Book Reviews

Douglas Raber, Editor

Managing Records As Evidence and Information. By Richard J. Cox. Westport, Conn.: Quorum Books, 2001. 243p. $67.95 (ISBN 1-56720-231-4).

During the series of events that became known as the Iran-Contra affair, National Security Council Staff Officer Oliver North exchanged a number of e-mail messages with his superior, National Security Advisor John Poindexter. Sent via the White House e-mail system, these messages formed a crucial record of the events that constituted the Iran-Contra scandal. A decade's debate has raged between the various parties involved as to what kinds of documents, precisely, these e-mail messages were. Were they routine junk that could be purged by the White House, as the first Bush Administration contended, or were they important records and documents that must be preserved?

As Richard J. Cox discusses in this detailed study, the Iran-Contra affair is but one instance of which the very definition of what constitutes a "record" is the subject of public debate in the age of information technology. Modern corporations, businesses, and government agencies are well into an era where "the development of the personal computer has made every employee a records-generating dynamo" (99). This plethora of records presents a particular challenge for records managers and archivists. How do they sort through mounds of paper and electronic records to determine what is important and what is not? For Cox, the answer begins with clearly defining what constitutes a record, then using this definition as the basis for developing sound policies for records appraisal and maintenance.

Cox, a professor at the University of Pittsburgh's School of Information Sciences Archival Studies program, has published numerous articles dealing with records, archives, policy, and the nature and importance of the record in the Information Age. This volume distills, revises, and thematically encapsulates nearly a score of articles from a handful of journals. The result is a comprehensive, useful, and eloquently argued examination of the importance of accurate record management in a time when a record could just as easily be embedded in computer code as printed on a piece of paper.

Given the confusion over what constitutes a record, Cox opens his work with a chapter titled "Starting Policy: Defining Records." While this may seem unnecessary to many professional archivists and records managers, Cox makes a convincing case that the definition of "record" has become somewhat vague and elusive as computers have become commonplace tools for records generation and storage. Fundamental to any records management or archival policy is understanding that "records are discrete entities, with characteristics separating them from other information sources. They capture evidence because they document transactions" (16). They form the basis for organizational memory, help organizations comply with external regulations and rules, and exist as evidential markers regardless of whether they are handwritten letters, spreadsheets tucked in a database, or e-mail transactions. Cox illustrates how "archivists and records managers . . . wandered" away from the evidential role of records, then builds a compelling case for under-

standing that "records need to be the focus, as the source of evidence of the work of organizations and individuals and for purposes of corporate memory and accountability" (34).

After untangling the definition of records from the minefield of modern information technology, Cox's second chapter outlines ways to focus on records—not technology—as records management policies are created. Modern records creation and management is inextricably tied with software and systems design and implementation, calling for nothing less than "a new preservation paradigm for electronic records" (95). To manage records effectively and set workable policies, Cox argues, records managers must have enough understanding of the process to ensure that systems and software do not impair the ability to preserve records.

"The Policy's Spine: Appraising and Managing Records," the third chapter, discusses some of the differences between archival and records management policies in terms of value, electronic records, and preservation. Cox examines policies by the U.S. National Archives and other public agencies, using these examples to argue for clear and consistent policies for appraising, scheduling, and managing records while never losing sight of their evidentiary nature.

Cox concludes this work with two chapters dedicated to spreading the gospel of proper record-keeping policies. The first of these is a fascinating examination of public perceptions of archivists and records managers that includes examples from newspapers, contemporary movies, popular fiction, and children's literature. Sadly, Cox laments, the profession comes off as

dull and boring in the public's eye. "Surely records professionals can find someone who can communicate the details of their work in a fashion that captures public interest" (149). (Perhaps the archivists' equivalent of a John Grisham or John LeCarre?) He concludes this chapter with a serious examination of professional ethics, privacy, access, and policy in the light of public awareness and public scrutiny. The state of archival education is the subject of Cox's final chapter, and he examines both degree-granting programs and continuing education for practicing professionals.

