

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

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The National Archives, Washington 25, D.C.

How to Dispose of Records: a Manual for Federal Officials, issued by the National Archives. (Washington, D.C. February, 1945. Pp. iv, 50. Processed.)

How to Dispose of Records is another in the series of manuals prepared to assist federal agencies wishing to take advantage of the services offered by the National Archives. Similar manuals relating to records disposal procedures for their respective departments had been published earlier by several federal agencies, among them the United States Departments of Agriculture, Post Office, and War, the Civil Aeronautics Bureau, the Office of Civilian Defense, and perhaps others.

The average American archivist has not yet been able to educate his clientele to a point in archival consciousness where they would be willing to study and digest a manual of procedure as detailed and as technical as this of the National Archives. He must, for the most part, depend upon personal examination of records and more or less informal discussions as the basis for appraisal of records suggested as suitable for disposal, rather than expect the departments themselves to fill out detailed questionnaire forms such as those illustrated here.

The National Archives has had to appraise millions of records en masse, and has had to formalize its procedure for describing records for disposal to the point where selection becomes an almost mathematical science. It is that breadth of experience which makes everything the National Archives says about the appraisal of records, and particularly this publication, so helpful to other archivists struggling with the same problems. For them perhaps the most helpful part of this manual, certainly the part which will be most frequently quoted, is that section headed "The Evaluation of Records" (Pp. 7-11).

The major portion of the manual is devoted to procedures, illustrated by sample forms, for governmental agencies to use in preparing lists of records to be authorized for destruction. The National Archives recommends that each department designate one person to act as records officer for the entire department, with full powers not only to compile schedules of records, but also to initiate such reorganizations of records as will make for a more comprehensive and orderly progression of records from active to inactive status—that is, destruction when obsolete or transfer of noncurrent permanent records to the archives. No small part of the duty of the records officer will be to

make sure that obsolete records are actually disposed of as they become non-current.

Disposal lists are submitted when authorization is sought for permission to dispose of noncurrent records of a kind that are no longer accumulating. In the case of records already in existence and which will continue to accumulate, it is necessary as a preliminary to appraisal, to know how these records correlate with other records relating to the same or similar functions. Therefore, the National Archives recommends the compilation of two types of schedules: disposal schedules, which are used to cover only records that will have no further value to the federal government after the lapse of specified periods of time; and comprehensive schedules, which are used to cover not only records that after specified periods of time will have no further value to the government, but also all other records with notations as to periods of retention before transfer to the National Archives or to an intermediate agency depository. Detailed instructions are given for filling in the disposal and schedule forms which the National Archives provides for this purpose.

Since a correct appraisal of records depends upon the information given in these questionnaires, it is in order to mention several points which may need additional clarification. For instance, under Question 10, "Kind and frequency of use" (see discussion on p. 6), it should be pointed out that frequency of use is not always a true criterion. It has been the reviewer's experience that sometimes a series is not used because of an inconvenient internal organization which, if corrected, might make the file a very active one. Also it is quite possible that a record which has not been consulted once in fifty years may be the one pertinent piece of evidence required in some very important lawsuit.

Among the additional questions which may also be asked at this point are the following:

What purpose was this record created to serve?

How long is it necessary, from an administrative point of view, to preserve the information given in this record?

Is the information given in this record kept in some other form, and if so, in what form? Is this record necessary to substantiate that other record?

As between parallel records, which would be the record which would be preferred as evidence in court?

Is there a specific law relating to this record? In the case of state and county records it is sometimes necessary to amend an act before proceeding to destroy a particular record. For instance, an obsolete act may require that a record be "kept in a well-bound book," where present day record practice would recommend keeping the record on cards or on microfilm, or suggest a periodic destruction.

To date this is the most practical piece of technical literature on the sub-

ject of disposal of records, particularly from the angle of destruction. Until archivists have had far greater experience with the subject than they have had to date, their nights will be haunted by the fear that "the opinion of the person or persons in charge of the records," which is at present almost all they have upon which to base their own appraisals, has been erroneous. It is to be hoped that archivists will not be satisfied that this manual, excellent though it is, is sufficient guide for their own procedure; but that they will continue to think and write upon this pressing subject.

