

JAMAICA LIBRARY ASSOCIATION BULLETIN

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E D I T O R I A L

All too belatedly we publish another edition of our Bulletin. This is an archives issue, consisting of the texts of a series of three broadcast talks given by Mr. Clinton V. Black and his assistant Mr. Geoffrey Yates. It seems right that the Jamaica Library Association should be closely associated with a movement for the preservation of historical records of our Jamaican history, out of which may come books of lasting worth and historical accuracy to augment the local collections in our libraries throughout Jamaica.

We are also happy to record our appreciation of the enterprise of the newly formed Bookseller's Association in mounting such an admirable book exhibition, and in displaying such whole-hearted co-operation to assure its success. May we hope to see such a display become a regular, if not an annual, feature in the Kingston calendar.

This editorial brief and hastily penned as the editor takes his departure on overseas leave,

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would not be complete without congratulations, hearty and sincere, to Miss Joyce Lawson, Senior Library Assistant with the Jamaica Library Service, on being awarded a British Council scholarship of one year, to study and to visit library systems in the United Kingdom. We are sure all members will join with us in wishing Miss Lawson success and good fortune in her studies, and a wealth of happy experience during her year abroad.

W. F. C.

ARCHIVES

WHAT THEY ARE AND WHY WE KEEP THEM

By Clinton Black

In this the first of the series of three broadcasts on the subject of Archives, I should like to say something about archives in general and why we try to preserve them. In the second it is proposed to deal with the Archivist and his work, and in the third and last talk we will consider some of the problems of archive keeping, with special reference throughout to Jamaican archives.

There is, happily, a growing interest here in our archives and steps are being taken to preserve what remains to us. This being so, it is all the more important that we should be clear as to what we mean by archives. I have been told more than once, "I don't think you would be interested in my documents. I only have records - you keep archives."

The suggestion here is that archives are old and important documents, while records are modern and unimportant ones. In actual fact, (i) archives are records, and vice versa (the terms for all practical purposes are interchangeable); (ii) neither word has

a connotation of age; in any case if we are going to assume that age in itself gives importance, then we must remember that archives, like everything else, have to be new before they are old; and (iii) 'archive importance' is a relative idea, one that is often dependent on intangible and generally unpredictable factors. 'Historic importance' is the other expression I often hear in connection with archives, and one which always makes me a little anxious, for what does this really mean? Again, I suppose, it suggests age. But sometimes modern records are more important historically than ancient ones, for this so-called 'historic importance' which records assume is also often dependent on unpredictable factors, such as changing trends in political thought, in the approach to the writing of history, and so on.

What, then, should we understand by archives (or records, if you prefer that word)? They are the documents which accumulate naturally in the course of the conduct of affairs of any kind, public or private, at any date; and preserved thereafter for reference - in their own custody - by the persons responsible for

the affairs in question, or their successors.

Now, three points stand out in this definition and call for comment. First, note that archives are an actual part of the activities that gave them birth: evidence surviving in the form of writing. Let me illustrate this from our own public records. When Lord Rodney saved Jamaica by his crushing defeat of the French fleet at the Battle of the Saints in April 1782; when the jubilation which greeted his arrival in Kingston two weeks later with eight prizes of war and hundreds of prisoners (including the French admiral himself) died down; when those same vessels were tried and condemned as lawful prize by the Jamaican Vice-Admiralty Court (a naval court whose duty was to try cases of piracy and murder on the high seas, breaches of the Navigation Laws and to decide whether ships taken during wars were lawful prizes); when, I say, all these things had receded into the past to become matters of interest mainly to the historian and the biographer, there still remained the documents in the case (such as examinations of witnesses, petitions and the like) to tell us, so far as they survived - and in this particular case we are lucky in the

matter of survivals - what, in fact, did occur.

The other two points in our definition which will have struck you and on which I should like to comment briefly, are: first, that archives may be of any date, and second, may result from activities of any kind. Here in Jamaica with a recorded history as short, comparatively speaking, as it is, there is not a great disparity in age of archives. The Vice-Admiralty records relating to Rodney's prizes, for instance, only predate those produced during the last war by 160 years or so. But if we consider the archives of a country like England, the point becomes more striking. There, between the earliest Pipe Roll compiled in 1131, and the present Treasury accounts, however much they may differ in writing, language, material, size, shape, colour and arithmetical method, though the one used wooden tally sticks and an abacus (a contrivance for calculating, resembling a child's beaded counting-frame); whereas the other relies on algebraical formulae of taxability, between these two there is, in respect of their quality as archives, no difference.

