

## BOOK REVIEWS

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**Jeannette A. Bastian, Reviews Editor**

### **Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries**

Edited by Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton. Canberra, Australia: Australian Academic and Research Libraries, 2005. (Copublished as *Australian Academic & Research Libraries* 36, no. 2, June 2005). 216 pp. (Summer 2006). Available from the Australian Library and Information Association, \$29.95 AUD, ISBN 0-86804-563-2.

As part of a sabbatical research trip to Australia, I had the good fortune to meet with five of the authors represented in this work, including co-editor Martin Nakata who shared a “hot-off-the-press” copy. This compilation explores the intersection of Indigenous knowledge and the information professions in the broadest sense, from the traditional and cultural to local and contemporary. The human rights themes that emerged during our memorable conversations are echoed in the text. *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries* is a well-used component of my personal library, as the number of coffee stains on the book’s fore-edge attest! Since the early 1990s, issues surrounding Indigenous culture have generated global discussion and recognition of different approaches to the management, preservation, and dissemination of intangible and tangible heritage. As Nakata—director of the Jumbunna Indigenous House of Learning, University of Technology, Sydney—notes, these complex issues have profound implications for libraries and archives as stewards of Indigenous knowledge. He believes the information professions have responded with “enormous goodwill and interest” (p. 207). In the words of anthropologist Michael F. Brown (*Who Owns Native Culture?* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2003), how should we “promote respectful treatment of native cultures and indigenous forms of self-expression within mass societies?” (p. 10).

In 2004, Nakata and Marcia Langton, chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, along with a group of practitioners and academics, set out to address the future of Australian Indigenous knowledge vis-à-vis libraries and archives. A colloquium, cosponsored with the State Library of New South Wales, formed the basis for this publication, which includes sixteen chapters and nineteen authors—nine of whom are Indigenous. The papers cover five major areas: Indigenous knowledge in Australia and the world; the politics of Indigenous knowledge; intellectual and cultural property rights; Indigenous knowledge centers; and Indigenous knowledge and archives.

The writing styles and content of the chapters are varied. The authors offer a refreshing mix of the theoretical and practical. A strong introduction, cogent first and last chapters that frame the issues, and a thoughtful afterword bind the diverse nature of the individual pieces. The topics can be disquieting. Can libraries and archives entertain differential levels of access to sacred or secret Indigenous knowledge based on age, gender, initiate status, and role? How can extant records be annotated or modified to reflect Indigenous concerns? How could intellectual property laws be expanded to recognize Indigenous communal ownership of knowledge?

Langton and educator Ma Rhea focus on defining Indigenous knowledge, its value, and challenges in relationship to bioprospecting and conserving biodiversity in Australia and Asia. They make a case for retention of Indigenous knowledge to ensure sustainability and the need for reciprocity and attribution. Langton and Rhea celebrate the recognition of Indigenous intellectual property rights by the World Intellectual Property Organization, UNESCO, and the United Nations.

In an intriguing chapter that requires “deep reading,” Arun Agrawal a natural resources professor at the University of Michigan, probes “how the nature of the *Indigenous* is shaped by the workings of power, and . . . the ways in which power is a property of that which is classified as *Indigenous*.” Agrawal questions the assumption that Indigenous knowledge is disappearing and applies the work of postmodern philosopher Michel Foucault. In a complementary paper, researcher Megan Davis describes the human rights implications of the World Trade Organization’s General Agreement on Trade in Services.

As solicitor Terri Janke observes, “Indigenous people view the world they live in as an integrated whole” (p. 99). The problem with copyright from an Indigenous perspective is that it expires and that it protects authors but not the communal creators or “owners” of knowledge. Native people are pursuing intellectual and cultural rights on the international scene, which extend beyond Western laws. Janke recommends development and implementation of protocols in the absence of new or amended laws. She highlights key issues for libraries and archives. Building on Janke’s work, research fellow Jane Anderson comments on the philosophical and daily tensions of access, ownership, and control of Indigenous materials in non-Indigenous archives from the colonial period to today’s virtual world. She admits that archivists must sometimes “dance around” legal issues in serving communities and identifying win-win practices.