MARGARET C. NORTON

Illinois State Library

The Preservation of Public Records: A Tentative Report by the Committee on Preservation of Public Records. Special Bulletin S. (Chicago, Ill. Municipal Finance Officers Association, 1944. Pp. 12. \$.35.)

The MFOA committee has demonstrated the need for practical guidance in records management, directing its inquiry primarily toward municipal officials, but taking county and state problems into account. Its tentative statement declares that preservation of public records is as important as the conservation of natural resources, and that key personnel of a governmental unit should take part in this primary responsibility of management. It stresses the need for fixing in one qualified person responsibility for execution of a records program, a point that has also been found basic in federal records administration, so far as currently operating agencies are concerned.

Attention is given to the establishment of regular programs for the disposal and transfer of noncurrent records. A main feature is the schedule of retention periods prepared by Carl W. Tiller, covering more than forty items to be retained permanently or disposed of after fifteen, seven, or three years. The potential significance of this report is partly shown by the quotation of this schedule in the *Report to the 1945 Minnesota Legislature* of that state's Interim Committee on State Administration and Employment (St. Paul, 1944) as an element in its argument for establishment of a state archives commission.

The MFOA committee will perhaps find reason to broaden and make more logical its classification of "factors" warranting preservation of given types of information: "historical, statistical, legal, financial, and unique or unusual." Its list of persons who should serve on a commission to carry out the provisions of records legislation includes: "a lawyer, with a knowledge of the legal value of records and documents; someone with a knowledge of the statistical value of records; one qualified to judge or pass upon the historical value of records and papers; an archivist, or someone with experience or training in the arrangement and care of material entrusted to the archives;

an auditor, or accountant, who is familiar with the financial and accounting records." That list shows a commendable breadth of interest. The distinction between an archivist and someone qualified to judge the historical value of records indicates lack of understanding of archival qualifications. But the fault lies with the archivists, who have much to do in bringing their interests to the attention of officials. It is not surprising, though it should be, that no archivist was a member of the committee.

The viewpoint of the report is essentially one of practical management. In addition to useful suggestions on preparing an inventory there is a summarization of answers to questions put to a variety of public officials. The vagueness of the results, especially in relation to microfilming, cataloguing, and storage space, indicates that many officials had given little thought to important activities that they just took for granted. That common tendency is a major one for archivists and progressive organizations like the MFOA to combat.

PHILIP C. BROOKS

The National Archives

The Scholar and the Future of the Research Library, by Fremont Rider.
(New York. Hadham Press, 1944. Pp. xiii, 236. \$4.00.)

Anyone who has followed the writings of the eminent librarian of Wesleyan University since 1936 should not be surprised that at long last he has arrived at a probable solution to the provocative questions and problems he has repeatedly posed.

In this thesis Dr. Rider offers as a solution to the manifold problems of the ever-growing research library the process of microprinting—a method whereby as many as a hundred printed pages can be reproduced on the single side of a 3 by 5 index card. By such a method it is proposed to reduce not only the many thousands of feet of space now occupied by little used publications, but also to simplify the techniques of indexing, classifying, shelving, and other library functions. It is also a corollary of Dr. Rider's that the utilization of his method would materially reduce both the time required to service research requests and the costs of such service.

The solution propounded by Dr. Rider and the questions it raises are so fundamental as to require at least a study of equal length to the excellent work under consideration. Time and space make such a review impossible here.

There can be but little doubt that the basic hypotheses outlined by Dr. Rider are sound. There is a good deal of question, however, as to whether the solution he proposes can be as all-encompassing as is suggested. There is considerable doubt that even the larger research library is so set up that it could immediately undertake to issue microprint cards. This is not to say that eventually there could not be regional issuing institutions, but it must be borne in mind that the microprint plan will require executive direction,

trained staffs with high technical experience in business, science, and a multiplicity of professions and trades never before available in the indexing divisions of research libraries. Even more important must be the establishment of a comprehensive set of standards which will govern all such institutions. The failure of a single cog in the wheel of the various issuing institutions could so complicate the indexing problem alone as to invalidate much of the good to be gained from the microprint program.

