

as well as describing how it was done in the EAD/EAC world. It was especially interesting to see how the Glaswegians shoehorned their complex relationships into descriptive standards and document type definitions (DTDs) that just weren't designed for them.

I enjoyed reading this book immensely, and not only because description is the archival function that has always interested me most. All of the case studies are strongly practical, and even pragmatic, describing options and decisions in areas ranging from the technical nitty-gritty, such as the use of particular fields or data elements, to human resources and project management, such as the use of interns and volunteers. A number of the authors write with a dry humour. Many are frank in their assessment of the success of their projects against their initial aims and in how methods and plans needed to be changed in the light of experience. There is no defensiveness here or institutional 'spin'. Just archivists reporting innovative and practical ways of doing description better.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2016.1135709>

Crisis, Credibility and Corporate History: Proceedings of the Symposium of the International Council on Archives, Section on Business and Labour Archives, 14–16 April 2013, Basel, International Council on Archives Studies 1, edited by Alexander Bieri, Liverpool, Liverpool University Press, 2014. x + 146 pp., £50.00 (hardback), ISBN 978 1 781381 37 3. Available from Turpin Distribution (email: liverpool@turpin-distribution.com).

The objective of this symposium as described in its announcement was to 'tackl[e] the archive's conflict between scientific history and marketing'¹ and further, as stated in the conference programme, 'Our conference will focus on corporate history, more specifically the conflict in between writing scientific history and the demands of modern history marketing.'²

Twelve papers contributed at the symposium are included in this volume and cover a range of topics that reveal a majority of fundamentals in common within the diversity of circumstances to be found in six countries spread across the globe.

The papers include an overview of:

1. business entities' attitudes to history and their individual part in preserving, using and publishing the results of research into the records they have created and kept;
2. 'the conflicting demands of academic standards and entrepreneurial marketing' (p. 13) when a business decides to write its history;
3. a distinction to be drawn between an objective assessment of the evidence and being 'contextually accurate' (p. 25);
4. the company archivist's right to write the company's history in the face of questions about the archivist's objectivity;
5. 'The Application of Social Science Theories in Corporate History' (p. 39);
6. the 'archetypes' (p. 55) of biographical writing;
7. a case study of circumstances leading a prominent 'family to confront their history' (p. 63), resulting in a thorough investigation of the relevant archives;

8. the development, management and use of regional business archives in Germany;
9. ‘... The Case for an Integrated Anniversary Approach ...’ (p. 89);
10. a view of the archivist’s role in this information laden-world as ‘filtering out the right information at the right time from the mass of information and placing it in a useful context’ (p. 100);
11. an academic bid to find ‘a compelling, irrefutable statement of the strategic business value capable of convincing the Neutron Jacks of the corporate world that an archive is a “must-have” rather than a “nice-to-have” function’ (p. 104); and,
12. ‘Trends in the Writing of Japanese Corporate History’ (p. 123).

What excited me most, as a consulting archivist, was Paul Lasewicz’s innovatively researched and convincing attempt to answer the question, ‘Is there a strategic justification for corporate archives?’ (p. 103). His examination of an extensive literature led him, among other things, to reveal a distinction being made between history and heritage. To put it crudely, the archive collection as a whole may be seen as representing the facts of history. When parts of the archive collection are combined with current organisational activity a new product, called heritage, which represents a tangible value to the current enterprise, is created. Obviously, the opportunities for combining history and organisational activity to create heritage will be changing all the time as different circumstances impact the organisation.

The contribution of Alexander Bieri, Curator of the Roche Historical Collection and Archive, and the editor of these published proceedings, titled ‘Archives and Collections in the Twenty-First Century: From Drab to Sexy’ (p. 99), inspires his colleagues with the observation that our work requires experience, knowledge and skills that are unlikely to be capable of automation for some time and wonders whether ‘the occupation of archivist, the “data pilot”, will be the dream job of the twenty-first century?’ (p. 101).

In my opinion, the papers that tackled the conflict between scientific history and marketing most intimately, namely Clemens Wischermann’s ‘Business History or Corporate Communication’ (p. 13), Henning Morgen’s ‘Objective? Me?’ (p. 25), Lionel Loew’s ‘Do Archivists Have the Right to Write History? What is at Stake When Writing Your Own Company’s History?’ (p. 29), Birgitte Possing’s ‘The Biographer’s Power and Private Archives’ (p. 53), Joachim Scholtyssek’s ‘Company History as an Opportunity and Challenge for University Academics’ (p. 63) and Yuko Matsuzaki’s ‘Seventy-Five Years of Toyota’ (p. 123), presented local variations on the symposium’s objective that challenge readers to view their own situation from a different perspective and possibly prompt innovative change at home.

These proceedings provide a view of predominantly European business archival activity and experience, ranging from Karl-Peter Ellerbrock’s summary of the historical development of regional business archives in Germany to Birgitte Possing’s analysis of the ‘archetypes’ of historical biography.

Reflecting on the published papers as a whole and comparing their messages with the title of both the symposium and this volume, I conclude that corporate archives provide the credible source of evidence and information to respond to any corporate crisis, provided that the archives have been preserved in the first instance.

There is so much here that this slim volume deserves a place in easy reach of every company managing director, archivist and historian to enable them to refer easily to the gems within.

Endnotes

1. Section for Business and Labour Archives, News and events entry, International Council on Archives website, available at <<http://www.ica.org/13958/news-and-events/international-seminar-crises-credibility-and-corporate-history-tackling-the-archives-conflict-between-scientific-history-and-marketing-basel-switzerland-1416-april-2013.html>>, accessed 2 November 2015.

2. Section for Business and Labour Archives, International Council on Archives, 'Crisis, Credibility and Corporate History', Symposium Programme, 14–16 April 2013, Roche Historical Collection and Archive, available at <<http://www.ica.org/download.php?id=2732>>, accessed 2 November 2015.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2016.1135716>