MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTING SIGN CHANGES
AT THE HUDSON’S BAY COMPANY, 1670 TO 1914

Gary Spraakman
York University

Abstract:
There are fundamental issues about the extent of the reality behind accounting signs such as income, but these issues have received minimal attention from accounting researchers (Mattessich, 1991a; Heath, 1987). Recently, Macintosh et al. (2000) addressed these issues with financial accounting and Baudrillard’s orders-of-simulacra theoretic to conclude that financial accounting no longer functions according to the logic of transparent representation, stewardship or information economics. This study extents the work of Macintosh et al. to a long-term study of the management accounting practices of the Hudson’s Bay Company. It concludes more positively; signs are integral with management accounting because there is a need for abstraction – every transaction cannot be separately considered – and there is a need to consider the future. Signs must to be understood to understand management accounting.