

Archives & Manuscripts: Conservation. A Manual on Physical Care and Management. MARY LYNN RITZENHALER. Basic Manual Series. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1983. 144 p. ISBN 0-9218328-58-9 \$7.00 pa. (members), \$9.00 pa. (non-members).

Archivists, manuscript curators, archival managers and, yes, even conservators: take note! Here is a manual that should prove to be of great practical value. Why are documents deteriorating? How can a proper environment be created for them? What is the best way to store collections? What kind of storage material should be used? What basic conservation treatments can be given? What is acid-free paper? Questions such as these are dealt with here by Mary Lynn Ritzenhaler. And far more! *Archives & Manuscripts: Conservation* tackles the thorny question of conservation management and the archivist's primary responsibility for the preservation of collections.

Over the past ten years in Canada, much greater emphasis has been placed on conservation. To date, most Provincial Archives either have a conservation facility manned by a professional conservator or they are in the process of planning one. This would appear to relieve archivists from conservation responsibilities. Not so! It is the archivist, according to Ritzenhaler, who has primary responsibility for the conservation of collections in his charge. Conservation should be considered not as a new or separate programme element, but as an integral part of existing archival and curatorial functions. Whether such an archival conservation programme succeeds depends on acceptance of four principles. First, conservation is a management responsibility at the highest administrative level. Secondly, an appropriate share of each annual budget must be allocated to the conservation programme. Thirdly, a conservation programme is wide-ranging in nature. It includes storage and handling of documents, temperature and humidity control, security and disaster preparedness, routine in-house preservation treatments, and other conservation procedures that may require special facilities and high technical competence. Acquisition, processing, research use, and exhibitions are also integral components. Finally, conservation must be the legitimate concern of all members of the staff at every level; it is not merely a technical matter to be relegated to a conservation workshop or some remote specialist.

The archivist must be able to recognize the material nature of records in order to make informed decisions regarding their use, handling, storage, and conservation treatment. To this end the *Manual* describes types of paper, inks, cloth, adhesives, and photographic material. It points out, for example, that to order acid-free paper does not always suffice. "Acid-free," as used by certain suppliers, does not necessarily mean that the paper contains the necessary alkaline reserve. Causes of deterioration and preventive measures are also described in detail. Extreme temperatures, too high or too low relative humidity, light, pollution, and biological agents have distinct relationships with each other. For example, the speed of many chemical reactions which destroy documents is dependent on both temperature and water. The top conservation priority of every archival repository should be provision of temperature and humidity controlled quarters for storage and use of archival material. In a sense, this is a mass conservation treatment because it benefits all items in a repository. Air conditioning, though it is expensive to install and maintain, is considered to be the most cost-effective way of caring for collections.

Of course, one of the greatest causes of deterioration is abuse and mismanagement by archivists themselves. How often do archivists cause inestimable damage to maps by retrieving and returning them to their folders while the folders are still in the map cabinet, instead of first removing the folder with the map (maps) from the map case to a flat working surface and then removing the map. Archivists commonly store their map folders with the open end toward the front of the map cabinet, thus encouraging this destructive practice. Stamping documents with traditional rubber stamp inks which are usually highly acidic should also be avoided. The Library of Congress has developed a permanent, non-acidic ink specifically for marking archival material. It is available free of charge to any repository requesting it.

The *Manual* has a section on some of the more technical conservation treatments like fumigation, washing, bleaching, and deacidification. Archivists should have a basic understanding of these processes. And they should especially be aware of the health-related and environmental problems associated with using hazardous material like ethylene oxide as a fumigant.

The section dealing with setting up a preservation workshop is extremely useful. The workshop proposed does not include facilities for washing or deacidifying documents — processes which require the expertise of a professional conservator. Instead, the workshop described provides the equipment and material necessary to perform such basic conservation procedures as relaxing and flattening documents, surface cleaning of paper records, testing for ink solubility, testing the pH of paper (for acidity), paste preparation, mending with long-fibre Japanese paper, polyester encapsulation, treatment of leather bound volumes — all in-house procedures an archivist with some training can perform. In Appendix B of the *Manual*, these basic procedures are described in detail with excellent drawings to help clarify them. Appendix C provides instruction on evaluating the conservation literature while Appendix D presents an excellent bibliography of archival conservation literature. Finally, there is a section dealing with conservation supplies and equipment.

This *Manual* provides a wealth of information and instruction based on sound conservation principles. For archives wishing to implement a conservation programme, it is must reading.

Charles A.E. Brandt
Chief Conservator
Artistic and Historic Works on Paper
Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Vatican: Archives of the Sacred Congregation "De Propaganda Fide." LUCA CODIGNOLA. Prepared for the French Archives Section of the Public Archives of Canada and the Research Centre in the Religious History of Canada of Saint Paul University. Finding Aid No. 1186. Ottawa: Public Archives of Canada, 1983. microfiche. \$13.50.

In 1977 the Public Archives of Canada, in collaboration with the Research Centre in the Religious History of Canada at Saint Paul University in Ottawa, engaged Professor Luca Codignola of the University of Pisa to prepare an inventory of Canadian material in the Archives of the Sacred Congregation for the Propagation of the Faith at the Vatican. Propaganda was the branch of the Roman Curia