In the same way this thing that is called

'archive quality' is not dependent on the grade of activity which produces the record. Government department or private individual, church, business firm or charitable institution - all, in so far as they apply writing to the purposes of administration, produce potentially archives. One of our lecturers at the School of Librarianship and Archives of London University, used to bring this fact home forcibly by pointing out that last week's laundry list, though relatively of little value, is as much an archive - a record - as Magna Carta. I think you see what I mean.

What, then, is this special quality or nature which is common to all archives regardless of their origin, age or importance? It is indicated in two words of our definition 'accumulate naturally.' As a result of this archives have a structure and natural relationship between parts which are essential to their significance. This natural relationship shows itself in more ways than one: it may even be the physical fact of the place in which they were kept. A good example of this is provided by an incident in the last war. When the Allies entered Rome in 1944, the Archives Officer who

followed on the heels of the first parties, found and was just in time to stop a large quantity of records being thrown out of a window of a building which the high command proposed to use. Among the rescued files were a number of Situation Reports - a type of document of comparatively little importance and probably repeated in other files elsewhere - but the significance of this particular lot lay in their connection with the building in which they were found which proved to contain Mussolini's private archives, and this fact alone gave the clue to certain marks in blue pencil on the Situation Reports: namely, that they were the copies that had been especially marked for the information of the Duce - possibly by his own hand. Had the documents been thrown out the window before this fact had been apparent it would in all probability have never been established.

There are other points of relationship which could be mentioned if we had the time, but now perhaps we might consider why archives are important and why we endeavour to preserve them. A little thought given to these questions soon produces the answers. Without

its current archives, business, public or private, cannot be carried on. We have only to think what the position of a department of government, a bank or a solicitor would be if deprived of its papers. The scientist needs to have the facts and figures of his predecessors, while the historian and economist would lack important background material and often essential facts without the archives of a more distant past.

Archives usually pass through three stages. In the first they are the current files needed for ready reference. In the second, these files may still be needed on occasion but more for precedent or historical background than for current purposes. Finally, if they survive, they reach the third stage in which their value for the purposes of research is recognized and becomes the governing factor in their preservation.

It is of this third stage that most people think when they speak of archives - the phase in which they have become available for study - and, at this stage, there is a definite change in the purpose for which they were compiled. Let me illustrate this. There is in Jamaica a persistent legend of an 18th-century

clergyman attached for a short time to the Kingston Parish Church, turning counterfeiter and being hanged on the Parade. In one of the few printed references to the story the clergyman is described as "a Rev. Mr. Smith." In the Colonial Archives at Spanish Town are Minute Books of the old Kingston Vestry. The Vestry, as you know, was the body which administered parochial affairs, the ancestors in fact, of our present K.S.A.C. and Parochial Boards. In one of these Minute Books under date October 1766, there is an Order directing the Church Warden to pay a Rev. Haddon Smith £30 for acting as Rector for a short time. This order authorized the expenditure of certain parochial funds, and that was the intention of it, but incidentally, it also furnishes supporting (if not conclusive) evidence in the search for the counterfeiting clergyman: in other words, a simple, straightforward entry serving a purpose of which the eighteenth-century Vestrymen never dreamed!

And this is a point worth emphasizing, because it is this very indifference of the Official Custodian to the interests in which his documents come to be used which gives to Archives, properly preserved, one

of their outstanding characteristics - their unbiased quality. There can, after all, be no questioning the impartiality of a witness who knows nothing of the point, nor of its importance, which his evidence will be used to establish; a witness, in fact, who made his statement in a totally different connection.

So much then for our definition of archives. One last word about the variety of scope which archives offer to research. There is, when we stop to consider it literally no person or subject of human interest which may not find illustration in surviving records. For centuries now it has been practically impossible for a man to be born or die without a Public Authority of some kind taking notice of the fact, and recording it. It is in their third stage that archives offer this scope to human interest, this opportunity of pursuing unusual inquiries with success in unlikely places.

