



Reference Works and Historical Texts

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WHEN THE LARGE NUMBER of reference works in the archival and manuscript fields today are compared with the relatively few of a generation ago, there is evidence for a favorable accounting on behalf of recent historical scholarship. Actually this widespread movement to provide guides and inventories to manuscript sources dates back to the turn of the century. The *Reports* of the Historical Manuscripts Commission of Great Britain during the latter decades of the nineteenth century inevitably suggested that something comparable ought to be undertaken in the United States. Action came, not from the federal government, but from two private organizations, the American Historical Association (with the benefit of the Government Printing Office) and the Carnegie Institution of Washington.

In 1895 the Association set up a Historical Manuscripts Commission to pool the interests of state and local historical societies and to embark upon a program of documentary publication through the medium of the Association's *Annual Reports*. In 1899 it established the Public Archives Commission as a clearinghouse of information in a much neglected field, and more especially as a means of promoting inventories of state and local archives throughout the United States. During the following decade both archivists and professors of history engaged in this noteworthy task with very creditable results. The *Annual Reports* of the A.H.A. of 1900-1917 contain a series of surveys and inventories, varying in detail, of state archives ("records" would be a more apt word for some of the states) and a few municipal archives. Meanwhile the Carnegie Institution, established in 1901, was sponsoring a series of *Guides* to materials on American history at home and abroad. J. F. Jameson, head of the Institution's Bureau of Historical Research, deserves chief credit as the master planner for its far flung achievement. Among the first fruits were C. H. Van Tyne

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and W. G. Leland's *Guide to the Archives of the Government of the United States in Washington* (2d ed., Washington, 1907), which demonstrated the dire need for a national archival establishment, and the *Guide to the Manuscript Materials for the History of the United States to 1783, in the British Museum* by C. M. Andrews and Frances G. Davenport (Washington, 1908), and *Guide to the Materials for American History, to 1783, in the Public Record Office of Great Britain* (Washington, 1912-1914). The distinguished list of other similar publications by the Carnegie Institution is well-known among scholars.

During the period between world wars two events of outstanding significance occurred in American archival history: the establishment of the National Archives in 1934 and the organization of the Society of American Archivists in 1936. A third event of more temporary interest, but with far reaching results in aiding scholars, was the organization of the Historical Records Survey as an unemployment relief project in 1936. During its five years of existence the H.R.S. produced through the several state projects hundreds of inventories of county records, most of them mimeographed in limited editions. It also took over the Survey of Federal Archives which issued similar inventories; see its *Bibliography of Research Projects Reports . . .* (Washington, 1943). Rapid acquisition of records by the National Archives and initial problems of archival procedure delayed its publication program. The *Guide to the Records in the National Archives* (2d ed., Washington, 1948) is indispensable, and is kept up to date by *National Archives Accessions*. The *Guide* replaces for the most part Van Tyne and Leland. *List of National Archives Microfilm Publications* (Washington, 1953) reveals selected records available as positive prints. *The American Archivist*, quarterly of the Society of American Archivists begun in 1938, is in many respects a source book on contemporary archival practice. Its annual "Writings on Archives and Manuscripts," published since 1943 in each October issue, is a great boon to historians as well as to archivists.

Although many of the state archives antedate the National Archives as organized departments of government, those with publication programs, now or earlier, have been more inclined to reproduce documentary texts in series rather than to compile reference works covering a larger proportion of the records as a whole. Even the *Calendar of Virginia State Papers . . .* (Richmond, 1875-1893) is an exceptional case before 1900, and the same may be said for the Maryland Hall of Records' *Calendar[s] of . . . Red Books, of . . . Black*

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Books, etc. (Annapolis, 1943—in progress) and the Delaware Public Archives Commission's *Calendar of Records* (Dover, 1935). Maryland is also exceptional for its *Catalogue of Archival Material* (Annapolis, 1942). A few state archives issue *Annual Reports* containing reference material—e.g. Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Illinois, and Wisconsin by the State Historical Society; but generally speaking, little has been done that is comparable to the work through the Public Archives Commission fifty years ago.

The boldest and most comprehensive project in state archival records was *A Guide to the Microfilm Collection of early State Records*, prepared by the Library of Congress in association with the University of North Carolina, compiled by W. S. Jenkins and edited by Lillian A. Hamrick (Washington, D.C., 1950), and the *Supplement* in 1951. Here is a new means of access to this complex field, through microfilm copies conveniently classified and analyzed. While this great compilation gives a passing nod to local archives, it seems unlikely that anything comparable to the county inventories of the Historical Records Survey will be undertaken in the near future.

