

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 Indeed, but archivists may ask as well why an outdated format of these records is emphasized over the content.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.

Jane E. Nokes
Bank of Nova Scotia Archives

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

in Descartes and Newton, whereas the oral tradition is powerfully reflected in the works of Niels Bohr, Albert Einstein, and Werner Heisenberg and the space/time continuum.

Both Innis and McLuhan are notoriously difficult to read and here too space and time play a part. Historical narrative requires a diachronic exposition on the printed page, whereas so much in actuality occurs synchronically in the manner of a musical chord. According to Patterson, Innis always thought synchronically and wrote that way which resulted in the symbolism of opposed ideas, paratactic development and footnotes extending from one page to another. McLuhan could at other times write in the traditional manner, but both were concerned to jolt the reader from the familiar sequences of text so as to be aware of the relationships of ideas rather than their connections. Examples from Innis's "Ideas File" and McLuhan's rough notes help us understand the process.

Patterson introduces Donald Creighton in contrast to Innis and McLuhan as a "ground," as it were, to their "figure" (figure/ground relationships receive much discussion as being non-syntactical). Creighton, the splendid exemplar of classic historical writing in the English tradition before Namier — in which narrative prose lends itself to the march of progress — had a high regard for Innis and this was returned. The author examines contrasting styles and approaches in the field of the communication of ideas and illustrates these with writings by Creighton and others which seek to define, for example, the Family Compact, the Riel Rebellion and Responsible Government. This takes him into the field of cliché and archetype and a defence of McLuhan and Wilfred Watson's difficult book on this subject. The author skilfully blends historiography with literary criticism and stresses that Innis was essentially a macrohistorian open to correction by the specialists, yet transcending them through the mythic sweep of his all-encompassing vision. This parallels McLuhan's "auditory imagination," which, "penetrating the unconscious, fuses the old, obliterated and the trite with the current, the new and the surprising" after the manner of Yeats, Pound, Eliot, and Joyce, to aid the recognition of patterns otherwise hidden by the overload of information.

The author sought to interest a wider public than professional historians — so what is there here for archivists? First we have to realize that, if our background is academic history, we were probably brought up in the tradition of linear narrative, in which, at its best, the connection rods of cause and effect drove forward the argument with the power of a locomotive. This has meant that our approach to archives as the raw material of history reflects a similar logical and rational development in our respect for provenance, original order and the five-tiered hierarchy of arrangement which is of great value. However, our descriptive practices have placed undue emphasis on the physical form of documents rather than on the activity which flows through them which is information as staple. This is now beginning to change as recent writings on appraisal and descriptive standards bear witness. At the same time we are well aware that our inventories reflect the synchronicity of day-to-day affairs, as series of ledgers, daybooks and correspondence, for instance, have overlapping dates and are referred to in a similar manner when spread out on the desk of users generating decisions within the context of oral conversation. It is this kind of relationship extended to the macro level that Innis explored and which McLuhan moved back to the individual sensory awareness.

Our scope notes and descriptive introductions to fonds and series are couched in continuous prose which leads the user along one predestined track. This of course has value, but paratactic jottings, as in Innis's "Ideas File," may in addition suggest relationships

which may lead to insights over and above form and content. This is one of the most vital contributions of the archivist as arranger who is immersed in the material like a warm bath, which is the way McLuhan describes the way we bury ourselves in a newspaper.

Since we have to deal with electronic records in a manner analogous to oral exchange, the mosaic approach of Innis which so captivated McLuhan has direct relevance to the way we will design information retrieval architecture in the future based on relational databases and hypertext. The analogies, concepts, models, metaphors and the like, which Graeme Patterson discusses so very well—remind us that we should always try to remain *au courant* with such ideas which must eventually permeate ourselves and the users.

Hugh A. Taylor
Qualicum Beach

Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History. FRANCA IACOVETTA and MARIANA VALVERDE, eds. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992. xxvii, 303 p. ISBN 0-8020-2734-2 (cl.) ISBN 0-8020-6773-5 (pa.) \$40.00 (cl.) \$16.95 (pa.)

Depuis son émergence au début des années 1970, l'histoire des femmes a considérablement évolué. D'abord principalement concernée par les femmes anglo-saxonnes des classes moyennes, cette discipline s'est progressivement diversifiée pour s'intéresser aux expériences des femmes de différents milieux sociaux et de diverses origines ethniques.

Gender Conflicts: New Essays in Women's History témoigne de cette évolution. Tel que le suggère son sous-titre, ce recueil de huit articles mise sur la nouveauté. Cherchant à se distinguer des ouvrages précédents en histoire des femmes, les auteures adoptent une perspective qui se veut plus globalisante. Ainsi, dès les premières pages de l'introduction, elles précisent: "By gender conflicts we mean not only the conflicts and tensions that characterized relations between men and women, but also conflicts among women of different racial, class, and cultural backgrounds. These tensions historically have resulted in various groups of women having different and, at times, conflicting gender experiences" (xii). En adoptant une telle démarche, les auteures cherchent à nuancer le rapport homme oppresseur/??/?femme victime et proposent d'analyser les relations entre les sexes à l'aide d'un modèle théorique intégrant les concepts de classe, de race et de genre.

Outre l'utilisation d'un cadre analytique original, *Gender Conflicts* traite de sujets qui ont été négligés, jusqu'à récemment, par l'histoire des femmes. Par exemple, à la lumière des procès relatifs aux cas de séduction, Karen Dubinsky examine les habitudes de fréquentations chez les jeunes couples hétérosexuels ontariens au tournant du siècle. Plus précisément, elle analyse l'écart qui existait entre les prescriptions sociales en matière de sexualité et les comportements sexuels prémaritaux. Selon l'auteure, même si la criminalisation des rapports sexuels volontaires contribuait à renforcer l'autorité de l'État sur les femmes, celles-ci n'étaient pas toutes des parangons de vertu.

Si certaines femmes ont été victimes de mesures législatives discriminatoires, d'autres ont toutefois bénéficié d'un appareil judiciaire andro-centriste. En s'inspirant des cas des meurtrières torontoises Clara Ford (1894) et Carrie Davies (1914), toutes deux acquittées malgré l'aveu de leur crime, Carolyn Strange démontre que l'attitude chevaleresque