I could give you almost countless examples of this. I have already mentioned the Prize Papers of the Court of Vice-Admiralty in Spanish Town. These papers may be studied for details of Colonial Admiralty Jurisdiction as it existed 200 years ago, or for information

on any of the numerous related subjects. But you can also find among these papers some small but beautiful samples of 18th-century Italian silk. How these samples found their way there is itself interesting. It happened that when an enemy vessel was captured, her papers (such as the log, crew list, &c.) as well as any mail on board were confiscated and used in connection with the trial. After the case was disposed of these papers remained in the Registry of the Court as part of its archives. These samples and covering letters probably belonged to a travelling salesman among the crew who hoped to do a little business in silks and ribbons on the side, and were seized with the other documents on board the vessel at the time of her capture.

This is perhaps a spectacular example, in its way, but the fact is that the endless possibilities archives afford for the large-scale study of small matters have not been fully explored. In Jamaica, hardly explored at all. History to-day tends to deal with people rather than individuals, with conditions rather than things. It is the life of the ordinary

people - our opposite numbers in the past - that we need to study for guidance of our own conduct to-day, and for such study Archives, and only Archives, supply the material.

We plan to produce a history text book for use in our schools. That history has ~~to be~~ written from source material. The facts are not conjured up by magic, they have to be laboriously looked up. Even if information may be found in certain printed works about Jamaica, this information often has to be checked in order to establish its accuracy. Besides, from this checking other facts often emerge which probably lead to different interpretations. This source material is our records - our public and other archives - the nature of which I have tried to discuss briefly tonight, as well as the reasons why we think it worth trying hard to preserve them.

THE ARCHIVIST

By Mr. G. S. Yates

Professor V. H. Galbraith begins his book "Studies in the Public Records" by saying, "There is no need today to stress the importance of the original sources in the teaching of history." To every student whether of history or medicine, modern languages or physics, this is self-evident, and applies equally to all of them. The student knows that he must base his work on impartial facts - facts that can be checked and counter-checked and are based on observation. For centuries, the study of medicine and geography was based on assumptions that, for one reason and another no one verified. In history, things were and often are, the same. If we read the Histories of Jamaica by Long or Bridges, we are, at best, absorbing facts at second-hand. In Jamaica, where national consciousness is emerging with an attendant search for national heroes, we must be ready to refute assumptions with facts so that the history of the nation is built on a solid foundation.

In a previous talk in this series, Mr.

Clinton Black defined "archives" - their nature and inherent qualities. I want to talk this evening about the archivist - the person responsible for looking after the records - what are his duties, his aims and objects? And, in trying to describe what these are, I need hardly say that I talk about the ideal man in the ideal setting - the man who must be something of a Jack-of-all-Trades.

I think it is fair to say that in origin the main body of archives is a royal creation. In the days when the King was the immediate giver of orders, the departments of his household, the Wardrobe, the Treasury and so on were responsible for administering his decisions. In time, it was found that it was extremely difficult and expensive to have these departments trailing about the country after him. They had to have a settled home to transact their business and to keep their records. In other words their function of acting as the King's memory demanded a repository and an archivist, and it is interesting to note that the P.R.O. still occupies the site of the ancient Domus Conversorum - the House of Converted Jews - where

William of Burstall in the year 1377 had combined the two Offices of Keeper of the "Conversi" and Keeper of the Rolls of Chancery. These archives grew and grew over the centuries until, when the war was over in 1945, it was necessary to shift 300 tons of records from the basement back to the upper floors - and, after that, 600 truck loads had to be brought back from various places of safety in the country.

From 1838, when the Public Record Office, as we know it now, was established it had been necessary to have a trained staff to look after these purely governmental records. It was not, however, till almost a century later that any widespread interest in the existence of family archives and those of local government grew up. What would we not give to have complete sets of papers for all the estates in Jamaica, or of the Parochial records for St. Thomas in the East and Tre-lawny? Today, most counties and corporations in England are alive to the value of their records - and an awakened knowledge of this has spread to dominions and colonies. In the United States, several of the larger businesses such as the Firestone Tyre Company employ trained

archivists.

Writing has, as we know, become a substitute for memory - in many cases one more accurate. The primary duty of an archivist lies, therefore towards the archives entrusted to his care. Their value is not so much for immediate reference as for future reference, when the people who were eyewitnesses of an event or transaction are long dead. Access to them must be strictly controlled for they are unique evidence and must never run the risk of being tampered with. Carelessness, it must also be pointed out, which entails casual loss or destruction may be equally as serious as wanton falsification. Even a termite-ridden mass of paper may serve to let us know that such and such a volume has perished. The archivist must insist on a carefully supervised policy of destruction. It reminds one almost of the officer in the last war, who having taken over a new company office sent a telegram to headquarters asking for permission to burn so many out-of-date files. He received the reply "Yes, if you take copies of them all in triplicate."