Institutional archives embrace a vast and largely uncharted area where few archivists have trod as yet to organize the records and ultimately to make known their arrangement and content. Pioneering work, with limited accomplishment in publication of reference works, has been done for three kinds of institutions: religious, business, and educational. The Carnegie Institution pointed the way by sponsoring and publishing W. H. Allison's *Inventory of Unpublished Material for American Religious History in Protestant Archives and Other Repositories* in 1910. However well some church organizations are caring for their official records, they have done little to make known their resources for research; consequently the historian seeks religious materials in general manuscript collections because the archives are unknown and often inaccessible. Exceptional is the "List of Manuscript Records in the Virginia Baptist Historical Society," *Seventh Annual Report of the Archivist, University of Virginia Library, for the Year 1936-37* (University, Va., 1937), in revealing official minute books of such churches and associations in Virginia.

Archival work in the business field got its impetus from the Harvard School of Business Administration and the closely allied Business Historical Society in the 1920's. While a quarter-century of growth has outmoded Margaret R. Cusick's *List of Business Manuscripts in Baker Library* (Boston, 1932), it laid the groundwork for the more

comprehensive compilation by Henrietta M. Larson in *Guide to Business History; Materials for the Study of Business History and Suggestions for Their Use* (Cambridge, 1948). Numerous histories of individual firms have been written, some of them based upon the original records, as they should be; but only in a few cases have such records been inventoried and the inventories published for use by future researchers, e.g. the *Guide to the Burlington [Railroad] Archives in the Newberry Library, 1851-1901* (Chicago, 1949), by Elisabeth C. Jackson and Carolyn Curtis.

The organization of college and university archives is often stimulated by the preparation of anniversary histories; yet such archives usually become a part of the institution's historical manuscript collections and are seldom considered as a separate category of archives. Since such archives have won slight recognition as yet, even among many of the older institutions, it is not surprising that little has been published to aid the researcher. A beginning may be seen in W. E. Hemphill's, "A Bibliography of the Unprinted Official Records of the University of Virginia," *Sixth Annual Report of the Archivist, University of Virginia Library, for the Year 1935-36* (University, Va., 1936).

Organizations and institutions are legion, of course, and run the gamut of our complex modern society. Only a few are, or have been, conscious of the historical value of their records; no doubt relatively few will ever establish their own archives. However, some records by or about many of them get into the papers of individual persons which are acquired by research libraries. Thus official records as archives become intermingled with so-called "personal papers" the contents of which are partially revealed in guides to historical manuscripts. From this condition may be seen the difficulty of drawing a sharp distinction between archives and historical manuscripts.

The master key to reference works on manuscripts is R. A. Billington's "Guides to American History Manuscript Collections in Libraries of the United States," which appeared in the December 1951 issue of the *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, and was reprinted by Peter Smith (New York, 1952). They are analyzed (1) by federal depositories and (2) by states, (a) general and (b) in the several states, alphabetically. Two attempts have been made to provide a national cross-section of manuscript collections, with limited results; a third project in the making is described later (see pp.). The Library of Congress compiled a *Check List of Collections of Personal Papers in Historical Societies, University and Public Libraries, and Other*

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Learned Institutions in the United States (Washington, 1918), covering eighty-six institutions out of more than 300 solicited, but the collections are merely listed, not described. An enlarged edition with brief descriptions was issued in 1924 under the title, *Manuscripts in Public and Private Collections in the United States*. On a more restricted basis the American Association for State and Local History published its *Historical Societies in the United States and Canada* (Washington, 1944), edited by Christopher Crittenden and Doris Godard, with descriptions of manuscript holdings of each society, but the data were so abridged as to be of very limited value. Several efforts have been made to present guides to manuscript collections on a regional basis, either in connection with printed works or as separate compilations, e.g. R. B. Downs, ed., *Resources of Southern Libraries: a Survey of Facilities for Research* (Chicago, 1938), but such works are quickly outdated and their long-time reference value steadily diminishes. Since microfilm copies of manuscript materials are becoming increasingly available and library policy has been greatly liberalized in this respect, the scholar should be familiar with *Union List of Microfilms* (rev. ed., Ann Arbor, 1951) and *Supplement* (1953), issued by the Philadelphia Bibliographical Center and Union Library Catalog.

