

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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The United States Government as Publisher, by LeRoy Charles Merritt.
The University of Chicago Studies in Library Science. (Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1943. Pp. 179.)

The stated objectives of this study of the publishing activities of the United States government are threefold: (1) an analysis by subject—"to discover the scope of the subject content" and to "trace the trend of subject emphasis . . . since the turn of the century"; (2) an analysis by function—to examine "the trend in the purpose for which government publications are issued"; and (3) an analysis by departments—to note the "trend in quantitative output of the several government departments." Consequently, the major portion of the book appears in the form of tables and graphs, together with the necessary interpretation, based on a review of the publications issued by the several departments and agencies as listed in the *Monthly Catalog United States Public Documents* for the period 1899 to 1940, and presented in accordance with an established sampling procedure.

Like all who work with government publications, the author has yet to find an adequate definition for "government documents." Likewise, the lack of a satisfactory definition for those publications which are created by processes other than printing is pointed out, but with these handicaps acknowledged, the author presents in tangible form the movements in government publishing from the standpoint of agency of origin, purpose of publication, and subject matter, one chapter each being devoted to these three analyses. Certain marked trends are in evidence as a result of each analysis, which are carefully pointed out in the interpretation of the statistics. It is recognized that additional conclusions may be drawn from the facts as set forth.

The author's conclusion that still more government reorganization is necessary to avoid much present duplication and confusion will receive the hearty approval of many government critics. Furthermore, the despairing cry of innumerable scholars that government-sponsored research studies never see the light of print but remain buried in inactive departmental files finds justification in this study.

Another significant trend noted, and one which has a direct bearing on archival work, is the officially sponsored policy of reducing the number and size of administrative reports, resulting in the availability of complete department and bureau reports in typewritten form only in the files of the respective departments and agencies. Such a trend is not good administrative procedure, nor does it carry out the democratic principles upon which our government was formed.

In the section devoted to the departmental analysis of publications, all independent establishments are treated as a single agency, being compared with each of the ten executive departments, the legislative branch, and the judiciary of Washington. This grouping is somewhat disconcerting at times, especially in view of the present size and significance of some of the agencies falling within this group, although an attempt at breaking these independent agencies down into several groups would, perhaps, have made the study unwieldy. It is recognized, moreover, that the resulting inability on the part of the reader to visualize the distinctive activities and contributions of these component agencies as such is somewhat compensated for by the interpretative remarks concerning the trends discovered by the author in the course of his survey of publications but which could not be revealed through the tables and graphs.

The repetition of material in more than one chapter has tended also to disrupt the forward movement, too much having been presented in the introduction which logically belongs with the presentation of the facts. The work, however seems to have been carefully done, with the evidence presented in a form readily available for further individual study and interpretation.

Most of the findings are not new to those concerned with documents and their problems, but the author has brought the facts together in statistical form, and it is to be hoped that this study will give additional impetus to the movement to remedy many of the unfortunate practices of the United States government as publisher.

ELEANOR ROSS

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The Chicago Public Library, Origins and Backgrounds, by Gwladys Spencer.

The University of Chicago Studies in Library Science. (Chicago. University of Chicago Press, 1943. Pp. xvii and 473.)

Miss Spencer undertakes to write against a wide historical background the history of the Chicago Public Library. Beginning with the assumption that most people believe the Chicago Public Library originated in a gift of the English people after the fire of 1871, she sets about to find deeper origins for it. She sketches the pioneer Chicago community to show that it was one from which culture, art, and reading were not remote; she traces the establishment of the small co-operative public libraries that tended to spring up in all progressive pioneer communities. On the eve of the fire of 1871, she actually shows two rival libraries, that of the Chicago Library Association and the YMCA. She shows that a free public library was under agitation before the fire of October 9, 1871. She deals briefly with other specialized libraries such as that of the Chicago Historical Society, the Chicago Academy of Science, and the Chicago Law Institute. She even considers in considerable detail the private libraries of I. N. Arnold and others.

For further background, she seeks out the history of libraries in Illinois

from the beginning, including early legislation upon the subject, in college, normal school, and university libraries. She has, therefore, exhausted considerably more than half of her volume before she is ready to deal with the post-fire development of the library. She goes into detail upon the English offering and traces carefully the parallel development of the State Library Act of 1872. In dealing with the use of that authorization by Chicago, she finds it necessary to trace the governmental history of Chicago itself from the beginning as a preliminary to considering the actual inception of the Chicago Public Library as it exists today.

