

custodians of photographic archives who are either starting out or seeking to improve their procedures. Of great significance is the emphasis placed upon proper acquisition and initial control procedures, vital steps often neglected in the rush to make materials available for use. Also valuable is the discussion of technical processing and storage with much-needed emphasis upon care and handling.

What is sadly missing though, is any acknowledgement of archival principles or theory. The closest the author gets to a discussion of arrangement and description is a mere two paragraphs under the title "selection and sorting." Respect for original order is recommended; provenance, however, is never mentioned. Instead the reader is offered such advice as: "If there is no apparent order to the collection, sorting like images together will make the collection easier to use." While this may well be true for the "picture-agency" use to which photographic archives are often put, it is not true for research which requires information on the provenance of a collection.

Similarly, the unqualified urging that "pictures that have no relevance to the collecting mandate of the institution, images that are out of focus, and images that cannot possibly be identified" be weeded out and transferred, discarded or returned, is hasty at best. Do we handle textual records so categorically? By "pictures that have no relevance," I am assuming that the author means photographs whose subject content is beyond the geographical or subject collecting areas of the institution. But what of the information a photograph may reveal about the photographer or agency responsible for generating it, or the individual responsible for collecting it? For example, a photographer may have experimented with "soft-focus" as an art form, or an individual may have travelled extensively. Is it not a great loss if that information is not acknowledged and preserved in some way?

I am not trying to suggest that all collections of photographs possess evidential value. Many simply will defy any attempt at selection or arrangement based on other than informational content. Nor am I trying to suggest that all photographs should be retained regardless of content or condition. No archives could afford such a liberal policy. What I am suggesting is that there is much more to "selecting and sorting" than Dryden reveals. The truth is that many photographic collections do have evidential value, and neglect of this value contravenes fundamental principles of archival science.

Admittedly, a basic guide cannot cover all aspects of the care of historical photographs. Archival principles, however, are basic to the care of all archival documents. Their absence here is a serious oversight. Even the bibliography fails to list a work on archival principles and practices. *Images in Time* would have been much more effective if the author had traded some of the ample photographic decoration for more explanation of the archival nature of photographic records.

Margery Tanner Hadley

The Past in Focus: Photography and British Columbia, 1858-1914. Edited by JOAN M. SCHWARTZ. Special issue of BC STUDIES (No. 52, WINTER 1981-82), 177p., illus. \$6.00 pa.

Archivists have been in the vanguard of historical photographic studies in Canada. Not content to await historians and others to discover the caches of images collected and preserved in their repositories, they have forged ahead with the presentation and interpretation of Canadian photography. From archivists came the *Photographs and Archives* symposium that

appeared in this journal in 1977-78, those superb books by Ralph Greenwood, Andrew Birrell and Richard J. Huyda, and dozens of other publications. Main-line historians have been slower to utilize this material, a fact not overlooked by archivist J. Robert Davidson in an accusational essay, "Turning a Blind Eye: The Historian's Use of Photographs," one of the essays in this issue of *BC Studies* dedicated to photography in the province. The special number was organized, appropriately, by Joan M. Schwartz, unquestionably the pioneer student of the historical photograph of British Columbia. She presents an admirable introduction to the seven articles and two bibliographic surveys which comprise the number.

The articles by Andrew Birrell and Margery Hadley McDougall are good practitioner's pieces, the former an overview of survey photography in British Columbia from 1858 to 1900, the latter a study of R.H. Trueman, an important photographer along the rail lines and in the Kootenays. Though both are concerned with the quality and content of their photographers, they belong solidly to the history of photography genre.

It is one thing to write the history of photographers and photography, quite another to use photographs to write history. Joan Schwartz and Lilly Koltun collaborate in examining five remarkably similar views of the town of Yale over the period 1863 to 1884. The consistency of the image, they conclude, reflects a constant aesthetic and embodied norms of artistic composition shared widely by Victoria audiences, identified here as "a suitable juxtaposition of wilderness and civilization." The essay is in every way an admirable one: well researched, then presented with skill and imagination. The assumption, however, that one can read the mind of an audience by an examination of a particular set of images is a large one. This reviewer has sometimes used similar assumptions; something like it is probably inescapable. On the other hand, it is more likely that the authors already had a fairly firm idea, drawn from what we know of the Victorian mind and aesthetic, of audience preferences. Does what we know about the audience tell us about the image, rather than the image informing us about the audience?

