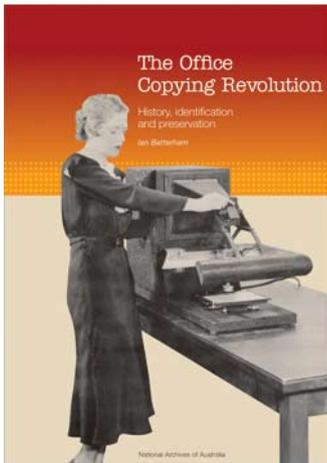


THE OFFICE COPYING REVOLUTION: HISTORY, IDENTIFICATION AND PRESERVATION



Ian Batterham, 2008
National Archives of
Australia
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Reviewed by **Joanna
Newman**

COPYCATS

Did you know that the first commercial facsimile was used to transmit messages between Paris and Lyon between 1865 and 1870? Or that carbon paper as we know it was developed in 1808 when Pellegrino Turi invented a typewriting machine to help his lover, the blind Countess Carolina Fantoni, write letters to him? Or even that adherography and hectography were once common office copying methods?

The new book, *The Office Copying Revolution: History, identification and preservation*, on office copying, its methods and outputs is written by Ian Batterham, a conservator at National Archives of Australia. It grew out of an interest in office copying that developed when he was researching his Master's thesis and covers, "copying processes used in commercial and government offices to produce single copies, or small runs of copies, from an existing original, from a prepared stencil or master, from an electronic data file, from a microform, or through the use of moveable type." It specifically excludes copying used in the reproduction of architectural drawings, except those that were also used for document copying, such as blueprinting, hectography and the diazotype process.

The book begins with an interesting overview of the history of office copying, going into detail about every process. Each section starts by explaining when that particular process was in active use, how common it was and synonyms, brand names or product names associated with it. This is followed by its history, a description of the materials and working procedure and how to identify documents created

by it. Batterham even includes preservation issues and requirements as well as related health concerns. Useful appendices at the end include a guide to indentifying an unknown copy (complete with images of the letter 'e' produced by every process mentioned), a glossary of process, product and company names and, finally, how to make a legible copy from a faded original.

MANAGING MULTIPLES

My first thought was that this book would be a worthy and essential reference text for any archives or other institution responsible for documentary collections, which it definitely is. Batterham writes, "The legacy of this 250 years of office copying, with all its invention and variation ... is the millions upon millions of copies that remain. ... Some copies are as pristine as the day they were created, others are showing signs of degradation such as embrittlement of the support, yellowing of the background and fading of the image."

While providing an indispensable resource for all document repositories, however, it is surprisingly a fascinating read. The number of different processes that have been used to produce copies of documents and the ingenuity and complexity of the technology is mind-boggling for the layperson. There is just enough information to explain and allow the reader to grasp the nature of the processes without being overwhelmed. The text is also accompanied by many colourful and helpful illustrations, including a large number of advertisements from the 1950s when office copying technology boomed.

This book is strongly recommended as a reference manual for archives, museums and other holders of documentary heritage. It is designed to help identify individual copied formats and provide answers on how to deal with them but at the same time is an important reminder that all copies are not equal.

Joanna Newman is an independent consultant who trained as an archivist in Sydney. She was responsible for archives and records management at Fletcher Challenge, before joining Te Papa as collections information manager, and later managing the curators. She returned to archives to manage Wellington City Archives and, since starting her consultancy, has lectured at Victoria University. She is currently undertaking research into sustainability of community archives.

The Office Copying Revolution is available (in NZ) for A\$54.50 (excl. GST) + A\$24 postage and handling, by contacting naasales@naa.gov.au.