Drafting an Archival Blueprint for Engineering Records in Manitoba: 
Developing a Thematic Guide to Engineering Records

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The engineering profession in Manitoba has a long and storied history. Despite this fact, the dearth of historical work devoted to engineering in Manitoba is evident when examining the literature on this subject. One possible major reason for this gap in the literature is that the records documenting Manitoba's engineering history are not easily accessible by researchers. Engineering records related to Manitoba are voluminous and located throughout numerous public and private archival repositories in Manitoba and elsewhere. Also, many descriptions of engineering records, especially in the private section, do not adhere to archival standards. The proper description of engineering records according to archival standards across archival repositories in Manitoba alone is an admirable but very ambitious goal. Since the implementation of comprehensive descriptive programs is very time consuming, the creation of a research tool focused on engineering records, a thematic guide to the records of engineering in Manitoba, would prove quite useful in the interim. A thematic guide would aim to identify the principal engineering records in Manitoba in major institutions and stimulate research into the history of the engineering profession in this province.

This thesis is a first, and hopefully formative, contribution to the efforts required to create such a thematic guide for Manitoba engineering archives. The creation of an actual guide is itself a major project beyond the scope of this thesis. The opening chapter discusses the rationale behind sound archival description in archival theory and practice, and extends that discussion to the purposes and creation of this particular type of descriptive tool. The second chapter analyzes several existing models of thematic guides in an attempt to determine the best style and format for the creation of a thematic guide for engineering. It will then outline the suggested format of the engineering guide based on these critiques and provide direction to significant components of the proposed guide's content in an extensive list of major bodies of engineering records located in the largest public archives in Manitoba and in a cross-section of leading private engineering firms in the province. This list illustrates the vast volume and variety of records that a thematic guide would map. The final chapter is devoted to an historical overview of engineering in Manitoba. This provides the essential context for comprehending both the choice of engineering in Manitoba as a subject for a thematic guide and the records that document it. A thematic guide to engineering records would draw heavily on this historical information. The thesis concludes with recommendations for the future development of engineering archives in Manitoba through collaborative efforts between engineers and archivists.