

book but certainly the rapid change on the World Wide Web complicates efforts to provide accurate information to both print and Web resources.

As mentioned earlier, an obvious limitation for Canadian researchers is that this book is American, and most of the sources provided are specific to the United States. Occasionally, a Canadian institution or Web site is mentioned; for example, the Hudson Bay Company Records Management and Heritage Services in the chapter on business archives, and the section on military archives, includes the Armed Forces of the World Web site compiled by the Information Centre of the Canadian Forces. The concentration on American sources is certainly not a fault for a publication intended for researchers interested in American history; therefore, the question is, would a similar publication with a Canadian focus be advantageous?

Books such as *Archival Information* are useful in providing resources that educate the public and in arming researchers with tools that facilitate and enrich their archival experience. For the beginner researcher, this book helps demystify archives and archival processes, and provides a place to start their research. A Canadian version might include a short section on the evolution of the Canadian archival system, in particular the “total archives” approach and the likelihood that the national, provincial, and territorial archives will hold relevant records on all subjects, from genealogy to business and sports. The approach taken by *Archival Information* may also be transferred to existing on-line research tools. Some archival sites, such as Library and Archives Canada and the Archives of Ontario, already provide sections to their researchers familiarizing them with archival processes and providing them with guides to certain types of holdings such as military or land records. What makes *Archival Information* different is its comprehensive scope that includes as many American archival resources and institutions as possible. “Archives Canada,” the Canadian Archival Information Network, is certainly an excellent tool that allows Canadians to access holdings across the country. Still, a Canadian version of *Archival Information* would be useful for providing new users with an introduction to researching in the Canadian archival system.

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Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts (SAA Archival Fundamentals Series II). KATHLEEN D. ROE. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005. 180 p. ISBN 1-931666-13-X.

Many North American archivists in the 1980s and 1990s were weaned on the Society of American Archivists’ “Archival Fundamentals” series and the appearance of Series II bears eloquent testimony to its enduring popularity

and usefulness. Like its predecessors, *Arranging & Describing Archives & Manuscripts* is a neophyte practitioner's textbook. The author describes herself as a "description archivist," suggesting that archivists are, or should be, functional specialists. There is no detailed conceptual analysis or theory of arrangement and/or description, such as one would likely find in a work reflecting "Canadian practice." Method and practice suffice – and by that is meant American practice and American archival traditions. The book is at least as good an introduction to the American way of doing archives as it is to the concepts of arrangement and description. We still have "archives" (the records of organizations) sharply demarcated from "manuscripts" (the records of families and individuals, or single documents). Yet the same rules apply to both. The persistence of traditional terminology is the more remarkable in that the author boldly adopts the Canadian technical term *fonds* to encompass both archives and manuscripts.

The book does not address the "why" of arrangement and description, or what arranging and describing archives and manuscripts means or achieves. We are never told how arrangement and description are linked and in what sense arrangement can be a function-based activity or half of one. On the face of it, arrangement is a feature of the archival *Ding an sich*, an object of description rather than an act to be performed on the archival body as if it were cosmetic surgery. It is therefore untrue to observe, "Archival records must be arranged before they can be described" (p. 61). Doing so would obscure or destroy arrangement (the creator's right) and compromise the integrity of the description (the archivist's responsibility). The discovery, or rediscovery, of arrangement tells us more about archives than description does, and the "moral defence" of description is to reveal arrangement in the broad sense of documenting provenance. Arrangement is integral to the organicity of the archival organism; it is not the intellectual aspect of physical organization. This manual tends to conflate, if not confuse, arrangement and organization, or, more invidiously, to treat physical organization as a means of preserving, restoring, or reflecting arrangement. The author also comes perilously close to substituting pertinence for provenance as the source of archival arrangement. Arrangement results from the creative work of the "author" of the *fonds* not the analytic work of the arranging–describing archivist. At an ACA conference years ago Keith Stotyn posed the sixty-four thousand dollar question, "Is the fonds describable?" The answer is no – if description depends on neat and tidy arrangement, or indeed on any arrangement at all. The archivist's hands are tied; one may describe to one's heart's content but one may *not* use the physical organization of the material as an occasion or pretext to reorganize it or reinvent arrangement. Describe what is there – not what might be or once was. If the original order has been lost, is irrecoverable, or never existed, just say so.

