Reviews

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

Christopher J Prom and Ellen D Swain (eds), *College and university archives: readings in theory and practice*, Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 2008. 360 pp. ISBN 1 931666 27 X. US$55.00.

This book builds on a number of well-known books for university archivists including Helen Samuels's *Varsity Letters*. It is based in part on surveys completed by university archives showing their view of how the university archivist's lot has or has not changed over the past 30 years.

This collection of articles is a mix of theoretical and practical information for university archivists developed by people with extensive experience in university and college archives in the United States. While some of the theory and some of the practical issues are exclusive to university archives, much would be of interest to archivists working in other, non-academic archives. It was difficult to resist skipping the theory to get to the sections which deal directly with practical issues. So I didn't. This did not matter as the book is basically a set of articles, each of which can stand on its own.

Part one starts with an article using survey responses to see how academic archives and their professional staff have changed since a survey in the late-1970s. The archivists themselves remain mostly white, tertiary-educated women who can now take advantage of opportunities for continuing education and training not available in the 1970s. Many of the issues archivists in the 1970s had to contend with still bother their successors, including processing backlogs and storage space. The modern university archivist also has to deal with electronic records, digitisation and demands for access via the Internet. The second and third articles in this section focus on the challenges of

electronic records and the expectation that scholarly information will now be disseminated through electronic publishing.

The second section, 'Capturing Campus Histories', looks at how university archives can practically undertake the role of keeper of the campus memory through undertaking oral history projects and having a broad collecting policy. The case study of the University of Illinois's oral history program would be of interest to anyone undertaking an oral history program in any institution or community. This case study gives information about costs, developing a strategy, identifying potential interviewees and even has a list of questions. It includes a valuable reminder to get the interviewees' permission in writing to hold transcripts and original tapes, and make them available to researchers. The last two articles in this section encourage university archivists to develop collecting policies that go beyond university administration, teaching and research staff, and student records to seek out diverse groups on campus who may be overlooked when official histories are written. I think most Australian university archives are doing this already, but may meet some resistance from groups on campus who either do not trust the university administration with their records, or do not think their activities are worth documenting.

Part three, 'Managing Efficient Programs', looks at outreach, processing and the role of records management in university archives. While different universities' approaches to outreach vary according to their resources, many seem to be using traditional methods including exhibitions, celebrating anniversaries, giving tours, writing articles for alumni publications and contributing to courses. Others are taking different approaches including the use of webpages and digitisation to publicise the archives and show their relevance. Others are getting more involved in recordkeeping. The section on target audiences urges university archivists to never miss an opportunity to talk to university staff, academic and general, about how the archives can support their work. I suspect most university archivists are already doing this. The second article in the section looks at the problem of endless processing backlogs which is a common problem in all sorts of archives. This article uses survey data to show the level of backlogs in university archives and looks at the work of Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner, who wrote

More Product, Less Process: Pragmatically revamping traditional processing approaches to deal with late 20th century collections. This section is equally relevant to archivists in other institutions.

Part four, 'Serving Our Users', starts with a look at how privacy and freedom of information legislation in the United States affects archivists' abilities to give the sort of access to information which would be covered by legislation in Australia. It seems that the mostly private American universities make their own access decisions based on quite restrictive privacy legislation. Those decisions can sometimes lead university administrators to destroy student records and other personal information, rather than pass them on to the archivists. The following chapter on copyright law looks at how copyright considerations can make working with unpublished archives such a challenge. After discussing the problems the author suggests a number of strategies of which my favourite is to confirm and exploit the public domain, which in the United States hinges on knowing when the records' creator died. It would be a great help to find a similar set of strategies based on Australian copyright law.

This is a useful collection of articles which will be relevant to all sorts of archivists, not just those working in universities and colleges.

Sarah Lethbridge
Noel Butlin Archive Centre, Australian National University

Deidre Simmons, *Keepers of the Record: the history of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives,* Montreal, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007. xvi + 368 pp. ISBN 978 0 7735 3291 5. C$80.00.

