

Archival Theory and Practice in the United States: A Historical Analysis. RICHARD C. BERNER. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1983. xv, 219 p. ISBN 0-295-95992-4 \$35.00.

Archival Theory and Practice in the United States will take a place among the best archival writing of Theodore Schellenberg, Ernst Posner, and H.G. Jones. Richard Berner, head of the University Archives and Manuscript Division of the University of Washington Libraries, has diagnosed the ills of the American archival profession and concludes that it is far from well. His book is an archival jeremiad. Berner asserts that the profession's chief ailment is its impoverished theory of arrangement and description — a problem which, he says, has “extensive historical roots.” (p. 1) Two conflicting traditions have shaped the history of archival arrangement and description. The historical manuscripts tradition, which grew out of nineteenth-century librarianship, emphasized the random collection of fragmentary documentation and that encouraged artificial classification schemes. Obviously, close attention to individual documents impeded successful archival work with voluminous public records. The public archives tradition emerged in the early twentieth century from European concepts of provenance and records levels in order to address that need. By the mid-1930s archivists who worked with public records had a “solid foundation in theory” whereas “in the historical manuscripts area there were simply practices, executed without recognition of their theoretical implications.” (p. 23) Since then the National Archives, Schellenberg, and the Society of American Archivists have erected a full-fledged theory of arrangement and description on that foundation. Berner, however, is concerned about the persistence of the historical manuscripts tradition in, for example, Kenneth W. Duckett's National Union Catalogue of Manuscript Collections and the Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules. They have been written “as though practice has no theoretical basis.” (pp. 75-76)

Berner blames the slow evolution of archival theory on the absence of formal academic archival education. Most archivists are self-taught and “too few have raised themselves above narrow mastery of mere technique borrowed from myriad institutional settings.” (p. 119) “Because the profession's approach has been predominantly practical,” he adds, “eclecticism has been rampant ... quasi principles have originated from commonsensical methods that have accumulated over time.” (p. 5) There is little hope for improvement without a better system of archival education.

Some will surely say that emphasis on theory is wrong because vast practical problems face the archival profession. The first reports of the state assessment projects funded by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission reveal immense problems in the areas of legislation, staffing, professional leadership, and funding. *Archival Theory and Practice in the United States* should be read along with these reports because Berner contends that underdeveloped theory is the cause of some of these other, seemingly more important problems.

Berner demonstrates that an understanding of the profession's past will help it deal with current problems. His history of archival arrangement and description indicates that similar studies of conservation, regional and institutional archival development, and archival leaders ought to provide a much clearer understanding of the entire profession's development. The connection he draws between inadequate

archival education and the slow and unsure development of arrangement and description theory is itself an example of the way in which studies such as these can identify priorities on the profession's agenda.

Archival Theory and Practice in the United States is critical of the American archival profession. Many archivists will be annoyed by that and miss Berner's many excellent suggestions. The reason for his combative tone and occasional tendency to overstate his case is contained in his assessment of Schellenberg: "Fortunately for the field Schellenberg shared his views in abundant detail. He did not avoid controversy, he courted it — and imparted this attitude to some others. Without it there probably would have been even less progress than we have seen." (p. 53) Berner dedicates the book to Schellenberg and it is intended to stimulate the kind of discussion he encouraged. For the archival profession's sake, it must succeed in that way.

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Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada. CARL BERGER. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983. xiv, 92 p. ISBN 0-8020-6523 \$7.95 pa.

Carl Berger originally presented *Science, God and Nature in Victorian Canada* as the 1982 Joanne Goodman lectures. The first lecture on "Science" describes what may be viewed as the three phases in the development of natural history in nineteenth-century Canada. In the first phase, in the early part of the century, a few amateur pioneering enthusiasts wandered through fields and forests near their homes intent on building up personal collections of flora and fauna. In the second phase, in mid-century, local natural history societies sprang up in the urban centres of Canada. In true Baconian fashion, society members embarked on the observation and collection of fact, and, as Carolus Linnaeus had prescribed, attempted to impose some rational classification on the information they gathered. These societies were formed for a variety of reasons. Members gathered to divide the labour of observation and notation and to exchange information and views about the scientific features, practical applications, and economic value of what they had found. Social and religious considerations also came into play. Field trips, Sunday picnics, and other social events were supposed to discourage the sin of idleness and to promote social and moral improvement. In the final phase, attempts were made to organize local scientific effort on a national scale through the founding of the Royal Society of Canada in 1882 and increasing involvement of the federal government in coordinating scientific effort.

The second lecture, entitled "God," underlines the prominence of Paleyite natural theology in Canadian attitudes to nature. Natural history provided Canadians with spectacular evidence of the existence and awesome power of the Creator. When viewed in this manner, science was embraced as an ally of religion and became indispensable for proper interpretation of the Bible and achieving an understanding of man's place in God's Design. The last concern ultimately stimulated an interest in archaeology, anthropology, and phrenology which, it was hoped, would provide answers about the nature of man and the different races of men.