Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society. RAYMOND WILLIAMS. London: Fontana/Croom Hëlm, 1976. 286 p. ISBN 00 633479 2 £1.95.

Fascination with automated access to archives has grown by leaps and bounds until one can scarcely attend an archival conference or open the pages of an archival journal without encountering some discussion of the topic. The traditional archivist has been beseiged by a bewildering panoply of computer programmes promising improved selective retrieval through content, provenance, or various types of subject indexing. The desired objective of improved access to archival collections is not at issue; however, the best method of achieving this highly sophisticated means of entry is hotly debated in archival circles.

Underlying the enthusiasm for the automated future rests a certain anxiety about our supposed triumphs in this area and uneasiness about proposed courses of action. For it is an unpleasant fact that subject indexing of archival collections is still poorly understood and hopelessly mired in administrative concerns rather than intellectual concerns. In our search for solutions to this problem, Raymond Williams' *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society* offers some assistance. Although the book is neither a recent publication, nor specifically directed to an archival audience, its message is as timely as its archival implications are obvious. Indeed it contains an implicit alternative to the methods of subject indexing currently touted by leading archival theorists in the field. *Keywords* reminds us, in short, that language is dynamic and idiosyncratic.

By emphasizing "history as a way of understanding contemporary problems in meanings and structures of meaning," the author unlocks the door to some fascinating discoveries underlying the contemporary meanings of numerous terms and demonstrates quite clearly that any true understanding of contemporary usage must be grounded in historical semantics. He discovers that quite frequently words undergo profound shifts in meaning over time and may eventually come to represent the exact opposite of their original sense. This, he insists, is especially true in the case of words that embody complex ideas or concepts. Those like "democracy" and "individual," which have both enjoyed vibrant and varying historical usages, provide examples of Williams' assertion that words should never be considered in isolation from their historical context. According to Williams, language itself merely serves as a barometer of social change which records and reflects the "processes of real social history."

In this regard, the word "culture" stands out as a vivid illustration of a term which has experienced an interesting, if not confusing usage. Upon close scrutiny, we discover that its intricate historical development and varied usage in several disciplines make it, as Williams points out, "one of the two or three most complicated words in the English language." Through a systematic examination of this word through time, the author uncovers its problematical nature and argues convincingly for the primacy of history as the crucial variable in understanding semantics. From its uses as a noun of process as in the tending of sheep or gardens, through its nineteenth-century social-historical intellectual applications, and, finally, down to the complexity of its modern development, Williams underlines the difficulties in applying static indexing terms to words which embody concepts or ideas that draw meaning and significance from their historical context.

Keywords will be as valuable to the academic community as it will to the scholar-archivist struggling with the fundamentals of subject indexing. Since the book is not addressed primarily to an archival audience, it does not discuss procedures for improving subject access to archives and manuscript repositories. Instead, we find a thorough investigation of the principal words used to describe the nature of society. A careful reading will provide archivists with innumerable insights into the historical evolution of vocabulary and demonstrate that subject access to archives must rest firmly upon the foundation of historical semantics.

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Rod Young
Federal Archives Division
Public Archives of Canada

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Microcomputers for Libraries: How Useful are They? JANE BEAUMONT and DONALD KRUEGER, eds. Ottawa: Canadian Library Association, 1983. 123 p. ISBN 0-88802-170-4. $12.00 pa.

Information Management, Machine-Readable Records, and Administration: An Annotated Bibliography. RICHARD KESNER. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1983. 153 p. ISBN 0-931828-57-0. $8.00 (members), $11.00 (non-members) pa.   .

Computer Applications in Archives: A Survey. RACHEL BARTLE and MICHAEL COOK. (British Library Research and Development Department Report No. 5749.) Liverpool: University of Liverpool, Archives Unit, 1983. 58 p. ISBN 0-907156-01-0. £2.50 pa.

The computer is becoming a fact of life in archives in two ways: conservation of automated or machine-readable records themselves and the use of automation as a management tool. Computers will probably arrive in most archival institutions before machine-readable archival records. For the near future archivists must focus on the use of computers as archival tools. The three publications discussed here illuminate the rapidly evolving field of computer applications in archives and libraries.

The papers published in *Microcomputers for Libraries* share actual experiences in the use of microcomputers rather than theoretical views of potential applications. In particular, Jean Beaumont's papers on software selection and choosing a database management system for the microcomputer are among the clearest presentations on these subjects. Other noteworthy topics discussed are electronic bulletin boards and managerial applications. A fine list of sources of information and an alphabetical list of existing microcomputer applications in libraries complete the volume. There is no bibliography, but each paper is followed by notes and sources. *Microcomputers for Libraries* ought to assist archivists who may feel uneasy about starting down the micro path.

Richard Kesner's bibliography is a much-expanded version of his 1980 bibliography. There are close to nine hundred entries in the new version compared to approximately three hundred in the 1980 edition. Although the new bibliography has been organized into subject areas, the original format of sequentially numbered entries has been retained. The separate author and topic indexes in the 1980 edition