

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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The Repair and Preservation of Records, by Adelaide E. Minogue, *Bulletins* of the National Archives, No. 5. (Washington. September, 1943. Pp. 56.)

The foreword of this *Bulletin* states that it is designed to set out the methods of rehabilitating archives and manuscripts used in the National Archives because these methods are especially adapted to war-time emergencies. The introduction declares the purpose of the *Bulletin* is to meet the need for a practical handbook based upon the most recent scientific investigation. The second claim is sounder than the first since most of the equipment and procedures described are too bulky or intricate for emergency use.

The first section is devoted to paper manufacture and the various tests that may be used to determine strength and purity. Also discussed in some detail are those factors frequently present in storage areas which cause or accelerate natural aging. Suggestions here given for control of light, temperature, humidity, sulphur dioxide, and ozone are well stated and the recommendations made will repay careful study. The discussion of dust control and filter systems leaves something to be desired particularly in that the newer developments in the field, such as the Westinghouse Precipitron apparatus, which bid fair to revolutionize air-conditioning systems, are not mentioned at all. Methods of fumigation and protection from fire and water are adequately handled.

The largest part of the *Bulletin* is given over to methods of repair, cleaning, flattening, and reinforcement. The compressed air cleaning table is described together with humidifying and ironing machines for bulk flattening of paper. A table of solvents for stains is provided although without statement as to any tests that may have been made of them. Comments on the washing of paper disregard the fact that with suitable equipment even very badly deteriorated documents may be soaked without damage. These, of course, since they have developed high acidity, are the ones most in need of such treatment. Discussion of faded inks is limited to observations on photography and visibility under ultra-violet light and there is no discussion of chemical means save the statement, without reference, that it cannot be safely undertaken without jeopardizing the strength of the paper and the ultimate permanence of the writing.

Methods of reinforcement are given in considerable detail with sections on inlay, mounting, glazing, and resizing. Restoration by pasting sheets of

crepeline or Japanese tissue over damaged material is described and the conclusion that use of these processes is expensive and never completely satisfactory is sound. Restoration by the use of transparent cellulose sheetings is treated fully. Those with adhesive are considered satisfactory for certain types of work but their limitations are not completely explained. Those without adhesive, which are applied under heat and pressure, are stated rightly to be the best for all purposes. Fairly complete instructions are provided for the preparation and lamination of material in a steam-heated hydraulic press. Reference is given to a simpler and less expensive press.

The *Bulletin* is completed with sections on special problems of restoring maps, photographic reproductions, burned and soaked records. Suggestions are also made concerning preservation of bindings, seals, and parchment, and there is a brief treatment of boxing and shelving with emphasis on vertical rather than horizontal filing.

The *Bulletin* has assembled more pertinent information on repair and preservation of records than has heretofore been available and custodians of documents should be very grateful for its contribution. Descriptions are drawn almost completely from practices in the National Archives and conclusions represent largely those of a single institution. As excellent as these are in many respects, other institutions will find themselves at variance with many of them. Since many working details are omitted such as time, temperature, etc., needed for particular operations, and since there is nowhere any statement of how errors made during the process of repair may be corrected, the *Bulletin* does not meet the need of a complete manual and cannot be used by an untrained person.

W. J. BARROW and R. W. CHURCH

Virginia State Library

"Peregrinations of an Itinerant Microphotographer—Microfilming the Journals of State Legislatures," by William S. Jenkins. *The Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, 5 (December, 1942), 177-197.

Microphotography provides a feasible means of assembling in one place copies of large bodies of research materials which cannot themselves be so assembled. It also opens the road to a new type of documentary publication with the master negative substituted for the printer's plates and the positive print for the finished book. Obviously, if these newer uses of the microfilm medium are to attain high repute, the possibilities of the medium must be appreciated and its limitations respected. Projects must be wisely selected, carefully planned, and well executed. The Library of Congress project for microcopying colonial, territorial, and state legislative journals appears to meet these standards. It was under Professor Jenkins' immediate supervision until the war forced its suspension, and, in his article, he traces it from its

origin. The value of the article, aside from its proof of the possibilities of itinerant microphotography, lies in the stress placed on preliminary planning, in the discussion of the special problems and emergencies that arose during the high-speed microfilming campaign covering thirty states, and in the explanation of the steps taken and editorial devices adopted to make the completed film fully comprehensible to users. Anyone responsible for planning or executing large-scale microfilming projects will do well to study Professor Jenkins' article, and anyone interested in the finished product of his travels should consult the "Checklist of State Legislative Journals on Microfilm" published in *The Journal of Documentary Reproduction*, 5 (September, 1942), 150-160. Finally, this reviewer has two observations to make: First, a writer seeking to convey to readers the benefit of experience gained during itinerant operations would, it is believed, find an analytical approach more successful than Professor Jenkins' method of giving a step by step account of his trip. Second, the several institutions pioneering in the creation of microfilm edited for scholarly purposes would do well to undertake co-operative study of such problems as project selection and editorial techniques.

