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Review

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REVIEW

Recognizing Leadership and Partnership: A Report on the Condition of Historical Records in the States and Efforts to Ensure Their Preservation and Use. Prepared by Victoria Irons Walch. Iowa City, IA: Council of State Historical Records Coordinators (with funds provided by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission), 1993. Bibliography. One volume and a supplement. 365 pp.

This report on the status of archival programs in the fifty states and the District of Columbia and five territories attempts to establish a baseline against which future archival achievements can be measured. Using Ernst Posner's thirty-year-old *American State Archives* and Paul Conway's 1985 census of archival institutions for background information and comparisons, Victoria Irons Walch, with the help of the State Historical Records coordinators and National Historical Publications and

Records Commission (NHPRC) staff, gathered and broadly interpreted information about the care of state and local government records and about statewide initiatives supported by State Historical Records Advisory Boards.

The two volumes provide a snapshot of the condition of records care in 1993 in the states and, to a lesser extent, in local governments. The comparisons with the 1964 and 1985 studies offer useful reminders of how much conditions have improved over the years—every state in the Union now has a functioning archives (in 1963, twelve states had not state archivist), basic records management programs are now in place in all but four states, and one-third of the states occupy buildings that are less than twenty years old with twelve more states planning for new buildings. Nonetheless, many comments from state archival officials about budget cutbacks, the loss of personnel, storage facilities that are filled to capacity, a growing amount of records being sent to the archives, and inadequate conservation programs, etc., serve as reminders of how much more needs to be done.

The report covers fifteen main conditions and issues. The supplement offers detailed profiles of each of the states, territories, and the District of Columbia; information in it is almost entirely contained in the main volume. The most obvious problem with this report is the one most frequently mentioned in the introduction—Walch had only seven weeks to gather the information and write the report. A tremendous amount was accomplished in those seven

weeks, but no reason is ever given as to why only seven weeks were available. Would an extension of a few months have allowed more information to be gathered and more analysis to be done? Also there is often excessive duplication between some of the tables and charts and lists of comments from the states. For instance, a table, two maps of the United States and individual entries from each states all show which states have been involved in formal planning processes. Other information is left out or glossed over. It is difficult to draw conclusions, for example, about the states' involvement in the archival profession based strictly on the number of people in each state who are members of the Society of American Archivists and the Association of Records Managers and Administrators. Time did not allow gathering figures about the membership of regional archival organizations and local ARMA chapters (which are accessible to a much larger percentage of people working in archives) or to membership in the Academy of Certified Archivists. Perhaps the next study will include these important details.

As useful and informative as these two volumes are, the true worth of this study will come in follow-up reports. The Council of State Historical Records Coordinators or the NHPRC should commission another study every ten years or so to start providing an on-going, up-to-date report on the care of state and local government records.

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