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## BOOK REVIEWS

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### *A Manual of Sound Archive Administration.*

By Alan Ward. Aldershot, Hants. England and Brookfield, Vermont: Gower, 1990. Hardbound, 288 pp., \$59.95.

The care and preservation of sound recordings is a topic of great interest and concern to those individuals entrusted with the administration of sound archives. Unfortunately, most "sound archivists" assume this responsibility with little understanding of, or experience in, the technical aspects of this area. To date, little information has been made available to assist the professional archivist outside of occasional journal articles and the informal exchange of information that takes place at meetings of ARSC and other professional organizations. Sound archivists usually are left on their own to care for their collections to the best of their abilities with methods learned by trial and error. These attempts meet varied degrees of success.

Alan Ward's new book addresses these concerns. Written for the technical layperson responsible for administering a small-to-medium size archive or special collection, Ward discusses the various aspects of maintaining a sound archive: acquisitions, copyright, public access, documentation, storage and handling, equipment and facilities, and preservation. The author bases his manual on an assessment of existing practices, and states in his introduction that the "pursuit of adequate, generally acceptable and compatible standards" is his ultimate goal.

The arrival of this book will no doubt be welcomed warmly by sound archivists here and abroad. In order to properly assess the contribution this book makes to the field of sound archiving, however, it is necessary to bear in mind the following questions: (1) how successfully does Ward adhere to his intended focus and goals, as stated in his introduction? (2) how does the "British" orientation of the manual affect its usefulness for the archivist working in the United States? and, (3) how helpful is this book to the professional sound archivist?

Throughout the manual, Ward is consistent with the basic premises he presents in his introduction. He urges his readers to adopt a conservative approach for each aspect of sound archive administration, encouraging them to think of long-term considerations and solutions while adhering to generally accepted professional practices. Advocating "conservation" over "restoration", for example, he recommends that preservation copies of aging sound recordings be kept as true to their original source recordings as possible, avoiding the use of noise reduction and signal manipulation in the rerecording process.

In his introduction, Ward correctly remarks that sound archivists come to the field from a variety of backgrounds and experiences. He approaches his discussions, however, from the viewpoint of the archivist who has had experience with historical printed documents, and he consistently draws analogies between sound archives and textual archives, belying not only his own background and training, but also his basic assumption that sound archivists are really “conventional” archivists at heart. This approach makes for somewhat tedious reading for those sound archivists not particularly interested in detailed discussions of text archiving.

In general, the use of British terms and abbreviations is not overly cumbersome to the American reader, and it is easy to figure out from context a more commonly used substitute term (e.g. “test tone” for “lineup tone”, “storage” for “accommodation”). Frequent references to published British standards, British laws, and United Kingdom safety codes, however, limit the usefulness of certain sections of the manual. The relevancy of the information on copyright, as one would expect, is limited to Great Britain as well. Nonetheless, Ward presents a clear, systematic discussion of the subject, one that would serve well as a model for anyone contemplating the preparation of a similar treatise for U.S. copyright law.

Ward is usually careful to distinguish between practices that are standard only in Europe or Great Britain, such as the adoption of specific colors of leader for open reel tapes, and practices that are international in scope. This distinction, however, becomes blurred in his chapter on documentation. Ward discusses at length the *Manual of Archival Description* (“MAD2”), which he feels should be adopted as a United Kingdom descriptive standard for Archives as AACRII is for books. It is unclear as to how widely used this document is outside of Great Britain, and how relevant the ensuing discussion is to the sound archivist working in the United States.

Similarly, Ward discusses several British computer-based documentation systems without making it clear whether or not these are available outside of Great Britain. An annotated listing of commercial cataloging and documentation software packages available in the United States would be of great assistance to the sound archivist, especially if information were provided not only on the advantages and limitations of specific programs, but also on which U.S. archives currently utilize them.

The manual is at its best where it provides concrete advice and specific examples of existing practice at established sound archives.

Ward includes helpful examples of actual forms used at various sound archives for acquisitions, for disc and tape inspection, and for obtaining clearances to use copyrighted materials. The author wisely urges the adoption of written policies for the various aspects of sound archive administration, and provides detailed examples of existing written policies for general management, for storage, handling and playback, and for preservation rerecording at various sound archives in Great Britain and abroad. In the chapter on “Accommodation, Equipment and Facilities”, he offers helpful suggestions for arranging listening and study facilities, and even includes some good, practical advice on the design of shelving supports. In this chapter, as elsewhere, brief summaries of relevant portions of Pickett and Lemcoe’s classic technical study, *Preservation and Storage of Sound Recordings*, are most helpful to the non-technically oriented reader. Of similar merit is the survey of the history of sound recording, where the author presents an historical overview of cylinders, discs, magnetic recordings, wire, and sound on film. The presentation provides not

only a helpful background for the sound archivist, but practical suggestions for recognizing the provenance and material of various types of sound recordings. A number of helpful photographs and charts are included, as well.