Dr. Rider seems to conclude that research materials are primarily printed books, whereas the ever-increasing quantity of basic documentary and manuscript materials now being acquired by research institutions are given but passing notice. The reviewer can see a great future for microprint in this latter field. The literally tons of records, for example, which the Newberry Library is acquiring from the Burlington and the Illinois Central railroads present a problem which is already being faced by other institutions desirous of preserving such source materials for the economic history of specific industries, regions, or states. Microprint, properly adapted, should provide real assistance to such archival depositories. In letters dated January 5 and 17, 1945, the associate chief of the Historical Records Branch of the Office of Price Administration informed the head of the War Records Survey in Colorado that "We now have under way a project for reprinting in microcard form most of the significant OPA publications down to the end of 1944." In the field of government publications microprint would also seem to have a distinct future.

In general, however, Dr. Rider's theoretical solution can only be said to be the first step rather than the last step, as he concludes. He has planted the seed of an idea which may bear fruit, but that fruit has not as yet appeared. Before microprint will be ready for general use, research librarians and scholars in the various fields involved will have to work out specific programs and solve specific problems in the fields of acquisition, filing, reproduction, correlation, indexing, and distribution. Unfortunately, Dr. Rider's treatment of these problems is too general and fails to consider the essential differences in techniques utilized by the major institutions which would be involved in the suggested program.

This work is marred somewhat by the all-encompassing positive statements of the author which are either misleading or poorly conceived. On page 103, in discussing the economy in cataloguing costs, Dr. Rider points to the great economy to be effected through the microcard since one hundred or two hundred libraries will divide the amount. This might be valid for reference works and other books widely used by research libraries, but what about collections of documents where the cost of microprinting would be prohibitive if only one, two, six, or a dozen libraries desired the collection? Yet such

collections as those previously mentioned would most certainly fall into this category. On page 111, Dr. Rider pointedly states "that nobody seems to have given any particular thought as to whether 35 millimeter film was best adapted to library micro-text use." Assuredly Dr. Rider is mistaken. A number of institutions—state, federal, and private—have given a good deal of thought as to film sizes, and the institution represented by this reviewer has evolved specific uses for 16mm., 35mm., and 9 by 12cm. film. On page 112, Dr. Rider questions whether any consideration has been given to the problem of microphotographing from open books, inferentially suggesting that other methods might be more practical. This discussion is misleading, as the question is not whether there are other ways to do such photographing, but our motive for so doing at this time. Most microfilming, after all, has been done in the field of rare books and documents which belong to some other institution or individual and the borrowing agency is in no position to cut or mutilate or alter the borrowed item. Certainly the lending institution would not mutilate its own rare items just to provide a film copy! On page 114, Dr. Rider again became over-positive by declaring "no one gave any thought as to whether this was a wasteful practice or not, any more than one gave much thought to the waste involved in perforated film." Once again we must emphatically disagree. A great deal of study has been given by library, archival, and equipment manufacturers to the use of perforated or nonperforated film as well as to framing and other space problems involved in microphotography.

On page 116, in referring to the cost of microcards, the author states that they "will probably never be printed in editions of less than five hundred copies." This reviewer sincerely hopes that Dr. Rider is wrong, for a large bulk of the materials now housed by research libraries, and which should be reduced by some microcopy process, are not of such nature as would have such a large market. If the author's assumption is valid, it would appear that in this instance, at least, ordinary microphotography continues to remain our best approach; the individual institution having a large collection of research materials, documentary or printed, could save considerable expense by direct microfilming rather than the expense of microcarding. On page 185, the author almost nullified one of the principal advantages to be gained from his suggested program—the benefit of the microcard process to the small college or research library. It would appear that one of the principal advantages of the microcard process is that for the first time the small research institution, with limited budgetary resources and limited library facilities, could obtain research materials in certain specific fields on a par with larger and more wealthy institutions. If small depositories are to be turned away, such institutions as the Universities of Wyoming, New Mexico, North and South Dakota,

Idaho, and Nevada (among others), and small public and private colleges throughout the country would be unable to make the best advantage of the program.