The Hudson's Bay Company was established in 1670 and throughout its early operations was predominately interested in the fur trade of North America. The search for new fur supplies and the resultant exploration and mapping led to the gradual expansion of the company from the shores of Hudson Bay. Early shareholders of the Hudson's Bay Company included people such as Christopher Wren and the Earl of Shaftesbury who were also prominent in the foundation of the Royal Society at a similar time. The company was established during the reign of Charles II, who as a king with expansionist ambitions was keen to

support exploration during a time of growing competition in trade and the search for cheaper and faster trade routes.

Parallels with the East India Company and other trading companies of the period are interesting, in particular the strength that these companies provided to the British Empire. The Hudson's Bay Company, however, is the only one to survive into the modern era.

While this book chronicles the history of this now Canadian company, it is written from the point of view of the company archives that have evolved throughout the long history of the company. It is the story of the administration of the company records and the efforts to make them available for public access and research. Since the publication of this book, it has been announced that the Hudson's Bay Company Archives have been inscribed as part of the *UNESCO Memory of the World Register*.

The book traces the different phases of the development of the company and the way in which its recordkeeping reflects these developments. In her foreword to the book, Maureen Dolyniuk, the manager of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, states that '*Keepers of the Record* is the first-ever comprehensive look at the development of the Hudson's Bay Company's Archives, the result of a continuous record-keeping system of the Hudson's Bay Company over more than three hundred years of its history. It describes the many hands that created and cared for the records over numerous generations.'

The book provides an understanding of the people involved at the time of the foundation of the company and their interconnections with the monarchy and the records that were required at this time to reflect these relationships. The early minute books set out the details of the ships and their provisions, the goods for sale and trade on the outward voyages, and the fur returning on the homeward voyages. As the company became more established in North America the records reflect this change and expansion.

The tangents which this book takes us on are enthralling, leading us into a much wider sphere than expected. 'The Company renewed its practice of hiring apprentices from London's charity schools - Christ's Hospital and the Grey Coat School - where, as well as a core curriculum,

instruction was provided in navigation and cartography. The master of the Mathematical School at Christ's Hospital from 1775 to 1798 was William Wales, who had observed the Transit of Venus at Fort Prince of Wales in 1768–69 and then sailed as astronomer with Captain James Cook in his second voyage across the Pacific Ocean in the years 1772–75' (p. 80).

The records of the company include minute books, maps, plans, census returns, land records, accounts books, deeds, agreements, registers of company personnel including baptisms, marriages and burials, and, one of the real treasures, a document known as the Selkirk Treaty, which was made between Lord Selkirk and Saulteaux Chief Peguis and other chiefs.

This is also a story of the move of the company's administration from London to Canada and the subsequent move of the company archives. As a more modern style of conducting business evolved so did the organisation of the company's records. The system developed in the 1930s by the company archivist and Hilary Jenkinson, and based on records type and chronology, was no longer adequate for describing the records of a modern corporation. A decision was made to adopt a records group classification structure to recognise the function of the record and the activities of the recordkeepers within the administrative unit, a concept that had been developed in the United States and Australia, and promoted by TR Schellenberg in both countries. The book ends describing a process also familiar in Australia with the transfer of the company's records to a university repository (p. 289).

It is interesting to note the special thanks to Tom Nesmith in this book's acknowledgements. *Keepers of the Record* is a good illustration of the model that Nesmith espoused in his paper 'Re-exploring the continuum, Rediscovering archives', in his keynote address at the ASA Conference *Archives: Discovery and Exploration* held in Perth 6–9 August 2008. In his paper Nesmith discussed the need to acknowledge and address a role for archivists to assist with the interpretation of older archives and promote a much greater engagement with our records. *Keepers of the Record* is an ideal example of one such endeavour.

David Wardle
ACT Territory Records Office

International Records Management Trust, *Ghost Busting: Building Payroll Integrity in Sierra Leone*, London, International Records Management Trust, 2008. 14 minutes. Available on DVD and for download at <*http://www.irmt.org/video_ghostBusting.html*>.

