

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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Jaarverslag van het Landsarchief van Nederlandsch-Indie, 1938, 1939, and 1940. (Batavia. 1939, 1940, and 1941. Pp. 15, 20, and 28.)

These three annual reports when read together reveal in some perspective the slow impact of the world war on the activities of the National Archives of the Netherlands East Indies. The report for 1938 stated that although little progress had been made in the development of the National Archives as the central depository and in the building up of an archival system for the whole country, some preparatory work towards these objectives had been done. Encouragement was received from the creation of the Historical Section of the Royal Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences and from the establishment of the Far Eastern Commission of the International Committee of Historical Sciences. Mr. F. Verhoeven, the archivist, was made president of the former and representative of the Netherlands Indies in the latter group. The government had shown some recognition of the importance of the National Archives and had promised adequate legislation to place in its control the preservation, transfer, and disposition of government records. A government circular letter of November 8, 1938, to all departments ordered that the opinion of the archivist as to the historical value of records should be obtained before disposal of them was authorized.

In 1938 the National Archives was becoming more widely recognized as a center of historical study. The number and diversity of requests for information and of its international contacts were increasing. These contacts were predominantly with the mother country and with the Straits Settlements. A visiting professor from the German Institute in Kyoto collecting data on contacts of the Netherlands Indies with Japan in the nineteenth century stressed the importance of continuing the publication of documents from its historical collections.

A number of archival collections were received by transfer from various government departments in the capital and from other localities throughout the islands. Some requests for transfers had to be refused owing to lack of space. The inventorying of records continued. The Soerabaja archives were completely sorted and entered on slips. The arrangement of the Semarang archives was begun. The description and measuring of maps were continued on a considerable scale and the collection of genealogical slips was greatly increased. The increased usefulness of this latter collection, particularly in answering the many inquiries received from Germany, was mentioned.

When the 1939 report was written at the beginning of 1940 the National Archives was still mainly occupied with its normal activities. It was

even stated that the future of the institution was brighter than ever before and that the construction of the first part of the new archives building would be begun in 1940; an amount was set aside in the financial estimates of that year for this purpose. The arrangement and inventorying of various collections continued and the removal of certain collections from the main part of the building into the two wings in order to release space for other records was completed. Work was done on the cleaning, repairing, and rewrapping of records and the fire protection system was improved. Steps were also taken for air protection immediately upon the outbreak of the war in Europe. Attention was given to the improvement of the information or reference service, which was recognized to be inadequate. It was hoped to build up this service on a sounder foundation, with historical documentation of a continuous character. It was recognized, however, that this could not be accomplished without a larger trained permanent personnel, and for lack of funds very little was accomplished in this direction during the three years under review. Archival exhibits in connection with current or historical events were held as usual at various times through the year. Among the research projects undertaken was the beginning of a search for data concerning Krakatau before the eruption of 1883.

In the course of the year 1940 the war introduced considerable changes in the situation of the National Archives in the Netherlands Indies. After the conquest of Holland it was realized that this institution was the only place where administrative and historical research for those islands as well as for the mother country could be carried on. The plans for a new archives building were dropped and economies practiced in the preceding years had to be maintained and extended. Requests for transfers of records increased and were accepted as far as possible. The government archives for the period 1851-1880, amounting to one kilometer in linear measurement, were taken over and added to those of the period 1815-1850 already in the National Archives. In order to do this, however, old financial records had to be moved into a warehouse in the lower part of the capital, where they were stored on wooden shelves and where little or no attention could be given to their upkeep or inventorying.

New plans for evacuation and for destruction of old archives were proposed and were still under consideration at the end of the year. Administrative and military archives in various localities were inspected. Increased calls were made upon the archivist for his ruling as to the historical value of records submitted for disposition as a result of the government circular letter of November, 1938.

The normal work on the arrangement and description of records was continued. Progress was made in collecting native Indian archival documents and a bibliography of native source materials was begun. The statistics for services rendered showed a slight decrease for the year, but information was supplied to the government at the latter's request to aid in combating inacu-

rate statements made abroad. Although illustrations were omitted from the 1938 and 1939 reports for reasons of economy, the 1940 report contains several photographs of interesting old archival documents.

ARTHUR LEAVITT

The National Archives

Philadelphia Libraries: A Survey of Facilities, Needs, and Opportunities. A Report to the Carnegie Corporation of New York by the Bibliographical Planning Committee of Philadelphia. (Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press, 1942.)