Dr. Rider fails to give any thought to the cost of manufacturing of microcards insofar as the original capital outlay is concerned. Whether reproduction is by photography or printed type, the program will call for a considerable initial cash investment by those institutions issuing microprint cards. In a discussion of the matter with a number of librarians in major institutions west of the Mississippi this has been a very perplexing problem. In almost every instance the consensus has been that it would be far better to have one major issuing agency such as the Library of Congress. This, of course, would mean a strict standardization of the types of material microcarded and would leave the problem of individual collections whether manuscript or printed, to be solved by the individual depositories. In such instances it is probable that Dr. Rider's photographically reproduced microcard would be more practical than the printed type.

This reviewer suspects, however, that microfilming must remain the first reliance for the individual institution as it is a cheaper form of microreproduction where but a single institution is concerned. Rapid strides in the improvement of film elements and film techniques are being made. It is not improbable that positive paper prints made by new high speed automatic printers from standard 16mm. and 35mm. film will play a major role in the post-war research institution. Applicability of this technique may be gathered from the use now being made of such prints by Dr. Julian Boyd of Princeton University in connection with the Jefferson project, and by the Western Range Cattle Industry study in Colorado. New film reading devices now in the experimental stage also give promise of improvements in the field of direct film projection.

In summary it must be readily admitted that Dr. Rider has done the library and archival professions a great service by directing attention along specific lines which can ultimately provide the solution to the pressing problems of the research institution and depository. The microcard program is certainly at the stage where it can be universally studied and specific trials undertaken without undue delay. Whatever criticism there may be of the author's manner of presentation, these are far outweighed by his contribution in a field which desperately needs remedial treatment rather than additional palliatives.

HERBERT O. BRAYER

Colorado State Archives

Guide to Materials for American History in the Libraries and Archives of Paris, by Waldo G. Leland, general editor. Volume II, *Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs*, by Waldo G. Leland, John J. Meng, and

Abel Doysié. (Washington, D.C. Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1943. Publication 392. Pp. xii, 1078. \$4.00, paper \$3.50.)

This thick tome is the most recent of a proud series. In 1907 the Department of Historical Research of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, then under the directorship of the late Dr. J. Franklin Jameson, began to publish guides to the materials for the history of the United States in foreign archives. To date eleven foreign countries have been covered (in part at least) for such materials in this order: Spain, by W. R. Shepherd (1907) and R. R. Hill (1916); Cuba, by L. M. Pérez (1907); England, by C. M. Andrews and F. G. Davenport (1908), C. M. Andrews (2 vols., 1912-1914), and C. O. Paullin and F. L. Paxson (1914); Italy, by C. R. Fish (1911); Germany, by M. D. Learned (1912); Canada, by D. W. Parker (1913); Mexico, by H. E. Bolton (1913); Switzerland and Austria, by A. B. Faust (1916); Russia, by F. A. Golder (1917); and France, by W. G. Leland (1932), and W. G. Leland, J. J. Meng, and A. Doysié (1943). There also appeared under the same auspices in 1925 a *List of Manuscripts Concerning American History Preserved in European Libraries*, by D. M. Matteson.

The present guide describes volumes and cartons of documents in the archives of the French ministry of foreign affairs which range in date from the early part of the sixteenth to the middle of the nineteenth century. Most of them fall between 1750 and 1850. The volumes, in accordance with the arrangement in the archives, are treated under the following headings: (1) Correspondance Politique, pp. 1-828 (the correspondence between the ministry and its diplomatic agents in England, Argentina, Austria, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Denmark, Spain, the United States, Guatemala, Hamburg, Hesse, Holland, Malta, Mexico, Portugal, Prussia, Rome, Russia, and Texas, and the correspondence of the ministry with diplomatic agents accredited to France by the same countries), (2) Correspondance Politique, Supplément, pp. 829-866 (additional correspondence relating to England, Spain, the United States, and Holland), and (3) Mémoires et Documents, pp. 867-1043 (memoirs and other material classified under Africa, Algeria, America, England, Asia, Brazil, Spain, the United States, France, Genoa, Holland, Morocco, Mexico, Portugal, and Russia). As regards unbound material, under the heading Correspondance des Consuls those cartons are described (pp. 1044-1063) which contain correspondence to and from the French consuls in Alexandria, Annapolis, Baltimore, Boston, Charleston, Natchez, Newport, New York, New Orleans, and Philadelphia.

