

acknowledgements where the authors list their sources (but not the institutions that care for them) and indicate “published and unpublished historical documents and correspondence were major sources (a draft manuscript with complete references is on file in the CMC Archives)” (p. 94). One would think that the authors’ use of unpublished sources was so invaluable to the compilation of an institutional history that they would understand the importance of archival materials and would realize the benefit of highlighting the Canadian Museum of Civilization’s archive as one of its significant assets. Unfortunately, however, in this case the archive did not make the cut.

**Krisztina Laszlo**  
**Museum of Anthropology, Morris and Helen Belkin Art Gallery**  
**University of British Columbia**

**Political Pressure and the Archival Record.** MARGARET PROCTER, MICHAEL COOK, CAROLINE WILLIAMS, eds. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005. 345 p. ISBN 1-931666-15-6.

This book consists of twenty of the papers presented at a conference of the same name held in Liverpool in July 2003. What does the phrase “political pressure” bring to mind? To an archivist, it may summon up bad things such as deliberate destruction of documents, refusal to deposit records in the archives, practices that avoid creating records in the first place, or instructions from the higher-ups to administer access inequitably. Such activities fall within what the editors call “the sudden, deliberate, and blatant school of political pressure” (x). However, the range of topics addressed in this volume goes well beyond that. Even seemingly beneficial shifts in policy, such as the current Labour government’s initiative to modernize British government services, in part by mandating electronic records management in all government departments, is also political pressure of a sort that will have an enormous impact on the work of record-keepers and archivists. Although the editors are somewhat apologetic about the time lag between the conference and the publication of the volume, it is not at all dated. While it is true that shocking tales of record-keeping malfeasance have surfaced more recently (and continue to do so), the volume goes beyond the journalistic reports to provide some perspective and a more measured commentary on an aggregation of such situations.

While you could read this book straight through, it is more likely that you will leaf through it and dip into the papers that pique your interest. The range of the papers is very wide, and extremely interesting. The authors of the papers represent not only archives, but a range of other disciplines as well. They also come from five continents, and recount episodes or situations of

which the average Canadian archivist may not have heard. Following an introduction by Margaret Proctor, the papers are organized into six broad themes (“The Historical Legacy”; “Access and the Public Interest”; “Ethical Dilemmas in the Public Service”; “Governments under Pressure? Threats and Responses”; “At War: Records and International Conflict”; and “Modelling the Future”), although as the editors point out, any categorization is essentially arbitrary and the papers cross the boundaries of these groupings.

In a review of this length, it is impossible to deal with all of the themes that are present in this volume. The one that struck me was the range of personal engagement with the topics covered. Some of the papers are historical studies that look at various aspects of recordkeeping in the era of the Second World War. To the extent that these events occurred more than sixty years ago, the reader may be relatively detached. Other papers deal with more recent events, such as the role of records destruction in the ethnic cleansing in the Balkan conflicts, events that occurred during our professional lives that many of us remember. Still others discuss issues that continue to unfold, such as the impact of the *Patriot Act* in the United States and other measures taken to limit access to information on the grounds of national security. As archivists, we well understand the implications of all these situations for the record. Even for those events that occurred many years ago, we also understand that the impact continues today; because archives are of enduring value, it should come as no surprise to learn that the matter of access to the records of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study, which ended in 1972, is still contentious. However, unless these matters affect us directly, we are still likely to remain somewhat detached.

Being personally affected, however, is a different story. The papers I found most engaging were those dealing with the role of the archives and the archivist in protecting the record. While we may think we know the “right” course of action in a theoretical situation, do any of us know for sure what we would do in a situation where we had to make a choice between ethical professional practice and our job? Few of us have faced that situation, but one of the most interesting articles is by Chris Hurley, who recounts two different situations in which he was personally involved, one where he was relieved of his duties because he took a stand regarding the unauthorized destruction of a record, and another where he felt he had to criticize publicly a senior professional colleague in a situation involving the destruction of records after it was known that they were required in legal proceedings.

To the surprise of the organizers, one of the spontaneous outcomes of the conference was a list of actions to be taken to raise awareness of these issues in the wider community. It would be interesting to know the extent to which these actions were carried out. I suspect they did not survive the enthusiasm of the moment. Nonetheless, as the editors point out “the underlying issues remain constant, and the editors hope that the volume will encourage further studies that explore and develop understanding in this area of political and

ethical activity” (vii). It occurs to me that a similar conference could be held, or a similar volume written, dealing entirely with Canadian episodes involving political pressure and the archival record. Somalia, tainted blood, residential schools, banking records made available to American authorities, and the current flurry of activity in Ontario universities as they are required to comply with provincial access and privacy legislation, all come to mind.

For the professional archivist, the broad range of content in this volume presents a number of different issues and situations in which the record and/or the record-keepers are compromised. Its international focus introduces the reader to events and situations in other countries of which they might not otherwise have heard. Furthermore, reading about the incidents that occurred elsewhere gets the reader thinking about similar or related issues in one’s own environment. The book is also useful as a resource for archival educators, who will find readings suitable for a wide variety of topics, including access to information, privacy protection, records management, professional ethics, and, of course, the importance of recordkeeping and the record in society. In this regard, the presence of an index is helpful. For all these reasons, this book is a useful addition to the professional literature that will be an important means of achieving the conference participants’ desire to increase awareness of these issues in the wider community.

**Jean Dryden**

**Faculty of Information Studies, University of Toronto**

**Preserving Digital Materials.** ROSS HARVEY. Munich: K.G. Saur, 2005. 246 p. ISBN 3-598-11686-1.

Ross Harvey’s *Preserving Digital Materials* is a single volume guide that concisely summarizes the complex and interrelated technical issues and challenges surrounding long-term digital preservation. In seeking to explore the “single most critical issue” faced by members of the library and record-keeping communities, Harvey outlines valuable digital preservation principles, strategies, and practices by examining significant research initiatives from the last two decades. The necessity and rationale for writing such a book is clearly identified by the author, who acknowledges that “a great deal of information about digital preservation is available in print and on the web ... but most practitioners do not have the time or technical expertise to evaluate or synthesize it” (xi). Consequently, this valuable book provides technical guidance to library and record-keeping professionals, in any institutional setting, interested in the various aspects of long-term digital preservation. Harvey is a professor of Library and Information Management at Charles Sturt University in Australia with extensive research and teaching experience in the fields of