

times, a mix of citation styles is employed; this, along with occasional grammar and spelling errors, is evidence of rushed writing and/or sloppy copy-editing. Overall, the work makes a substantial and balanced contribution to the literature on American archival practice, public recordkeeping, collecting, and replevin. Canadian and other archivists outside the United States (especially in English common law jurisdictions) could learn much from the discussion of principles underlying public records legislation and the relevant case law, as well as from the case studies, which are useful to anyone familiar with public records in archives.

Tom Belton
Western Archives, Western University
London, Ontario

Libraries and Archives: A Comparative Study. TOMAS LIDMAN. Oxford: Chandos Publishing, 2012. xvi, 123 pp. ISBN 978-1-84334-642-5.

As a volume in the Chandos Information Professional Series, this book is “aimed at the busy information professional” and was “specially commissioned to provide the reader with an authoritative view of current thinking” (p. ii). Praise has been widely meted out to other books in this series: *Scholarly Communication for Librarians* by Heather Morrison (2009), *Special Libraries as Knowledge Management Centres* by Eva Semertzaki (2011), and *Google This! Putting Google and Other Social Media Sites to Work for Your Library* by Terry Ballard (2012) are but a few examples. I wish I could be equally positive in this review; however, I cannot. The 114 pages of discussion by Lidman, a former national librarian (1995–2003) and national archivist (2003–2010) of Sweden, will leave his target audiences (“politicians and bureaucrats with very little knowledge about the topic,” “students in library and information studies,” and “the ordinary reader” [p. xiv]) none the wiser about the similarities and differences between libraries and archives than if they had read only the six-page introduction and each chapter abstract.

Lidman states in the introduction that “There has been a very clear international tendency during the last decade to think of libraries and archives as almost equivalent institutions. They both collect papers, manuscripts and information in different analogue and digital formats. Some politicians would like to see much closer co-operation, some even a merge, which is the case in, for example, Canada, Egypt and India, and just recently the Netherlands” (p. 2). The purpose of his book is to provide an introduction to libraries and archives as distinct institutions with “very different duties and commissions” but which “must work together side by side in matters of mutual importance and interest” (p. 2). To accomplish his goal, Lidman takes readers through a

significantly abbreviated history of libraries and archives. Tracing the historical roots of each, he suggests, will help explain our current situation.

In Chapter 2, Lidman presents abbreviated histories of libraries and archives from what he alarmingly calls “pre-historic times” – i.e., the times of recordkeeping at Ebla in the Sumerian Empire and the great library at Alexandria – to the Renaissance. Frustratingly, his discussion of archives is weaker than that of libraries. As a case in point, he makes the uncontroversial observation that the library at Alexandria is widely recognized as the first such institution and then brings up the riddle of “Ebla – archive or library?” (p. 7). By not answering his own question, though, he misses a perfect opportunity to explain the complexity of defining “archives.” Chapter 3 discusses libraries and archives from the Renaissance to the nineteenth century, noting in particular the effect on libraries and archives of the rise of nationalism after the French Revolution, the increased need for organizing principles of governmental administrative records and printed materials, and the changes in mandates to improve user access to books and archival materials.

Chapter 4 explores twentieth-century national libraries, which, Lidman suggests, adopted a “middle ground” between research/scientific/academic and public libraries in that they served the “scholarly community and various professional interests ... without abandoning their mission to serve all the members of the nation” (p. 59). Of key significance are their core activities of national bibliography creation and “indispensible” (p. 61) role in the development of a national union catalogue of publications. However, since library systems began providing access to electronic articles and books, thereby decreasing the collecting gap between national libraries and research and public libraries, national libraries were forced to rethink their missions. They did so in divergent ways: adopting a clear position as cultural institutions, broadening their collecting mandates, or “guarantee[ing] an infrastructure for both research and public libraries” (p. 68).

Attention turns to archives in Chapter 5. Here Lidman launches into a verbose, almost impenetrable discussion about how national libraries differ from national archives, the upshot being that while libraries acquire (by legal deposit or otherwise) individual books, archives “must work in conjunction with those institutions providing material, be they public or private, and devise methods of compounding the material in a way which most accurately reflects the activity of the institution. This is an ongoing process due to the dynamic nature of human society, which is never stationary” (p. 73). The topics of restrictions of archival material, archival appraisal, and lack of standardization in processing of archives are either dealt with in such a vague manner or show such a lack of awareness of international developments as to render them unhelpful or simply misleading. Take, for example, the following comment about appraisal: “This issue has been analysed in a number of writings and from different theoretical and methodological perspectives. This

issue has been extremely controversial and volatile, and is probably the most discussed question in the archive world in recent years – at least if you study the wide debate which is still running” (p. 83). The discussion does not get more specific than that, missing a perfect opportunity to segue into the wide array of appraisal methods and thus drive home the point about diversity of approaches: black box, macro-appraisal, documentation strategy, sampling, and functional analysis, to name but a few. As the discussion sits, we just have to take the author’s word that there are differences, being none the wiser as to what those differences are.