'The corruption is eating all of us,' says the intense young man at the beginning of this documentary by the International Records Management Trust (IRMT). 'We face corruption throughout our life, since we were born.' A compelling beginning to what is an inspiring account of the IRMT's work to help the Sierra Leone government regain control of its payroll systems by eliminating 'ghost workers', names of people on a payroll who are not actually doing the jobs they are being paid for, or who do not even exist.

The Republic of Sierra Leone, a former British colony in west Africa, is probably best known to most of us for its brutal civil war and the resulting United Nations peacekeeping effort. The 2006 Hollywood film *Blood Diamond* highlighted the internal corruption and the trade in diamonds that fueled the war.

For those interested in the Kevin Bacon Game, there is a direct link between *Blood Diamond* and *Ghost Busting*. Sierra Leone's Refugee All Stars appear in the soundtrack of both productions. According to *Wikipedia*, the band tours 'extensively to raise awareness for humanitarian causes', and was the subject of another documentary in 2005. It is hardly surprising that the All Stars have contributed to *Ghost Busting* given the impact that corruption has had on them and their country.

In the first few minutes of *Ghost Busting*, Sierra Leone Minister for Economic Development David Carew estimates that if the government could reduce by 20 per cent the number of ghost workers on its payroll, it could afford to increase salaries for everyone else by up to 15 per cent. This is especially significant in light of Dr Ibrahim Thorlie's earlier comments, that 'people are bound to be corrupt in order to survive'. While we might often think of corruption in the developing world as being on a grand scale and at the highest levels of compromised governments, it is also, more mundanely, a method of supplementing public servants' salaries to a level of income that might buy a reasonable standard of living.

The project *Ghost Busting* documents sought to verify the identity and existence of workers on the Sierra Leone government's payroll in preparation for implementing a computerised payroll management system. An impressive range of people speak about the project and bring important insights to the discussion of the role of recordkeeping in corruption-fighting. Interviewees include the President and the Vice President of Sierra Leone, the Accountant General, the Auditor General, the Commissioner and investigators from the Anti-Corruption Commission, and departmental secretaries as well as members of the Records Management Improvements Project (RMIP) team.

Establishment Secretary Dr Julius Sandy summarises the vital role of records in supporting reliable electronic systems: 'what you put into computers is what comes out, so if you don't have an accurate record I don't see how you expect the computers to do magic.' Government Archivist and RMIP team leader Albert Moore notes that even developed countries continue to maintain hybrid paper and electronic recordkeeping systems, and this seems to be the basis of the RMIP project – to identify and verify authoritative paper records in order to build integrity and certainty into the new electronic system.

It is messages like these that are particularly important. We know that all too often people look to digital systems to do some kind of magic – to miraculously and easily solve the problems that were not solved in the paper world. Perhaps this documentary could be made compulsory viewing for anyone contemplating buying an electronic payroll management system.

The range and authority of the very articulate speakers is this documentary's particular strength. Almost all of the on-camera talent is from Sierra Leone – one exception being IRMT adviser Dr Pino Akotia who hails from Ghana. This is not a bunch of worthy foreigners preaching. The message is that Sierra Leoneans understand the problems and are working to fix them for themselves.

While I suspect that this production was put together largely with aid funding bodies in mind, the DVD could have great utility as a tool for archivists – particularly, although not exclusively, in developing countries – to make their case about the need for authoritative records and reliable recordkeeping systems. Just buying database software is insufficient:

you need reliable evidence of transactions to support database systems. Garbage in equals garbage out. The President of Sierra Leone tells us 'without records you cannot do anything. You don't have a past, and you cannot even learn from your past ... you cannot map out your future.' This could be much more compelling to senior officials in other governments than hearing it from the undervalued, underpaid and, in some cases, undertrained government archivists in their own countries.

Another great advantage of this DVD as a marketing tool is its production quality. Reasonable quality images (although at 323 megabytes it is still a crippling download), professional camera work and editing, and slick captioning make this a credible and highly watchable account. If IRMT founder and International Director Dr Anne Thurston ever feels like a career change she could turn out to be a respectable filmmaker, based on her credit for this documentary. I did, though, find the digital recreation of the burning of the Treasury building slightly suspect.