Topics like "Accessioning Archival Records" and "Physically Processing

the Records” have no place in a sectional chapter entitled “The Practice of Arrangement and Description.” Nor is it correct to define archival context as “the conditions under or during which records were created – a historical era, a social milieu” (p. 15). Archival context is the purpose of creation, the activity that the record was meant to document. Proper records *always* reflect the context of their creation and use.

The bibliography, though useful, is too short and selective and leaves out important monographs like the late Hugh Taylor’s *Arrangement and Description of Archival Materials*.¹ The appendices are not helpful and detract from the overall merits of the book. In their place there should have been a fifth section enumerating all the relevant descriptive standards, together with a brief critical comparative analysis. For example, we learn a good deal about *Encoded Archival Description* (EAD) but nothing about the more recently developed *Encoded Archival Context* (EAC), or about the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions’ *International Standard Bibliographic Description for Electronic Resources*. Nor are four pages at the tail end of the last section sufficient for discussing “Professional Standards for Archival Arrangement and Description.” (One wonders what a professional standard for archival arrangement could possibly be. Probably the author means standard for arrangement *and* description taken together. One arranges in order to describe, as it were.)

In general, this work highlights the absolute necessity of separate Archival Fundamentals publications dealing with arrangement (structural provenance) and description. Arrangement is about being – or not being, as the case may be – description is about doing. This book takes the relationship between the two as read, which is unscientific and begs the question of what arrangement is in itself rather than in relation to description. If arrangement is provenance, then description is subordinate to, and based on, arrangement, and its justification and rationale are to explain provenance in its structural, functional, creational, and other diversity. Though the work takes into account some recent developments, the metadata management model of archival description is conspicuous by its absence and the Dublin Core Metadata Initiative is mentioned only in passing. To that extent, despite global imperialism in the form of EAD, one has to wonder whether standardized archival description serves any useful purpose, if indeed it ever did. The sheer success of EAD, the original purpose of which was to enable the electronic interchange of non-standard finding aids, gives one pause. It remains unproven whether what the author calls “The movement toward standardizing archival arrangement and description” (p. 36) facilitated or retarded access to archives.

In order to be useful, description must be accurate and concise. Less, as

1 Hugh A. Taylor, *The Arrangement and Description of Archival Materials* (Detroit, 1981).

they say, is more. Instead of identifying “Significant events or developments to which the records relate,” (p. 60) let the describing archivist explain why the records were created – the purpose they were supposed to serve and whether they served it. Were the records “good” or “bad” – that is, effective or ineffective. In today’s “e-everything” environment, archival description needs to be viewed in terms of knowledge management – information that is short, sharp, and to the point. Too much descriptive information is gratuitous or redundant, and rarely explains why the records exist; we learn far more about the creator of the records than about the creation of them. Yet it is impossible to describe records without understanding the record-keeping system that gave rise to them and makes them what they are. A record is defined by the purpose of its creation and use. In order to describe archival materials, what one needs most is the finding aid by means of which the creator of them controlled and retrieved them, or, failing that, a records-stripping metadata harvester. In order to arrange and describe archival records, the archivist needs to get under the skin and inside the mind of the record-keeper, viewing the records from the perspective of the creator when the records were created. Description, so to speak, is an inside job. Approaching description from the outside as an historian or researcher defeats the entire purpose. As a matter of professional ethics, archival description should never be allowed to serve as the archivist’s excuse to do the work of a para- or pseudo-historian.

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Metadata in Preservation: Selected Papers from an ERPANET Seminar at the Archives School Marburg, 3 – 5 September 2003. FRANK M. BISCHOFF, HANS HOFMAN, & SEAMUS ROSS, eds. Marburg: Archivschule, 2004. 259 p. ISBN 3-923833-77-6.

In September 2003, the Archivschule at Marburg, Germany hosted an ERPANET¹-sponsored event on the theme of Metadata in Digital Preservation. Approximately seventy-five people from twenty-one European and North American countries gathered to discuss the important role of metadata in digital preservation and to hear experts from Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and Europe representing a wide range of disciplines (library and archival science, records management, government, information technology) present their perspectives and experiences on this topic. The stated goal of the event

¹ Electronic Resource Preservation and Access Network, a European Commission initiative established to act as a virtual clearinghouse for research and development, as well as for best practices dissemination in the digital preservation of cultural heritage and scientific objects.