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Reviews

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REVIEW


Faye Phillips’s Congressional Papers Management is an important and ambitious but flawed work not susceptible to easy categorization or emphatic judgment. Phillips offers this volume as “a critical companion” to the records management publications of the House and Senate historical offices, and to the 1992 Documentation of Congress (to which she was also a contributor), to assist archivists in repositories that have made a commitment to acquire, catalog, and make available one or more congressional collections. The book has five chapters: one each on collecting, appraising, and arranging and describing congressional papers; one on “Guidelines for Arrangement and Description”; and one on “Sampling and Electronic Records.” Phillips has included many sample
There are basically three types of repositories which care for and about congressional collections: 1) those that specialize in congressional and other public affairs collections, 2) those that actively collect congressional papers as part of a larger geographic and topical mandate, and 3) those that—deliberately or accidentally—acquire at most one or two congressional collections largely out of keeping with the rest of their holdings. The curators in these three types of repositories have distinct (though not entirely separate) needs when it comes to furthering their education in the management of congressional papers. By structure and content, Congressional Papers Management seems to be a cross between a beginners manual for those new to congressional collections and a processing manual for paraprofessionals employed by geographic and special-focus repositories.

Phillips has published Congressional Papers Management at a time of increasing turnover in congressional delegations and when more and more repositories are receiving their first such collections (and begging for help). In the face of this increased need, the book seeks to provide one-stop-shopping for curators of congressional papers collections, extensively summarizing general archival works on collection development and arrangement and description. Particularly in the chapters on collection and appraisal, Phillips provides a good synthesis of a growing and complex body of writing on congressional papers while properly adding her own assessments in clear but discreet terms. She gives welcome prominence to the need for a collecting policy for congressional papers. The two chapters on arrangement and description are based on policy and finding aid examples gathered from other repositories and
chapters on arrangement and description are based on policy and finding aid examples gathered from other repositories and extended summaries of basic manuals on archival processing. The fourth chapter includes extensive references to conservation problems.

As an introductory manual *Congressional Papers Management* has at least three important weaknesses. First, it does not set the management of congressional collections in the larger context of a repository’s other collections. While there are indeed aspects of modern congressional collections that distinguish them from other collections, the book treats them as if totally unrelated to the equally massive records of a modern social service agency or business or religious congregation or labor union. This conceptual narrowness is reflected in the fact that, with the exception of the first arrangement and description chapter, Phillips cites virtually no literature that is not specifically about congressional papers. While this is noticeable in the chapters on collection development and appraisal, it is positively crippling in the chapter on sampling and electronic records.

Second, and related, the vast majority of the specific examples cited in the book (particularly in the two arrangement and description chapters) are of papers of collections that should better be looked at as exceptions rather than rules. Richard Russell, Sam Nunn, Mike Gravel, Hubert Humphrey, and Frank Church are in no way “typical” members of Congress (not even "typical“ senators), and the decisions made about their papers should not be taken as typical or standard. The result of this bias is to give the impression that "correct" processing of congressional papers
is far more detailed than (or, many archivists would ever, should be) is the case. One specific example (p. 147) are the directions for item ordering and item weeding Press Files: “if item arrangement is more time-consuming than the repository can afford, then only remove the duplicates. . . .” Removing duplicates, however, is itself often more than the repository can afford, and depending on the extent of the duplication, it is quite possible that the space saved by searching for duplicates is worth less to the repository than the staff time taken to search for them.

Third, if the book is intended to be a fairly comprehensive manual, why are there not chapters on conservation and on reference and outreach? A conservation chapter, in particular, would have made sense given the extensive repetition (series by series) in the arrangement and description chapters of admonitions on dealing with audio-visual material, oversized material, and deteriorating boxes and folders. Why include documentation policy but little discussion of deeds of gift? (Viewed instead as a processing manual for paraprofessionals in larger institutions, Congressional Papers Management does not really need these extra chapters, and also does not need its current chapters on collection development and appraisal.) Most disappointing, for a 1996 imprint, is the section on electronic records. This thin section (6 pages of 181) ignores the abundant writing on electronic records not specific to congressional offices, and begs for a more detailed examination of the content, structure, and function of the current Senate systems and some words about the more common software being used in House offices.
managing congressional papers (though it sets standards that are unrealistic for many of them) and as a teaching tool for use by supervising curators at repositories specializing in congressional collections (where by definition a higher level of resources per collection have been available to congressional papers). Curators at repositories who view and treat congressional collections as a fairly routine segment of much broader appraisal and processing activities will find Phillips's fine synthesis of appraisal issues of most interest. Curators with responsibility for congressional collections owe it to themselves to read through this book at least once and to make the decision to purchase a personal or institutional copy on the basis of that direct assessment.

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Portraits of Conflict: A Photographic History of Georgia in the Civil War is the fifth volume in the University of Arkansas
Press's series on the Civil War. The authors, Anne J. Bailey and Walter J. Fraser, Jr., have compiled 260 photographs, four maps, and primary source materials to compose Georgia's role in the Civil War. The information extracted from the letters, diaries, and narratives combined with photographs may be the closest representation to recreating the war in all its violence and motion. The authors have utilized the holdings of repositories, private collections, and individuals from across Georgia and elsewhere.

