

sioned oral history interviews with rural, ethnic, aboriginal, and francophone communities to ensure the preservation of a record that reflected societal diversity. Nonetheless, the question of commissioning oral history to create a more representative record of society remains a contentious issue for many archivists.

As noted in its introduction, this book is intended to serve as a text for classroom use and for those interested in becoming an oral historian. As such, its up-to-date essays about theoretical aspects of oral history may provide a useful addition to the archival science curriculum. Those interested in archiving oral history in Canada, however, are advised to seek out publications and advice from the Canadian Oral History Association, as many have been doing for the last forty years.

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Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England. ELIZABETH SHEPHERD. Surrey, England/Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Limited/Ashgate Publishing Company, 2009. xiv, 245 p. ISBN 978-0-7546-4785-0 (hardcover).

Archives and Archivists in 20th Century England is an important and ambitious book that is both exemplar and a contribution to the recently burgeoning field of archival history. As Victor Gray, a former president of the Society of Archivists (UK), writes, “this book represents a coming of age for the archival profession in England. At last we have a route-map through the complex thicket of a century and more of initiatives, enthusiasms, false starts, and inspirations. Now we can understand not only what has been achieved but what still remains to be done” (dust jacket). To this could be added that now we have a splendid case study of the contingent, contextual nature of archives and archiving, written from the inside – the archives not as a passive storehouse of information for historical research on myriad topics, but the archives itself as the subject of historical research and contextualized understanding.

In Canada, we all know about Sir Hilary Jenkinson, the first great pioneer to articulate, for the English-speaking profession, the ideas and concepts of modern archiving as these had evolved – and been recorded – in French, German, and Dutch writing in the nineteenth century. But curiously, we know little (from the published literature at least) about the archival profession’s development in England – the context in which the famed Jenkinson became so influential – compared to that in the United States, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Australia, or even South Africa, about which articles and books have appeared in recent years. Considering that England sent us Hugh Taylor, Gordon Dodds, Alan Ridge, and Edwin Welch, among others, as immi-

grants, all to achieve archival prominence in Canada, and that there is considerable mythology around Jenkinson's ideas, this book is doubly welcome for putting these people in context. More than that, Elizabeth Shepherd suggests a model for understanding the evolution and ethos of an archival profession in any country.

Well known for her many articles and (with Geoffrey Yeo) the very successful book entitled *Managing Records: A Handbook of Principles and Practice* (2003), Shepherd teaches in the Master's Program in Archives and Records Management, Department of Information Studies, University College London (UCL). She was hired by UCL to update and revise the program, following her earlier career as an archivist and records manager in local government. She currently teaches principles of both archives and records management; that experience is evident in her book, where records and archives, and records managers and archivists, are integrated as streams of analysis.

Over the years, there have been histories written of archival institutions, such as those on the Public Record Office (PRO) and the National Archives and Records Administration, or more recently, of major archival collections, such as the Hudson's Bay Company or Vatican Archives. In the past decade or so, there has been an outpouring of articles in journal collections and books on the history of archival ideas and concepts, of prominent archivists (both builders and thinkers), and of most of the key archival functions, as well as on various recording media and individual fonds. But no one, to my knowledge, has attempted to write the history of the entire archival profession for a whole country. What defines or makes a profession? What should be studied?

To that ambitious task, Shepherd sets herself with enormous research and analytical skill. Following a useful introduction about international trends, as context for what she sees happening in England, Shepherd identifies four critical components that make a profession: archives and records legislation (and the political engagement necessary to obtain such); the emergence (and thus self-definition) of the profession working in actual record-keeping institutions; exclusive-to-the-profession organizations and associations; and professional education for archivists and records managers. Within the twentieth century, against her four themes of legislation, institutions, associations, and education, Shepherd casts developments in three chronological periods. In the first of these, from the mid-nineteenth century to just after the Second World War, the profession's foundations were laid: national archival legislation was enacted; the PRO and the Historical Manuscripts Commission (HMC) were founded and flourishing; county records offices and other sorts of archival institutions were created locally, if sporadically; historical and (somewhat antiquarian) record societies developed an interest in archives; and subjects were taught in the universities relating to aspects of archival work (palaeography, diplomatic, librarianship, and local history).