On the other hand, the functions of an

archivist are not to act as a dog in the manger. If no one were to use his documents, his reason for existence would cease, and the documents might as well be destroyed. It is his job, once he has made certain of their safe custody and physical security to see that access to them for all genuine researchers is as easy as possible - unless it is that the organization or family depositing them has made stipulations as to their use. He has to provide keys, in the form of lists and indexes, which will enable the searcher to pick out material of interest to him without having to plough through a mass of irrelevant stuff. The dullest-seeming and most insignificant-looking document must be as carefully listed as the most elaborate, for who can tell its value?

The archivist is, of course, lucky when he is able to work on a particular set of records which offer an opportunity to combine business with pleasure so to speak. In this connection I should like to mention the Calendar of Vice-Admiralty papers on which I am working at the moment, and which will in due course be published by the Institute of Jamaica. A calendar, in this

sense, is a full descriptive list which is designed to give a summary of the information contained in a document or set of documents. The Vice-Admiralty Court grew up to deal with murder and piracy, and the disposal of prize vessels captured in time of war. The collections of letters from the ship's mail handed in to the Court often reveal, in addition to more serious historical material, snippets of interesting information. Long after the close of the Middle Ages, we find a Spanish sea-captain carrying with him a collection of prescriptions - the one for rheumatism being a nauseous concoction involving the roasted head of a black cat mixed with olive leaves and turpentine. The compiler points out that this should be applied at night, when the humours collect most.

The archivist should possess a knowledge of the administrative detail of government, so that he can list the material properly when it comes into his care. Today in the bigger repositories he naturally insists that, when documents are transferred to him in the ordinary course of events, they shall be properly listed and arranged. When once the logical sequence has

been destroyed it is extremely difficult to restore, and may cause future students endless trouble. This insistence is not always possible. For instance, recently in Bermuda, a collection of thousands of papers, relating to the Court of Chancery and covering the period 1687 - 1909 has been found in the attic of a Government building. Whilst I was in England, I prepared a summary list of a collection of records, comprising some 34,000 items - the archives of the town of Ludlow in Shropshire, which had been deposited in the County Record Office for preservation. They had survived virtually intact for hundreds of years, but had then suffered great damage in the matter of a year or two - by being stored in a damp cellar by a careless clerk.

Such collections as these which the archivist willingly accepts for the sake of preserving such a valuable fund of material, shows something of the problems confronting him. He must make arrangements for their reception and storage. Ideally his repository must be weatherproof, burglarproof, fireproof, and vermin or insect-proof - especially the latter here in Jamaica where we know the damage wrought by termites and chi-chi.

He must be able to look after all these details in adapting whatever accommodation he finally does get to these requirements. Quite often the documents must be treated for mould or mildew - and, in many cases, repaired. This calls for a special knowledge of the techniques of repair-work in parchment or paper with some knowledge of book-binding - so that he can at least attempt simple repairs - for it is not often that he has the time for elaborate work.

There is a point which I should like to introduce here- that of photographic work. The archivist is sometimes asked - "Why don't you first have everything microfilmed or photographed?" The answer is that while photography and microfilming are without doubt an extremely valuable aid to research, they are no substitute for the original. To photograph an extensive collection is extremely expensive. Besides, as we know, the camera can lie. Again there is no certainty about the durability of film. If well-kept, paper and parchment will last indefinitely; and are easier to use for any prolonged research or study.

To revert, however, to the collections I men-

tioned earlier on - it can be seen that to deal with a series of records produced by a corporation or other body over a spell of centuries, calls for a varied knowledge and interest in times and conditions when they were produced - and at the same time offers many problems. For instance, handwriting changes over the years - different abbreviations and contractions are used. In some cases it is paradoxically true to say that you have to know what you are reading before you can read it. Again the language problem crops up. Most documents in England during the Middle Ages, were written in Latin or Anglo-Norman French.

In Jamaica the problem is not so obvious in regard to handwriting. It is only some of the late seventeenth century specimens which show the last influences of the specialized legal scripts which were once used. On the other hand we find letters and accounts and so forth written in French, Spanish, Portuguese, Dutch, Danish, Swedish, German and Latin, so that at least a nodding acquaintance with one or more of them is desirable - particularly French and Spanish. The School of Librarianship and Archives at London University, which offers a diploma in Archive administration teaches Ele-

mentary Bibliography, for often the archivist may find a number of books amongst a collection of records, Paleography or the science of interpreting early handwriting Latin and Anglo-Norman French - Administrative History and sometimes the allied study of librarianship. All this, however, is coupled with an insistence on a period of work in a repository itself to gain some practical experience, before their diploma can be granted.