In chapters three and four, librarians Cate Richmond and Jacob Pilot present the current state of “Indigenous Knowledge Centres” in Australia. These centers blend traditional and Indigenous approaches to knowledge management: “to develop communities through libraries; to connect people to information; to preserve [local] heritage; and to help people learn” (p. 29). Richmond advocates the potential of digital technology to support documentation and access to

cultural heritage. Pilot notes the importance of community involvement and the recruitment and training of Indigenous staff. Indigenous community liaison Joe Neparrnga Gumbula chronicles his efforts to locate and repatriate copies for local use of Gupapuyngu cultural knowledge. He spends several months each year on the road to gather and bring home information resources for the Galiwin'ku Indigenous Knowledge Center. Gumbula justifies the need for tailored, community-based levels of access (restricted, peri-restricted, and public).

Technologist Jane Hunter provides an overview of new software tools for Indigenous knowledge management, based in part on a project with the National Museum of the American Indian. Customizable software allows the documentation, preservation, attribution, use, and repatriation of language and culture in a variety of formats. Such systems enable communities to control access and rights to digitized collections that suit local customs.

Four papers shed light on the sometimes conflicting interests of governments and Indigenous people. The Australian archival record includes painful details of the forced removal of Aboriginal children from biological parents and the story of "stolen wages"—Aboriginal pay held in trust and never distributed. Historian Ros Kidd and educator Lynette Russell describe their powerful experiences as researchers seeking Aboriginal records. Russell cautions that the needs of Indigenous people are not homogeneous. Kidd advocates special treatment of Aboriginal records to ensure their preservation and protection from governmental concealment or destruction. Archivists Andrew Wilson and Kirsten Thorpe share their observations as Indigenous professionals in State Records Offices. Wilson extols the benefits of indexing Aboriginal records in a culturally respectful way—such as the Aboriginal Name Index project in South Australia and the Bringing Them Home Name Index produced by the National Archives of Australia. Both authors encourage the creation of Indigenous advisory groups and outreach to communities.

In 1995, an Australian working group of Indigenous and non-Indigenous colleagues crafted the *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protocols for Libraries, Archives and Information Services* at [www.cdu.edu.au/library/protocol.html](http://www.cdu.edu.au/library/protocol.html). The protocols address critical issues including intellectual property and ownership of knowledge; accessibility and use; description practices; sacred or secret content; and Indigenous participation in management and the profession. Martin and Vicky Nakata, academic Alex Byrne, and librarians Gabrielle Gardiner and Alana Garwood-Houng report on a decade of progress and outline recommendations for meeting the ongoing challenges of promoting the guidelines; professional recruitment, training, and retention of Indigenous personnel; professional development across the library sector to raise awareness; identification of an organizational home for the protocols; refinement of the protocols and inclusion of "best practices"; and creation of a Web site for easy access and supporting information.

Archivists hold dear the concept of intellectual freedom and shy away from the notion that knowledge can be “owned” or that access may be a privilege rather than a right. While committed to championing unfettered access, many American archivists also wish to respect culturally sensitive material. Dagmar Schmidmaier, state librarian of New South Wales, advises all of us to move beyond our “comfort zones” (p. 1). Collectively, the authors urge librarians and archivists to engage in an “. . . unsettling of established practice, and the questioning of some of the assumptions on which accepted practice rests” (p. 3).

Unlike some authors who lament “irreconcilable views of information,” the Australian writers are more optimistic in their attempts to find common ground and, in Langton’s words, to put aside the “absurd presumption of Western supremacy over other societies” (p. 60). Byrne notes in his afterword that “we have a shared commitment to the preservation and transmission of knowledge” and points to Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (p. 211). The right to know can be balanced with respect and autonomy.

The groundbreaking work captured in *Australian Indigenous Knowledge and Libraries* can serve as a model for comparable dialogue in the United States. Hundreds of organizations hold archival collections, gathered both with and without informed consent, that document Native American lifeways. Tribal leaders, archivists, and librarians in North America have expressed interest in exploring ways to engage in joint stewardship. Native Americans—like Aboriginal people—have firsthand experience with the ways that information resources held in distant institutions can impact the quality of life, the practice of religion, and the future of a people—sometimes with disastrous consequences, sometimes to their benefit. There are many opportunities for archives that hold such materials to cooperate with communities of origin.

As Nakata and Langton write, “Indigenous people are at the heart of this matter. The development of practice in this complex intersection must have *legitimacy* with Indigenous people and communities” (p. 5). The lesson to be gleaned from this text for American archivists engaged in collecting, preserving, and making available Indigenous knowledge is to remain focused on human rights and to embrace the power of conversation, collaboration, education, and negotiation. As Sven Haakanson, Jr. (Alutiiq-Sugpiaq) reinforces in the recently published *Caring for American Indian Objects* (Sherelyn Ogden, St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2004), “. . . it takes human connections to make positive changes happen” (p. 3).