In sharp and pleasing contrast to books with encyclopedic titles and limited contents, the present volume constitutes a careful examination of a much more extensive field than is implied in its title, *Philadelphia Libraries*, or even in its more extended subtitle. The whole field of library co-operation in America came within the review of the committee in its effort to define the place of Philadelphia libraries in that field. If the results of that survey seem an unfavorable reflection on the library situation in Philadelphia, so are those results an even more unfavorable commentary on the whole field of library co-operation in the United States.

In examining the development of library co-operation throughout the world the committee was compelled to conclude that library co-operation "has not made as much progress in the United States as it has in Germany or Great Britain or some of the smaller countries of Europe." It describes American library co-operation as local in its scope and haphazard in its development. No thinking librarian or archivist will deny that these conditions exist, but some measure of comfort should be forthcoming from the consideration that the United States is a much larger geographic unit than any one country in Europe in which library co-operation has been highly developed. This is not to condone the haphazard development, but it should suggest the possibility of creating a reasonable pattern of library co-operation and the basic framework of local and regional co-operative programs now in operation.

Some of the difficulties encountered in Philadelphia are indicative of the kinds of traditions which must be upset before an all-inclusive, nation-wide system of library co-operation can be effected. Disregarding the almost universal general apathy to library co-operation as only a normal inertia confronting all new enterprises, we can point first to the impediment imposed by ideas of property rights. That books should be considered private property is natural enough; they are bought and sold much like other commodities. The ideas contained in books, however, are public property, and when the exigencies of time and bad library and archival practice have seriously limited the number of manifestations (copies) of those ideas available to the public and to scholar-

ship, it becomes imperative that even the so-called private libraries open their resources to serious and legitimate users.

But private libraries are not the only sinners in the name of property. Library co-operation implies library specialization, which in turn implies (among other things) the transfer of collections from less desirable locations to more desirable locations. National, state, and local laws make such transfers difficult for libraries of public and educational institutions, and librarians have been slow to adopt the subterfuge of the indefinite loan.

Only one other example of the many impediments to library co-operation can be mentioned here—this one apparently having the full support of the Bibliographical Planning Committee.

I am in entire disagreement with the committee's statement that "it must be admitted that the distance which separates Bryn Mawr (ten miles) from the larger research libraries within the area necessitates the development of an independent research library." It is this very feeling that all materials must be immediately at every possible user's hand that accounts for the high percentage of duplication among research libraries, and for the fact that American research libraries, as a group, hold hardly a third of the titles known to the world. A much more fundamental conception of library co-operation and specialization is in order if we are to increase greatly the number of titles held by American libraries. Scholars at Bryn Mawr, New York, or at Pittsburgh, should be willing to travel to Philadelphia when the significant collections of materials in their fields are located there; and libraries in Philadelphia should be willing to lend to Bryn Mawr, New York, and Chicago when only one or a dozen or twenty books are needed. Library co-operation means co-operative use of books on a nation-wide scale. Union catalogues and bibliographical centers, important as they are, are no more than necessary instruments in a program of library co-operation. Philadelphia is fortunate in having compiled a union catalogue and in having laid the foundation for a bibliographical center. These tools cannot achieve their maximum usefulness, however, until Philadelphia libraries manage to place in effective operation the principles of library co-operation so well described and documented in this report of the Bibliographical Planning Committee.

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A Proposed Program of Records Administration and Archival Service for the Tennessee Valley Authority, by W. Grant Boyer. (Knoxville, Tenn. Tennessee Valley Authority, 1941. Pp. 22, and appendix, 10. Processed, limited distribution.)

The great masses of records that have been accumulated by the several federal government agencies represent one of the largest and most important current administrative problems. It is all too slowly gaining recognition as

such. These masses of records are being augmented daily during this war emergency by tremendous quantities of newly created documentary evidence of current activities, in many instances with little or no control over the adequacy of their content, their completeness, or their orderly and useful organization or careful preservation. The timely adoption of programs similar in principle to the one so excellently presented in this report would have undoubtedly prevented the creation of the current problems of inadequate operating space, equipment, and far more important, the lack of ready reference to the important information the records contain.