Every research library with manuscript resources ought to recognize as one of its primary responsibilities the compilation and publication of a guide to those materials. The Historical Records Survey, although chiefly concerned with inventories of county archives, gave attention to manuscripts collections in some states. The results of these efforts were set in mimeographed works on nineteen of the states under the title, *Guide to Depositories of Manuscript Collections in the United States*,* with brief notes on the collections in each library. This laudable undertaking gave rise to or provided supplementary aid for more thorough projects in certain institutions which eventually issued separate guides to their own holdings. Furthermore, these projects were carefully planned with the aid of archival and historical experts so that format and collation for each entry became uniform throughout the H.R.S. and subsequently have been generally adopted. The only city whose manuscript resources were presented as a collaborative effort among institutions was New York. This *Guide*, published in 1941, had been preceded by a more restricted work as to period but

* California, Florida, Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, North Carolina, Oregon—Washington, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Wisconsin.

including printed as well as manuscript material: E. B. Greene and R. B. Morris', *A Guide to the Principal Sources for Early American History in the City of New York* (New York, 1929), rev. and sup. ed., 1953.

A few institutions have made known their manuscript collections by similar publications earlier in the present century, notably the Library of Congress in its *Handbook of Manuscripts* (Washington, 1918) and supplements prepared by C. W. Garrison and P. C. Powell respectively in 1931 and 1938 and published in the American Historical Association's *Annual Report for 1930* and *for 1937*. Subsequent lists are found in the annual *Report of the Librarian of Congress*, 1938-1942, and beginning in September, 1943, in the Library's *Quarterly Journal of Current Acquisitions*. Its *Accessions of Manuscripts, Broadsides and British Transcripts* (Washington, 1922-26) was issued in five volumes; a cognate compilation is Grace C. Griffin's, *A Guide to Manuscripts Relating to American History in British Depositories Reproduced for the Division of Manuscripts of the Library of Congress* (Washington, 1946). Miss Griffin's annual *Writings on American History* since 1906 (in the American Historical Association's *Annual Report* beginning in 1909) includes a section on "Archives and Manuscript Collections." (Two earlier reports of *Writings*, for 1902 and 1903, had appeared under other compilers.)

The Virginia Historical Society prepared a *Catalogue* of its manuscripts (Richmond, 1901), not yet superseded. In the same year "Manuscript Collections in the New York Public Library" appeared in its *Bulletin*, and the first "Supplement" was released in February, 1915, also printed separately as V. H. Paltsits', *The Manuscript Division in the New York Public Library* (New York, 1915). Subsequent lists of accessions have appeared regularly in the *Bulletin*. Another early contribution was R. G. Thwaites', *Descriptive List of Manuscript Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin . . .* (Madison, 1906), which included a section on collections in other states of the Middle West; the Wisconsin material has been fully superseded by Alice E. Smith's, *Guide to the Manuscripts of the Wisconsin Historical Society* (Madison, 1944). The latter work is typical of the effective reference tools published since the 1920's by several leading manuscript repositories, some with WPA aid through the Historical Records Survey, as mentioned above.

In California the Huntington Library first presented a descriptive list of its collections in its May 1931 *Bulletin*, which was partially replaced by Norma B. Cuthbert's, *American Manuscript Collections*

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in the *Huntington Library for the History of the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries* (San Marino, 1941). Grace L. Nute and Gertrude W. Ackerman's, *Guide to the Personal Papers in the Manuscript Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society* (St. Paul, 1935), became something of a model for other institutions undertaking such compilations. It is supplemented by *Manuscript Collections of the Minnesota Historical Society. Guide Number 2*, compiled by Lucile M. Kane and Kathryn A. Johnson (St. Paul, 1955). One of the more detailed and most attractively designed is H. H. Peckham's, *Guide to the Manuscript Collections in the William L. Clements Library* (Ann Arbor, 1942), supplemented by a multilith edition of 1953, compiled by W. S. Ewing. In North Carolina both the *Duke University Guide* (Durham, 1947), revised and enlarged from the mimeographed edition of 1939, and the *University of North Carolina Guide* (Chapel Hill, 1941) were begun as Historical Records Survey projects. In Massachusetts two works of more limited scope by leading societies have appeared: *A Guide to the Resources of the American Antiquarian Society . . .* (Worcester, 1937), and *Handbook of the Massachusetts Historical Society, 1791-1948* (Boston, 1949), each of which includes a section on manuscripts. More recently the Ohio Historical Society has published a detailed *Guide . . .* (Columbus, 1953), compiled by Elizabeth C. Biggert; Colonial Williamsburg has issued a similar volume, by Lynette Adcock (Williamsburg, 1954; and so has the Kentucky Historical Society, by G. G. Clift (Frankfort, 1955). Space does not permit the listing of numerous articles of similar content in learned journals. It should be noted, however, that such data appear regularly in the annual reports of certain institutions. Especially detailed are the University of Virginia Library's *Annual Report on Historical Collections* since 1940 (originally . . . of the *Archivist*, 1931-1940) and Cornell University Library's *Report of the Curator, Collection of Regional History* (Ithaca, 1945-?).

