

development is endogenous, the authors refer to such change as the “autogeneration of new technology.”

Archivists will also find Friedman and Cornford’s analysis helpful, because it counters many of the other widely-held assumptions of computer development in the literature, such as studies of the social implications of the diffusion of computers and new forms of computer technology which, by definition, preclude the reverse direction of causality; or studies of the ‘invention’ of computers, which focus on the big breakthrough which the authors demonstrate has been increasingly less important for understanding what it is that has been diffusing under the label of computers — the cumulation of “minor” improvements to computer systems core.

By providing a historical framework for computer systems development that focuses on the activities within the user organizations, but also incorporates broader social and economic forces, Friedman and Cornford thus offer archivists valuable contextual information concerning the shaping of the electronic record. The appraisal and description of electronic records will be greatly enriched by taking such information into account.

**David W. Horky**  
Archival Studies  
University of Manitoba

**Women’s Archives Guide: Manuscript Sources for the History of Women.** JOANNA DEAN and DAVID FRASER. Ottawa: National Archives of Canada/Archives nationales du Canada, 1991. 110 p. ISBN 0-662-58074-5.

In 1976 feminist historian and Renaissance scholar Joan Kelly described the dual restorative goal of women’s history in which women were restored to history and history was restored to women. The restorative process not only contributed to historical knowledge, it significantly revitalized historical theory by questioning its conceptual foundations, constructing what Kelly called a “vantage point” from which to study women’s experience. The implications for archivists in this revolution in scholarship were and likely continue to be felt most acutely at the reference desk, where the familiar question, “Do you have anything on women?” is first posed. Because early women’s historical writing was vaguely hagiographic, focusing on the lives of individual great women, this question could be easily answered by providing the records either created by or directly reflecting these great individuals. Later the contributions of social history to women’s history dictated the need for a broader range of primary sources on the experiences of the majority of invisible women undistinguished by individual records creation. Since the 1970s, the dual restorative process has exploded, encompassing questions about the social construction of sexuality and gender, the politics of reproduction, and the intersections of class, race, sex and ethnicity.

This widely publicized and explosive growth in the study of women’s history since the 1970s should have disabused archivists of the notion that those questions “on women” could be easily answered by a single record type or form. In this more complex terrain of questions about women, any record, regardless of its creator and including those records in which women are conspicuous by their absence, could conceivably be regarded as relevant to women’s history. This new context for questions about women’s records sets

limitations on what any one finding aid to these records can accomplish. Still, despite allowances for the impossibility of capturing all women's records in one research tool, the National Archives new guide to selected collections in the Manuscript Division is a remarkable disappointment. The most startling problem with this publication is its title, which confuses the terms "manuscripts" and "archives." While manuscripts are indeed a type of archives, they certainly are not exclusively synonymous with "archives." Will this error breed widespread misunderstanding about women's records, archives, and manuscripts? Perhaps the problem isn't quite so critical, but this title certainly lends little effort to the process of educating users about why archives isn't only about manuscripts and further obscures the critical value of non-textual media to women's history. Documentary art and photography, for example, are important records of women's lives and the social systems structured across gender lines which define women's experiences. As non-textual records, these non-manuscript "other" archives comprise the voice and spirit of many women who did not have access to textual records creation.

Also confusing are the guide's variable references to its contents and other relevant records in the Manuscript Division as "Women's Archives Collections" and "Women's Historical Collections." Are these artificial "collections" or administrative names used for a subsection of the Manuscript Division? Despite these problems, this publication is successful to the extent that it provides information on a range of women's manuscripts from the Manuscript Division in English and French. The compilers of the guide recognize, in their introduction, the difficulty in representing the broad range of women's experiences, including social and political activism, personal and domestic life, and more traditional work outside the home (i.e., business and professional organizations). Unfortunately, simply noting the existence of this range of experience also raises questions about the variations and subtleties of meaning in each of these categories. What kind of social and political activism do these selected women's manuscripts reflect? Are all forms of women's social and political activism necessarily reflected in manuscript collections? Is there anything particularly distinctive about these records as "women's" records? Has the enormous growth in this area of study affected how and why these records are used? Sadly, this publication also limits its presentation of the expansion of women's history to listing the superficial evidence of its success, including the caveat that "books relating to women's history are receiving awards." While the continuing efforts of the Manuscript Division into acquiring, preserving and making available the records of women are laudable and must be encouraged, this guide suggests a view of women's history lacking the vigour of more current scholarship.

Ideas about archives and gender are still in slow ferment in the Canadian archival community and so perhaps it would be easier to consider what this type of guide might accomplish in the future. The multidisciplinary nature of women's studies and its close relative, gender studies, presents new challenges to how archivists describe holdings. What exactly are "women's archives" or "women's records?" Are they always records created by women and, if so, what distinguishes these women as creators? What role do non-textual media have in illuminating gender in history? While these larger theoretical questions could not be answered by a single guide, they will be key in the evolution of the archivist's response to the question, "Do you have anything on women?"

**Johanne M. Pelletier**  
United Church/Victoria  
University Archives