

Manual of Archival Description (second edition). MICHAEL COOK and MARGARET PROCTOR. Aldershot, England: Gower Publishing Company, 1989. xvii, 291 p. ISBN 0-566-03634-7.

Cook and Proctor's *Manual of Archival Description* is a product of a very fertile period of analysis of archival description, particularly in the English-speaking world.

The period began in the United States in 1980 with the work of a National Information Systems Task Force (NISTF), sponsored by the Society of American Archivists (SAA). NISTF identified the descriptive data elements commonly used by American archivists and found that they could be incorporated into a library-based format, Machine-Readable Cataloging for Archival and Manuscripts Control, or MARC AMC. While NISTF was at work on this format, a Joint Committee on Specialized Cataloging of the Council of National Library and Information Associations commissioned the drafting of rules for description of archival materials that would be compatible with rules used by the library community.

Canadian archivists, in the form of a working group on archival descriptive standards, undertook an analysis of their descriptive practices in 1984-85. In its report on the results of that analysis, the working group concluded that descriptive practices would benefit from the introduction of standards, and that such standards should be developed. Like their North American neighbors, participants in the Canadian working group saw the possibilities of basing these standards on a library model.

In the United Kingdom, analysis of archival descriptive practices took the form of a university-based project that was jointly sponsored by the British Library Board and the (British) Society of Archivists. Beginning work in 1984, the project team, under the direction of Michael Cook, Liverpool University, surveyed the finding aids prepared by archival repositories and, based on this review, derived a set of recommended descriptive practices. Despite the joint sponsorship, the project team concluded that archival descriptive practices and those of the library community "proceed from different basic principles."

By the end of the decade, each of the three analytical programs had resulted in significant publications. In 1989 American archivists using the MARC AMC format welcomed the appearance of the second edition of *Archives, Personal Papers, and Manuscripts: A Cataloging Manual for Archival Repositories, Historical Societies, and Manuscript Libraries* (APPM2), the library-based rules first drafted by Steven Hensen in 1983. Also in 1989, the book under review here (MAD2), a revision of a 1986 edition, was published in Great Britain. And the first segment of the Canadian *Rules for Archival Description* (RAD) was published in 1990.

How do these *fin de la décennie* publications compare? When the authors themselves have engaged in comparisons — and they have! — the emphasis has been on the differences between the three works. There are indeed differences — subtle differences between APPM2 and RAD, and obvious differences between these North American publications and MAD2. APPM2 and RAD are built upon the same foundation — the *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, second edition (AACR2), a foundation that also supports all English-language library finding aids. APPM2 has proven to be a roomy enough structure for most American archivists engaged in the preparation of catalogue records for textual archival materials, but APPM2 is a modest bungalow in comparison

to the mansion under construction by the Canadian Planning Committee on Archival Description. RAD is designed to accommodate archivists engaged in the preparation of finding aids of all types for all media. MAD2 is designed to be as accommodating as RAD, but MAD2 is built on its own unique foundation — one presented as an alternative to AACR2. Both APPM and RAD present rules for the preparation of a catalogue record, a specific form of archival finding aid that can be combined with bibliographic catalogue records in a single information system to facilitate cross-research in primary and secondary resources. The authors of MAD2 reject the library-like catalogue record as an appropriate form of archival description, emphasizing instead other uniquely archival descriptive products.

Comparison of these three works could be nothing more than an interesting exercise, were it not for the growing support for development of international standards for archival description. The International Council on Archives has sponsored recent discussions of this issue for which an analysis of the three standards works was commissioned. This analysis revealed — in spite of cautious words to the contrary — that the books' similar covers are indicative of other similarities (all three are decorated in combinations of blue and white). The authors of the three works generally agree on the data elements that comprise a viable archival description and they all clearly believe that rules should govern the use of these data elements. The rules presented in the three manuals — with a few notable exceptions — are compatible. Continuing work by the ICA group has affirmed this compatibility.²

Supporters of international descriptive standards take heart from the core similarities between MAD2, RAD, and APPM2. They are not discouraged by obvious differences between the organization and structure of MAD2 and the organization and structure of its North American counterparts. They see a future in which archival description can be as widely shared and universally understood as descriptions of published works.

Notes

- 1 Some partial "comparisons" by the authors of these respective works are now in print. The preface to RAD acknowledges a debt to APPM and MAD, and Heather MacNeil of the Canadian Council of Archives has reviewed APPM in this journal. The author of APPM has evaluated RAD and MAD in *Archives and Informatics*. The Author of MAD considers its relationship to APPM in section 9.IIB of MAD2.
- 2 The ICA effort is being carried out by an Ad Hoc Commission on Archival Descriptive Standards that includes representatives from Canada, France, Germany, Great Britain, Malaysia, Sweden, Portugal, Spain, and the United States. The Commission already has circulated a set of basic principles on which rules for archival description can be based. A subgroup has begun drafting rules for the formulation of at least fifteen elements of description. It is expected that the principles and rules will be presented for international consideration at the ICA Congress to be held in Montreal in 1992.

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