

Birgitte Possing og Bruno Svindborg (red.). *Det kongelige Biblioteks Håndskriftafdeling. Erhvervelser 1924-1987. Bind I-II*. (Danish Humanist Texts and Studies, Volume 12. København: Museum Tusulanums Forlag 1995. 675 s. DKK 380,- ISBN 87-7289-335-4.

Many users of the Royal Labrary in Copenhagen have long looked forward to this catalogue of manuscripts the Library has acquired since

1924. Besides an overview of the acquired material, this book offers a comprehensive guide for users, both in English and in Danish. It is, on the other hand, an ironic fact that manuals like this one, although so long awaited, in a sense are artefacts of a past era. It would not surprise me at all, if this would turn out to be the last printed volume of its kind. The next generation of this type of bibliographical tool will without doubt be an electronic and digitized one, available on CD-Rom or by remote (internet) access. This is not only due to the rapid advance of computer technology in libraries in general, but more so because computational databases have a number of obvious advantages over their printed counterparts. Not only will an electronic version be more up to date and easier to keep so, it also has clear advantages with regard to practical useability. A simple example of this is that in the printed version cross-reference is not easy — or can only be carried out on a very limited scale.

With respect to being up to date, one must note that there is a time span of nearly a decade between the year of publication of these volumes and the most recent entries in it. (The closing date of editing was March 1994). This is a rather large gap, which strongly effects the reliability and practical useability of this work.

One of the great problems of archives and archival databases in general, are the references to 'closed' archives, temporarily sealed documents and collections with restricted access. This bibliography notes such closed collections, but does not tell us when and how they will be accessible. For instance, the documents concerning Karen Blixen and the one's of Thorkild Bjørnvig (pp. 107, 109) are now restricted but there is no information about their accessibility.

Another problem that also has been adressed by others concerns the lack of a nation-wide, generally adopted standard for anotation and registration of documents. The introduction to these volumes tells us that this issue will be dealt with in the near future.

Of course one can never expect works of this nature to be flawless, typing errors always occur, but are very unfortunate in works of this particular nature and status. Some disturbing random examples can be seen on p. 588: Grete Stenbæk Jensen's novel is entitled *Konen og æggene* (not 'med'); p. 189: Holger Drachmann's lover's surname was not Nielsen, but Nilsson (proper name is mentioned on the same page as well); and why is his third wife called Soffy instead of Soffi; see also p. 540 and p. 189,

concerning Paul V. Rubow's name (V not W). Is it just a matter of coincidence that Vilhelmine Erichsen is recorded with a note saying that she was Drachmann's first wife, just as is the case with his second one, while this is omitted in the entry on Soffi Drachmann, whose maiden name is not listed, either. And while we are at it, why is Drachmann's first wife's maiden name, Erichsen, mentioned, whereas the maiden names of his second (Culmsee) and third (Lasson) are not (see also: p. 532 on Edith Rode).

Nevertheless, every scholar that has anything to do with manuscripts, will find numerous references that one hopes will lead to new discoveries in this realm of dusty cardboard boxes, mice-nibbled parchment and scribbled handwriting. The Manuscript Department of the Royal Library has manuscripts from medieval times to the present, mostly related to Danish literary, political and cultural history — some five kilometres of shelves. One of the attractive aspects of the Library's collection-policy becomes apparant glancing through these two sturdy volumes; it not only contains manuscripts and letters by writers, artists, scholars, officers, clergymen, politicians and so forth, but a substantial part of the collection comprises documents of less publicly known individuals. Take for example: the electrician Hugo Bonfils (p. 120), the housekeeper Anna Krebs (p. 368), the maid servant Marie Wolstrup (p. 659) and the haulier and sand-dealer Hans Petersen (p. 503).

All this being said, one must give due credit to the Danish Royal Library for the effort and be grateful that it has been undertaken. The present two volumes will prove to be of great help in finding and working with all kinds of unique documents and will be especially useful for the foreign users of the Royal Library, who can hereby better prepare their visit to the Manuscript Department.

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