

# ARCHIVES ADMINISTRATION

**A Manual for Intermediate and Smaller  
Organizations and for Local Government**

**Michael Cook**

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**DAWSON**

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# Preface

This book is one of the products of what has been called the 'archival revolution' which has been gathering pace since the Second World War. This 'revolution' has radically altered society's view of what archives are, and it has altered archivists' functions both in administration and in connexion with research. The main features of the archives world of today are that there is an almost inconceivably large body of records being produced, that the character of these records has changed from what it was before and is in process of changing further; and that the demands of both administration and research for access to the information in records and archives is rapidly growing and changing in character. All these features have led archivists to change their attitudes and their methods. Some of these attitudes and methods are the subject of this book and the changes are its justification.

It is no longer possible for one person to write a complete survey of professional practice in the administration of archives. Too many specialities have developed, and the scope of the work has grown too wide. This book is offered because it serves a practical purpose, and because it may help forward the processes involved in producing an adequate body of literature to support the art. It is offered in a spirit of respect to the leaders and elders in archives work, and in a spirit of encouragement and enthusiasm to those who are starting out.

The immediate objective of this book is to provide the basic information which will be needed by anyone starting or running a small or intermediate archives and records service. It is not based upon the experience of the larger national archives services, like

most of the archival manuals published hitherto, but upon that of smaller and local ones. All complex organizations produce and need to manage records, and the general interest requires the development of archives services. Like all organized activities, these need resources of people, installations and finance.

Therefore adequate services can be provided only by organizations above a certain size, and smaller entities will find it unrewarding to run their own: they may be able by co-operative agreements to make use of those of larger ones.

While accepting this situation, this book attempts to describe the activities, duties and standards of records and archives services run by organizations such as industrial or business firms or local government which are, in comparison with the national or international giants, small or intermediate in size. It confines itself to providing basic information, and in addition offers guidance through the bibliography on sources for further knowledge. Among the important subjects which are not dealt with in detail here are the technical aspects of conservation and repair (under this heading management aspects alone are included), technical developments and standards in description (cataloguing), computer programs beyond the merest outline, archival publication, the design and layout of archival buildings, and professional education. All these subjects call out for fresh literature, and in many cases it is difficult at present to suggest sources for newcomers to learn about them.

I should like to thank all those of my colleagues who have given permission for the inclusion of items from their work, or who have helped me with advice and information; they have been very generous. They include: the Keepers of the Public Records and of the Public Records of Northern Ireland; the Secretary of the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts and the Registrar of the National Register of Archives; the directors of national archives in Malaysia and Singapore; the county archivists of Cheshire, Clwyd, East Sussex, Gloucestershire, Greater London, Kent, Lancashire, Suffolk, and Worcestershire; the corporation archivist of the British Steel Corporation; and the Acting Director of the Borthwick Institute of Historical Research, York. In addition I acknowledge very gladly my debt to their respective councils or governing bodies for permission to reproduce or adapt documents. I should like also to thank the following for permission to reproduce documents at rather greater length: the British Steel Corporation for the retention schedule in chapter 5; Lancashire County Council



for the version of their plan in chapter 10; the Public Record Office for their summary of archival values in appendix B; Her Majesty's Stationery Office for the extract from the Public Records Act 1958; the Schools Council and their project team on 'History, Geography and Social Science, 8–13' for the statement of objectives in chapter 12 and the Council of the Society of Archivists for the text of their *Recommendations* in appendix A. My colleagues at Liverpool, especially Adrian Allan, have been very understanding during a long period of gestation; Mrs Anne Oakes did a splendid job in the typing. Lastly I gladly advertise the fact that my wife and I have a very effective scheme for supporting each other in times of specially heavy work; I thank her especially for carrying it through in this case.

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