The foregoing survey of reference works on archival and manuscript resources suggests that efforts to make widely known what is extant and available for use have been piecemeal, as indeed they have. One may argue that the very nature of the material makes it more difficult to impose uniform procedures and other controls on manuscripts as compared with imprints; that the collections of each library are unique enough to raise issues peculiar to that institution; and that cost factors vary so greatly among diverse institutions having custody of manuscripts that cooperation on behalf of reference projects which are national in scope is impractical. While scholars have been grateful for each additional guide to manuscript collections

that has appeared, they have continued to explore the possibilities of a centralized, unified project to which all such pertinent data might gravitate and from which information might be disseminated on a continuing basis. Arguments have been set forth from time to time on behalf of regional undertakings as being more likely of realization. Fortunately, perhaps, none of these has materialized, since one or more might have forestalled the plan now in the offing.

Two projects raise anew the hopes of archivists and historians. First, well advanced by the National Historical Publications Commission, is a comprehensive guide to all archival and manuscript repositories in the United States, with descriptive material on at least the leading collections of each. Like the handbook of historical societies published by the American Association for State and Local History in 1944, but on a broader scale and more thorough in coverage, the N.H.P.C. Guide, indexed in minute detail, should become the reference tool of prime importance in the field. Publication date has not yet been set.

The second project, though still in the planning stage, has a body of procedures ready for application. The Library of Congress has proposed to develop a national register or union list of manuscript collections which would be somewhat comparable to its union catalog of printed books. Beginning with the collections in its own Manuscript Division, the Library would prepare a standardized catalog entry for each, with a brief description of content, for printing on a standard 3" x 5" L.C. card. The cataloging rules for this procedure, which have been approved, approximate the rules for cataloging printed books, with adequate allowance for peculiarities of manuscript materials. With the cooperation of other libraries in supplying the essential data for their separate manuscript collections, the Library of Congress would likewise print cards for them and make copies available for distribution in the usual way through its Card Division. Once this project is put into operation with the necessary funds, the Library of Congress can soon demonstrate its service to scholars and archivists, so that the cooperation of other institutions will be forthcoming.

The proposed card catalog to be established and continuously expanded in the Library of Congress will become a great reference tool and clearinghouse of information; the sale of printed cards to institutions and individual scholars will make for that flexibility of information in the manuscript field which has long been taken for granted in the field of imprints. A joint committee of the Society of

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American Archivists and the American Association for State and Local History has served in an advisory capacity in promoting this project and will at the proper time solicit the cooperation of all repositories of manuscripts to assure a real union catalog approximating that ideal of completeness which can have no terminal date. It is hoped that it can be put into operation sooner rather than later.

The rapid development of microfilming and its application to manuscript materials in the 1930's misled many archivists and historians to the conclusion that microfilm editions would replace letter press editions of documentary texts. Since microfilming is relatively cheap, textual editions in this form could be actually complete, giving the scholar ready access to all documents unadulterated by the subjective judgment of the editor. This reasoning overlooked several points: that even microfilm copy has to be "edited" to some extent; that the text, faithfully rendered in print, can be read more quickly and just as reliably as the manuscript, which may still be consulted to supplement the printed version; that the reliable editor, well versed in the field of his documents, continues to serve an essential purpose for both the scholar and the general reading public; and that tradition, prejudice, and eye-strain still favor the printed book over the microfilm and its reading machine. Thus, while the use of microfilm (and microcards) for research work continues to expand, the edited and printed text in its traditional forms has lost none of its potential for present or future use.

