

The International Scene: News and Abstracts

FRANK B. EVANS, *Editor*

International Seminar on Records Management. A pioneering effort was undertaken this spring by the National Archives and Records Service (NARS) in the development and presentation of the first International Seminar on Public Records Management. Cosponsored with UNESCO and in cooperation with the International Council on Archives, the seminar was directed to the records management needs of developing countries. As a practical necessity, considerable time was devoted to discussing how modern records techniques could be adapted to widely differing cultures in countries that have reached different stages of development.

The twenty-one participants from five continents studied the full range of records management topics. These included modern techniques of file management, inventorying and appraisal, character and use of machine-readable records, information retrieval, and forms design. Attention was also given to the relationship between archivists and records managers. One of the most significant sessions, held on the final day, featured a roundtable discussion on how to establish and operate a records management program in a developing country. Popular with those attending the seminar were the tours of the National Archives Building, the Washington National Records Center at Suitland, and a full-day visit to the Maryland Hall of Records at Annapolis, Maryland.

Eighteen of the participants represented archives and records agencies in individual nations, and three others are staff members of the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the Organization of American States.

Financial support, in addition to that of UNESCO, was provided by the Society of American Archivists, the Council on Library Resources, the Asian Foundation, the American Records Management Association, and the Association of Records Executives and Administrators. [ROMAYNE L. POTOSKY]

Federal Republic of Germany. *Richtlinien Handschriftenkatalogisierung* is a 20-page pamphlet of guidelines for manuscript

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cataloging, published to facilitate uniform cataloging procedures in archives and libraries throughout the Federal Republic. Published in Bonn-Bad Godesberg in 1973 by the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft [German research association], it covers medieval manuscripts; modern, book-length manuscripts; collections of personal papers; and single manuscripts. After stating the principles for each category the authors suggest methods of describing, dating, and establishing the place of origin of various manuscripts and give pertinent examples. This guide is a useful and much needed tool for a long-neglected task. [GEORGE O. KENT]

Second International Conference on Caribbean Archives. Originally scheduled for September 23-28, 1974, in Guadeloupe, French West Indies, the Second International Conference on Caribbean Archives was postponed. Miss Enid M. Baa, Secretary-Treasurer of the Caribbean Historical Association, announced that conflicts with similar international meetings and problems in underwriting expenses were responsible for the postponement. The conference is being rescheduled for 1975, and the specific dates will be announced as soon as they have been established.

Great Britain. Preservation of Documents and Seals. The British Standards Institution, London, has published a standard which gives comprehensive recommendations for protecting documents and seals against many forms of deterioration. BS 4971, *Recommendations for repair and allied processes for the conservation of documents*, Part 1:1973, *Treatment of sheets, membranes and seals*, deals with destruction of microbiological and insect infestation, mechanical and liquid cleaning, deacidification, repair and joining, lamination, and various other processes. Part 2 of BS 4971 will deal more specifically with the make-up and binding of archival documents, while a separate standard is being prepared for the storage and exhibition of such documents. Price, including postage, is £ 2.00, and copies should be ordered from BSI Sales Department, 101 Pentonville Road, London N1 9ND, England.

The Contemporary Scientific Archives Centre in England, directed by historian Margaret Gowing, has completed its initial year of locating, preserving, and making accessible the personal papers of contemporary scientists and technologists. Fourteen collections have been processed, nine are in process, and inquiries on many other collections are underway. The centre acts as intermediary between the scientist or his family and the repository where collections are accessioned and made available for scholarly use. Collections are processed at the centre's office at Oxford University, and arrangements are made for the deposit at an appropriate archival repository. Among the collections completed thus far are the papers of Frederick Soddy and William Hume-Rothery, deposited at the Bodleian Library, Oxford University; Sir John Lennard-Jones, deposited at Churchill College Library, Cam-

bridge University; Cecil F. Powell and Heinz London, at Wills Memorial Library, Bristol University; and Edmund C. Stoner and Richard Widdington at the Brotherton Library, Leeds University. The work of the centre is guided by the Committee on Scientific and Technological Records, a joint committee of the Royal Society and the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts. Further information on collections or on the work of the centre may be obtained by writing to the centre at Indian Institute, Broad Street, Oxford OX1 3BE, England.

ABSTRACTS

Argentina. [DONALD L. KING, National Archives and Records Service] *Revista del Archivo General de la Nacion*, no. 2 (1972). The director of the National Archives, Guillermo Gallardo, speaking on the occasion of the sesquicentennial of the Central Archives of Buenos Aires (pp. 13-17), notes that the governor of Buenos Aires and the minister of government issued a decree dated August 28, 1821, consolidating the archives of the several branches of the provincial and municipal governments. The decree provided for the gathering of the various departmental archives under one roof and appointed a committee to "establish and arrange" the documents under the direction of the Departments of Foreign and Domestic Affairs. In 1884 the archives, public library, and museum were combined into a single unit of the then-recently federalized government. A mixed commission was appointed to determine which documents should be returned to the Provincial Archives of Buenos Aires. An extensive audiovisual branch has recently been established, and a guide to the holdings of the National Archives is being prepared. The staff of the archives has supervised historical expositions, advised public and private organizations, and distributed technical publications.