PRESTON W. EDSALL

North Carolina State College

Company Museums, by Laurence Vail Coleman, director, American Association of Museums. (Washington, D.C. The American Association of Museums, 1943. Pp. viii, 173. \$2.50.)

When visiting company museums, two questions always come to my mind—and probably to yours, viz., (1) "Is this activity worth what it costs?" and (2) "Should my company have a museum?"

In his well-written book *Company Museums*, Laurence Vail Coleman does not attempt to prove a company museum is worth its cost. He allows you to infer from what he tells you that properly conceived and managed, it's an asset. When he tells you about the museums maintained by Aluminum Company of America, Bell Telephone, Eastman, Ford, General Motors, Hammermill, and Western Union, he lets you decide if they are crazy or if the idea is sound.

After a hasty but informative glance at existing museums, the author presumes his reader has decided to start a museum—or improve the one he already has—and gets right down to brass tacks in explaining how this should be done. He convinces you he knows what he's talking about and that if you follow his suggestions your museum will be a success. He even does not neglect to tell you how to attract visitors—so again the theory of the world beating a path to the forest home of the mousetrap maker is ignored—rightly.

Perhaps when you have reached the end of the last chapter, your enthusiasm

will bring you into agreement with Coleman's thesis that the company museum is one of the activities that will enjoy great expansion after the war.

You certainly will agree when he says, "Museums do not appear where there is an attitude like that of one high executive who forestalled 'such nonsense' by falling upon a collection of his company's early products with a club. But they tend to take root where the management has a sense of tradition and pride in the firm and holds a liberal view of its work."

FRANK M. ROOT

Westinghouse Electric and Manufacturing Company

Measures Relating to Vital Records and Vital Statistics, Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Report of the Bureau of the Budget on Measures Relating to Vital Statistics. Union Calendar No. 214. House Document No. 242. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1943. Pp. vii, 264.)

Establishing a Bureau of Vital Records in the United States Public Health Service. Hearing Before a Subcommittee on Commerce United States Senate Seventy-Eighth Congress Second Session on S. 1096. . . . January 13, 1944. (Washington. United States Government Printing Office, 1944. Pp. 52.)

These documents grew out of President Roosevelt's letter to the president of the Senate on July 27, 1942, in which he wrote "There is at the present time a great confusion in the field of vital records growing out of the activities of Government and industry, particularly in connection with the security and health laws. There is need for a comprehensive study to be made to determine requirements and make recommendation to prevent duplication of effort and to integrate the activities of all agencies concerned." Mr. Roosevelt went on to direct the Bureau of the Budget to make the study, the product of which is printed in the first of the above titles.

Included in the volume are: "Report of the Commission on Vital Records, Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services, February 3, 1943" prepared under the direction of Dr. Lowell J. Reed of Johns Hopkins University (pp. 14-22); "Report of Vital Records Committee of the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, March 25, 1943" (pp. 23-31); and five sections compiled by Dr. Halbert Dunn, chief statistician for vital statistics, Bureau of the Census, covering "Uses of Vital Records" (pp. 32-38), "Development and Present Status of State and Local Vital Statistics Offices" (pp. 39-93), "Development and Present Status of the Division of Vital Statistics, Bureau of the Census" (pp. 94-117), "Other Undertakings . . . in the Field of Vital Records" (pp. 118-122), and "Analysis of Costs of

Vital Records (pp. 123-127). A valuable selection of exhibits, including tables, charts, and forms, completes the volume.

The Bureau of the Budget concludes (1) that while a national population registration should be carried out, it is not essential during the war, (2) that a national vital records office should be established as a separate organizational unit in the United States Public Health Service, and (3) that the pending legislative proposals to authorize certain agencies to issue documents as substitutes for birth certificates should not be enacted.

The second title listed above covers the hearings held by the subcommittee of the Committee on Commerce of the United States Senate January 13, 1944, on S. 1096, "The Vital Records Act." This proposed act grew out of the report of the Bureau of the Budget described above.

This proposed legislation would authorize the appropriation of \$2,000,000 annually for allotment by a bureau of vital records, in the United States Public Health Service, to the states for the purpose of "assisting States and their political subdivisions in establishing and maintaining adequate vital records services including the training of personnel for State and local vital records work" and, the functions of the Division of Vital Statistics of the Bureau of the Census would be transferred to the United States Public Health Service. The hearing brings out the distinction between vital records and vital statistics, the faults in existing vital records systems, the need for federal-state co-operation and highlights the line versus staff concept of federal agency organization.

It must be noted that S. 1096 has not yet been reported out by the Senate committee.

