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Reviews

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Sharing the Responsibility: Communities and Their Records. McCarnish Broadcast Center, Rhinehart College (VHS, Color, 20:21), 1996.

Funds for the video, workshops, and grants have been made available from state appropriations and from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission grants. The video, is available for purchase from the Georgia Department of Archives and History, Box RAB, 330 Capitol Avenue, S.E., Atlanta, GA 30334. Price, $10.

The Georgia Historical Records Advisory Board (GHRAB) and the Office of the Secretary of State’s Department of Archives and History, as part of their mission to help improve the condition of Georgia’s heritage, produced this twenty-minute video to illustrate how several communities have successfully addressed their records problems. The effectiveness of this professionally produced video is in hearing first-hand from the archivists, private citizens, and local officials who have been involved in the records management program’s public-private partnership plan. They tell how partnerships between Georgia

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communities and GHRAB improve the preservation and use of local historical records and documents, with professional guidance of the Advisory Board. Included on the tape are representatives from community sites in the Gwinnett County Records Program, Thomaston-Upson Archives, Troup County Archives, and Rome-Floyd Records Program, telling of their experiences and benefits from these partnerships.

The video tape, funded by state appropriations and grants from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, introduces efficient and productive ways in which communities are working together to accomplish these goals. The concept of forming a public-private partnership to preserve their history, successfully adopted by these Georgia communities, prompted GHRAB to highlight the video presentation with some of their success stories. Archivists, records managers, citizens, and officials describe how they have joined efforts effectively.

Lewis Massey, Georgia Secretary of State and Chairman of the State Records Commission, tells of the involvement of his office in assisting and encouraging local governments and state agencies in learning how to create and maintain efficient records management programs. "Together," he says, "we can preserve our State's rich heritage while improving government efficiency."

The Georgia General Assembly created the Georgia Historical Records Advisory Board in 1993 to evaluate conditions of records statewide and to educate the public about their documentary heritage. Dr. Ed Weldon, Director of the Georgia Department of Archives and History, is
coordinator of the Board. Experienced record administrators are appointed to the Board by the Governor, and their first priority is to address the needs of local government records. With the help of a planning grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, the Board was able to survey more than 1,000 local government officials, organizational leaders, and private individuals, and to ask them about their record concerns.

"Several issues clearly stood out as areas for action, such as: public awareness, electronic records, safe storage, use, and greater access," Dr. Weldon said. A grant of $300,000 was awarded to the Board by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission to improve records management programs in Georgia's local government.

The strategy is to work cooperatively, both public and private, to help Georgians help themselves, and in turn, to help their neighbors. An important partner in this mission is the Georgia Records Association, a group of government records managers throughout the state working together with information and records management training through newsletters and workshops. Dr. Weldon explains that the Association provides users with the latest in information on technology and legal requirements regarding records keeping. He adds that it is a great resource for those who are seeking to know more about records and information management at all levels.

Interviews during the video with archivists and records managers throughout Georgia give a comprehensive
overview of their operations. They credit much of their efficiency to the assistance they receive from the Georgia Records Association, an important partner of this mission.

Maria Bradbury, with the Gwinnett County Records Center established in 1983, says the Center contains microfilm, sound recordings, images, area photos, maps, drawings, and other historical items and records, a total of 23,000 cubic feet, or approximately 66 million documents. "With our system," she says, "we can get a request for a particular document and can find it, retrieve it, copy it, and have it ready for pick-up in under thirty minutes."

Winston Walker, Archivist of the Thomaston-Upson Archives, in describing their new archives facility, formerly the High School Library, pointed out that the building was deeded to the city and county by the school system through the efforts of the Upson Historical Society and generous donations by the Thomaston Mills Community Enterprises. "That is an example," he says, "of the success of public-private partnerships."

Kaye Lanning Minchew, director of The Troup County Archives, describes the success of their citizens in organizing an archives to save and protect their documentary heritage. The archives provides records management for the city, county, and school board, and maintains a collection of archival materials used by the public. She tells of the near loss of records dating from 1827 in a courthouse fire in 1936, and of their later deteriorating from lack of proper storage.
Concerned members of the Troup County Historical Society set out to find the funds to create a records management program. The building they are in now was remodeled and donated to the Historical Society by the Callaway Foundation. "We would like to say this 1917 bank building, designed to keep your money safe, is now keeping your heritage safe and accessible," she says. "All of the generous donations, including a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, have helped expand the program into another building across the street, the storage space needed to serve the growing community."

An example of a cooperative effort by several government agencies combining to serve the community in the Records Management Program is described by Steve Mull, director of the Rome-Floyd Records Program. In 1983, they were to provide service to four local governments, Floyd County, City of Rome, Floyd County schools, and Rome city schools, the first program in the United States to have served so many separate entities. The governing Board, including one representative from each government, and a citizen representative, has won a number of awards and recognitions for efficiency and service to the city, county, and citizens. "The goal is to offer efficient records management and archival services to the government we serve," Mull said, "and in turn, to the town's citizens."

The video tape is recommended for archivists, community citizens, and officials who are interested in protecting archival material. The tape also stresses the numerous contributions to archival endeavors being made
by private citizens and government officials. Program host Dan Chandler encourages those who are interested in creating and maintaining a records management program, and in finding resources to improve records management activity and programs, to call 404-657-3849 for further information.