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### Preserving Digital Materials

By Ross Harvey. Munich: K.G. Saur, 2005. xvi, 246 pp. \$95.00. ISBN 3-598-11686-1.

Ross Harvey places four questions at the heart of *Preserving Digital Materials*: “Why do we preserve digital materials? What digital materials do we preserve? How do we preserve digital materials? How do we manage digital preservation?” (p. xiii). This spirit of inquiry allows him to question basic tenets of traditional preservation practice and suggest new approaches more suitable to the work of sustaining digital materials. In this work, he guides us successfully through a synthesis of key developments in research and experimental projects over the last fifteen years in the area of digital preservation. For those professionals and scholars looking for a comprehensive overview of the subject, Harvey, a faculty member at Charles Sturt University in New South Wales, Australia, does not disappoint.

In his introductory chapter, Harvey describes the purpose of the book as aiming “to improve digital preservation practice in libraries and recordkeeping environments . . . by taking stock of what we know about the principles, strategies, and practices that prevail and by describing the outcomes of recent and current research” (p. xi). While much of the literature of digital preservation, particularly that emerging from the library community, focuses on digitization standards and methods, this book looks at challenges inherent to ensuring the longevity of all digital materials and makes no distinction between digitized and born-digital materials.

The premise that digital preservation requires a new approach and mindset lies at the heart of Harvey’s argument. Whereas the physical stability of the artifact dominates preservation discourse in the analog world, the new paradigm of digital preservation sidelines the artifact, assuming that the physical carrier itself carries no value. Ultimately, the meaning of long-term preservation will no longer be centered around the longevity of the media, but rather on the establishment of the continuing value of the information contained within the media.

Archivists will find Harvey’s chapter on selection (“Selection for Preservation—The Critical Decision”) to be of particular interest. He discards the selection criteria developed within the library profession, as he finds it insufficient for digital materials, in favor of archival-style appraisal. Reasons for preferring appraisal criteria as developed in the archival community include the critical needs for more contextual information about digital materials and for a continuum approach to preservation (which recognizes that conscious preservation decisions need to be made much earlier in the life cycle of digital materials).

Another critical question Harvey poses is “What is the ‘essence’ of digital materials?” Identifying and preserving the critical attributes and functionality of

digital materials represent some of the most difficult challenges of digital preservation. Harvey points out that digital objects are always mediated by a hardware and software environment as the system in use translates the 0s and 1s of bit-streams into the documents comprehensible to humans. We must take that transformation into account as we migrate objects forward to new hardware and software environments. When does the difference in how the object is mediated affect its authenticity and integrity? There are no simple, straightforward answers to these questions, as stakeholder communities that preserve and use a particular set of digital objects will need to work together to define the objects' critical attributes and functional requirements.

Several chapters are devoted to the exploration of various strategies of digital preservation, which Harvey divides into "non-solutions," "preserve technology" approaches, and "preserve objects" approaches. "Non-solutions" include storage and handling practices and using durable digital media, which buy time while one decides what to do in the long term; making analog backups (printing hard copies) is also considered to be an interim solution useful to a limited category of digital materials. "Preserve technology" approaches include creating computing technology museums and emulation, while "preserve objects" approaches include bitstream copying and refreshing, adopting standard file formats, developing archival file formats, migration, and encapsulation. Harvey warns that the latter two approaches are "the two ends of a spectrum of possibilities, not discrete points on that spectrum" (p. 118). Most digital preservation solutions will combine multiple approaches, because "diverse collections require a range of solutions" (p. 156).

As Harvey articulates, for digital materials to survive, preservation concerns must be incorporated into their design even before their creation. In the near future, many preservation activities will be automated—built into systems and incorporated in digital archives as part of a mass production process. The Open Archival Information System (OAIS), the reference model upon which many digital archives are now being developed, provides the basic functions of ingest, storage, data management, administration, and access. The development and use of standardized preservation metadata schema will be key to the implementation of the OAIS model and thus the automation of digital preservation processes. Harvey laments the lack of standardization of such schema. At the time of this book's writing, the OCLC/RLG joint preservation metadata standard PREMIS (PREservation Metadata: Implementation Strategies) had not yet been published. If widely adopted, PREMIS may provide archivists and librarians with a metadata standard that will greatly aid in the development of systems for automating digital preservation activities.

