? Quite a bit. Archivists and archival programmes have enormous impact on the history and self-image of a nation. They play an extremely powerful role not only in the choice, but also in the shape and interpretation of many historical studies. The historian rightly speaks of his skills in selecting what he needs from an overwhelming mass of material. What he often fails to mention is that the archivist has already made an initial selection. The work of Collins and Pannell point to new directions in historical research that archivists — through committed and imaginative work, or studied and carefully cultivated neglect — will aid or impede; they are denied neutrality. Historians are beginning to pay increasing attention to both the internal development and dynamic of science and technology, as well as its impact. It remains to be seen whether or not Canadian archivists will rise to the occasion. To date, there has been more good luck than good management. Little has been said about this neglect because few have wanted to use the materials. However, the growth of research activity is making major archival omissions and failures glaringly obvious.

In the next few years, the reaction of the archival community to this area of growth will be most revealing. In times of fiscal restraint, it is easy to claim that there is no room to remedy past neglect, particularly where there is no political or financial pressure to do so. Yet times of stress often can induce beneficial re-examination and, if used creatively and courageously, can bring about more balance than would be possible during flush times when serious introspection and self-improvement are much less necessary and much less likely.

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