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This prizewinning two-volume guide will be a valuable reference tool for repositories and libraries interested in this area and time period. Robert Kvasnicka won the 1995 C.F.W. Coker Prize for Finding Aids for this guide, and
received a wonderful review in the November 1995 SAA Archival Outlook, [he] "has compiled a guide which exemplifies the best of archival description. It is a clear concise, well-indexed, analytical tool which will facilitate research on the Trans-Mississippi West...Each record group is well outlined and placed in context, the provenance of each series is clear, and the indexes are well designed to guide researchers seeking material by subject and personal name." (p.21)

Records of the Department of State in the National Archives that are associated with the American West are identified and described in the first volume. These include the Territorial Papers, maintained by the department of State; records relating to Presidential appointments and pardons; correspondence with departmental officials at posts in Mexico, Canada, and the Republic of Texas; records of commissions responsible for establishing international boundaries of the United States and claims settlements involving the Republic of Texas, Great Britain, and Mexico; and records concerning Government exhibits at international expositions held in the western United States. The arrangement of this guide is by record group and incorporates data taken from pertinent descriptive materials previously produced by the National Archives. The compiler notes that instead of merely reproducing inventories, an attempt has been made to present a different viewpoint, with more emphasis on subject matter, specific examples, and practical guidance on using the records.

The second volume of this series focuses on the department of Justice records in the National Archives.
which relate to the American West. These include correspondence of the Attorney General’s office; records relating to appointments of Federal judges, attorneys, and marshals; dockets and case files documenting the activities of U.S. attorneys and marshals; case files for Indian depredation claims and other claims brought against the United States; various records of the Bureau of Prisons regarding prisoners in State and Federal penitentiaries; Presidential pardon case files and Utah amnesty case files; and investigative case records compiled by predecessors of the Federal Bureau of Investigation. In the preface, Trudy Peterson notes that users of this guide will find the records described in this volume are, additionally, sources of information about social tensions involving minority or dissident groups, competition between political factions, public attitudes and morals, the use and exploitation of natural resources, and many other issues relating to the settlement and development of the Trans-Mississippi West. There are currently two forthcoming volumes in this series:

Part III: A Guide to records of the Department of Agriculture for the Territorial Period

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In the early 1990s, both the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and the University of New Hampshire received grants from the NHPRC to survey and schedule university records. These guides are the results of those surveys, and are two excellent paper guides to their respective repositories. Yet, one might wonder what is the point of a paper repository guide in this increasingly electronic world.

The purpose of the Chapel Hill guide, compiled by Michael G. Martin, Jr. and Susan C. Ballinger, is to “give an overview of the records groups held in the University Archives” and “summary access to those holdings to persons who do not have access to the online catalog records.” This statement points to the reason paper guides to collections are still valuable and viable. Not everyone, and indeed, probably not most people, has easy access to electronic catalogs or Internet sites. Paper guides still fill a very great need, and while they will not be necessary forever, they will still be important for years to come. At the time the UNH guide was compiled by Frank Wheeler, there was no online access, other than the library OPAC, to their finding aids (since then, UNH has established a WWW site for its Archives).

Both guides provide the basic information necessary for any repository guide, whether it is paper or electronic: an introduction to the institution and the repository; instructions
on how to use the guide, and how to navigate the organizational scheme; an index; and, of course, summary descriptions of the records groups and collections. The UNH guide also includes policy documents such as their mission and collection policy statements, and their records authority statement. These documents help to establish the legitimacy of the archives, and are specially important to a department that was relatively new in the university community.

One nice touch in the Chapel Hill guide is the inclusion of reproductions of collection material. Preceding each new record group listing is a reproduction of a document from the collection. Although most are facsimiles of written or printed material, they do provide a glimpse of some of the wide range of material in the collections.

Both guides are clearly organized, well written, and this is most important, are usable tools for discovering what is in the repository. A researcher, whether a member of the university community or not, could consult either of these guides and quickly discover if the material they seek is in the archives. This functionality lies at the root of any good access tool, and these guides are functional in the best sense of the word.

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In writing *The Archival Enterprise*, Bruce W. Dearstyne provides the archival community with a comprehensive book covering many topics of the archival profession in a concise and easy to read format. The book gives beginners sound basic knowledge of many topics and issues which can be explored with more detailed/technical books. However, its value is definitely not limited to those just entering the profession. Instead, seasoned archivists will find his discussions of changes in the field and new issues, such as electronic mediums, helpful and informative. His description of the archival profession is so exciting and insightful it will inspire those who have become jaded to reexamine this noble endeavor.

Dearstyne begins with the fundamentals in an introduction filled with descriptive definitions, giving the reader a good foundation of basics. Dearstyne also begins the book by establishing three case studies of imaginary institutions which differ in repository type and mission. He continues to use these repositories throughout the book in order to illustrate issues and problems under discussion. This gives the theories and practices practical applications, enabling the reader to see examples of how they are applied. However, these case studies are not a distraction to the more advanced reader because they are set off from the rest of the material with bars on special pages following the appropriate section of material.
A broad number of issues are addressed in the book including such fundamentals as collection policies, donor relations, mission statements, relationship with the parent institution, and appraisal of materials. Good explanations of the general task of processing and cataloging via RLIN and OCLC are also included, giving beginners a nice overview.

For the more advanced archivists, insightful ideas are provided on topics such as staff management, public relations, security, and marketing. Other helpful items included in the book are example forms ranging from inventories and patron sign-in forms to preservation management records that both beginners and seasoned professionals will find beneficial.

Beyond theory and practices, Dearstyne also provides an excellent history of the profession and of the Society of American Archivists and related organizations. Bringing the history up to date, he even discusses many of the issues faced by the profession today, such as certification. Dearstyne is able to discuss these without revealing his biases and without forcing his opinion.

The layout of the book makes for quick reading and easy comprehension. Key ideas are set off in italics for quick locating and are followed with short, explanatory paragraphs. The text is well documented with endnotes following each chapter with the chapters being of a good length and flowing together.

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