Myrna Cobb and Dennis Duffy look at photographs which accompanied promotional brochures for Interior settlement in the two decades before 1914. We find what one would expect to find, a bias toward the positive and against the negative aspects of the area, "an exploitation of the public's naive way of interpreting photographs as truth."

The two most interesting essays in many ways are those dealing with photography of British Columbia Indians. Margaret Blackman, an anthropologist who for years has been using Northwest Coast Indian photographs as primary ethnological and historical evidence, fascinates us with an essay on the response of Indians to photographers and photography. She documents cases of suspicion, refusal, curiosity and fright, and, most importantly, how, when the Haida began to use photography for their own purposes, the images changed. "Eventually imaging became part of Haida culture and they turned it to their own purposes, recording themselves as they wished to be seen." A subsidiary theme, that white photographers of the natives were collected like artifacts, makes an intriguing parallel, but her assertion that, like their masks and baskets, the Haida parted with their own image "for a price" is supported by only two known instances, surely too few to sustain the generalization.

Alan Thomas' essay on white photographs of Indian subjects is both irritating and fascinating. Thomas, an accomplished writer on photography in Victorian Britain, reads images with facility, and dextrously evaluates both content and form of the photographers' struggle to find conventions and compositions suitable for the Indian. He notes the emphasis upon capturing the aboriginal features of the Indians, an attestation "to the continuing vitality of Romantic ideas of the primitive life" even in a settler society that scorned that life. The frustrating aspect of the article is that Professor Thomas' visual literacy is not supported by equal facility with written material. His textual research is thin, leading him to speculative

interpretation where little is necessary. The reason for Franz Boas' potlatch photographs are well documented, but Thomas' remarks about them fall wide of the mark because he appreciated neither the peculiar purpose for which these photos were to be used (curatorial authenticity in the creation of sculptural groups of Indian figures for museum display) or Boas' use of images for his anthropological scholarship. When Thomas does use Boas' published letters, he misses the germane comment on one photograph and egregiously misquotes another.

Reading visual evidence does present difficulty. Davidson, whose essay is elsewhere marred by a sophomoric acerbity, has some thoughtful discussion of such questions. He warns that photographs do not speak for themselves and gives, as an example, a photograph of Fraser River Indians at prayer. The photograph is a "lie," Davidson claims, because photographer Frederick Dally labelled his album print with a "candid" caption telling us that the Indians were only "shamming" prayer for their priests and the photographer. Davidson agrees that "there is little conviction" in the pose and expression of the Indians. But why should we believe a Protestant's candor about Catholic religiosity? In fact, the photograph can tell us nothing about the religious convictions of its Indian subjects. No image can present the mental attitudes of the subject and it is silly to think that it can. One can read into it what one wishes, of course, but this presents the major problem of visual material: how does one read it without reading into it? I am not reassured by Davidson's assertion that what photographs do best "is to suggest imagination" or by the supporting quotation: "'There is the surface. Now think—or rather feel, intuit—what is beyond it, what the reality must be like if it looked this way.'" That is very ticklish methodology. Intuition and imagination are powerful historical tools, but require careful, critical restraint, a virtue not always practiced in this collection of essays.

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Australian Historical Bibliography. Bulletins No. 5 (December 1981) and No. 6 (May 1982) of the Reference Section of Australia 1788-1988: A Bicentennial History. Edited by ALAN IVES and ELIZABETH NATHAN. Available from the office of the Reference Section, University of New South Wales. ISBN-0158-1481.

These booklets consist of papers read at the A.C.T. Branch Seminar of the Australian Society of Archivists, held at Burgmann College, Australian National University, on 22 and 23 November 1980. The stated theme of the seminar was "Towards 'The Spirit of the Hive': Archivists, Librarians and Historians in Communication." More concretely, as the editors explain in the preface to Bulletin No. 5, the seminar was designed to establish closer cooperation amongst archivists, librarians, bibliographers, and historians in overcoming problems of mutual concern in the control and use of historical source material.

Within the space restrictions of a book review, it is difficult to do justice to each of the seventeen articles in the two publications. Consequently this review treats the articles in their totality, dealing with those aspects of the problems of resource material control and use which are common to all of them. Given that these articles in the main address a common theme, albeit in its various ramifications, it seems that such an approach will not do the disservice to the various contributors of distortion through omission.