

REVIEWS

Christopher J Prom and Thomas J Frusciano (eds), *Archival Arrangement and Description*, Chicago, Society of American Archivists, 2013. vii + 215 pp. ISBN 10: 1 931666 45 8. USD\$34.99.

This volume is the first in a modular series, ‘Trends in Archives Practice’, an initiative of the Society of American Archivists. The aim of the series is to provide timely updates on the latest developments in archival practice to complement the Society’s long-standing publication of series of basic manuals. In this volume, the three modules are intended to complement Kathleen D Roe’s *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* (SAA, 2005), part of the Archival Fundamentals Series II. The modules are available in hard copy (in which case you buy all three) or they can be purchased separately in electronic form from the Society’s website: <<http://www.archivists.org/bookstore>>. With this new purchasing model in mind, this review will comment on each module separately.

Standards for Archival Description, by Sibyl Schaefer and Janet M Bunde, is an 80-page ‘novella’ on standards, beginning with what they are, who sets them and why they should be used. The bulk of the module consists of descriptions of data structure standards (MARC, EAD, EAC-CPF), data content standards (AACR, APPM, ISAD(G), DACS, ISAAR(CPF), ISDF and ISDIAH), data value standards (Library of Congress Name Authority File, Union List of Artists’ Names, Library of Congress Subject Headings, and Art and Architecture Thesaurus), and then metadata standards. These descriptions and accompanying examples are clearly written and comprehensive, but are necessarily full of parentheses, square brackets, angle brackets, slashes, underscores, fieldnames and acronyms (which are expanded in the text and in Appendix 3) so are not an easy read. There is a useful section on choosing the right standards for your archives, addressing institutional factors (such as current practice, resources and users), the nature of your holdings and the community context (other archives or organisations that you may wish to share data with). There are two case studies which are unfortunately much too brief in the print version, except as pointers to web addresses. In fact, so many of the footnotes and the ‘further reading’ suggestions are online that this module is probably best read and used in the electronic version.

The second module is required reading for those of us of a certain age whose archival experience and training is now ‘so last century’. *Processing Digital Records and Manuscripts*, by J Gordon Daines III, begins with a succinct and clear exposition of the ‘Issues and Challenges Posed by Digital Records and Manuscripts’. It then maps the business process of undertaking arrangement and description, taking the familiar manual processes used for analogue records and highlighting areas where they need to be tweaked or completely re-engineered for processing of digital records. Using the Open Archival Information System reference model, he then provides sample accessioning and arrangement and description workflows, and ends with encouraging recommendations including ‘embrace the concept of digital curation’ and ‘become comfortable with the available tools’. The catchphrase, ‘don’t let the perfect be the

enemy of the possible', had a particular resonance with me. There are two brief case studies, a summary of recent and current research projects and activities, a table of online processing tools and 'further reading' as appendices.

Designing Descriptive and Access Systems, by Daniel A Santamaria, takes a wider approach to accessioning and description, referring to many of the standards and tools mentioned in the earlier modules. His emphasis is on implementation: how descriptive data transforms into finding aids for users, and what small repositories with limited resources can do to improve access for their users. For example, he discusses how to use web content management systems to produce 'catablogs', providing access to digital images through Flickr and using simple crowd-sourcing strategies to improve systems. His recommendations cover the 'simplest', 'more advanced' and 'most advanced' options for accessioning, description, finding aids and evaluating access systems. There are two substantial case studies, weblinks for the many tools mentioned, 'further reading', and sample workflows and tools for small repositories as appendices.

What then of the role of the editors of the volume, Prom and Frusciano? There's a seven-page introduction and some cross-referencing between the modules, but no doubt the more difficult contribution was the copyediting and checking of the numerous acronyms, technical details and web addresses.

Reference

Kathleen D Roe, *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2005.

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Matthew S Hull, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, Berkeley, CA, University of California Press, 2012. xiv + 301 pp. ISBN 978 0 520272 15 6 (paperback). US\$26.95.

Matthew Hull is an associate professor in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Michigan. In his book, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*, Hull examines the bureaucratic processes of government in the Central Development Authority (CDA), an agency established in 1960 with comprehensive planning, judicial and administrative powers to realise the original master plan of the capital Islamabad devised by the Greek architect Constantinos Doxiadis. This is an anthropological study about the creation, use and management of records, which looks beyond their transactional and evidential function to how they create associations and coalitions between people which often work against protecting the integrity of government, becoming destabilising and undermining instruments.

The introduction explains Hull's analytical focus. While writing and documents have long been of interest to both sociologists and anthropologists, the focus has generally been on looking *through* them rather than *at* them. Hull contends that 'as the main mechanism and *dominant emblem* of the formal dimension of bureaucracy' (p. 12, my emphasis),