The manual is less useful where Ward discusses sound archiving in general terms. While one cannot find fault with the information he offers in these sections, he does not present adequately the complexities and problems of the various aspects of sound archiving. For example, Ward oversimplifies the difficulties of cataloging archival sound recordings, asserting that adequate commercial software packages exist for this purpose. Although he does state some of the major limitations of these programs, such as limited field sizes, or restricted searching capabilities, he does not adequately represent the grave problems that these limitations create. The documentation and cataloging of sound recordings is an area where much more work is currently needed and not one that should be treated in summary fashion. Similarly, in his chapter on "Accommodation, Equipment and Facilities", the author spends an unwarranted amount of time discussing the design of new facilities, providing not enough information to really help the sound archivist in the enviable position of planning for a new facility, but too much irrelevant information for those needing to make do with what they have.

The problems that arise in discussing an issue without paying appropriate attention to its complexities are particularly apparent in his chapter on preservation. Ward spends approximately half of the main body of his book on the "Conservation of Sound Archives". Preservation is an area of great interest and concern to the sound archivist, and one which is difficult to discuss adequately within the confines of a manual such as this. Although Ward provides a good introduction to the topic, recommending caution and the adoption of what have now become standard procedures, he glosses over the complexities and problems encountered in audio preservation.

One basic problem inherent in any discussion of audio preservation involves determining to whom it should be directed. Ward remains consistent with his initial intentions by directing his presentation to the sound archivist lacking formal technical training. A difficulty with this approach, however, is that the information presented is not detailed enough to adequately assist the sound archivist responsible for establishing a preservation program. An archivist without technical training does not have the necessary qualifications to undertake preservation rerecording without the assistance of a qualified audio engineer. Perhaps Ward might better have approached the subject by first advising the sound archivist to hire (or "borrow" from a different division of the archivist's institution) an expert in audio engineering, and then providing enough detailed information on the subject so that the engineer, with no training in archiving, had a foundation upon which to proceed.

Ward offers no advice on what to do when standard practice doesn't work, and this is exactly the type of information for which sound archivists are clamoring. For example, Ward recommends washing aging discs with a mild liquid soap and distilled water, and mentions that Freon also may be used. But he offers no advice for how one should proceed if these measures fail to remove the stubborn white deposits that often appear on acetate discs. Much of the damage that has been done to archival sound materials has occurred in the archive after "standard practices" have failed and "desperation measures" have been adopted. It would be helpful if Ward provided some guidance about the following questions: What choices are available after standard practice does not work? What measures should never be adopted, and

why? When is the risk of imposing potential harm to the original material outweighed by the advantages of producing a successful transfer copy of an already deteriorating original sound recording?

Difficult issues such as these need discussion to provide enough information for the sound archivist to make informed decisions. A survey of existing practices and solutions adopted, although not necessarily recommended, by existing preservation transfer centers in the U.S., would at least provide some guidance to the sound archivist attempting to establish an audio preservation program.

This manual is well researched and documented. Footnotes are included at the end of each chapter, providing citations for all sources used within a chapter in lieu of a general bibliography at the end of the book. The last chapter comprises a brief annotated list of recommended readings, conveniently arranged by subject headings. The author refers the reader to Gerald Gibson's "Bibliography: Working Draft" in Associated Audio Archives' *Audio Preservation: A Planning Study* (Rockville, MD: ARSC, 1988) for more detailed listings. He also reprints in its entirety the very useful Glossary from Appendix III of the *Planning Study*.

Ward's *Manual of Sound Archive Administration* is a useful resource for sound archivists in the United States and abroad. Ward is successful in maintaining his intended focus throughout the book, and in providing an informative overview of the various aspects of a complex subject. While the usefulness of portions of the manual restricted largely to sound archivists working in Great Britain, enough information is relevant to the subject in general to warrant purchasing it for use as a basic reference tool for sound archivists in the United States. This book is not the final word on the subject of sound archiving, however. Much more work is needed in this area, and it is hoped that the publication of this book will inspire further efforts in this direction. Until a more consistently helpful and more definitive guide for the sound archivist in the United States appears, though, Ward's manual will serve as the most useful tool available. *Reviewed by Suzanne Stover*

### ***Enrico Caruso: My Father and My Family.***

By Caruso, Enrico, Jr. and Farkas, Andrew; Illus., 850 pp. Amadeus, Oregon: Amadeus Press, 1990. \$39.95

This is in every way a great book. Not only is it remarkably heavy, weighing in at 3 1/2 lbs. (1.58 kilos to European friends), not only is it *very* long (the text runs to 560 pages, with a further 164-page section of notes, bibliographies, discographies, chronology, index, etc.), it is above all authoritative, scholarly, and readable. Not that it totally displaces all other books on the century's greatest tenor, it is both more and less than some of these. More, in that, as well as giving the domestic life story of the tenor and of his two greatest loves, the sisters Ada and Rina Giachetti, it is also an autobiography of the co-author Enrico Caruso, Jr. as well as relating the long squalid wrangling over the tenor's estate. Less, in that it does not pretend to give a detailed account of Enrico's career, although much of it is told. For this, other books (especially Michael Scott's) should be consulted. So why is it so special? Because it is such an honest and human book. The principal author was Enrico Caruso, Jr.; Andrew Farkas, who befriended him toward the end of his life, has provided the mortar with which the bricks have been set to provide the splendid many-storied building.