Marcelo Bazán Lazcano, writing on the disposition of records (pp. 25-57), divides his discourse under four headings: legislation, selection, arrangement, and microfilming. He notes that lack of storage space has often led to the disposal of entire classes of records at the discretion of the functionary in charge, and that constantly changing regulations and inadequately trained personnel create confusion. Legal and economic rights must be protected and documents of truly historic or scientific interest must be preserved. Documents that explain the organization that created them should be preserved. In his judgment the subject matter and number of documents relating to a subject and a probable importance for future historical research should determine the fate of the records. Large microfilming projects are expensive and time consuming but do save space and serve as a safeguard in time of danger. The acceptance of microfilm as legal evidence in Argentina is as yet not fully determined. The distinction between "administrative" and "historical" archives is determined by the use to be made of the documents, juridic or cultural. Selection is the dividing line between non-archives and archives. This important function should be under-

taken only by a trained archivist. Space, or its lack, is the most important single factor, according to the author.

Brazil. [LAURA V. MONTI, University of Florida] *Arquivo & Administração*, vol. 1, no. 2 (September 1973). Antonio Garcia de Miranda Netto, writing about semantical aspects of documentary research (pp. 9-11), defines various facets of SD (Sistema de Documentação), which is equivalent to our Information Storage and Retrieval System. Format, structure, and system are defined and explained. According to the author, it should be possible to reduce all information to a format that in general plan of physical organization could be applied to any phenomenon or event. The documentary support of the information appears as a format with time variations according to the system. Structure is defined as a format establishing rules to define the situations, relationships, and correlations. Because of frequent confusions between structure and system, the author defines the system as a structure with a goal. The structure can be useful or not for an operation, but the system is always operational. One of the components of SD is analysis. Information appears under two aspects: for the physicist it is deprived of all semantic meaning and reduced only to a probability. For the documentalist, data is fundamentally semantic. The author refers to Brillouin and Couffignal to clarify the concepts.

Arquivo & Administração, vol. 1, no. 3 (December 1973). The Archives of Almirante (pp. 10-13) is a history of the largest and most complete archives of Brazilian music. Ribeiro Barros, founder of the archives, came to be called Almirante; a singer and composer, he developed a great love for popular music and collected scores, books, songs, photographs, and everything connected with the tradition of Brazilian popular music.

In 1963 the governor of the state of Guanabara visited Almirante and his already famous archives and convinced him that his collections should be made the property of the state. After some negotiations the archives moved to a building which had been headquarters of a police district. Today the archives are in the same building and should be transferred to an adequate building where it could become a center for research with its library of three thousand volumes, two hundred thousand musical scores, and five hundred plays and personal objects of composers and singers. It is now attached to the Museum of Image and Sound, and its holdings are open to all students and researchers.

Nadir Regina Titton, writing about tourism, documentation, and archives (pp. 14-15), discusses the economic, social, and cultural connotations of the tourist movement. The author notes the formation of the Empresa Brasileira de Turismo (Brazilian Enterprise for Tourism) EMBRATUR, which has already begun to organize a center for documentation within the most modern concepts of information, CEBITUR (Brazilian Center for Tourist Information). An archival

system will be also necessary because of the variety and wealth of tourism documentation: graphic, monographic, plastic, and audio. Modern archival techniques could be developed and applied to one *Sistema Nacional de Turismo* to preserve and retrieve the information contained in this documentation.

Arquivo & Administração, vol. 2, no. 1 (April 1974). Included in this issue is an article on the Brazilian scholar Alcides Bezerra who was director of the National Archives of Brazil (1922-38) and his vision for the need of highly trained professionals in the field of archives. He organized the first courses in archives administration, a two-year program of studies that began in 1922.

The successive decrees that continued to upgrade the profession, making its curriculum more extensive and raising the qualifications, are given. In 1973 an agreement was signed with the University of Rio de Janeiro for a permanent course in archives. The article concludes with the concepts of T. R. Schellenberg on the necessity of having archivists educated at the university level.