This is, as may be perceived, a somewhat unusual library history. In fact, Miss Spencer's book is rather a history of culture in Illinois with special reference to Chicago than it is a special history of an institution. The mode of approach is different but it is none the less interesting and readable.

THEODORE C. PEASE

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Rapport de l'Archiviste de la Province de Québec pour 1941-1942. (Quebec. Redempti Paradis, 1942. Pp. 575.)

This report of the archivist, the twenty-second of the series and like the great majority of the documents of the province, is published in French. It follows the usual model of Canadian archival reports in being devoted largely to selections from the historical archives of the province while the administrative report is embodied in the letter of transmittal from the archivist to the provincial secretary. In the present report, there are brief comments about the collections acquired and the inventories published during the year. A list of the principal gifts, with their donors, immediately follows the administrative report.

The first selection is "L'Aveu et Denombrement de Montreal" taken in 1731. This is a list of the holdings of land in Montreal together with the name of the owner and a brief description of the property. This detailed description is indexed and is also accompanied by a map drawn by Chaussegros de Lery. Both list and map are preserved in the Provincial Archives. This is followed by the third part of the inventory of documents concerning the church in Canada under the French regime, edited by the late Abbe Ivanhoe Caron (the first part is published in the *Report* of the archivist for 1939-1940, and the second in that for 1940-1941). The next is an account of a visit to the Gaspé Coast, by the Reverend G. J. Mountain, archdeacon of Lower Canada in 1824. This is published in English, as it was written in that language. The last selection is an inventory of the letters of Mgr. Jean Jacques Lartigue, vicar-general of Quebec and bishop suffragan of Montreal from 1819 to 1826, also by the late Abbe Caron. The report is made more valuable to historical scholars by an index.

This report is the first prepared under the direction of M. Antoine Roy, second archivist of the province. The first archivist, Pierre-Georges Roy, retired in 1941.

EDWARD F. ROWSE

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Check List of Historical Records Survey Publications. WPA Technical Series, Research and Records Bibliography No. 7, revised April, 1943. Federal Works Agency, Work Projects Administration, Division of Service Projects, Washington, D.C. Prepared by Sargent B. Child and Dorothy P. Holmes, with assistance in checking and arranging by Cyril E. Paquin. (Mimeographed, 110 p.)

This "final" listing of Historical Records Survey publications, 1936-1943, supersedes *WPA Research and Records Bibliography* No. 4, issued September 12, 1940, revised and reissued September 1, 1941. It contains lists of the published *Inventories of Federal Archives in the States*, and of the series of state, county, and municipal records inventories which have been published. Other types of publications listed include transcriptions of public archives, guides to vital statistics, inventories and directories of church archives, calendars and inventories of manuscript collections, American imprints inventories, including indexes to certain newspaper files, American portrait inventories, guides to civilian organizations, ship registers and enrolments of certain ports, and a miscellaneous series.

The volume also contains a list of the local records microfilmed under the direction of the Historical Records Survey, which does not include other microfilming work of the WPA.

The results of the Historical Records Survey's work thus presented are very impressive and should be of the greatest value to historians, saving their time and pointing the way to sources which otherwise would be buried in an undifferentiated mass. Librarians will be able to use this key to a vast amount of information of practical value to individuals, groups, and government entities. The real extent of the survey's work can only be realized from the statement in the preface, that the volume of the material gathered by the survey, which was in various stages of completion when it had to be discontinued, is "estimated to be eight or ten times greater than the volume of material represented by the publications listed in this final check list."

This unpublished material is not listed, but a list of depositories of unpublished material is given in the appendix, which however fails to mention the National Archives as depository for the unpublished materials of the Survey of Federal Archives in the States. A list of the libraries which have sets of the published inventories would have been very useful. The user of this list, if not so fortunate as to find listed here the particular inventory he needs, should not

assume that it does not exist. A check made by Miss Frances Bourne of the National Archives has shown that certain published inventories which are on the shelves there were omitted from this list, probably by an editorial slip, including the whole series of Inventories of Federal Archives for Maine, and several Inventories of County Archives for Wisconsin. The Maine inventories appeared in the earlier list (No. 4). But even if an unlisted inventory which may be desired has not been published, it will in many cases be possible to locate it in an unpublished state at the appropriate archival depository.

It is to be hoped that, while this list may be regarded as, in the main, definitive for the present suspended state of survey work on historical records, it will be anything but "final" in the developments that may grow out of it.

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