Similarly disappointing in Chapter 5 is the discussion of standardization of archival description. The section is completely devoid of any reference to standards such as *ISAD(G)*, *RAD*, *MAD*, *DACS*, or even *EAD*. After explaining that libraries have done well in making it “relatively easy to find books, regardless of one’s location,” Lidman notes, “Archives are nowhere near this stage of development. Archival registers can be clumsy tools, and free searches seldom allow perusal of the material at the document level” (p. 96). Indeed, in his final chapter, Lidman goes so far as to write, “National union catalogues, a *sine qua non* for libraries, do not really exist for archives” (p. 113). It goes without saying that digitizing every document in national archives’ holdings would be utter folly, but providing access to everything from fonds-level descriptions to detailed file-level finding aids has been an approach taken by a number of consortia and countries that bring together multi-institutional union catalogues: Archives Canada (www.archivescanada.ca), the US’s National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections (www.loc.gov/coll/nucmc), Australia’s Trove (trove.nla.gov.au), and the Online Archive of California (www.oac.cdlib.org), to name but a few. None of these endeavours is acknowledged, which leaves the impression that archives are mired in a Luddite past.

In Chapter 6, Lidman asks, “What’s in store?” (p. 103). A drawback to the current situation, as he sees it, is that the mandate documents and strategic plans of international organizations and national institutions make no mention of their sister institutions: for example, those of the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) do not refer to archives as allies nor do the International Council on Archives (ICA) policy documents refer to libraries; similarly national libraries and national archives rarely reference each other. This is unfortunate, he argues, because “First and foremost, it is in the realm of technical innovation that libraries and archives will find common challenges and solutions” (p. 106) and that through co-operation to develop standards and make use of economies of scale both libraries and archives would greatly benefit. The troubling aspect of this chapter appears to be a faith in digitization as the answer to all preservation and access issues, similar to the outlook that is taking hold in our own national library and archives. The chapter, like the others, is maddeningly vague, and although the author does

not explicitly say “Let’s digitize everything,” that seems to be the implicit take-away – not a helpful message to be sending, even inadvertently.

In conclusion, for an introductory work, it is disappointing that more emphasis is not placed on the scholarly sources. Lidman is no doubt well read, but that is overshadowed by an inattentiveness to routine scholarly rigour to back his interpretations of history, to support claims made about legislation and ordinances, and for basic facts about libraries and archives. Furthermore, I am convinced that there are clearer ways to have completed his task. Lidman’s chronological approach to his subject would have afforded an ideal opportunity to explain the varying usage, both over time and in different countries, of the terms “archives,” “records,” and “personal papers” or “manuscripts,” in contrast with the term “library,” which has remained fairly stable through centuries and geographically. Had the book dealt with some of these distinctions, it would have been much stronger. Indeed, as an introductory text that attempts to elucidate the current literature regarding the differences between libraries and archives, as well as the major issues facing each and their future roles, this book ultimately fails. It is too vague to be authoritative and, unfortunately, presents a pallid, inaccurate picture of the state of archives internationally.

Kathryn Harvey
University of Guelph

Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace: Explorations in Canadian Women’s Archives. LINDA M. MORRA and JESSICA SCHAGERL, eds. Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2012. ix, 355 pp. ISBN 978-1-55458-650-9.

Put plainly, the essays in *Basements and Attics, Closets and Cyberspace* are “about researching the archives created by, about, and for Canadian women” (p. 1), but within this specific topic the contributors consider more universal questions regarding the use and management of archives. The collection builds upon earlier works that explore women’s archives,¹ but it is also consistent with postmodernist approaches to understanding archives, which reject a single historical truth and for which “no archive is neutral” (p. 3).²

- 1 See, for example, Helen M. Buss and Marlene Kadar, eds. *Working in Women’s Archives: Researching Women’s Private Literature and Archival Documents* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2001); and Nupur Chaudhuri, Sherry J. Katz, and Mary Elizabeth Perry, eds., *Contesting Archives: Finding Women in the Sources* (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2010).
- 2 For an overview of postmodernist writing within the context of archival studies, see Terry Cook, “Fashionable Nonsense or Professional Rebirth: Postmodernism and the Practice of