Archivists, students of government, and administrative officials at local, state, and federal levels of government will find these documents a useful synthesis of current vital records and vital statistics problems and the points of view on their solution.

JOHN C. L. ANDREASSEN

Federal Works Agency

War Records Projects in the States, 1941-1943, by Lester J. Cappon, library consultant in history and archives, assistant professor of history, University of Virginia. (Washington, D.C. The American Association for State and Local History, 1944. Pp. 38.)

The author is eminently qualified to appraise these projects since he has been in the center of activities in this field from the beginning. Under the authorization of the Social Science Research Council, he made a study of such projects in the first World War (published in 1943), and is now the chairman of the committee on state and local records of the American Association for State and Local History.

The report contains several sections dealing with the twenty-nine state projects in regard to: their administration and operation; problems of collecting and selection; means of informing and arousing the public; types of war records being collected; writing war history; and post-war planning. He has appended a chronological list of projects through 1943.

Mr. Cappon feels that collecting war records presupposes an intelligent concept of aims and objectives along with an understanding of the practical problems involved; he says that these conditions are more prevalent today than in 1917-1918, and that it is "a safe prediction that the program of archival science and practice during the past twenty years will be reflected in the better preservation of state official records of the present war as compared with that during and after World War I."

Types of records being collected are in the following categories: governmental; records of economic, political, social and religious organizations; newspapers; personal papers and manuscripts; books, pamphlets, and periodicals; posters, music, films, and photographs; museum objects; data compiled by questionnaire; interviews; and special investigations.

This appraisal is well done and should encourage those engaged in the work, as well as inspire others to lend a hand.

WILLIAM D. OVERMAN

Firestone Tire and Rubber Company, Akron, Ohio

War Records Handbook, compiled by the Division of Archives and History, [New York] State Education Department. (Albany, N.Y. The University of the State of New York Press, 1943. Pp. 31.)

This is at once a practical manual of instruction and a justification of local war records preservation. The five reasons given for such activity would apply in any state: to provide data for local and community histories, to create funds for later selection by libraries and museums, to supply school exhibits, to provide bases for veterans' claims, and to enlighten future leaders by the lessons of experience. Advice is wisely given to emphasize records of local activities rather than of national ones of which evidence happens to appear in the locality. The suggestion that collectors list the war organizations in their regions first in order to decide upon the selection and arrangement of materials should assure some orderly pattern to the work. The wide variety of possible types of war records is explained and also emphasized by catch-lines inserted at the foot of successive pages.

Most of the handbook consists of a "Summary of Types of War Records," which is in large part really a list of activities that might be recorded. The outline of this list, or the later recommendation of an alphabetical filing system, might induce some collectors to rearrange in subject or alphabetical order the records of organizations in which the original order would have

archival significance. This would be particularly deplorable if, as some headings on war-time living and economic conditions in the summary appear to suggest, local collectors took over records of public bodies. There is, indeed, a caution to the effect that federal, state, and local agencies will probably take care of their own records.

Advice on arrangement and care of collections is commendably brief and simple. Fortunately careful dating and labeling of everything are emphasized. Scrapbooks are recommended only in very small communities, and even for them it is wisely stated that an unindexed scrapbook is worthless.

PHILIP C. BROOKS

The National Archives

Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the United States Food Administration, 1917-1920: Part 1, The Headquarters Organization, by the National Archives. Preliminary Inventory No. 3, Part 1. (Washington, D.C. The National Archives, July, 1943. Pp. xlv, 335.)

Keenly cognizant that adequate guides are imperative if the contents of major groups of records are to be made readily available to government officials, research workers, and other investigators, the archivist of the United States inaugurated in February, 1941, a systematic program of compiling and issuing finding aids that will serve this purpose. The initial objective is preliminary check-lists that indicate the series, files, volumes, or other units of the major record groups as they are found or tentatively arranged. The second objective is preliminary inventories in processed form for general distribution. After the arrangement of each group is completed, final inventories are to be issued. During the present war, the program is to be limited to preliminary finding aids for the records concerning war and post-war problems.

This preliminary inventory covers the records of the United States Food Administration's offices in Washington, its Milling Division and its Sugar Distributing Committee which had headquarters in New York and Chicago respectively, and certain regional offices operated by several of the organizational units. The records of the state, territorial, and local food administrations are to be covered in the second part. The records of closely associated agencies, such as the United States Grain Corporation and the Sugar Equalization Board, are also to have separate preliminary inventories.

The introduction (pp. ix-xvi) provides a brief history of the Food Administration and its records and indicates its relationship to associated agencies. The first part of the bibliography (pp. xvii-xlv) is a selected list of contemporary articles, writings by administration officials, and secondary studies concerning the organization, functions, activities, and records of the administration. The

second lists the printed publications of the administration insofar as they have been found in the National Archives. Both parts of the bibliography include references on the associated agencies.

