

gramme, Shepherd and Yeo succeed without question; this work will make a valuable primer for information managers, information technology personnel, librarians, and others who are not versed in records management, before attempting to implement a more prescriptive set of guidelines, such as the ISO records management standard. Additionally, this book should be read by all those who see records management principles as an anachronism in the age of electronic technology, and it could be valuable as a basic textbook in certain training courses, or even introductory graduate level courses on records management. For readers outside these audiences, on the other hand, *Managing Records* may or may not be a worthwhile purchase. As a clearly written, well structured book with comprehensive coverage, it will definitely have value for all readers; however, experienced records managers and archivists already knowledgeable in basic principles and practices of the discipline will likely find it to be a useful, but not essential desk reference.

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**Effective Approaches for Managing Electronic Records and Archives.** BRUCE W. DEARSTYNE, ed. Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, Inc, 2002. 167 p. ISBN 0-8108-4200-9.

This slim volume of eight essays addresses core aspects of one of the most pressing issues for archivists and records managers: effective management of electronic records. It is replete with prominent authors, most of whom concocted suitably intriguing titles for their contributions. The authors leverage a vast array of experience and expertise to present an accumulation of informative and illustrative examples, lessons learned, and case studies. This essay collection might be best suited to an archives and records management education audience, as the case studies are from the mid- to late-1990s and provide interesting historical context, and to managers and practitioners at organizations who are surveying the landscape for their own developing programs.

Rick Barry provides one pertinent and evocative example from his repertoire for each of the past four decades. This is both an entertaining and educational approach that works well. The examples may be somewhat more context specific than his explanations might suggest, but his experiences reflect both the steady progression of technology and the entwined themes of organizational and technological development inherent in that progression. Roy Turnbaugh's essay, which editor Bruce Dearstyne refers to as provocative, continues the seemingly eternal pursuit of a good definition or more appropriate term for "electronic record." Timothy Slavin and Robert Horton provide organizational insights on what are otherwise fairly well known

projects, the Delaware Public Archives electronic records program and Trustworthy Information Systems respectively, that demonstrate the broader applications and implications these models have for other developing programs. John McDonald, reporting on the activities of the National Archives of Canada, and Alan Kowlowitz, making observations based upon experiences within the New York State Government, focus their considerable analytical skills on issues pertaining to the changing roles, potential collaborations, evolving user expectations, and revised priorities for record-keeping participants in the electronic government arena. Lee Strickland turns what might have been a requisite nod to legal issues into a practical and readable primer that incorporates representative examples and recommendations presented from an organizational perspective. Bruce Dearstyne, in the final essay, presents a proposed platform of eight strategies for electronic records and archives programs in what is perhaps the most holistic, instructive, and immediately useful piece in the volume.

While Turnbaugh has a worthy aim in pursuing a more appropriate term for electronic record, he pursues his objective in an unexpected direction and ultimately unsuccessful manner. He might have been able to make his case by raising his concerns about the “record” portion of the term without his specific use of the U.S. national archives (NARA) example. The brief list of citations about the events at NARA that appear at the end of his piece is neither comprehensive nor representative, which may explain the tilt of his argument; he cites a few selections from the published works of just one of the program’s managers dating from 1980 and earlier. His portrayal of the NARA program is incomplete and often incorrect in its specifics of the nature and value of records that were accessioned by the Center for Electronic Records and its predecessors, and he displays an apparent lack of familiarity, based upon the examples he cites and his description of them. In addition, he refers only to events at NARA, which were not isolated but were mirrored by similar occurrences at other national archives around the globe at that time. His largely unsupportable perspective serves to bring the remainder of his argument under suspicion, and thereby prevents him from achieving his intended goal. It would have been refreshing to the reviewer, a former employee of the Machine Readable Branch and Center for Electronic Records at NARA towards the end and just after the period Turnbaugh discusses in his essay, to read a purported account and assessment of the efforts of the electronic records program at NARA that is accurate in fact and interpretation, and that acknowledges both the program’s deficiencies *and* accomplishments, of which there have been many. Furthermore, it is desirable and even obligatory for our profession to critique the initiatives, priorities, and actions of organizations that have archival and records management programs, perhaps especially those with great potential influence in the profession. There are valid and constructive criticisms that can be made of any organization to enable its ongoing

self-evaluation and improvement. However, as Turnbaugh's essay illustrates, it is extremely difficult for an outsider to gain sufficient familiarity with the complexities of another organization to make accurately these kinds of observations.