The Iran-Contra e-mail debate is just one of the many examples of ambiguous or misguided record-keeping policies that fill this valuable and timely work. Cox's narrative repeatedly shows how such a seemingly simple thing as the definition of a record has often been lost in the Information Age. Fortunately, Cox also provides practical advice for creating workable, realistic policies to keep the evidential nature of records paramount as records managers and archivists navigate the technological complexity of the modern world. Clearly argued and well-written, this book will be welcome reading for anyone who creates or administers archival or records management policies.—*Gene Hyde (ghyde@lyon.edu), Lyon College, Batesville, Arkansas*

Maxwell's Guide to Authority Work. By Robert L. Maxwell. Chicago: ALA, 2002. 275p. $49 (ISBN 0-8389-0822-5).

"Authority work is important if a library wishes its users to have full access to its collections. Although doing authority work may seem more expensive than neglecting it, the cost of not placing headings in the library's databases under authority control—in terms of the wasted time and ill will toward the library of users attempting to navigate an uncontrolled database,

to say nothing of the difficulties library staff will have in determining the extent of their collections—is undoubtedly greater than the initial expense to the library," states Robert L. Maxwell in this new book on authority work (263). Maxwell—already known as author of the current edition of *Maxwell's Handbook for AACR2R* (1997)—has given librarians another indispensable cataloging tool with the publication of *Maxwell's Guide to Authority Work*.

In the introduction, Maxwell does a good job of explaining what authority control and authority work are—and the reasons why libraries should spend time and money on them. In a chapter on "Standards Governing Authority Control," he lists the tools for formulating name and uniform title headings: *Anglo-American Cataloging Rules*, 2d ed., (AACR2), *Library of Congress Rule Interpretations*, the Name Authority Cooperative Program's *NACO Participants' Manual*, and the Library of Congress's *Descriptive Cataloging Manual Z1: Name and Series Authority Records*. Standards he cites for terms include ANSI/NISO Z39.19 *Guidelines for the Construction, Format, and Management of Monolingual Thesauri* and the *Library of Congress Subject Headings* and LC *Subject Cataloging Manual*—all discussed in detail in a later chapter. He also presents *MARC 21 Format for Authority Data*, the encoding standard for authority records, using explanation, examples, and an invaluable position-by-position table and description of the leader and 008 field of a MARC 21 authority records.

His chapter on "Basic Authority Control Procedures" includes workflow for establishing headings and field-by-field guidelines for creating authority records. Figures with helpful examples are attractively presented throughout the book and keyed to corresponding discussions in the text. Maxwell refers to other sections of the book throughout (usually by chapter

number) when introducing topics that will be discussed in greater detail later on. Other sections are "Authority Control of Names," "Uniform Titles: General Information," "Uniform Titles: Particular Problems," "Series: General Information and Series Authority Records," "Authority Control of Terms: Thesaurus Building," "Authority Control of Terms: Subjects," and "Authority Control of Terms: Genre/Form."

The final chapter, "The Library and Beyond," is concerned with sources of authority records, outsourcing, and cooperative programs for the sharing of authority records. Maxwell also discusses library systems and database maintenance. "It is important to look upon authority work as an ongoing process, not something that can be undertaken once and then considered finished," he emphasizes in his conclusion (264).

Full of good explanations, helpful examples, and practical advice, the book is readable and easy to understand. I was impressed first thing when I saw the "Glossary of Acronyms" at the very beginning. Although there is no bibliography *per se*, Maxwell provides references to cited and other related publications and Web sites through end-of-chapter notes. It probably would have been helpful to have a cumulative list of resources at the end of the text, but having the notes at the end of each chapter is my personal preference—and many of them are explanatory rather than simply bibliographical. There is a thorough index, thankfully set in type the same point size as the main text, which facilitates locating and reading the entries. Overall, the book is well designed and physically attractive.

Previous manuals, such as Robert H. Burger's *Authority Work: The Creation, Use, Maintenance, and Evaluation of Authority Records and Files* (1985) and *Authority Control: Principles, Applications, and*