The compilers have added considerably to the usefulness of the guide by including three appendices as follows: (A) List of French Foreign Office material in the collection of reproductions of manuscripts in foreign archives in the Library of Congress, pp. 1065-1070, (B) List of volumes examined but found to contain no material concerning North America, and nothing worth

noting concerning any part of the Western Hemisphere, pp. 1071-1077, and (C) List of volumes possibly containing materials for American history but not examined, p. 1078.

Individual volumes and cartons are treated in accordance with their contents. Under an entry for a rich volume of the Correspondance Politique, one may find after the number of the volume and its date scope, not only the names of the persons who wrote the letters in the volume but a variety of other helpful information under such headings as "Other Material" (letters of credence, memoirs, instructions, reports, newspaper clippings, and printed tracts), "Subjects Treated," "Important Documents," and "Documents Printed." The entry for Etats-Unis, Vol. 13, July-September, 1780, for example, is so full as to cover two and one-half pages (pp. 581-583). In contrast, the entry for Espagne, Vol. 498, April-June, 1748, requires only three lines (p. 412). All entries are precise as to dates, and folio, page, or document numbers. Unfortunately there is no index—a cumulative index is promised when the remaining volumes are published.

Little fault is likely to be found with this method of describing the records in the French Foreign Office. Indeed every archivist or searcher who has occasion to use the guide should be grateful to the compilers for giving more than purely factual information. Yet it is well to bear in mind that so far as individual documents are concerned opinions are bound to differ as to their relative importance. The entry for Correspondance Politique, Etats-Unis, Vol. 44, June-December, 1795, illustrates the point. Under the caption "Other Material" there is mention of "memoirs on U. S., Florida, and Louisiana, by Thérémín, Fauchet." Below under "Important Documents" one reads merely: "Correspondence of Monroe with French Government, and of Fauchet, and Adet with U. S. Government (*passim*)."

Now this volume contains Fauchet's long memoir on the United States (folios 457-527), dated December 15, 1795, in which the former minister to this country reviewed in trenchant style Franco-American relations from 1783 to 1795 and made specific recommendations for improving them. There is no doubt in my mind that this memoir should have been singled out for mention under "Important Documents."

Exception can also be taken to the entry for Vol. 53 (January-December, 1801) because it does not list Pichon's remarkable letter to Talleyrand, dated July 22, 1801. In this letter the French envoy recounted a recent interview with Jefferson in which the president is represented as displaying a favorable attitude toward the desire of the French government to reduce Toussaint Louverture, the defacto ruler of St. Domingue. I believe this document is more significant than any of the three selected as "Important Documents," even though the three deal with Louisiana affairs. And why, under Angleterre,

Vol. 597 (September 23, 1801-September 22, 1802), *Supplément*, omit mention of Otto's letter to Talleyrand, dated October 23, 1801, reporting Prime Minister Addington's approval of the proposed Leclerc expedition against Toussaint? It cannot be pointed out too often that the purpose of the French government in obtaining the retrocession of Louisiana was to secure a mainland support for St. Domingue. If the plans for the restoration of St. Domingue to its pre-1789 status as a producer of tropical articles were to fail, the value of Louisiana would fall in French eyes. In some cases, therefore, documents relating to St. Domingue are more worthy of notice than those relating to Louisiana even though the latter became part of the United States.

