

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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A.L.A. Glossary of Library Terms, with a Selection of Terms in Related Fields, prepared under the direction of the Committee on Library Terminology of the American Library Association by Elizabeth H. Thompson. (Chicago. American Library Association, 1943. Pp. viii, 159. Cloth \$3.50.)

The subtitle of this book, "with a selection of terms in related fields," shows its real value to the archivist. The interest of members of this group is centered, not on the technical terms of library practice, but on those dealing with archives, maps, and films, and in these respects the book is of value to them. The definitions of archival terms are excellent, and should be of great value to everyone, both in and out of the archival profession, in providing definite and clear statements of what have been to many people vague and shadowy terms. We only wish that there were more of them.

The definitions of terms relating to maps and microphotography, especially the latter, are very good. Here we have, for the first time, a group of terms clearly defined in such language that those who are not acquainted with the technical jargon of photography can understand.

The technical library terms, interesting to this reviewer because he is a trained librarian as well as an archivist, are very well done, clear and succinct. The mere perusal of the glossary brings home forcibly the progress that has been made in library science in the last decade.

One criticism, and only one, can be made of the glossary, and that is the definition of the terms used in binding, and even that is tempered by the realization that space is at a premium in these times. The definitions of the different types of sewing could be made much clearer if they were accompanied by simple diagrams. It is difficult for one not too familiar with the binding process to grasp the different types of sewing and their particular virtues. This is, however, a very minor matter, and Mr. Feipel is to be congratulated on his contribution to the *Glossary*. The book is a distinct contribution to both library and archival science and should be of value to both librarians and archivists, and especially to those persons whose duties are a combination of both professions.

EDWARD F. ROWSE

The National Archives

An Experiment in the Retention and Preservation of Corporate Records, by Carl H. McKenzie. Supplement to the *Business Historical Society Bulletin* for February, 1943. (Boston. Baker Library, 1943. Pp. 23.)

If other alumni of the Harvard Graduate School of Business Administration carry with them into their business careers as intelligent an interest in business records and their management as has the author of this pamphlet, we may expect them in time, as they rise to positions of responsibility, to exert a real influence upon the standards of record administration in the business world. The author, who is secretary-treasurer of the Pennsylvania Telephone Corporation, here presents a case study based upon his actual experience in grappling with the record problems of his own corporation. It is presented, according to the editor's note, as a kind of supplement to Ralph M. Hower's pamphlet, *The Preservation of Business Records*, now in its fourth printing.

In his search for "tried or suggested methods and procedures," Mr. McKenzie was obliged to turn to writings on public archives, there being "no constructive material available indicative that private business had given serious consideration to the problem." The experience of archivists, "even if somewhat different in scope, was found helpful and instructive." He notes significantly that the regulations of governmental regulatory agencies with respect to the keeping of records by many businesses affected with a public interest, including his own, "contain positive retention limitations for certain records but are indefinite as to the requirements for those records which a business may wish to retain for informational or historical purposes." He adds further that "historical value demands serious thought, not only for potential future advertising purposes and sentimental reasons but also from the viewpoint of successor managements."

The necessary preliminary survey revealed that "decentralized storage had been permitted to flourish throughout the organization." Mergers and consolidations had "left an aftermath of scattered, disconnected, or incomplete records, apparently forgotten once the matter of immediate importance had been concluded." It was decided that "centralization must be insisted upon so that an efficient and economical approach could be undertaken toward ultimate standardization." The records were therefore assembled, examined, and sorted. The useless records were eliminated. Those to be permanently retained were flattened, repaired, classified, and indexed, and filed systematically in a large vault. Retention and disposal schedules were drawn up on the basis of this work. The description of the classification and indexing procedures followed leaves one with the impression that they are more elaborate than necessary, and the vault arrangement described seems to lack flexibility. One would have to visit the depository, however, to fully understand and pass judgment upon these matters. Whatever one's doubts as to certain details of procedure, this is an intelligent and thought-provoking pamphlet that should be in the

hands of all practicing business archivists and others interested in the management of the records of business firms.

OLIVER W. HOLMES

The National Archives

The Administration of Current Records in Italian Public Agencies, by Ernst Posner. The National Archives, *Records Administration Circular* No. 5 (November, 1943). Pp. 13. Multilithed.

The study of the administration of current records in a foreign country, as the author points out in his prefatory paragraphs, should be done by personal observation; and whenever that is impossible, it should be based on realistic descriptions of prevailing practices and actual conditions. If these methods are unavailable, then filing manuals and regulatory documents constitute the only types of source material that can be used. Little recent material, even of the last category, was available in this country for the author. Notwithstanding this the writer, a former archivist in the Privy State Archives in Berlin and now adjunct professor of archival administration at the American University, has given in a few pages a glimpse of the organization for and procedures of paper work prescribed for Italian public agencies at the beginning of the twentieth century and which are known to have been maintained in force down to the early thirties. The registering, classifying, and arranging of an agency's records, which are major processes in records administration proper, are discussed. There are also notes on the organizational structure of the government at various levels and of some of the offices and officers responsible for records administration matters. The preparation of this paper for the assistance of those engaged in the administration of occupied territories, at the suggestion of the archivist of the United States, demonstrates that archives can be made to meet the exigencies of the hour.

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