My only other criticism of the documentary is that it was perhaps made too early. It would be good to hear the various speakers recount some concrete results of the project. How many ghost workers have been found and 'busted'? How great are the savings involved? Is the pay-rise for public servants, with its crucial implications for the country as a whole, going to be possible? The expected benefits for the community are motivating. Even more compelling will be the demonstration of real results. An unnamed Sierra Leone government official expresses her hopes for this process, and laments the many verification processes that have gone on before. It is not clear, though, how this attempt at payroll verification is different to those failed predecessors, and a view of the process a little down the track might indicate how successful and sustainable this project has been.

The documentary is supported by a CD containing the IRMT's training and good practice guides, although I did not receive a copy of this. It might have been useful to include the IRMT website in the DVD's credits (although it is on the packaging and label) so that others who come across the documentary separated from its supporting materials can track them down. The IRMT website has a range of these resources, including its most recent Training in Electronic Records Management (TERM) modules.

The TERM modules have been developed, according to their introductory material, as a self-study or institutional training tool for records management practitioners. At a combined 686 pages they are no beginners' introduction. How do we get the decision-maker and resource allocator, newly-inspired by Sierra Leone's ghost busting efforts, from the DVD to TERM? There are many audiences for the recordkeeping message, and *Ghost Busting* is a polished and professional avenue for reaching an important stakeholder group. We need tools like this, and many others, to get our many messages to our many audiences.

Danielle Wickman
Australian National Audit Office

Kelvin Smith, *Public sector records management: a practical guide*, Aldershot, Ashgate Publishing, 2007. xii + 259 pp. ISBN 978 0 7546 4987 8. £55.00 [online: £49.50] + postage.

This book presents itself as a response to a number of events since the 1990s that have affected public sector records management in the United Kingdom, most notably freedom of information legislation and the increasing importance of electronic records. Further, it states that it takes a practical approach to records management rather than including much theory.

Consequently, the book is mainly aimed at British public authorities and bodies subject to the *Freedom of Information Act 2000*, *Public Records Act 1958* and the *Public Records Act (NI) 1923*. For readers outside that jurisdiction, the book offers an insight into the effect that the *Freedom of Information Act 2000* has had on records management, in particular the Lord Chancellor's *Code of Practice on the Management of Records under Section 45 of the Freedom of Information Act 2000* (November 2002). The author uses the *Code of Practice* to provide a structure for the book in line with his intention that the book be practical. This approach results in a variety of strengths and weaknesses in the book.

On one hand, it will be a very handy resource and help to those working in entities within the British framework because of its clear and practical approach pinned to that specific legislative situation. For those outside, the elements of the book that include the specific details are not relevant, although are of some professional interest.

Structuring the content to follow the Lord Chancellor's *Code of Practice* creates a problem of currency. The book was published in 2007, but in July 2009 the *Code of Practice* was revised and reissued. For readers it will not be readily apparent whether or not the references to the *Code of Practice* are still current. For example, The National Archives of the United Kingdom produced six model action plans to assist public authorities implement the *Code of Practice*. The book refers to these action plans, notes that they are on the National Archives' website and reproduces one of them as an appendix. When I checked in August 2009 it was apparent that the model plans had recently been withdrawn. As a result of the revision, anyone using the book in a British public authority covered by the *Code of Practice* will need to double-check the currency of the advice before acting upon it.

A strength of the book is its readability. The writing is clear and to the point. Throughout the book there are many good examples and practical instructions. For example, the purpose and content of a records management policy statement is outlined on one page and then is followed by a model statement on the following two pages.

There were a number of issues that I expected to see covered considering the target audience. For example, the need to mark and handle records in line with relevant security procedures or other kinds of restrictions, is not well addressed. This seems to be an oversight, since it is an issue that most, if not all, public authorities have to deal with. Although reference is made to the need to declassify security classified records whenever possible and the issue is mentioned in the section on the destruction of records, the question for records managers is how to ensure that records are appropriately security classified at the point of creation and then stored and accessed accordingly?