More Americans have done research in the archives of the French Foreign Office perhaps than in any other continental European depository. Consequently many persons should be able to say that this or that document had not been given due prominence in this guide. But surely there will be much more inclination among both searchers and archivists to rejoice at having the long-awaited guide available and to look forward to the appearance of the volumes in preparation on other Parisian depositories. By going beyond the mere listing of volumes and cartons the compilers have at once made their guide more useful and exposed themselves to criticism. They also "date" themselves. But no matter. Every generation prepares its own finding aids, just as every generation writes its own history. The compiler of a finding aid fulfills his obligation by meeting the needs of the age in which he lives. If he happens at the same time to anticipate the needs of posterity, that is a rare piece of good fortune.

To any archivist who has wrestled with the problems of arranging and describing records (and what archivist has not done so?), the guide under review contains crumbs of comfort. It reflects, as stated above, the arrangement of the French Foreign Office records which are divided into three main groups. The binding of the diplomatic correspondence country by country, chronologically thereunder, obviously gave no difficulty, for the documents were already so arranged. Yet matters did not end quite so simply. Considerable material of this sort came to the archives from posts or through gift or purchase after the records with which it belonged chronologically had been bound and was placed in the subseries called *Correspondance Politique, Supplément*. It is consequently necessary for the searcher to look under both series to be sure that he has seen the available correspondence on a given period. If the archivists had delayed binding until all the documents were at hand, they could have avoided the creation of the subseries. They may have considered that delay would cause greater evils. Only the very size of the *Supplément* leads one to wonder whether good judgment was shown in

binding the main series so promptly. Clearly it would not now be practicable to break up the volumes and interfile the documents.

The arrangement of the documents within individual volumes is chronological for all series. It is somewhat disturbing, however, to note the date overlapping and the occasional lack of sequence of the volumes in the *Supplément* and the *Mémoires et Documents*. To illustrate, under *Mémoires et Documents*, *Amérique*, one finds volumes dated as follows: Vol. 17 (1784-1823), Vol. 18 (1775-1817), Vol. 19 (1699-1819), and Vol. 20 (1717-1830). There seems to be no reason why the material in Volumes 17 and 20, which cover colonial affairs in general, could not have been placed in chronological order and the volumes in sequence. As it is, Vol. 18, dealing with Guadeloupe, and Vol. 19, dealing with Guiana, stand between them. And why should Vol. 18 (1775-1817) precede Vol. 19 (1699-1819)?

But whatever the limitations of arrangement and description, the records of the French Foreign Office relating to American history are now under control as never before. It is to be hoped that the guides to the other Parisian depositories will not be long delayed, also the cumulative index.

CARL L. LOKKE

The National Archives

Thirteenth Annual Report on Historical Collections, University of Virginia Library, For the Year 1942-43 (University of Virginia, 1943. Pp. 70.)

The main interest of archivists in this seventy-page pamphlet will not be in the thirty-eight-page checklist of manuscript collections acquired by the library between September 1, 1942, and August 31, 1943, skillfully indexed in eighteen additional pages, but in Lester J. Cappon's fourteen-page introductory essay. This brief exposition on the library's procedure for accession and arrangement "to show to what degree our system is orderly and practicable" was apparently consciously undertaken to stimulate other institutions similarly "to provide a view from the inside" since "written records on this subject are unfortunately few in number."

Cappon succeeds in describing the present system of administering manuscripts at the University of Virginia Library so clearly that the careful reader can easily envisage all steps in the process. At the same time he praises by inference its simplicity of organization and avoidance of frequent shifting of collections. Above all, "the custodian who dies with the only index to his collections in his head should be condemned with the maximum penalty."

For manuscripts the library uses ordinary four-drawer legal-size steel file cabinets. Accessions are logged in chronologically and numbered consecutively. A "main entry" card is prepared for each accession at the time acquired, though later analytical cards are added to provide a concise guide-index as a

sort of master key to the manuscript resources as a whole. Accessions are folder filed, unfolded and flattened, vertically, in order of accession. Oversized, vault held, and bound accessions have dummy folders, being filed separately. Manuscripts on deposit are filed as accessions. If withdrawn the folder becomes a dummy. Only the Jefferson Collection has been calendared. By becoming a "collection" it has become an "open and continuous job," treated as a single accession with innumerable accretions. The call-numbers for maps are an adaptation of the Dewey decimal classification. Photo-printing and microfilming have found a place in the system, and means have been found to index their product on the card which is filed in the general catalogue.