This all may indeed, at first, sound rather remote from the everyday world - but on closer examination I think you will agree now. "The good Archivist" as Sir Hilary Jenkinson has called him, "is perhaps the most selfless devotee of Truth the modern world produces." Perhaps the essential meaning of the archivist's profession lies in his duty to help all students who come to him - to provide material, which he must nearly always leave to the historian to work up - but after all isn't that a creative task?

ARCHIVES AND THE ARCHIVIST

By Clinton Black

In this the third and last broadcast in the series, I propose to resume the theme of the two previous talks, with variations, and with some general references to the archives of Jamaica and the problems of archive-keeping everywhere.

On a certain occasion when I gave a talk on Jamaican archives, I felt that the subject would be best served by my speaking briefly on it by way of an introduction, then inviting questions from my hearers. This the audience kindly agreed to, and as soon as I had finished my brief remarks, one member rose eagerly and asked, "Please will you tell us the history of the Arawaks?"

Although a little dismayed at the time, the question had the effect of raising another: what archives do we have? - for although the island's history began with the Arawaks, its archives did not, since these gentle cinnamon-coloured people never managed to develop any form of writing whatever. The information which has been deduced from the evidences they left

behind them - their kitchen middens, and pottery vessels, stone implements and rock-carvings - has been thanks to the efforts of the archaeologist, not the archivist.

Jamaica's modern or recorded history began with the arrival of Columbus in 1494. Fifteen years later the Spaniards colonized the island and commenced immediately to produce archives of various categories - the inevitable result of the conduct of affairs of any kind.

In 1655 a Cromwellian expedition under Admiral Penn and General Venables landed at Passage Fort and after five years of mostly guerilla warfare, expelled the Spaniards from the island. Next year we will celebrate the tercentenary of this event, the anniversary of three hundred years of unbroken British occupation and rule.

What have been the effects of these changes on the island's archives? It is a fact that surprisingly little remains to-day of the Spanish occupation: where records are concerned, nothing at all. Many documents must have been destroyed when Spanish Town, the capital

was all but burnt to the ground at the time of the British occupation. Perhaps a certain amount was sent overland to the northside, and thence to Cuba. What records survive relating to Jamaica under Spanish rule are to be found mainly in the archives at Seville and Simancas, in Spain. From these, two books have been written, the later published only last year entitled Jamaica Espanola by Francisco Morales Padron.

Archives of one sort or another began to be produced almost from the moment the British set foot on the island. Brief reports, scribbled orders, laconic despatches and letters - these probably made up the sum of those earliest records. In time order was restored, a form of government established, courts set up, the Church organized, public services instituted, private business developed, and the island's archives under the new régime began to take a more definite and increasingly complex form. As time has gone on and the whole machinery of life altered and developed, the process has increased accordingly.

What then, briefly, have been and are these archives, taken as a whole? Like those of any other

country they fall into five well-marked categories. First there are, or should be, those produced by the activities of the many various divisions of Central Government including the Legal. Then there are those of Local Government - the Parishes, combining Civil and Ecclesiastical functions, and their modern representatives the Parochial Boards, in the case of Kingston, the Kingston & St. Andrew Corporation. Next comes what is called the Semi-Public category, that of the Institutions - benevolent, educational, commercial, social (schools, charities, public utility companies, and the like) - which, though private in origin and in a measure independent, yet discharge certain public functions. And then the Private category, institutions or individuals, with their family papers, deeds, accounts, minutes, diaries and the rest. And finally, the fifth category - Ecclesiastical archives - the records of the many religious communions in the island.

If we stop to consider the varied and complex ramifications of affairs, public and private, covered by this list, we will get an impression of the mass of records which has, or should have, accumulated during the last 300 years. What, or how much of this accumu-

lation - this raw material of our history - exists today?

It is impossible to answer the question, except very partially, at present. Indeed, it is to find the answer, and to devise means of ensuring the preservation of what we still have of this historical heritage, which are the pressing needs of the moment, and which fortunately are being given careful consideration by a Government Committee set up last year for that purpose under the chairmanship of the Honourable, the Chief Justice.

