

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.

Douglas Cole  
Simon Fraser University

**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.

Virtually every contributor to the seminar dealt with the question of user difficulties which researchers encounter with respect to archival and library sources. Several spoke of what might be particularly termed as institutional failings. Both J.M. Powell (No. 6) and E. Osborne (No. 6), for example, noted that the structural inertia and traditionalism of Australian archives and libraries precluded a quick response to serving the changing intellectual interests of users in developing new fields of inquiry. Powell further observed that the lack of archivists in government departments occasioned total confusion (and subsequent difficulties for users) when governmental records were deposited in an archive. And D.H. Borchardt (No. 6) spoke on the question of Commissions of Enquiry, pointing out that Australian Royal Commission are not bound by statute either to publish their proceedings and findings or to deposit a copy in an archive.

In addition to institutional drawbacks, other noted that there were pronounced weaknesses in user services of archival and library repositories. For example, C.J. Krawczyk (No. 5), himself a librarian, learned by disappointing experience how catalogues alone were inadequate in providing users with needed sources. P.J. Scott (No. 5) lamented the lack of standardized finding aids amongst various institutions. D.C.S. Sissons (No. 5) argued that regardless of how good finding aids or catalogues might be, they could never replace an experienced and knowledge reference officer in guiding a user to all available sources of information.

Most of the contributors proposed one or several answers to the above and other user difficulties. A number of them spoke of the need to publicize archives and libraries, and their holdings. J.L. Clelan (No. 6), for example, spoke in general terms of the imperative to publicize primary archival sources to get researchers back to citing original documents, while S. McCausland (No. 5) demonstrated how a wealth of information on the Australian wine industry could be tapped in the records of at least fifteen government departments, a fact which only publicity could make known to researchers.

V. Crittenden (N. 5), Sissons, and Krawczyk called for more guides of various sorts (indexes, catalogues, and bibliographies), and for more knowledgeable research consultants, for libraries; Sissons underlined the need for more manpower; and Scott argued that, to make the best use of sources, both research consultant and researcher must adhere to Jenkinson's injunction to know well the administrative history and procedures of the institutions originating the documentation being consulted. Additional proposals issued out of the "Concluding Discussion" (No. 6). For example, there was a call for a national register of finding aids, for cooperation in bibliographical and indexing work to avoid costly duplication, and for similar cooperation amongst service personnel (bibliographers, librarians, archivists) and users (historians) in tackling together problems of information control and retrieval. None of the above can be achieved easily, especially when, as the seminar participants agreed, the "Australian Archives is a low-priority agency in a low-priority ministry" (No. 6, p. 60).

How immediate all this sounds. It is in this respect that the two publications are instructive to archivists and librarians in Canada and elsewhere. While they, in their detail, discuss difficulties bedevilling archival and library institutions specifically Australian, those very same difficulties constitute universals which, by and large, disturb the archival scene in Canada as well.

Several of the contributions to this seminar were by persons who had switched callings (from archivist or librarian to researcher or historian). Having experienced both ends of the information control and information use equation, they wrote convincingly of the difficulties which best both archivist (or librarian) and historian in the search for source material.

In general terms, one could characterize most of the articles as pragmatic. There is a certain strength in this, but the pragmatic too often borders on the pedestrian. One might have liked something more on the philosophical-theoretical plane, given that this seminar was an attempt to reconcile representatives of several distinct vocations which handle information, its preservation and use. The calling of the archivist is never defined in terms other than how to solve problems of document use, a perspective which in turn is clearly based on the assumption that the archivist is, to use F.K. Crowley's infelicitous term, an "information specialist." Crowley further adds that "it is no longer appropriate for historians to act as bibliographers and archivists" (No. 6, p. 55). Crittenden and the editors, A. Ives and E. Nathan (No. 5), also see the true archival "professional" in the strictly narrow sense of an "information specialist." It seems to this reviewer that "information specialist" is a rather fatuous, formless designation for an archivist, a definition elicited by the trendy needs of modernity which strives to categorize all vocations into "professional" categories. It is as if archivists, in self-abnegation, must cease being what they are, and must become something different to make themselves "relevant" within the modern ethos of specialization and professionalism.

An archivist needs to be something much more than an "information specialist," as both Powell and Osborne intimate. Powell, writing on researching in the field of historical geography, and Osborne, discussing the new field of "communications" (ignored in Australia as a legitimate discipline), imply that the archivist needs to be aware of developments in the academic realm, that he should have some academic orientation: how else, one might ask, can he fulfil his obligation to preserve what is of value for study for future generations. (This is a risky and problematic proposition at the best of times, but how much more so if "professional" archivists master finding aids and catalogues, but know nothing of history, past and current!).

Largely for this reason—the lack of a theoretical-philosophical dimension to most of the contributions to the seminar, (at least on the basis of the articles in Nos. 5 and 6)—one wonders to what degree this seminar was successful in attaining its declared aim, which was to establish cooperation amongst historians, archivists, librarians, and bibliographers. How can one establish cooperation, other than in minor details, when one avoids a philosophical, vocational definition of the role of the archivist?

This is not the only seminar which fails in this respect; most assuredly, it will not be the last. But then, this was not the main intent of the seminar; and its proceedings have earned no small merit in their attempt to resolve many of the difficulties which compromise both the preservation of the historical record and its accessibility to researchers.

George Bolotenko  
Manuscript Division  
Public Archives of Canada

**The Saskatchewan Oral History Conference Proceedings 1981.** Edited by KRZYSZTOF M. GEBHARD. [Regina]: Saskatchewan Archives Board, 1981. \$5.00.

Of all Canadian provinces, Saskatchewan would seem most peculiarly suited to adopting oral history methods as a means of uncovering its past. Only the Northwest Territories or the Yukon, I would imagine, can compete with Saskatchewan for a sense of immediacy and intimacy with its historical experience which all the inhabitants of that province seem to