In a nutshell the principle objective of the program is to fix responsibility for the maintenance of service on records employed in the transaction of current business; the custody, organization and preservation of semi-active and inactive records; and the disposal of ephemeral materials. The positions to which these responsibilities are charged are designated as "archivist" and "records officer." The qualifications required of the incumbents of these positions are rather unique in that both must be analysts of procedural problems incident to the creation, organization, and servicing of active records and at the same time possess to some degree the archivist's sense of value of records. The establishment of such an officer in each of the several federal agencies, it is believed, is fully warranted and would pay incalculable dividends in the form of money savings, in more efficient business administration and more effective functional administration.

The program proposed by Mr. Boyer for the Tennessee Valley Authority is substantially supported by an interesting summary of administrative policies relating to the past and present administration of the organization's records and the effect of a confusion of those policies on the quantity and condition of the records. The volume and condition of the accumulated records are effectively illustrated by actual photographs appropriately selected to depict "The Story of the Knoxville Files." These photographs are a part of an ample appendix. The story which they relate is typical of conditions existent in many other agencies. It emphasizes the importance of timely, effective treatment of such conditions and the need for a program such as proposed in the promotion of administrative efficiency and economy.

The program is further substantiated by a historical account of the development of technique and procedure employed in organizing and servicing the large quantities of records accumulated to meet the requirements of a very active organization. Of particular interest is the account of experiences in the use of several types of records classification schemes and functional organization arrangements. The organizational arrangements ranged in type from non-centralized office and individual's files to centralization in toto. The results of these experiences will undoubtedly be of great value to planners of records service units in federal agencies and other organizations confronted with comparable problems.

The cardinal points of the proposed program incorporate sound principles of current and inactive records administration. A flexible subjective classification scheme and a unique alpha-numeric system of coding designed to meet the particular needs of the organization is proposed for the uniform classification of all of the organization's records and is presented in detail as a part of the appendix. The scheme contemplates facilitating the segregation of ephemeral materials by means of the establishment of specific categories for such materials. To administer the program effectively, it is proposed that the position of archivist of the organization be established "to administer generally the execution of the records program and to review and approve basic operating policies" and the appointment of a records officer whose principal functions would be to supervise the operation of a system of official files; to develop schedules of retention and disposal of records; and to develop basic operating policies, systems, procedures, and practices necessary to the installation and operation of the program. The program further proposes the establishment of temporary storage points for records sufficiently inactive to permit their removal from active files but which must be retained reasonably accessible to the files from which they are transferred and the establishment of a central archives for the storage of records to be preserved permanently or for a period of time sufficient to justify microfilming and ultimate destruction of the originals.

The only element essential to a complete records administration program lacking specific mention in the report is the establishment of an "administrative reference service." This service is a natural function of an effective records service organization. It contemplates facilities for furnishing complete background material, including source reference in the absence of actual documentary materials, on any subject that arises incident to the administration of the functions of the organization. These materials and references include legislative history, legal and administrative precedents, economic data, etc., available in anticipation of the need when it shall arise.

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American Manuscript Collections in the Huntington Library for the History of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries, compiled by Norma B. Cuthbert. Huntington Library Lists, Number 5. (San Marino, California. The Huntington Library, 1941. Pp. vii and 93. \$1.50.)

This volume describes in brief compass the principal holdings of a major repository of historical manuscripts and archival material. Perhaps as much as half of the documents described are to be regarded as archival in character, and of this half, a large portion is material a searcher might expect to find in the Public Record Office in London. At a time like the present, however,

American scholars can be thankful that the materials are in America in a library which guarantees so well their safe-keeping and availability.

The documents described are listed under twenty-nine headings. Headings represent both single collections as well as miscellaneous and arbitrary groupings, although manuscripts regarded as miscellaneous, however important, have not been listed. Each group of manuscripts is described with information relating to provenance, number of pieces, period of years covered, an outline of subject matter, persons represented by more than an occasional piece, important or interesting items, and the physical condition of the pieces. This detail is included within a remarkably small amount of space and yet it is astonishingly complete. In this and other respects the list is a model worthy of emulation.

The outlines of subject matter contained in the various collections bespeak an enviable familiarity with the nature of the manuscripts. Footnotes indicate the existence of published materials and in what other collections related items can be found. An index of proper names, providing ready reference to the data under "persons represented," adds to the usefulness of the listings. The only noticeable reference missing is a statement of the conditions under which these manuscripts can be used; mention of the services rendered by a depository to its clientele may be regarded as essential to a modern bibliography. The Huntington Library might have included this information with pride, for its assistance to scholars and its reproduction services are noteworthy.

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