In the inventory proper, the entries for the records of each main division of the administration are prefaced with a brief statement that gives pertinent administrative history, functions, and main officials. The wording of entries indicates the nature of each group of records, the period covered, the arrangement (alphabetical or chronological), the extent in linear inches, and the classification number.

Considering the time and labor involved in arranging the Food Administration's vast mass of records and in preparing this inventory, any statement to the effect that the work is well done hardly seems adequate. It is undoubtedly a great boon to all investigators who wish to know about the food and related problems of the first World War.

EVERETT E. EDWARDS

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Informe que Mario Briceño-Iragorry, Archivero Nacional, presenta al Ministro de Relaciones Interiores sobre las labores del Instituto en el año de 1942. Estados Unidos de Venezuela, Archivo Nacional. (Caracas. Imprenta Nacional, 1943. Pp. 14.)

It is a source of some regret to North American archivists that so little is published about the work and problems, past and present, of the Central and South American archival establishments. Individuals who are curious about these institutions may often leaf the pages of many numbers of many volumes of their quarterly and annual archival *boletines* without finding anything to reward their search. A feeling of enthusiasm and anticipation therefore greets the appearance of an item such as this separately published report of the national archivist of Venezuela to the Minister of the Interior for the year 1942.

In a closely-printed document of about a dozen pages of text, the archivist describes the training courses given by an institute within the National Archives of Venezuela on colonial paleography and the cataloguing of documents. There are paragraphs on packing and shelving; accessions; documents published and exchanged; the new quarters occupied by the archives; and other matters which have concerned the archives during the year. Occupying nearly four pages of the text is a discussion of desirable reforms of the National Archives law with a draft of the proposed bill. The suggested legislation is concerned mainly with the formation of a *junta superior de archivos*, which could be described as a governing council and would be composed of the national archivist, the director of the National Library, the director of the Academy of National History, the director of culture in the

Ministry of Education, and the inspector general of archives and public registers.

The brevity of the present report prevents more than a mere glance at the archives of Venezuela for 1942. But brief though it is, the document will find eager readers. These certainly hope that more and more the archivists of the good neighbor nations will come to publish annual and other descriptive accounts of their work, if not in their regularly-appearing quarterlies, then separately like the present document.

GASTON LITTON

The National Archives

"Post-War Plans for the Vermont Historical Society," *Vermont Quarterly*, 41 (January, 1944), 41, 42.

Regents Plan for Postwar Education in the State of New York, The State Education Department (Albany, 1944), pp. 21-23.

Postwar Public Works Program for a State Historical Building, Michigan Historical Commission (Lansing, 1943); see also *Michigan History*, 28 (April-June, 1944), 247-289.

The news from these three states located on or near the forty-second parallel indicates that plans for post-war archives buildings are, indeed, burgeoning. All three complain of over-crowding and the lack of adequate modern facilities in their present quarters. The Vermont and New York statements are rather brief, but the Michigan report is a comprehensive study of the factors involved in formulating a building program.

Vermont proposes to "establish a centralized archives for the non-current records of the State" by building an annex to the existing structure housing the historical activities of the state. The annex is envisioned as a simple, functional building occupied "almost entirely by stacks and files for books and records." Provision is to be made for vaults for the storage of the most valuable archival material, as well as for the storage of film. The size and cost of the proposed annex are not mentioned.

The Board of Regents of the state of New York recommends the erection of a state archives building as a part of the post-war building program and sets \$1,000,000 as the approximate cost of the structure. The building would be located at Albany and it is envisioned as the headquarters of the archival system of the state. It is claimed that the anticipated cost is much less than it would be if New York were not proceeding with the execution of the regional plan which calls for a depository in each of the large municipalities. The estimated quantity of state departmental records available for immediate transfer in the Albany area amounts to about 3,500,000 linear feet. No details of the proposed building are given.

The two Michigan publications cover substantially the same ground. The historical commission's *Program for a State Historical Building* is a mimeographed booklet of forty-three pages without illustrations. The *Michigan History* magazine gives forty-two pages to the program and includes several pictorial charts that graphically delineate the situation. Included in the *Program* are sections devoted to the historical background of the commission, its publications, field work, proposed budgets, proposed professional projects, justifications for the various services rendered or proposed, and comparisons with the historical appropriations of neighboring states. The state historical building is to include the state archives, the state museum, and the commission's offices and work rooms. The building is to be located in Lansing, and it is to be of fireproof construction to cost \$500,000 while \$100,000 is allocated for equipment. While there are no details as to the structure it is envisioned as about 170 feet long, 95 feet deep, and 100 feet high, and capable of housing 20,000 feet of stack floor space, although 10,000 additional feet are recommended for expansion. Space and equipment check-lists are also included.

VICTOR GONDOS, JR.

The National Archives