

# Book Reviews



**Cox, Richard J.** *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management.* Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Pr. (*New Directions in Information Management*, no. 35), 2000. 252p. \$65, alk. paper (ISBN 0-313-31331-8). LC 99-089071.

In this age of “information as you need it” and virtual communities created in the changing landscape of the Internet, archivists and records managers concern for the record and its long-term preservation, may seem passé. To the public, the records manager and the archivist are imagined operating in dusty basements with boxes of old papers, useful only to the academic scholar or the genealogist. Richard Cox, in his book *Closing an Era: Historical Perspectives on Modern Archives and Records Management*, presents a compelling case for the profession through a historical recounting of the role of records in society and the development of efforts to manage them.

Whether in the form of a digital expression or a stone tablet, the record, as Cox explains, should be preserved for reasons of accountability, evidence, and memory. Although advances in technology and communications have collapsed time and place and have certainly caused changes in work methods, the essence of the archivist’s and records manager’s work is still based on this historical foundation.

Beginning with a historical survey, Cox explores the changes brought about in society and in the archivist’s profession as a result of the digital age. He examines recent issues related to records management and archives, such as the court controversy over White House e-mail and what is and is not to be considered a “record.” Cox also reviews the argument between documentary editors and proponents of electronic records management that resulted from the National Histori-

cal Publications and Records Commission’s (NHPRC) setting of funding priorities. He laments that the profession is splintering into archivists and records managers rather than working together as records professionals. Finally, Cox describes educational programs for the archivist and discusses his views on what should be the best education for the archivist and the records manager.

*Closing an Era* is a carefully documented review of the historical foundations of the archival profession and an exploration of the changes occurring in the profession as the result of electronic records and communication through the Internet. It will be an extremely useful text for introducing students to the history and theoretical basis of the profession as well as to the current issues involved in working in a digital environment. Unfortunately, the book is printed in a very small font with faint print that makes reading difficult and the inclusion of exhaustive documentation can be tedious going, but the ideas presented make reading the book worth the effort.

Richard Cox is a professor at the University of Pittsburgh’s School of Information Science. His teaching experience combined with his past work as an archivist and editor of the journal of the Society of American Archivists (SAA) gives him a broad perspective for understanding the profession. With this book, Cox has made a significant contribution to the body of publications focusing on the records profession; for archivists, librarians, and records managers, *Closing an Era* is a book worth reading.—*Norma Myers, East Tennessee State University.*

**Kaser, David.** *Just Lucky, I Guess: My Adventurous Life as a Hoosier Librarian.* New York: Vantage Pr., 2000. 231p. \$13.95, pa-