We do know, however, that we have lost a good deal of the older archives. This is not an occurrence peculiar to Jamaica by any means, but it is one which emphasizes the need to make certain that we keep safely what we do have. These losses have been due to many causes, important among them 'natural' ones, or what the Insurance Companies prefer to call 'acts of God'. The earthquake of 1692, for instance, which plunged the better part of Port Royal under the sea took its toll of 17th-century Jamaican archives of all categories. Fires, like those that ravaged Kingston towards the

close of the 18th century have done their bit. Hurricanes also; the great earthquake of 1907; civil disorders - all these have been factors of destruction.

The Falmouth court house fire probably accounts for the lack of early Trelawny parish records, while in the Morant Bay disturbance we lost those of St. Thomas-in-the-East. Insects have played a deadly part in the process, as well as the deleterious effects of the climate. But 'acts of man' must also be mentioned: neglect in the past (and, to an extent, even now), going hand in hand with uncontrolled 'weeding' of so-called unwanted documents. But the whole story of what archives survive and what no longer do, will not be told until an islandwide survey has been done, taking within its scope all five categories of records.

What are the problems which arise from such losses? They are many, both for the user or archives and the person whose business it is to conserve them. For the user, there is the obvious difficulty when the absence of parts of series brings some important research project to an abrupt and disheartening end, simply because no further information exists. As for

the archivist, most of these problems have long since been accepted as normal aspects of his work and were, therefore, covered to some extent in the previous talk in this series.

One of the biggest of these problems, if we may still call them so, and one about which I should like to say something, is the need to supply 'means of reference' to the records when such 'means' no longer exist. Let me explain. When records are being produced and used by a department or business office, guides to those records are constantly being prepared in order to make possible ready reference to the files, &c. These guides take the form of indexes, registers and the like, depending on the type of document concerned. If a solicitor, for example, wishes to look up the proceedings of a certain case in court which was tried some time ago, he probably consults an index to the registers of proceedings and there, under the appropriate date or name, finds the volume number, and page number within the volume, of the particular case. When, as often happens, the registers survive (and are passed on to the Archives Department) but not the indexes, the archive staff must

set to work and replace those indexes.

These 'finding aids' as they are sometimes called, take many forms, ranging from the simple inventory list, to what is known as the 'calendar' - a précis, in effect, of every single document in a class or series. With a calendar on hand the researcher or historian virtually need not consult the original records since all the information he would find in the documents themselves has been extracted for him and set out briefly in the calendar. This has the further advantage of saving the records from the inevitable wear and tear caused in handling them; while, if the calendar is published, research on the records may be undertaken far from the documents - wherever, in fact, a copy of the calendar exists. You will recall, from the previous broadcast, that such a calendar of the Vice-Admiralty Court papers in the Colonial Archives is in the process of preparation and will in due course be printed.

A short while ago I mentioned "uncontrolled 'weeding' of so-called unwanted documents" as one of the contributing factors in the loss of many important records. I should like to say something about the

subject, for it is an important one. It is true that not every single document in every department of Government (to take as our example one of the main producers of archives) is worthy of permanent preservation. In fact, the indiscriminate saving of records can defeat its own ends, since the historian may in time be confronted by such an overwhelming mass of material that he may fail to see the wood for the trees, to find the information he wants because he gets lost in a forest of irrelevant matter. This is a problem which looms larger in bigger and more archivally-advanced countries than Jamaica at present, but it is one which we must face nevertheless, if not from immediate considerations, then for the sake of future users.

Destruction is an irrevocable act; a disagreeable necessity because every record is in some sense unique, and contains a certain element of knowledge which does not exist in quite the same form elsewhere; it is a task full of anxiety and difficulty, since it is often impossible to tell what future generations may consider important. There is, however, a method of dealing with the problem, such as that used by the Public

Record Office in London, which makes the weeding of records safe and feasible. All too often in the absence of a system the tendency is to save the file or volume which looks old and throw out the one that doesn't. A good principle is, if the same information exists in two types of documents, one (preferably the less permanent, physically) of the two might be destroyed. Another sound precept is, when in doubt, keep rather than destroy.

In these short talks an effort has been made to say something about archives in general, what they are and why we think them worth keeping, about the archivist and his work, about Jamaican archives as a whole and the problems of archive-keeping everywhere. Time has not permitted a full coverage of any of these aspects; if, however, these talks have succeeded in stimulating some interest in the subject - always valuable, but especially so here, at this time - they would have served their purpose.