The somewhat dated content of this publication presents an opportunity to raise another issue for consideration by our profession. Do recent changes in technology and in publishing present new opportunities and alternatives for disseminating this kind of information? Several of these essays present lessons learned from projects and initiatives that occurred between 1997 and 2000. This is, in fact, a 2004 review of a book published in 2002 that includes discussions of events from the mid- to late-1990s. These authors have interesting and useful perspectives gained during their electronic records initiatives, but do the specifics of their work presented in this format have decreased relevancy and immediacy as time passes? When might it be preferable for case studies to be conveyed to their intended professional audience through pre-print and other publishing mechanisms, which are used heavily in other domains to release the current information quickly? Might Rick Barry's selection of illustrative examples from the past four decades age more gracefully in an essay volume like this than reports on more recent and more easily outdated activities? What are the best investments to make for educators, practitioners, and other interested professionals in building a professional literature library? How are professional organizations contributing to our increasing need to have access to the latest methods and trends?

Returning to the moment of anticipation as I opened the volume for the first time, these are some of the topics I imagined might be there, or perhaps a wish list for what might be present in future publications on this topic:

- an acknowledgement of the huge and largely unpredicted impact of the Web on record-keeping, system development, and organizational practice with recommendations for formulating a programmatic response;
- the potential of archival research, ranging from basic to applied, for developing appropriate record-keeping approaches and solutions, as reflected in the widespread reassessment of funding priorities, and the need to develop pathways from research to mainstream applications;
- considerations for implementing or participating in a technology watch initiative, as an integral part of an electronic records program, to anticipate and prepare for the introduction of relevant new developments and significant enhancements to existing technologies.

Happily, it is unusual at this point in our profession to see an all-male roster of authors for a book of topical essays on key electronic records and archival issues. One indicator of our progress as a profession is that we now have many able women working with electronic records in all types of institutions at all

levels. That observation is not intended to detract from the contributions of these authors, but to encourage future volumes to prove the ratio reflected in this publication to be the rarity that it should be. Future volumes might also expand the represented perspectives beyond governmental examples to include instances from corporate, non-profit, academic, and other domains.

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**Selected Essays in Electronic Recordkeeping in Australia.** JUDITH A. ELLIS, ed. East Malvern, Victoria: Bookaburra Printing Pty Ltd, 2000. 187 p. ISBN 0-947219-15-3.

Reading this book reminded me of the age old question: what does an archives do? Produced by the Australian Society of Archivists, one would assume that this book was intended for an archival audience. And indeed, this assumption is confirmed in Shauna Hicks' Chapter 1 introductory essay, when she notes that the intended audience of the book is "recordkeeping professionals working within organisations such as private companies, state and federal government agencies, churches, schools and universities, and federal, state and local government records management authorities and archival institutions, including collecting archives" (p. 1). However, depending upon the level of involvement of the archives in record-keeping, and more specifically institutional, electronic record-keeping practices, the material discussed in this book may not be appropriate.

Hicks offers further introduction to the essays by stating that they have "brought together the most up to date information and advice in an introductory and practical way. The essays have been written with the [recordkeeping] practitioner in mind, as so much of the existing literature has been written from highly technical and theoretical perspectives and assumes familiarity with the subject..." (p. 1). And the introduction is correct – the essays do offer a very practical, step-by-step discussion of how to implement an electronic record-keeping system, from the beginning stages of explaining the necessity for the management of records to a final case study on the implementation of an actual system.

Stephen Yorke's essay "The Electronic Recordkeeping Environment" (Chapter 2) discusses the "why of recordkeeping, in the belief that this will make readers increasingly receptive to the 'how' of electronic recordkeeping" (p. 5). The essay then moves through definitions of electronic record-keeping and particular issues such as technological change and the information technology and communication revolution, which have significantly changed the nature of record-keeping.