In many government jurisdictions organisations contract out aspects of their work, with the result that the contractors are creating records. It would have been worthwhile for the book to alert readers to the need to include in contractual arrangements details about what kinds of records need to be created, how they are to be created, their management and ultimately the disposal of the records at the end of the agreement.

The book places much store on the value of a corporate filing system. No surprises here for records managers who have worked with records generated by government bodies influenced by British administrative practices. But while a substantial number of pages are devoted to describing file plans, very little advice is provided about other practical issues such as numbering schemes or other ways to control items at the file level.

I found the book to be of interest because of the window it gives into the British records situation. Because the target readership is in Britain, records managers in Australia wanting a handy primer may find other books covering similar ground to be a better option.

Rodney Teakle
National Archives of Australia

Richard J Cox, *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling: Readings, Reflections and Ruminations*, Duluth, MN, Litwin Books, 2008. 418 pp. ISBN 978 0 9802004 7 8. US$35.00.

Richard J Cox is Professor in Library and Information Science at the University of Pittsburgh, School of Information Science and has written extensively on archival and records management professional issues. *Personal Archives and a New Archival Calling: Readings, Reflections and Ruminations* expands on his collection of published essays in *Records and Information Management Report*, and reviews and observations from his personal blog *Reading Archives*.

Cox has put forward a well-developed and sustained argument of his case. His thesis is that personal archives now have more significance because of the way the public has embraced new personal information technologies, and because people now have an increased desire to connect with their past. He suggests that if archivists 'alter their mission and their practical priorities' (p. 3) and collaborate with individuals who need advice about creating and preserving a personal or family archive (that is, 'citizen archivists', p. 285) we can enhance our role and responsibilities for documenting our heritage. We may also be rewarded with public support as the public gain further understanding of our professional role.

The first chapter 'Posting notes and, then, saving them' sets the stage and provides an outline of the individual's impulse to collect and save, their 'instinctive sense to care for personal and family archives' (p. 3). In the next chapter 'Romance of the document' Cox suggests that, although the concerns of archivists about authenticity, legal and administrative needs and intellectual control of records may be minor to others outside the profession, there are common areas of interests for archivists and personal records collectors. He states that new approaches are needed such as 'the creation of a corps of citizen archivists' (p. 64) and that we should develop new partnerships with them.

Chapter three 'Information documents: how people and organisations acquire information' considers how people acquire information and the diverse sources they use. The next three chapters (Chapter four 'A "Therapeutic Function": Personal recordkeeping'; Chapter five 'Human impulses and personal archives'; and Chapter six 'Traces of ourselves: more thoughts on personal recordkeeping and the roles of archivists') investigate recordkeeping and personal relationships, the symbolic role of archives, how they provide security to our world, and why we are all archivists. Here, the book touches again on how the public does not fully understand archives and the role of archivists in society.

The final chapters (Chapter seven 'Electronic mail and personal recordkeeping' and Chapter eight 'The web of records: the world wide web, the records professions and personal archiving') examine the two prominent changes that have affected individuals in the way that they communicate: email and blogging and why these are so important. Cox suggests that a future role for archivists and records managers is to be a 'forensic documentalist' to ensure that 'fragile digital evidence is maintained in some form' (p. 281).

The book is thoughtfully written and well-designed: there is a general introduction and conclusion that draws together and presents the main threads to his overall argument, and each chapter has its own introduction, sub-headings and conclusion. The structure aids the reading process as the book is crammed with information and references to other authors: a 40-page bibliography, endnotes and an index. It is affordable and printed on acid free paper.

As a professional archivist involved in the collection of personal papers and therefore part of the intended audience, I believe this book is timely, if not overdue, even though most of the essays have been published previously. This much-needed publication fills a gap in archival literature and makes a significant contribution. It visits an often-neglected constituency, the personal archive, and presents the current state of play in terms of new technologies and sets out coherently the issues of long-term preservation with which we are all grappling. My only criticism is that, while Cox has articulated what we should be doing in the modern digital world, there is no clear pathway for how we should do it. I think this work should be on the reading list of every collecting archivist and is recommended to others in the archival and records community who also have responsibility for maintaining our documentary heritage.