From the post-war years until around 1980, her second period, Shepherd

sees a significant shift across these same organizing themes: following a major government inquiry, the National Register of Archives was established, along with new archival legislation; the PRO faced the Grigg Report¹ and the challenge of managing modern records; local record offices were now established nationwide; the first purely archival professional body was created in the Society of Local Archivists; and the three university programs in archival studies were launched.

After 1980, the emphasis shifted yet again in her third period: government policy, which affected archives as much as other agencies, required new approaches to both funding and program delivery, and the challenges of records management and computer technology required archivists to change patterns of work, skills, and alliances. The PRO and the HMC were administratively joined to form The National Archives, the combination of which, at least in scope, approached the Canadian “total archives” model. The profession began to see the need to coordinate and lobby for policies and activities within the profession itself, and in the wider community and with governments. Graduate-level archival studies programs in universities struggled to deal with this new world of a broader total archive, including digital technologies for creating records and using archives, public policy and workplace realities that increasingly blurred lines of the traditional records manager and archivist. Such issues from history set the agenda for current research, debate, and action. Throughout all this analysis, Shepherd shows again and again, in fascinating detail, the wide array of people who shaped the archive(s) by their individual enthusiasms, their personal interests, and their perceptions of the nature of archives based on their experiences.

For all its excellence, the book may be faulted for its structuralist bias, organization, and argument, centred (as just shown) on legislation, institutions, associations, and universities. While Shepherd shows convincingly that these all very much define (and reflect) the profession, so too does the realm of ideas and discourse that she underplays. One longs for more concentrated discussion on changing ideas in England about such archival functions as appraisal and description, or concepts around establishing authenticity, outreach programming, or audio-visual media; or more broadly, the influence on archives of wider societal ideas, from the empirical positivism and scientific pursuit of “truth” of the nineteenth century, to the modernism of efficiency, planning, management, and accountability of the twentieth century, to our own post-modern and digital world of fluid pluralism and societal networking. Some of this is present in Shepherd’s discussion, but only *inter alia*, and certainly not

1 The Grigg Report advocated a new system for the departmental management and eventual timed transfer of historical records to the PRO, and for review of appraisal decisions by the PRO initially made by departmental officials. It de facto formalized records disposition and introduced appraisal to the English archival system at the national level.

as one of her four organizing pillars. Perhaps the fault is not hers, as she notes more than once, and with some regret and in contrast to Canada, the United States, and Australia, a paucity of theoretical and conceptual analysis within English archivy. She misses a golden opportunity to explore some of this through the work of Hugh Taylor, for some fifteen years an English county records archivist, and a university and city archivist, before his emigration to Canada in 1965. Taylor published explicitly on the impressions of a British archivist encountering a radically different archival world in Canada, as well as a whimsical and informative end-of-career memoir reflecting in significant degree on his English years. Beyond this, his vast oeuvre tells much about English archival concepts and assumptions as they met and interacted with Canadian (and American) ones.

Archives, as a societal practice, is a very old profession, going back thousands of years. As a scholarly discipline, however, with university graduate-level education and an extensive peer-reviewed literature, the profession is a rather new one, dating in Canada from the mid-1970s. Traditionally, archivists were seen as quiet curators of an inherited past, their scholarship focused on the records themselves. That traditional archival paradigm has been fundamentally challenged in the past two decades by at least three factors: postmodernism and the impact of critical theory in many disciplines (including Archival Studies); digital technology and all it empowers and signifies; and historical analysis of archives in four senses: as records, as institutions, as profession, and as societal activity and idea. Memory in archival records, as elsewhere, is highly contested ground, historically, philosophically, psychologically, filled with stories of power and resistance, of records kept and records destroyed, of varying motivations and complex interrelationships surrounding the generation of documents, in all recording media, and their subsequent treatment by archivists.

Archival holdings thus reflect the struggles, needs, and passions of the present as much as they do events, characters, and ideas of the past. Archiving is culturally bound and a product of its environment: as a result, all archival records have their own story, their own context, and their own histories. These stories make the recorded artefact come alive, make the archive more robust and thus more useful. In this regard, Elizabeth Shepherd has breathed much life into our profession in her very fine book, demonstrating at once these factors of archival contestation playing out in England and showing us by implication so much more about ourselves in any archival tradition. As archival educator Richard Cox rightly asserts on the dust jacket, “This is a book every archivist will want to read and reflect on.”

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