The Caribbean. [PAUL V. GUITÉ, National Archives and Records Service] *Caribbean Archives*, no. 2 (1974). Étienne Taillemite, Chief Curator, Archives Nationales, Paris, gives a detailed description of Sub-series BB⁴ of the Naval Archives, made up of records of the Bureau of Movements of the Naval Ministry. This subseries is of particular importance for the history of Latin America and the Antilles since it contains the correspondence between the Naval Ministry and the commanding officers of the French naval stations located in the area. The mission of the naval stations or divisions was to safeguard French political and commercial interests in the area as well as to conduct scientific and hydrographic operations. Included are the reports of Rear Admiral Zédé, commander of the naval division of the Antilles and of Brazil from 1883 to 1884. Admiral Zédé spent some time in Trinidad in January 1883, with the *Minerve*, and his accounts give details of the economic situation of the island and of the French colony there. Use of these records is facilitated by a summary, but detailed, inventory that can be consulted at the Service Historique de la Marine and at the Archives Nationales.

In an article photocopied from *Courrier du CNRS*, the magazine of the CNRS (center for scientific research), Paris, Françoise Fliedner, of Le Centre de recherches sur la conservation des documents graphiques [The center for research on the conservation of graphic documents], discusses the important preservation work and research being carried out by her institution. The center was established in 1963 and is dependent upon five administrative bodies (the CNRS, the natural history museum, and the directorates of libraries, museums, and archives) the directors of which compose a board responsible for the annual study of scientific results obtained by the center as well as the program of activities programmed for the coming year. The center possesses the most modern and complete equipment for its research.

Four departments have been set up, each under a specialist: (1) paper and synthetic materials; (2) leather and parchment; (3) inks and illuminations; and (4) microbiology. The center has established permanent exchanges with organizations also involved in preservation research, both in France and on the international level.

This issue of *Caribbean Archives* contains also a description by John Alden of the Caribbean collection of the Boston Public Library.

Great Britain. [ROBERT B. MATCHETTE, National Archives and Records Service] *Journal of the Society of Archivists*, vol. 4, no. 8 (October 1973). In "Letting the Archival Dust Settle: Some Remarks on the Record Group Concept" (pp. 640-45), Gerald L. Fischer defends the primacy of the record group as the "logical extension of the principle of provenance," and criticizes those who advocate its subordination to the series "as a means of archival control." Fischer believes that those who champion the series are motivated primarily by the desire for a simple and convenient means for ordering a sequence of records generated by a succession of administrative units. In pursuing this goal, however, they forget that the basic responsibility of the archivist is to determine that records are arranged in such a manner as best to "ensure an enduring physical reflection of the administrative structure that gave rise to them." The elevation of the series above its parent record group, the decision that its life should continue beyond that of the group itself, threatens the creation of an entity so bloated and swollen that provenance itself is at least compromised, if not hopelessly lost. By contrast, the record group, designed specifically to reflect the creation and evolution of administrative entities and institutional hierarchies, acts to protect the bureaucratic reality of records production for future scholars and administrators.

Fischer believes that the problems represented by the series concept are of such magnitude as greatly to outweigh any potential benefits derivable therefrom. He suggests that it is to "good records management" that archivists should look for means to alleviate the confusion resulting from administrative reorganization. Active series, for example, would be assigned to the record group established for the new agency, while the earlier record group would retain inactive or closed series. Fischer feels that a certain degree of flexibility is necessary to permit the adoption by the successor agency of a concluded series necessary for reference use. In his view much of the controversy over the place of the series in the archival inventory "stems from too great an involvement in current records management." Fischer deplores the tendency of archivists to become involved with records much too early in their history, before there has been sufficient time to gain a perspective on them and their proper place in the unit hierarchy. He suggests the wisdom of allowing the archival dust to settle, of permitting the records to become substantially inactive, before placing the archival impress upon them. "Certainly," he concludes, "archivists must be very careful that they do not obscure the ultimate historical value of

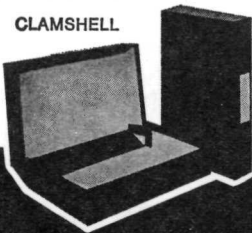
their records by any misguided enthusiasm exercised in an attempt to grapple with the flux of current and recent administrative change.

Mexico. [DONALD L. KING, National Archives and Records Service] *Bibliotecas y Archivos*, no. 4 (1973). Enrique Ruiz Cortés and Roberto Caletti Ruiz have contributed a glossary of archival terminology and tentative definitions (pp. 47-74), "for the purpose of administrative reform that is being effected in all official institutions." It was presented to the Commission of Public Administration in Mexico, which is directing administrative studies in the Secretariat of the Presidency. This glossary includes definitions of approximately 250 terms.

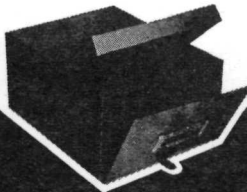
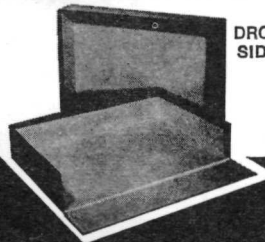
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