Shirley Sullivan
National Archives of Australia

Kelvin Smith, Roslyn Russell and Kylie Winkworth, *Significance 2.0: a guide to assessing the significance of collections*, Adelaide, Collections Council of Australia, 2009. ISBN 9780977544363 (pbk). $29.95 plus postage and handling (while stocks last). Companion website: <*http://significance.collectionscouncil.com.au*>. The print publication can be downloaded from the website.

The first edition of *Significance* appeared in 2001. Since that time, the significance methodology for assessing the value and importance of collections set out in that publication has been adopted by many Australian collecting institutions for a variety of purposes including collection policy development and advocacy. *Significance* 2.0 fits well into the Collections Council of Australia's roles as communicator of common issues and promoter of standards for cultural heritage collections. The new revised *Significance 2.0* print version is supported and enhanced by web resources that will enable wider diffusion of its concepts and practical tools. The images, examples and case studies presented in the book and on the website attest to a broad institutional reach across Australia. This inclusiveness of the diversity of the Australian collections sector is one of the strengths of *Significance 2.0*.

As the preface indicates, the new edition is the result of a collaborative process involving consultation across the collecting domains – archives, galleries, libraries and museums. The authors put the case for a common framework for understanding and valuing collections held by a range of custodial institutions, large and small, across the four domains. Archival input has no doubt influenced the strengthening of advice concerning collection-level significance assessment and presumably also the selection of examples for Part 6 'Significance in action – applications' (available only on the website).

But what actually is 'significance' and what interest does it have for archivists? Significance is defined as '[t]he meaning and values of an item or collection, or what makes it important. Significance is the historic, aesthetic, scientific and social values that an item or collection has for past, present and future generations' (glossary, p. 63). It is largely about making decisions about managing collections held by or offered to collecting institutions. Using the significance methodology involves using criteria that locate value and meaning in a collection, across multiple collections or in a single item.

Among the factors to be taken into consideration are provenance and context. Undertaking research into collections, documenting the decision-making process and being aware of other similar or complementary collections are all important in assessing significance. This should sound familiar to archivists. Nevertheless, some major differences in approach remain. Archival practice is not shaped by a need to acknowledge major Australian historical themes (although thematic collecting does occur), nor are aesthetic values usually a factor in making appraisal decisions, to name two such differences.

The significance framework so comprehensively described in *Significance 2.0* is not a substitute for established domain or institution-specific practice. This is recognised at the outset: '[c]ollecting organisations have their own criteria for assessing acquisitions, some of which overlap with the significance criteria' (p. 3). Thus, obviously, significance does not replace archival appraisal. Some archivists working in institutional settings not under the 'collecting' rubric may continue to question the relevance of significance to their professional practice. Nevertheless, they and their collecting archives colleagues

not already working with significance would be well advised to look at the book and website to learn more about significance, and why and how it is used. Archivists in small mixed archives who have to manage objects in their collections should find much helpful advice here. Part 3 'Significance: concept and process' (pp. 10–14) and the summary page of 'Principles for good practice with significance' (p. 43) are particularly useful for newcomers. Archives is one of the four domains involved and Australian archivists need to be informed about significance because it is integral to major national programs that affect all cultural heritage collections, including the Australian Memory of the World and Community Heritage Grants programs.

Significance 2.0 leaves some unanswered questions: it is intended to encompass digital collections, but the thrust is still very much towards tangible heritage managed in custodial institutions. Perhaps this and other questions, such as how significance has been taken up overseas and how significance is being used to educate collections sector professionals and volunteers, may be answered through the website. Various web resources are still being added, so another review in perhaps a year's time might be warranted. There is more I could say, but why not check it out yourself at <*http://significance.collectionscouncil.com.au*>.

Sigrid McCausland
Charles Sturt University