Of wider significance as a guide to Jeffersonia is a chronological card checklist recording the location of all known letters to and from Jefferson, with citations of printed texts. This type of near-complete guide offers tempting possibilities where similar powerful personalities are involved.

EVERETT O. ALLDREDGE

U. S. Navy

Army and Navy Filing, by Joseph G. Pritchard, director, Military Co-ordination, Public Evening School, Seattle, Washington. (Cincinnati, Ohio. South-Western Publishing Company, [c. 1943]. Pp. iv, 36. \$.28.)

This pamphlet was devised primarily to give to potential users a preview of the filing systems currently practised by the War and the Navy departments. According to the author, those who now have, or who soon may have, a need for such knowledge include the following: those already in Army or Navy service, whose work it is to instruct others in the use of one or the other of these filing systems; young men and women who would like to be assigned clerical work upon entrance into service with the armed forces; and those who wish civil service clerical positions with the War or the Navy departments.

The pages devoted to Army and Navy filing procedures give suggestions helpful not only to potential users of those systems but also to file clerks in any large office where there is a considerable volume of mail. Both the *War Department Decimal File System* and the *Navy Filing Manual* are apt to seem rather formidable in prospect and Mr. Pritchard is to be commended for his attempt to make them more generally comprehensible since files, in charge of understanding clerks, make not merely for good current records administration but tend to simplify the tasks of the future custodians of the files which are to be retired to a noncurrent status.

ELLEN ROTH

The National Archives

Business Filing, by E. D. Bassett and Peter L. Agnew. (Cincinnati. South-Western Publishing Company, 1943. Pp. 168. \$1.00.)

A procedure of filing, definitely stated, is a difficult task because there are too few universal fundamentals. A fundamental rule should be followed throughout the specific system, for usually all regulations are optional to various concerns. The best instructions are to be systematic, logical, and uniform.

Each filing equipment manufacturer has his own system. The simplest system which performs the specific need is always the best. The most complicated and color systems are only installed when necessary. One manufacturer's product is used because serious difficulties arise from combining different equipment.

A student of filing must obtain the fundamentals. This textbook stresses the fundamentals that are applicable to all types of filing systems, and it indicates how the principles are applied in the generally used commercial systems. Imbedded with these fundamentals the student will adapt them to the business where he is employed.

The presentation of this concise and thorough textbook is greatly assisted by its illustrations. A student first learns the "what, why, how, and when" of filing. Alphabetic indexing has detailed rules for all types of names with initials and abbreviations, titles and articles, addresses, subjects, political subdivisions, etc. The necessity and explanation of cross reference supplements alphabetic indexing. An organization of an alphabetic correspondence file enlightens the student of the equipment he handles daily. The filing procedure of the correspondence instructs him as to the sequence of his duties. A student also familiarizes himself with numeric, subject, and geographic filing. These types of filing are discussed in detail—the nature, use, arrangement, and procedure.

A student now knows the fundamentals of indexing and filing but additional requisites are necessary. The authors demonstrate charge and follow-up methods, transfer methods, filing of special types of records, card systems, and the establishment and maintenance of filing systems. The student has a convenient summary of rules for alphabetic indexing and throughout the textbook he becomes acquainted with the most popular products of filing equipment.

Each student appreciates an opportunity to apply the theory he has received during this course. A practice outfit of card filing and correspondence filing supplements the textbook. One or more of the following types of material; questions, exercises, or problems ends each chapter and the "job" is finished. Each "job" is an actual piece of practice work teaching the principles of theory set forth in the preceding chapter. Filing can not be taught by textbook alone, but textbook and practice together.

The student realizes that definite stated fundamentals for the procedure of filing are a task. He knows each filing equipment manufacturer applies the principles differently because each has his own system. But the simplest system for the specific need is the best. The student has become acquainted with various kinds of equipment, he has been taught and he has practiced sound fundamentals of filing through the use of this book.

DOROTHY K. TAYLOR

Denver and Rio Grande Western Railroad