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Frank G. Burke. *Research and the Manuscript Tradition.* Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 1997. x + 310 pp. $50.00 (cloth), ISBN 978-0-8108-3348-7.

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The title of this book would lead the reader to anticipate a narrowly focused approach. Indeed, in the introduction Burke specifies that his target reader is the "beginning researcher-academic, professional or amateur" rather than the "budding archivist" who will be exposed to other sources of information on manuscript use. But the author is shortsighted in his assessment of his potential audience. Burke talks about both public records and manuscripts, and the background and interpretations he provides on all facets of their management have relevance and appeal to a broader readership. New and experienced archivists will also learn a great deal from Burke's graceful and thoughtful "tour behind the scenes of a manuscript repository."

As a professional historian, archivist, and educator, Burke is in a fairly unique position to reflect on the use of archival and manuscript materials. He has held high level positions at both the Library of Congress and the National Archives, served as Executive Director of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, and taught for many years at the University of Maryland College of Library and Information Services. This breadth of experience gives him the perspective necessary to articulate both the joys of the search and the challenge for the professionals and institutions charged with collecting and preserving these valuable resources. The anecdotes and examples sprinkled throughout the dozen chapters are testimony to his knowledge and appreciation of the field of primary source research.

Chapter titles are clever and literary, and chapters usually begin with an interesting quote. The topic of the chapter is not necessarily clear from the title, and the order of the chapters do not always follow expected logic (from the perspective of the professional archivist, which again was not the author's intended audience).

In the first chapter, Burke uses the example of two letters written by William J. Calhoun, American Minister to China, posted in Peking and dated December 1911 and January 1912, to illustrate the differences between personal papers and official documents. This comparison of content and motive for writing gets at the heart of archival theory–that records and papers are created in the course of normal ongoing activity for a reason. This provenance is significant in terms of how documents should be appraised, arranged, and described, as well as who owns physical and intellectual property. Burke returns to these two letters several times throughout the book to make specific points.

In the second chapter, "The Recovery of Reality," Burke explores the different ways in which information is recorded, from forms of legal and routine documentation to the kinds of materials individuals create when trying to tell their version of a story or event. He suggests that researchers often utilize the papers of state and local government officials to verify the stories told in diaries, letters, and newspapers. He argues that the scholarly focus on "Great White Men" was not necessarily because archivists chose not to save alternative materials, but rather that historians selected safer subjects. Materials have always been there, just not necessarily as accessible.

Burke next turns to the ways in which researchers locate materials. He describes sources such as the National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections as well as other published tools that include the holdings of many repositories, explaining the quirks and pitfalls of various approaches, as well as links between collection level descriptions and more detailed finding aids. This is the first of several chapters that will become dated as electronic methods of access multiply, and Burke acknowledges that fact.

Access policies and the role of the archivist/curator are also covered in later chapters. Chapter Nine, "The Cultural Crypt," ties intellectual access to physical access and the policies and procedures that repositories impose to maintain security over their collections of unique materials. Chapter Eleven provides an excellent introduction to the legal and ethical issues that govern both ac-

cess to and use of historical resources. Burke not only explains the Freedom of Information and Privacy Acts and copyright law (the latter already outdated by recent legislation) but also provides useful interpretation of several legal cases which involved contested use of manuscript materials. This chapter will be a particularly useful reference for archival educators trying to communicate the complexities of ownership and access to their students.

Several chapters in the middle of the book cover the range of activities undertaken by archives and manuscript repositories as they acquire, arrange, and describe collections. Why does a particular collection end up in a specific repository? How do archivists choose what to retain and what to discard? Chapter Five, "Mapping the Roads to the Past," is a particularly nice introduction to the challenges of processing collections and the differences between organizational records and personal papers. Burke clearly explains the levels at which certain kinds of activities are likely to take place in organizations and the lack of equivalent hierarchies in manuscript collections that makes research more difficult.

Any text that discusses the status of technology in a field is obviously going to become outdated rather quickly, and this book is no exception. Burke refers to the ways in which archivists are using computers to create finding aids and provide access within their institutions and to a larger audience. Chapter Six, "Tradition Confronts Technology," is particularly detailed in the guidance it provides to researchers maneuvering through online systems of bibliographic information. But Burke also discusses the ways in which the computer is changing the means people use to create and store their documents and the challenge future generations of archivists and researchers will face in piecing together the historical record. These are challenges that are moving to the top of the professional agenda for archivists.

The least useful chapter to a broad audience is the one on documentary editing, and the amount of attention devoted to this topic is indicative of Burke's years at the National Historical Publications and Records Commission, which has provided funding for many of these multi-year projects.

This is not a reference book, nor is it easy to browse or search the index. Individual chapters can stand alone, but the book is best read in its entirety. A brief glossary of acronyms used follows the text, as does a bibliography of both professional references and primary and secondary sources consulted. The citations at the end of each chapter are particularly useful.

The price of this book will put it out of the reach of the average person, which is unfortunate. Burke has provided both the researcher and the archivist a well-written and thoughtful explanation of the rewards and challenges of working with archives and manuscript holdings, one which reminded me of the reasons I and my colleagues have remained involved in such work for so many years.

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