

Microcomputers in the Provincial Archives of British Columbia: A Summary

by **DAVID MATTISON**

The Provincial Archives of British Columbia has been utilizing the Wang Office Information System (OIS model 105) word processor since April 1983. During the first three months of 1984, two Wang Professional Computers were acquired. One of the latter incorporates a ten megabyte (10 million character) hard disk drive which can store over 1500 pages of text in addition to its operating programmes. This amount of storage is more than double that available on the OIS. The other Wang PC is connected to the OIS and is used as an OIS workstation (terminal) as well as a stand-alone microcomputer.

Word processing has been the only use to date for the OIS word processor and the PCs. The former has the ability to work like a computer (since that is really what it is) but Wang's introduction of its own microcomputer precluded strengthening the data-processing aspects of the OIS unit. For those conversant with high-tech talk, the OIS represents 8-bit and the PC 16-bit technology.

Wang was not entirely successful, as few companies have been, in bringing out a microcomputer (PC) the first time round. After years of perfecting the OIS, however, Wang did manage to produce a word processor that is hard to fault. I did locate a couple of flaws: it is impossible to work backwards in a Wang WP document, and it is impossible to recover a piece of text that has been accidentally or purposefully deleted. Neither of these conditions have been addressed by the PC word-processing programme.

The first release of Wang PC word processing was a 77 KB weakling — essentially a throwaway elementary memo writer. I was informed at one point that users wishing bells and whistles would find those features on the OIS! Wang must have realized its error, or heard from users even more critical than me, for the next release included all the major features of the OIS, but at the cost of more memory. The original PC WP release, then, was essentially useless for an archives or any other purpose that would fill more than one sheet of paper.

With the newest release of PC WP, we are able to prepare long finding aids and lists for sorting as effortlessly as we can on the OIS. A spelling checker is even included with the new PC WP, along with a dictionary and the ability to create and access special dictionaries. But you still can neither move backwards for searching nor recover deleted text. The search routine is too quick, for as soon as you enter something it starts looking, so you better type the command correctly the first time. Searching is case-specific and there are no options for special situations.

On the positive side, Wang word processing has direct page access: once a printout is made it's simple to press "GO TO" and a page number. A version of the Wang glossary or macro function is included, but has a more limited total number of glossary entries. It is very easy to move or copy information within a document or from one document to another; however, the PC is limited

to one page of information at a time, whereas the OIS can copy or move an entire document (up to 120 pages) at one time. The OIS has some handy WP utilities such as an index generator and automatic paragraph or section numbering. Merge print, a feature allowing the merging of two documents, one containing standard information, the other variable information, is available on both the OIS and the new PC WP.

Some of the specific archival applications of word processing include the preparation of a filmography of British Columbia, maintenance of a want list for the province's music recordings, inventories of various manuscripts and audio-visual collections, and catalogue cards. Future anticipated uses include subject listings to film and video holdings and title access to B.C. music recordings. These would be printed annually but maintained monthly on-line. An effort is also being made to reactivate on the Wang PC the abandoned Aural History Program computer database.

The Teaching of Archival Science in Italy and the Role of the Schools of the State Archives

by **DONATO TAMBLÉ**

Italy has a system of schools of archival studies connected to seventeen of the principal state archives in the country. The schools have a long tradition in states which existed prior to Italian national unification in the 1860s. They reflect the different institutional realities of the various governments which ruled the independent states before unification. The schools at Turin, Milan, Mantua, Venice, Genoa, Parma, Modena, Florence, Rome, and Naples are in capitals of former states. The state archives schools, known as "Schools of Archival Science, Palaeography and Diplomatics," not only offer university level archival education for archivists, but also a general preparation for archival research for those who do not intend to pursue a career as an archivist. The course lasts two years; attendance at lectures is compulsory, and written and oral examinations complete the programme. No tuition fees are charged.

Staffing of positions in the state archives is done by open competition. After appointment, new archivists must attend an archival school in order to advance in the profession beyond initial entry level status. In Italy a degree in archival science from the state archives schools or the university archival schools is compulsory not only for state archivists but also for directors of the main non-governmental archives. Nevertheless, the majority of students at the archives schools will not become archivists, but qualified users of archives in many other disciplines ranging from university research and teaching to journalism, the public service, town-planning, archaeology, ecology, the law, and medicine.

As an example of a state archives school, we may refer to the School of Archival Science, Palaeography and Diplomatics of Rome. This school lays