

Archifacts. Conference Papers. ARCHIVES AND RECORDS ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND. Auckland N.Z.: Archives and Records Association of New Zealand, June 1986. 76 p. ISSN 0303-7940.

ARCHIFACTS is the official bulletin of the Archives and Records Association of New Zealand (ARANZ). It is published on a quarterly basis and includes articles, short notices, accession reviews, letters to the editor, and book reviews. This issue published seventeen selected papers presented at the ninth Annual Conference of ARANZ held in Auckland from 6 to 8 September 1985. Also included is a supplement which includes the 1985/86 Annual Reports for the Archives and Records Association. The articles cover a wide variety of archival topics such as labour, religious, and immigration archival programmes. Of particular interest to the Canadian archival scene are two articles on recent New Zealand archival legislation. The ninth ARANZ Annual Conference was the first one held with NART — the Northern Archives and Records Trust, which explains the inclusion of articles on the formation of NART and the north in New Zealand history. Additional papers of the conference were published in the September 1986 issue of ARCHIFACTS.

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William James: Selected Photographs 1900-1936. GRANT ARNOLD and BROCK SILVERSIDES. Saskatoon: Mendel Art Gallery, 1986. 32 p., illus. ISBN 0-919863-22-1 \$6.00.

Far too little is known and written about the business activities and personal lives of the photographers whose negatives and prints fill our archives. That is why there is a need for more publications such as this exhibition catalogue about longtime studio and itinerant photographer William James of Prince Albert. Thoroughly researched, well-written essays by photo historian Brock Silversides and exhibition curator Grant Arnold document James' business career and establish him in the context of early Saskatchewan society. Four of the twelve reproductions of James' photographs in the catalogue are panoramas, a format in which he specialized and which lent itself to illustrating the landscape and people of Saskatchewan. Highly recommended.

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Preservation of Historical Records. NATIONAL RESEARCH COUNCIL. Washington: National Academy Press, 1986. 112 p. ISBN 0-309-03681-X \$21.75 (Cdn.).

Faced with the problem of trying to preserve billions of deteriorating archival records created by the government of the United States, the National Archives and Records Administration sought technical assistance from the National Research Council. The

Council formed the Committee on Preservation of Historic Records, under the chairmanship of Peter Adelstein, recently retired from Eastman Kodak, "to make recommendations on how to handle original paper records and on the advisability of transferring information from original paper records to media having acceptable permanence, including media with limited life but capable of being recopied." (p. 6) In this report, the Committee looks at only the current holdings of NARA, focusing solely on textual records and excluding such formats as maps, prints, and drawings, large ledgers, and small diaries. Disposition of original records after the transfer of their informational content is considered only in the case of those originals of no intrinsic value. The question of rapid accessibility to information by researchers is also not dealt with.

The authors of the report provide several chapters of technical information which is, on the whole, presented in an easily understandable fashion. They give detailed, clear descriptions of air pollutants which can have an impact on archival holdings. They then discuss the composition of paper, photographic film, magnetic recording media, and optical disc, and the specific problems associated with the use of each of these media for the long-term retention of information. A brief overview of NARA's recent collections survey, which underlined that organization's massive preservation problem, is then given to provide a context for the report's recommendations.

For those concerned with the development of preservation programmes for archives, the recommendations section of the report is of most interest. The recommendations focus on the prevention of future deterioration of archival collections, for mass treatment, archival copying, and preservation decision-making. Few of these suggestions are controversial. For instance, it is recommended that government departments use permanent papers for those records of permanent value. To set a good example, NARA should meet archival standards when it creates or copies records. It is suggested that NARA promote the development of archival standards for magnetic tape and optical disc, and implement those standards already in existence for environmental controls. NARA should be prepared to accession and preserve the information held increasingly in machine readable format. It should study microenvironments created in archival storage containers, but should merely monitor mass deacidification activities carried out in other institutions. NARA should develop procedures for collecting information on its holdings and define more accurately what is meant by archival use and poor condition in order to prepare long-term preservation plans and determine treatment priorities. And, if an archival copying programme is to be a successful component of these long-term plans, then NARA should establish in perpetuity an effective quality control and verification system for the resultant microfilm and electrophotographic copies.

What may be regarded with raised eye-brows — particularly because many of the Committee members have a background in advanced technology — is the recommendation that archives should concentrate on the use of micrographics and electrophotography for copying purposes. It is the Committee's opinion that magnetic and optical disc storage media are at the present time inappropriate for use as preservation tools because of the composition of these materials, existing technical problems, and lack of archival standards.

This report is recommended reading for its clear presentation of technical data regarding archival media and for its approach to a massive problem in modern archives — the preservation of information from the vast quantity of archival records of no intrinsic value. While there may well be some argument with some of the report's individual

conclusions, especially those relating to the “new technologies,” nonetheless, such a systematic approach to dealing with preservation issues can only be applauded.

Preservation Needs in State Archives. HOWARD P. LOWELL. Albany: National Association of Government Archives and Records Administrations, 1986. 56 p.

This report is the result of a year-long study carried out under the auspices of the National Association of Government Archives and Administrators (NAGARA) with funding from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). The NAGARA study, which built on information from the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) collections survey and the first NHPRC-funded state historical records assessment and reporting projects, was to determine the extent of preservation problems among the state archives in the United States.

The overwhelming results of the study are that there is a preservation problem of massive proportions at the state archives level and that these archives cannot hope to find the resources internally to cope with the requirements of their archival records. State archival programmes with an annual total appropriation of \$18 million are underfunded to meet their statutory responsibilities — responsibilities which have frequently been delegated by the federal government without the necessary resources to carry them out. State archives are understaffed with no extra personnel to work on preservation programmes. State archives staff are usually not trained sufficiently to carry out preservation activities, particularly in the management area. State archives are faced with current holdings of some 50 million cubic feet of records and an annual accessioning rate of a further 45 thousand cubic feet. There is a general feeling of despair and lack of direction among state archivists dealing with the preservation question since “[the] total volume of records receiving preservation treatment during the past five years, however the state archives defines that treatment, is less than the estimated annual accession rate into the state archives.”

Faced with this problem, the NAGARA study recommends a strategy to address preservation in state archives. As might be expected, this programme puts considerable stress on the necessity for solid, long-term planning, NARA playing a leadership role, co-operative efforts among archives and other cultural agencies, training, and funding from federal and private sources as well as state appropriations since the protection of state archival records is really of national significance. The study proposes the creation of a ten-year preservation programme including collections surveying to gather the data necessary for long-range programme planning, improvements to state archival facilities, advanced training for archivists and conservators, expansion of the regional conservation centres, increased funding for reprography projects, holdings maintenance projects to ensure that collections are housed properly and receive the most basic conservation treatments, and an extension of laboratory-based research and development carried out either by NARA or co-ordinated through that agency with the Library of Congress, the National Institute of Conservation, and other preservation research and private sector groups. Finally, the study recommends the establishment of a Committee for Archives Preservation, attached perhaps to NAGARA or to the Society of American Archivists, to promote consultation among archives, to define archival preservation standards, and to