documents created and owned by the state." It would take over a hundred years before any right of access to these records was enshrined in law.

Perhaps the most unusual thing about this book is its positive closing commentary. Vincent takes over 300 pages to document the dynamic between honour and trust, and the role of class in maintaining a hermetic secrecy inside and outside government. However, just before the book went to press, he added an afterword with his comments on the freedom of information initiative introduced by the Blair government. In this section, Vincent demonstrates considerable optimism towards this bill, seeing it as an opportunity to put Britain ahead of many of its continental neighbours. (The bill was subsequently passed on 30 November 2000, but issues of implementation remain.) In taking this position, he believes that a number of circumstances, especially a more pluralistic and open British society, can wipe away the well-ingrained culture of secrecy he has so thoroughly portrayed. Given the U.S. experience that Moynihan describes – much of which occurred after freedom of information – such hope may be premature. However, Moynihan too sees the present as an opportunity. With the disappearance of the half-century-long threat to national security, he believes it is time to move beyond pat national security justifications for the withholding of records from the public.

One only hopes that the collective optimism of the two authors is warranted. There is still a great deal of bureaucratic inertia in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as in Canada. While there is the best of intentions for those seeking open and accountable government, it is clear that reform will not come easily. Until officials understand that there is a greater long-term risk to the state in perpetuating secrecy than in releasing information, little will change. In the meantime, both these authors have given us a greater understanding of what is at stake, what is at risk.

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The Making and Unmaking of a University Museum: The McCord, 1921–1996. BRIAN YOUNG. Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000. 224 p. ISBN 0-7735-2050-X.

In January 1996, the McCord Museum fired archivist Pamela Miller after twenty-six years of service and issued a press release stating that the archives would immediately be closed to new users and that the archival holdings would be broken up or returned to McGill University. This book is a strangely readable and at times compelling account of the events that led to this development and the abrupt transformation of a university museum and

archives. Author Brian Young, himself a professor of history at McGill University and a former McCord Museum Board member, provides a detailed look at this museum's odyssey from one man's personal quest to a modern, dynamic, but troubled, institution. He begins by introducing the situation at the McCord, followed by a sketch of the McCord family and the origins of the museum, the unique place of women supporting and working on behalf of the McCord, and the events in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s that led to the closing of the archives.

What happened at the McCord, Young maintains, merely reflects the larger movement in the museum world towards the museum as a provider of "infotainment" to the largest possible revenue-generating audience. This denigration of the intellectual content of museums in order to appeal to a public whose attention span is decreasing daily has in part resulted because of the pressures on museums to be self-supporting. At a time when the number and types of museums were increasing, funds from various levels of government were decreasing, putting intense pressure on museums to divvy up an ever-diminishing pie. At the same time, however, there was the additional pressure on institutions not merely to maintain the status quo, but also to increase their size, power, and influence. In order to grow during a time when funds were diminishing, museums were forced to find other ways to bring in money: moving towards "canned" exhibitions loaned from other institutions, cutting back on the one-on-one service to researchers, and charging for entry. Other trends in the museum world that affected the McCord, and contributed to the changes outlined by Young, included the growth of the heritage movement bringing more people in through the doors, the proliferation of programmes, the trend towards formal marketing and fundraising throughout the heritage sector, and the increased interest in efficiency.

Young argues that, at the same time as museums diminished their support for intellectual endeavors, they diminished the central intellectual role of the professions of archivist and museum curator: "The crisis outlined here is indicative of ... the diminution of professions important to Canadian cultural life" (p. 13). But, in fact, the importance of the professional was a very late development in Canada as a whole. The McCord itself never had any real or serious interest in the museum as a laboratory for research and teaching, and therefore had no use for professionals to care for either its artifacts or its archival materials. In the early years of the museum's life, before it closed in 1936, there were only volunteers guiding visitors. When it finally reopened in 1955, it was staffed by a volunteer, Isabel Dobell; there wasn't a formal curator until the appointment of Russell Harper in 1964. Young also clearly delineates the role of women volunteers in building and maintaining the collection.

