

The study of the Dutch government reveals how issues surrounding electronic records management reflect societal pressures, limits, and attitudes as much as relations between archivists, records managers, and information specialists. The report emphasizes the central importance of having strong legislative frameworks in place to maintain accountability and compliance and leads us to question how well archives would function without these mechanisms operating in our favour. This book should also serve as a reminder of how difficult it will be for archivists to apply post-custodial archival approaches and practices in the practical world of organizational behaviour.

Newcomers to electronic records management will find in this book a rich survey of material from which to begin their own inquiries. In addition to the discussion of the limitations of traditional records management principles, the study contains a useful summary of the most important literature on electronic records. A lengthy bibliography is included, as are the interview protocols used for the site visits and their findings, which are reproduced as appendices. Those who are researching the field and planning their own programmes will benefit from the approaches, policies, and strategies outlined here.

The Dutch National Archivist and a senior government official praised the study for providing a basis for an electronic records policy. We can but look forward to a sequel for a progress report on what actions have been taken.

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The Principle of Provenance: Report from the First Stockholm Conference on Archival Theory and the Principle of Provenance, 2-3 September 1993. KERSTIN ABUKHANFUSA and JAN SYDBECK, eds. Stockholm: Swedish National Archives, 1994. 207 p. ISBN 91-88366-11-1.

In his *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago, 1990), American archival educator James M. O'Toole notes that the mid-twentieth-century promise of computerized information retrieval caused some American archivists to ask "did the idea of provenance have any meaning any more?" (p. 73). At about the same time, says Swedish archivist Erik Norberg in the book under review, some European archivists "severely questioned" the "validity" of provenance in their initial response to issues raised by the computerization of communication (p. 8). In the United States and Europe, however, as well as countries such as Canada and Australia, the centrality in archival administration of knowledge of the origin of records has received resounding reaffirmation in recent years. *The Principle of Provenance* is an important European statement of this reaffirmation. The book is a compilation of the twelve papers given at the First Stockholm Conference on Archival Theory and the Principle of Provenance. The authors are among the leading archivists in nine European countries. Unfortunately, only a few of the contributors (Michael Roper, Peter Horsman, and Angelika Menne-Haritz) are well known to archivists outside Europe. The authors gathered in Stockholm in September 1993 on the occasion of the 375th anniversary of the founding of the Swedish National Archives. On the day after the conference, a special seminar was convened in order to continue the discussion. A summary of the seminar discussion provides the book's final chapter.

The contributors to *The Principle of Provenance* address three main areas of interest: the meaning of provenance; its application in various archival functions; and the development of administrative strategies and procedures to implement it in these functions. Although some European archivists have differed over whether provenance means both identification of all of the records of a given creator of records and protection of the original order of those records, there is agreement among the authors that both are necessary to enable records to stand as evidence of the actions of their creators and to be interpreted in that light. (In computer systems, the original order is recognized as more conceptual than physical.) The contributors note that the range of applications of provenance information has widened from its initial custodial role in arranging archives and providing the "moral defence" of the evidence, to use Jenkinson's phrase, to its increasingly important role in appraisal and information retrieval. In order to perform all of these functions, the authors emphasize that: computerized communication must result in the creation of records, not de-contextualized information; provenance information or metadata must be the intellectual focus of management of computerized records; the often multiple provenance of institutional records must be more fully outlined in archival description than it usually is; and computerized records must be provided to users in computerized form, rather than in paper print-outs or microfiche, because users must have the same means of access to the records as their creators have had. Only in this way will users be able to share equally with the records' creators the interpretive value of provenance information.

Among strategies to implement the revitalized provenance agenda, the authors emphasize the importance of capitalizing on legal requirements for evidence, access to information legislation, and the public demand for accountable public administration. These are means of advancing archival interests in the management of public records in particular. And how should archivists insert themselves into the administrative process to achieve their goals? Bjorn Lindh's summary of the post-conference seminar discussion indicates that, for example, in the problematic area of systems design, the participants believe that archivists should join records and information managers, among others, to develop general standards and guidelines for systems development which respect archival requirements, rather than attempt to become deeply involved in design of specific systems.

The issues discussed in *The Principle of Provenance* are familiar ones. The book emphasizes the great importance of these issues and the fact that they are not yet adequately dealt with. It provides a summary of much of the best thinking on these questions rather than further exploration of them. The post-conference seminar did begin to do the latter and picked up on some of the issues raised in the formal conference papers. (Given the fluid nature of archival thinking in so many areas these days, conference publications such as this one might include transcripts of such discussions.) Still, there was no discussion, for example, of David Bearman's vision of distributed custody of archives as a means of protecting the provenance of computerized records in either the papers or (apparently) in the seminar. Bearman's proposal seems to have attracted more interest to date outside Europe, and especially in Australia.

The emphasis adopted in *The Principle of Provenance* is, nevertheless, understandable as archivists around the world strive to bring computerized records under even

basic control. I hope and expect, however, that the discussion will continue to broaden in Europe and elsewhere in order to explore related concerns such as: actual evaluation issues in provenance-based appraisal of the evidence of record creators' functions; the nature of record-keeping systems in the computer age and their place as focal points of the application of provenance; the type and role of information about the origins and original characteristics of records as access points in information retrieval; the forms (documentary provenance) and functions (functional provenance) of emerging types of computerized records; preservation of provenance information and the functionality of computerized records across software and hardware changes; personal archives in the computer age (does the provenance approach apply as thoroughly in this area, especially in appraisal by "collecting" archives?); and even deeper examination of the idea of the provenance (or origin) of a record and its relationship to the meaning of a record. To digress briefly on the latter, what does the concept of origin mean? Important insights into the nature of the act of record creation, and thus the meaning of the record, can be gained by studying the social nature of record creation, or by examining the interrelationship of three contributors to the record: the recorder, the intended audience for the record, and the persons or things recorded. All three are involved in record creation. We often focus only on a few aspects of the first one. The rich layering of provenance information offers much for archivists and others to explore.

The 1993 Stockholm conference provides clear confirmation that thinking about the meaning and application of provenance is now high on the agenda of the international archival community, especially in relation to computerization of records. As this book demonstrates, working out the implications of the reaffirmation of provenance animates the most important thinking in the archival field today. This valuable book brings together important European thinking on these matters.

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The Records Continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives' First Fifty Years. SUE McKEMMISH and MICHAEL PIGGOTT, eds. Clayton, Australia: Ancora Press in association with Australian Archives, 1994. i-xiii, 236 p. ISBN 0-86862-019-X.

If any doubts exist that our Australian colleagues are rightly proud of their archival heritage, one need look no further than the present volume, comprised of a dozen essays written mainly by senior staff of their national agency, Australian Archives. These essays, covering the gamut of functions performed by a major institution, attempt to inform and persuade readers of the distinct role Australia has played, and continues to play, in the development of our profession. And, for the most part, they succeed admirably.

The first essays in the book deal with historical background. In "Beginnings," Michael Piggott sketches early efforts toward creation of a national archival agency after the establishment of the Commonwealth of Australia in 1901, and then describes the events and decisions leading up to the appointment in 1944 of Ian Maclean as head of the new Archives Division of the National Library, rounding out the dis-