This point is irrefutable in the historical field where the microfilm has been a great boon. So far as American history is concerned, the last half-century of world wars and revolutions has aroused a new consciousness in the people. Not only is American history taught more widely than ever before but it commands the interest of a broader segment of the public; and this growth has been simultaneous with more exacting standards of historical scholarship. When bicentennial and other anniversaries of American statesmen have been made occasions for patriotic celebrations in recent years, publication of their papers is deemed appropriate and desirable, edited by well-qualified scholars. Beginning with the *Writings* of Washington, edited by J. C. Fitzpatrick and published by the federal government (Washington, 1931-44), this movement gathered momentum from the impact of World War II upon American democracy, well-symbolized by Jefferson (1743-1826), least appreciated of the founding fathers until his bicentennial. The *Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, edited by J. P. Boyd and others (Princeton, 1950-), has not only become a land-

mark in historical editing but inspired other similar efforts for publishing in full the papers of American statesmen. Boyd quickly proved himself the editor par excellence; and it is worth noting that he put microfilm to work as the means of providing projection prints of all Jefferson documents from which the editing was done. In another, but related, field, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence*, edited by W. S. Lewis (New Haven, Conn., 1937-54) deserves special recognition among the leading editorial works of these years.

Presentation of Volume I of the *Jefferson Papers* to President Truman in 1950 provided the occasion for him to recommend that the papers of other distinguished Americans, political, industrial, educational, etc., be edited for publication and that the National Historical Publications Commission serve as the promotional agency. The Commission forthwith compiled a list of leading Americans of the past, gathered information on the whereabouts of their papers, and urged that editorial projects be initiated by institutions where able editors and important manuscript collections were available in convenient proximity. The Commission's activities were presented in *A National Program for the Publication of Historical Documents; a Report to the President* (Washington, 1954). One of its own projects, described therein, is the Guide to archival and manuscript repositories, referred to earlier. In the same year, was launched the editing of the Writings of Benjamin Franklin by L. W. Labaree and W. J. Bell, Jr., to be published by the Yale University Press; and in 1955 the editing of the Adams papers by L. H. Butterfield with the Harvard University Press as publisher, and the Papers of Alexander Hamilton by H. C. Syrett with the Columbia University Press. Meanwhile selected *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt* were ably edited by E. E. Morison and staff (Cambridge, 1951-1954) and *Lincoln's Collected Works* by R. P. Basler for the Abraham Lincoln Association (New Brunswick, N.J., 1953-1955). Other projects under way are the Writings of J. C. Calhoun by R. B. Meriwether, University of South Carolina, and of Henry Clay by James F. Hopkins, University of Kentucky. An edition of James Madison's writings is to be sponsored jointly by the University of Virginia and the University of Chicago. To all these projects the N.H.P.C. has given publicity and encouragement; for all it serves as an office of information and advice.

It is significant that none of these American statesmen projects are being edited or published by the federal government. This is not to suggest that strong precedent exists against national appropriations for such undertakings. Every period of history has witnessed certain

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large-scale editorial works with federal support: e.g. Peter Force's *American Archives* (1937-53), *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies* (1880-1901), *Documentary History of the Constitution of the United States* (1894-1905), *Official Records of the Union and Confederate Navies* (1894-1922), and the *Territorial Papers of the United States* (1934-), edited by C. E. Carter. Nor has the government lacked able editors in the Library of Congress or the Department of State, or the National Archives; indeed, one of the most distinguished editors is Carter of the *Territorial Papers*, now on the staff of the National Archives. Many of the state governments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have financed the editing and publishing of documentary series from their archives, the most notable recent project being *The Colonial Records of South Carolina* (Columbia, 1951-), superbly edited by J. H. Easterby.

The diverse support of current large-scale projects is convincing evidence of widespread interest in historical scholarship and a wholesome dispersal of talent among numerous institutions, some of which have preserved the manuscripts in the very area of the statesman's public and private life. These are appropriate ventures, too, for the university press with its intimate scholarly connections. The prospects of profit are too dim for the commercial publisher today, although he had found such works a good risk at the turn of the century.

Most significant is the influence of these textual publications on historical scholarship. While they reflect its high standards in the careful planning of each project and in the thorough research that accompanies editing, the work of these editors may be expected to reach new levels of achievement. Without assuming too much from the far reaching influence already exerted by the Boyd edition of Jefferson, it can be asserted with confidence that the present generation is adding more to its inheritance of manuscript resources and to the tools for utilizing them than any of its predecessors. As long as archivists are historians, the archival edge of scholarship cuts both ways and the benefits are mutual. Too many aids to research may dull the curiosity and persistence of some historians, but manuscript records will continue to challenge the inquiring scholar because their unique quality will persist.