The authors introduce the war with a brief survey of photography, discussing different techniques of photographers, especially those who traveled with the Union Army. The drama then unfolds with each theater of war discussed, battle by battle, tying the theaters together into a whole. The battle narratives are vivid, providing an introduction to regimental histories and the personal feelings of the troops. Each section is then followed by a gallery of photographs of individuals or scenes that are discussed in the text.

The texture of the photographs are striking in what they evoke. The photograph of Fort MacAllister (p. 269) at low tide suggests the footprints still in the mud of several thousand pairs of feet that captured the fort. The portrait of Ellen Renshaw House (p. 299) shows the delicate demeanor of an unreconstructed southern lady; camp life and scenes of battles (pp. 15–16, 18–21, 215, 224) trigger hot, dusty days with ground particles of red clay of the piedmont and the stumps of trees with broken pine branches underfoot while soldiers lie about seeking relief. The harsh reality of operations at Andersonville Prison are clearly imaged (p. 306–10).
The only deficiency in the book is the rarity of photographs of slaves, slave life, and free persons of color. These groups made contributions to or participated in the war effort at various levels, as in the case of Horace King (p. 332), who became one of the foremost building contractors in Georgia and Alabama.

The appendix is extremely helpful, for it contains an alphabetical name list of the photographed people, giving biographical sketches of their lives after the War. The notes and bibliography are detailed and arranged by chapter, making it easier to conduct further research. The index is helpful, for it has a name and place name listing as well as Confederate Army unit listings, arranged by nickname and/or numerical designation by battalion and regiment. Any reader can glean information from this book and enhance his knowledge of the Civil War in Georgia.

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As stated in Paul Conway’s summary in *Conversion of Microfilm to Digital Imagery: A Demonstration Project*, the purpose of the demonstration project was to “establish, in a research library, the capacity for large-scale conversion of microfilm to digital imagery and to measure the quality, cost, and administrative complexities of such a capacity.” This project was the third phase of Project Open Book and was conducted at Yale University. The National Endowment for the Humanities provided substantial support for phase three, and this was a natural extension of the NEH Brittle Books Program.

Project Open Book was designed with three primary purposes in mind. Initially, the project was to create a ten-thousand-volume digital library and evaluate selection, quality, and cost. The second purpose was to create indexes to the images. And the third purpose was to enhance physical access to the digital material throughout the Yale University campus over its network.

The third phase of Project Open Book resulted in the conversion of two thousand volumes over a twelve-month production cycle running from September 1994 to August 1995. The overall purpose of the third phase was to determine a plan of production which consisted of selection,
technical capabilities (hardware and software), staffing, and cost using actual production time data.

The project staff, in conjunction with bibliographers at Yale University, were tasked with identifying books for digitizing. Several issues were considered in an attempt to ensure that the titles were not widely held which could potentially result in duplication of effort. They tried to identify items that would have widespread appeal to the Yale community while also considering Internet access for books with a very broad appeal. Books that were selected fell into four categories. The project staff digitized one thousand volumes on Civil War history, two hundred volumes on Native American history, four hundred volumes on the history of Spain before the Civil War, and four hundred volumes on the history of Communism, Socialism, and Fascism.

In his report, Paul Conway provides a step-by-step account of the processes that Yale University followed for the scanning of microfilm. He briefly explains the scanning processes in a manner which is appealing to both advanced and beginning "digitizers." Throughout the report he explains the recommendations that have resulted from the project. These recommendations have some practical applications for basic scanning conducted at smaller organizations with limited budgets. For example, Conway discusses the advantage of b-tonal scanning of preservation microfilm. Some of this discussion could have been more in depth, but his explanation is sufficient and allows the library and archives professionals to determine whether they would like to pursue more information.
A very useful section of this report discusses indexing as it is critical to the scanned images if they are to be successfully retrieved. Conway recommends using standard indexing tools to ensure consistency within access points and to create machine driven indexing tools to improve indexing efficiency, accuracy, and consistency. In addition, by placing a URL in the bibliographic record (MARC field 856), the researcher can link from the MARC record either from an OPAC or over the Internet to the digitized volume.

It was very useful to see the breakdown of the costs, both equipment and process time. When considering staff time, hardware, software, and any miscellaneous expenses, the total cost per book is $55.03, and the cost per image is $0.25. This is based on digitizing 3,194 volumes per year. Naturally, this figure will vary as certain book characteristics can increase the costs associated with processing steps. Conway also suggests ways to decrease the costs as most organizations cannot afford the above mentioned costs related to digitizing. These figures are in 1995 dollars and may differ dramatically today as the equipment costs may decrease due to competition.

This report contains eight appendices ranging from equipment configuration to job descriptions. Conway also included workforms, index samples, quality samples, and a cost-study manual. These appendices are extremely important and understandable and should be studied by any institution planning a large scale digitizing project.

As with all projects embarking on technological initiatives, the information included can become dated very quickly. This project was so advanced that the Yale University staff is still light-years ahead of what most archival repositories are
accomplishing. I highly recommend consulting Conway's report if planning to embark on a project, even if not to the scale reported, as there is pertinent information for any institution. It would be very useful to the topic of digitizing and its applications in an archives or library setting, if these recommendations, etc., were periodically updated to show the changes implemented due to technological advances. This report is a good start, and I hope that Paul Conway continues to keep the profession updated.

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