

whether there is or he offers a solution. He has the habit of falling back on some reassurances once he has got us thoroughly worked up, which I rather like about him.

For instance, in his discussion of what a record is in the electronic environment, he gets us ready for something radical only to aver that "the use of electronic information technologies has not altered the basic nature and purpose of recordmaking." One hopes not, but that is not the question he happens at the moment to be addressing, which is: How do we distinguish electronic *records* from other electronic *documents*? As far as I can tell, that is the big question. And it is not enough to advise archivists to "define electronic records as electronically communicated and maintained transactions" if the system and the people using it make no distinction between the record and all the other kinds of recorded information.

In that regard, the discussion in Annex C, "Creation of Electronic Documents," illuminates how end users are rarely "in a position to judge whether the applications used are in fact creating records which adequately document the work being performed." It's not so much a matter of documenting how the work is done as it is of knowing what is done. We know that computers greatly assist in the management of information connected with all sorts of processes. The question becomes, How do we extract a record of what was done from the stream of information connected with the process?

We hear that the solution is for the archivist to intervene in the design of electronic information systems. I am rather sceptical of this advice. Conceiving the archivist as *deus ex machina* of information systems design is a little like asking him/her to plug in everywhere. Either administrators will come around to see the need for long-term institutional memory and address it or they will not. No doubt, some archivists of the old breed will be part of the process and some will not. In the end, the medium of the record does make a difference. There is no doubt that we will have to tailor our accumulated experience to the requirements of new media. Beyond that, Dollar questions whether the centralized repository will be able to manage the electronic record of enduring value.

This book deserves close reading by archivists, several times, before a lot else on the subject. I hope it is made accessible to the North American market. Among other things, it would be an excellent basic text on the subject in archival education courses, and should on that score alone have a good market.

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Managing Business Archives. ALISON TURTON, ed. Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann Ltd., 1991. 462 p. ISBN 0-7506-0211-2.

Manuals and readers have become a familiar and welcome addition to the archival science bookshelf in the past few years. This British volume, edited by Alison Turton and published in association with the Business Archives Council, is a wide-ranging treatment of the topic of management of business archives. It comprises seventeen articles by various authors, many with impressive credentials and some familiar to an international audience.

In the foreword, S.H.G. Twining, Chairman of the Business Archives Council (and “a ninth generation Twining with an invaluable working archive”), states that the aim of *Managing Business Archives* is to “be of use not only to company archivists, but also to the wider constituency of those who are responsible for collections of business archives in local authority repositories or administering the historical records of other kinds of institutions.” This seemingly simple objective touches on a large issue of public awareness and the efficacy of proselytizing in this format. In an era of budget constraints and programme slashing it is hard to believe that sceptical or unsupportive parent organizations will be encouraged by this or any volume to “make proper provision for the long-term preservation of their historical records.” Certainly the situation in Canada and the United States throughout the 1980s and into the 1990s has been anything but encouraging for the development of business archives. Getting the message across to the business sector has been the goal of such vehicles as the Society of American Archivists Business Archives Section’s advocacy brochure. Sustaining corporate commitment to underwrite fully operative archives programmes has been a grey and at times grim area with few if any success stories. Ironically, as the professionalism of business archivists has increased, the opportunities to display that professionalism to the benefit of the business community have decreased.

Nevertheless, the authors of *Managing Business Archives* have pursued their objective with admirable conviction. Alison Turton, Senior Bank Archivist of The Royal Bank of Scotland plc, has done a fine job of organizing disparate material into a coherent whole and even contributes two of the better chapters herself. The contents proceed from the general history and development of business archives in the United Kingdom, including an interesting overview of the development of British Business and company law since 1750, to the specific subjects inherent in business archives. This latter group of writings varies somewhat in both style and content, but on the whole provides a thoroughgoing discussion of the basic operation of a business archives. The final essay, “The Business Archivist as Manager,” is a concise, well-presented introduction to the management issues faced by all archives. The dearth of writing on this topic by and for archivists in all sectors is regrettable, and a collection of articles like this one would go a long way towards redressing the situation. Line archivists and managers alike would benefit from solid management theory and practice discussed in the context of archives.

Managing Business Archives is, of course, restricted to those involved in any way with business archives. In some respects, that is both its greatest strength and its weakness. The enviable record of activity of the Business Archives Council stands as a model for other countries. Evincing by this not insubstantial volume, it can and does muster the energy of its members in a most impressive fashion. Like *Keeping Archives*, the Australian Society of Archivists’ 1987 manual, it is a collaborative enterprise of the first order. Unlike that publication, however, it seeks only a fraction of the archival audience (along with that elusive “wider constituency” of supporters). Arguably, this restriction limits *Managing Business Archives*’s ability to share its information with those professionals in archives who happen to work within different contexts but with most of the same contents and constraints as business archivists.

Managing Business Archives is well-annotated and presents a readable primer on business archives. It would be enhanced by photographs and the kind of checklists that *Keeping Archives* used to advantage. As Turton says, “It is hard to compress into a brief chapter expert knowledge of a subject which merits an entire book....” While this is

true, the writing is not as concise as Turton suggests it is, and it would benefit from visual aids.

Given the lack of illustrations, it is curious to find several pages of "accounting records" given over to reproductions of hand-posted ledgers. As the author of this segment admits, "Employers can quite properly question why so much expensive shelf space is occupied by records that are rarely consulted." Indeed, but archivists may ask as well why an outdated format of these records is emphasized over the content. Handwritten or computer generated, accounting records contain information which the archivist must make accessible and comprehensible.

The challenges facing archivists, business or other, demand more discussion. One would expect those with "expert knowledge" to lead this discussion. Ultimately, this volume raises more questions than it answers.

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History and Communications: Harold Innis, Marshall McLuhan, and the Interpretation of History. GRAEME PATTERSON. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. 251 p. ISBN 0-8020-2764-4 (cl.) 0-8020-6810-3 (pa.) \$40.00 (cl.) \$16.95 (pa.).

All information depends on media in one form or another if the receiver is to be informed, and there is increasing interest among archivists in the relationship between form and content. This book is about history rooted in forms of communication and how some historians communicate history.

Patterson examines the works of Harold Adams Innis and shows that in *The Fur Trade in Canada* and other studies in economic history, Innis meshed very closely transportation systems, such as rivers, and the staple commodities which moved along them by means of appropriate technologies such as the canoe. Innis was concerned with the social effects of these staples in Canada and in so doing laid the foundations of the Laurentian model of Canadian history, which Donald Creighton was to develop in terms of "mercantile systems, centralized government and prescriptive statutes." Patterson makes clear that the two later works of Innis, *Empire and Communication* and *The Bias of Communication*, were analogous extensions of the Canadian studies, in that Innis used staples connected with literacy (i.e., clay tablets, papyrus, parchment and paper) to show how these shaped empires and the way in which they were governed in space and over time. He contrasted the "time binding" societies of the Ancient World, dependent on clay tablets, with the Roman Empire, which could be managed in a "space binding" way, thanks to the more portable papyrus by which a centralized government could exert military and other controls at a distance. It was these insights which attracted the attention of Marshall McLuhan and caused him to further examine the effects of media, more particularly on the person, on the senses and on ideas, though Patterson emphasizes that Innis was well aware of this influence. Changes in the dominant staple or medium of communication effected profound changes in society and this idea is now becoming almost a commonplace thanks to the onslaught of automation. Patterson also deals with the western concepts of space and time which Innis realized were not present in nature or in oral society. What Innis called mechanical interpretations of history had its roots