

Some computer-produced finding-aids for the Russell Archives¹

by Albert C. Lewis

RUSSELL TOOK A rather sceptical view of the computer in 1952 when he reported that “mechanical brains are being rapidly perfected, and it is hoped that before long only experts will be able to distinguish them from live people.... This will make the work of management much easier, and if the machines can be taught to vote democracy will at last run smoothly.”² Computers have yet to live up to the expectations Russell derided thirty-six years ago, but few people then predicted the predominantly information-processing uses of the modern computer. Since the beginning of the Bertrand Russell Editorial Project at McMaster University the *Collected Papers* has been prepared through computer-typesetting systems and thus the volumes have been available in machine-readable form as they were being prepared. Could Russell have imagined the conversion of the flow of his manuscripts, writings, which he so conscientiously preserved over a long life, into the series of electromagnetic blips in McMaster’s computers? This contemporary medium is currently being used by the Editorial Project to produce a traditional printed text, but, thanks to this medium, Russell’s writings can continue to be explored through automatically generated concordances and other linguistic analyses and even propagated electronically between “mechanical brains” of the future.

In 1985 microcomputers were made available to the research staff of the Editorial Project and, thanks to these, additional work has been done on Russell’s texts in preparation for publication—mainly check-

¹ This continues the series on finding-aids initiated by K. Blackwell’s “The Finding-Aids of the Russell Archives”, *Russell*, n.s. 5 (1985): 66–71.

² “The Next Eighty Years”, *The Saturday Review of Literature*, 35, no. 32 (9 Aug. 1952): 8–9, 48–9 (at p. 8).

ing the consistency of editorial treatment and the spelling—and an extensive **Draft Index to Article, Book and Journal titles in the Russell Bibliography, Part C** has been made by Associate Editor Bernd Frohmann. Also, the letters of Ottoline Morrell to Russell since 1915 have been transcribed onto computer discs making them available (within the confines of copyright) for computer indexing or other analysis.

Several Project research aids have also been made available for other users of the Russell Archives. These aids provide additional access to Russell's manuscripts, correspondence, and library.

Key-Word Index to Folder Titles in Archives *220 (compiled by John King, index programmed by A.C. Lewis and last updated in June 1985). Russell's manuscripts are kept in the Archives in folders each of which is labelled with an identification number (usually referred to as the RA number), title, number of leaves, and dates of publication and composition. Arranged numerically by RA number, the folders fall into three series, *210 (books), *220 (articles and notes), and *230 (logic books, articles and notes), and within each series they fall into approximately chronological order of composition. The information from the folder labels has been entered into a database (using dBase III). Apart from forming an inventory of the collection which can be accessed by RA number, dates, or title, the database also allows a quick estimate of quantities of material assigned to prospective volumes of the *Collected Papers*. Probably the most useful service for the typical archival user, however, is gaining access to the folders by title. With a modest amount of dBase III programming this standard type of access has been enhanced (thus far only for the 220 series) by generating an alphabetical listing by each significant word in each title. Such a listing reveals, for example, that there are six manuscripts in the 220 series with either "communism" or "communist" in the title and five with "empire" or "empires".

Chronological and Alphabetical Listing of Personal Correspondence in Archives I and II, *710 (programmed by A.C. Lewis and last updated November 1986). Correspondence is generally arranged alphabetically by Russell's correspondent, with each letter (in Archives I) having its own labelled folder. Based on the revised data in the existing catalogues,³ a dBase III file was formed which contained the name of

each correspondent, the first and last year of correspondence for each, and the location of the correspondence (Archives I or II, but excluding Recent Acquisitions). With this minimal information a single alphabetical listing of correspondents was formed. In addition, one of the most frequently asked questions—"Who was Russell corresponding with at this time?"—can be answered in a reasonably helpful way. A listing of the potential correspondents for a specified period of time can be generated from the database (only *potential* since the database contains just the dates of the first and last letters). To determine who from this list actually did correspond for the period of interest the correspondence itself would have to be consulted. The database is not generally available on-line for users to key in their requests and so, as the next most convenient thing, a graphical listing has been prepared, again with the aid of some dBase III programming. It is arranged by the date of the first letter, and the range for each correspondent is indicated by a horizontal line. Thus, the possible correspondents in 1912 are found by determining which horizontal lines intersect the vertical 1912 line. See the accompanying illustration.

Works Referred to by Russell. Another frequent query by the Russell researcher is what Russell read by a certain date. A card file of approximately 1,600 works cited by Russell in his publications has been available in the Archives for many years.⁴ This file has now been copied into a dBase III format. Since the original file was incomplete, put together over the years in a not totally consistent fashion, and written sometimes in a hand that is difficult to read, the database transcription still needs to be enlarged and verified. But the database can be used, with caution, to determine what authors Russell cites over a period of time or in particular works (some of which are otherwise unindexed) and, in effect, to compile a union bibliography to Russell's published works. Since most of these citations come from Russell's books, which will not appear in the *Collected Papers*, this information complements the bibliographic indexes of the edition volumes.

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³ Barry Feinberg, ed., *A Detailed Catalogue of the Archives of Bertrand Russell* (London: Continuum I Ltd., 1967), with the Personal Correspondence listing corrected and revised by S. Turcon; and K. Blackwell and C. Spadoni, *A Detailed Catalogue of the Second Archives of Bertrand Russell* (forthcoming, 1987?).

⁴ It was compiled and donated by Peter Weinrich, a bookseller and bibliographer who supplied many of the items in the formative years of the Archives' Supporting Library, and supplemented by the Archives staff.

Chronological Listing of Personal Correspondence in Archives I and II

Keyed by Joy Drew, Output Designed by Albert Lewis
 24 November 1986
 disc file: br-corr.dbf

0 = Archives I (source: 'Master Copy' of Archives I catalogue as updated by Sheila Turcon)
 1 = Archives II

Undated correspondence is listed at the end.

Catalogue & Name:	Time Period in Range 1885 - 1970:
0 Russell, Frank	*****
0 Carey, Gaspard, W.	**
0 Dickinson, Goldsworthy Lowes	*****
0 Mee, W.M.	*
0 Boughey, A.H.F.	*
0 Cambridge: Trinity College	*****
	^90 ^00 ^10 ^20 ^30 ^40 ^50 ^60 ^70
0 Davitt, Michail	*
0 Green, B.A.	*****
0 Portal, Charlotte	****
0 Soper, Herbert E.	*
0 Bickersteth, John	*
0 Burdett, Maud	*****
	^90 ^00 ^10 ^20 ^30 ^40 ^50 ^60 ^70
0 Ewen, John F.	*
0 Lindsay, T.E.	*
0 Nourse, H. Dalzell	****
0 Peel, Georgiana	*****
0 Stuart, John	*
0 Vandercom & Co., & Doulton	**
	^90 ^00 ^10 ^20 ^30 ^40 ^50 ^60 ^70
0 Smith, Logan Pearsall	***
1 Cambridge University--Maggie &	*
0 Davies, Moya Llewelyn (Crompto)	*****
1 Joachim, Harold H.	*
0 McTaggart, J. Ellis	*****
0 Sanger, Charles Percy (Dora)	*****
	^90 ^00 ^10 ^20 ^30 ^40 ^50 ^60 ^70
0 cousins (p.52-53)	*****
0 Fry, Roger	*****
0 Russell, Arthur	*****
0 Russell, Alys	*****
0 Stanley relatives (p.53-4)	*****
0 Berenson, Mary	*****
	^90 ^00 ^10 ^20 ^30 ^40 ^50 ^60 ^70

The first page of the "Chronological Listing of Personal Correspondence".