What is the significance of the erosion of the power and central role of the curators and archivist at the McCord Museum to archivists in Canada? Young

says that "in its broader context, the collapse of the curatorial function in the McCord Museum before 1996 has important parallels in archival institutions that hire archivists or records managers untrained in history ..." (p. 3). This sounds eerily familiar to the old either/or arguments that possessed the archival community throughout the 1970s and 1980s: the archivist as historian or the archivist as information manager? In the archival community there was a partial reconciliation: almost everyone agreed that archivists needed training that focussed on their own special concerns. Depending upon their inclinations, different archival schools decided to augment that foundational knowledge base with more historical or more records/information management studies. Perhaps the final realization was that there are many ways to get to a desired end, and that the training of all archivists does not have to be identical. Proponents of each side of the argument politely agreed to disagree and carried on with their respective lives.

Young's account of the McCord's vicissitudes, however, suffers from not being placed into a broader context until the museum's later years. How typical is the McCord's somewhat tortured early history compared to other museums lodged in other universities? Was the stop-and-start, on-again-off-again relationship with university officials typical of university museums outside of McGill? How similar was it to the situations found in other institutions outside of a university setting? Was the lack of stable funding endemic to museums across Canada? It is difficult for the reader to know what to make of the years before 1970, yet drawing from such works as *Beyond Four Walls: The Origins and Development of Canadian Museums* (Toronto, 1973) by Archibald F. Key would have helped place the McCord into the context of Canadian museum history. Other works such as the position paper *Towards the 21st Century: New Directions for Canada's National Museums* also would have helped put the trends witnessed at the McCord into perspective. (It is interesting to note that the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature recently closed the doors of its own museum, although supposedly it is pursuing a consultant's report on reopening and strengthening its archives.)

Outside of this flaw, however, there are only a few aspects of the book that could have been tweaked to improve the readability. The dates of the individual chapters do not correspond to the contents: for example, chapter one is dated 1760 to 1907, but the chapter ends around 1921. What this means is that the reader is constantly trying to reconcile dates and events that jump about within the text. To this end, the chronology in the front of the book is critical; without it, it would be difficult to keep track of the historical flow. Young also occasionally drops bombshells into his narrative without any apparent explanation. He suddenly refers to David McCord's violence in connection to his marriage after McCord began to suffer from arteriosclerosis and mental instability, but then fails to follow this up with further information or employ it to make a point. The reader is left to wonder what exactly

happened and what it meant, for McCord himself, his wife, or his museum. Overall, however, the work is strong and deeply interesting.

David Ross McCord was a visionary. While his colleagues collected European and Oriental art and artifacts, he was busy gathering Canadiana, which in part is why the McCord Museum has such an excellent collection. McCord himself was as much a creator as a collector. He commissioned an artist to render scenes from Montreal with great historical accuracy, an invaluable resource today. Thus, in addition to the museum artifacts, the archives at the McCord, augmented by the Notman Photographic Archives, are also a national treasure, and as such deserve to be treated with the utmost respect that employing a professional archivist implies. Young's book ultimately has a hopeful ending for all archivists: following a protest a month after the closure of the archives, the museum announced that the archives would not be closed. Today another archivist has been rehired under the current director, Dr. Victoria Dickenson.

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History and Electronic Artefacts. EDWARD HIGGS, ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998. 345 p. ISBN 0-19-823633-6.

The dust jacket promotes *History and Electronic Artefacts* as the "first major publication to examine the implications of the electronic revolution for historical research." This claim may be overblown, but no one can doubt that there is a great need to continue addressing the complex and rapidly evolving questions posed for historical research by the computerization of contemporary life. In the case of Canada, consideration of these questions has been a central concern of historians and archivists since the 1970s. Long-time readers of *Archivaria* may remember the considerable debate provoked by the Vancouver Island Project during the early 1980s when a new conceptual framework was proposed for creating machine-readable access to historical sources of all types. Similarly at that time, the workings of the Machine Readable Archives division at the National (then Public) Archives of Canada reflected an awareness of the profound ways in which computerization was affecting the future of history.

Unfortunately, though, these early efforts to come to grips with the electronic revolution were significantly undermined by a convergence of forces including underfunding, professional and disciplinary boundaries, and underestimations of computerization's potential impact in our society. The result is that current thinking about the implications of information technol-