

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: NOTES
ON THE CARE, CATALOGUING,
CALENDARING AND
ARRANGING OF MANUSCRIPTS**

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Library of Congress: Notes on the care, cataloguing, calendaring and arranging of manuscripts
by J. C. Fitzpatrick

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J. C. FITZPATRICK

**LIBRARY OF CONGRESS: NOTES
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CALENDARING AND
ARRANGING OF MANUSCRIPTS**

U.S. LIBRARY OF CONGRESS, *Manuscript
Division*

Notes on the
Care, Cataloguing, Calendaring
and
Arranging of Manuscripts

(SECOND EDITION)

BY

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Chief Assistant, Manuscript Division

WASHINGTON
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PREFATORY NOTE

The Library of Congress has not made a practice of issuing manuals descriptive of its administrative processes or the specialized treatment of particular collections. In the case of the manuscripts, however, a description seems desirable for several reasons: First, because there seems not to be available in print a practical guide or aid to the treatment of archive material; second, because, in the absence of such a guide, the authorities of the Library have had repeated requests for advice on various technical details connected with such treatment; and third, because the processes at present in vogue in our Division of Manuscripts represent decisions reached by a long and intimate experience with a large and important collection, varied in form and condition, and requiring methods of treatment that will not merely insure safety and permanence, but prompt efficiency in response to a varied demand.

In the case of manuscripts, therefore, it has seemed well to make available in print a description of the procedure in the Library, of the processes, and of the convictions of experience upon which, between varying methods, a choice has been made; and the statement which follows has been compiled not merely as a report of operations in progress, but with a view to its possible utility to other institutions having like problems.

The compiler is Mr. J. C. Fitzpatrick, chief assistant in the division, who has seen the collection grow from the restricted limit of a single room to its present area of three floors, upon which are stored over a million folios of original documents

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touching American history from the time of the Columbian discoveries. During this period his personal experience of all the processes has been direct and specific, including not merely the physical handling of the manuscripts and the accessioning, classifying, cataloguing, indexing, and calendaring of them, as well as supervision of the various processes of repair, preservation and binding, but also the ministrant service of the material to investigators.

GALLARD HUNT,
Chief, Division of Manuscripts.

HERBERT PUTNAM,
Librarian of Congress,
Washington, December, 1913.

The first edition of these "Notes" being exhausted and the steady demand for them showing no signs of diminishing, this second edition is issued. A few revisions have been made.

J. C. FITZPATRICK,
Assistant Chief, Manuscript Division.

HERBERT PUTNAM,
Librarian of Congress,
Washington, May, 1921.

NOTES

Manuscripts and manuscript collections should be considered first as to *preservation*, second as to *use*.

1. *Preservation* necessarily precedes use and largely determines and governs it, though it must be borne in mind that a manuscript withheld from consultation might almost as well be nonexistent.

2. *Use* for any legitimate historical investigation, or similar purpose, should be restricted only in proportion to certain physical conditions of the manuscript (manuscripts of a confidential nature, official or personal, are present in all archival collections; but consideration of such papers does not properly fall within the scope of these notes). Where these physical conditions are prohibitive they may be met by photographic reproduction. A manuscript, unlike a rare imprint, is the only one of its kind existent and any defacement is irreparable. It should not be handled hastily; nothing should be laid upon it; it must not be touched with either pen or pencil point and copying should be with pencil if possible, as the open, dripping inkwell is a constant menace to the document. The fountain pen is only less objectionable. With some well-meaning but awkward individuals, however, the pencil for copying or making notes is all that can safely be permitted. Consultation of manuscripts should be allowed only in the presence and under the constant observation of the archivist or his assistants.

3. Sensational exploitation for newspaper or magazine must be guarded against. To this undesirable use of records the archivist has but to oppose his judgment of human nature. Letters and cards of introduction play an important part here and the rest can be covered by a brief conversation. For-

3—Continued.

tunately the historical contents of archives are of slight interest to the news gatherer and where the archivist has in charge manuscripts which, under the deed of deposit, can not be shown except with restrictions as to their use, he must see the notes or copies made therefrom by the investigator. The investigator of the manuscripts should be required to make written application for the documents he desires; this application may be a card form which, when properly filed, will prove of reference value to the archivist in the course of time. The application card will, of course, vary to suit different needs, but a form that will meet most requirements may be found in the following:

Name of the Archive Bureau	
Applicant:	_____
Address:	_____
Date:	_____
<hr/>	
Manuscript:	_____

Purpose of investigation:	_____

	○

Generally speaking, the risks arise from careless handling of the manuscripts, and a little watchfulness will reduce these to the minimum.

4. *Classes of manuscripts.*—Manuscripts may be divided roughly into two classes: illuminated manuscripts and correspondence or other pen-created papers of official and private daily life. The status of the typewritten letter is yet to be decided definitely, though probably it will be classed in the future with pen-made documents. We are not concerned here either with the care or archival treatment of the illuminated manuscript, a very good discussion of which, together with sound elemental instruction for cataloguing, will be found in Madan's "Books in Manuscript." Also the quantity of American parchments is negligible and seldom anything more than a charter, land deed, patent, commission, diploma, or similar document, parchment almost by accident, for nearly as many of the same class are on paper. These American parchments properly come under the same general rules of classification as manuscripts on paper; and special consideration of them beyond a few questions of preservation and storage may be rightfully ignored. Our interest is with the second class, generally denominated by European archivists as "documents." Here in America we have become accustomed to considering as "documents" the official printed publications of State and Federal authority, which results in a confusion of terms that some day may prove vexatious.

What we call manuscripts, then, are to be divided roughly into two classes: *Official* and *Personal*.

5. *Official* manuscripts are legislative acts, commissions, estimates, land grants, memoranda, messages, military rolls and returns, orders, patents, proceedings, proclamations, reports, resolves, etc. *Personal* papers are correspondence, drafts of letters, letter-books, memoranda, personal financial accounts, etc.; but where the papers are those of a public man the line of demarcation between personal and official is often shadowy in the extreme. (See *Cataloguing*.)