Throughout the text, Harvey emphasizes how collaboration has been and will continue to be essential to the success of digital preservation initiatives. Most digital preservation projects and resources are the result of coordinated efforts

among the world's largest libraries and archives. However, collaboration will involve other stakeholders beyond cultural institutions. For example, records creators and archivists will work together to establish "shared custody" of materials as many digital objects will not be transferred in the same way that archives now take possession of analog materials. No digital preservation effort will be successful unless it takes into account the social concerns, including legal, political, economic, sociocultural, and public policy perspectives. Harvey emphasizes the social aspects of digital preservation as he observes that "the challenges are not just technical; in fact, there is a school of thought that we have most of the technical solutions that we need at hand" (p.182).

Throughout the text, and in an appendix composed of case studies, Harvey showcases a number of international initiatives, including the Internet Archive, JSTOR, DSpace, LOCKSS, CAMiLEON, NEDLIB, Digital Preservation Coalition, and NDIIPP, among others. He gives special attention to Australian projects, including PADI (Preserving Access to Digital Information, [www.nla.gov.au/padi](http://www.nla.gov.au/padi)), VERS (Victorian Electronic Records Strategy, [www.prov.vic.gov.au/vers/vers/default.htm](http://www.prov.vic.gov.au/vers/vers/default.htm)), and the National Library of Australia's PANDORA (Preserving and Accessing Networked Documentary Resources of Australia, [www.pandora.nla.gov.au/index.html](http://www.pandora.nla.gov.au/index.html)). PADI serves as the essential information clearinghouse for digital preservation; VERS provides a successful example of the use of the preservation strategy of encapsulation; and PANDORA presents a model for the selective approach to Web archiving. While Harvey does not aim to be all-inclusive, his coverage of digital preservation projects gives readers a real sense of the diversity and scope of activities worldwide.

In summing up the major challenges that archivists must face to achieve digital preservation goals, Harvey identifies management, funding, and staffing as crucial concerns for the future. Sustenance of digital objects must be mainstreamed into institutional planning and administration, rather than being confined to special projects. As institutions get used to the idea of "paying the digital mortgage," finding a way to sustain the financial commitment required for digital preservation will become critical. As digital preservation transitions from experimental projects to full-fledged programs, archives and libraries must employ staff with the appropriate expertise in digital preservation who will ideally combine management and technical skills. Last, the field must provide solutions that are scalable, both up and down. As Harvey points out, "if digital preservation activities are to be fully integrated into standard practice they need to be applicable to all sizes and shapes of institutions" (p. 191).

This book will be a valuable resource for archivists with preservation responsibilities given its thorough review of the literature and its emphasis on the value of archival theory in creating solutions to the challenges of digital preservation. This reviewer has successfully used this book as a text in her digital preservation course. Its comprehensive overview of the field and the key literature makes it

quite suitable for teaching purposes. One hopes that this book will be revised in a few years and reissued so that it continues to be current.

*Preserving Digital Materials* is not a theoretical work, nor is it a manual of practice. Instead, it lays out the essential issues with which the cultural heritage community must contend, presents the key research accomplished to date, and suggests the path that lies ahead in the next five to fifteen years. Those seeking a how-to manual will be disappointed by this book, as it does not purport to provide solutions to particular digital preservation problems. This lack of practical advice should not be considered a flaw, however—the major dilemmas of digital preservation have yet to be satisfactorily solved at this point, and the development of a “magic bullet” universal solution is unlikely to appear in the near future. One of the primary lessons to be learned from those brave enough to have taken action already is that even smaller institutions can progress toward digital preservation, making small changes that will help safeguard materials until a more workable solution emerges; as Harvey puts it, “start now, do what you can now, and then consider the possibilities” (p. 192).

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### **Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History**

Edited by Antoinette Burton. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005. x, 396 pp. Index. Cloth, \$84.95. ISBN 0-8223-3677-4. Paper, \$23.95. ISBN 0-8223-3688-X.

This is an important book, a breakthrough collection of essays, most by historians—but some by experts in literary studies, communications, American studies, political science, and Chicano studies—who discuss how their work in archives and their use of archival sources reflect what they perceive to be the nature and power of such repositories and their holdings. *Archive Stories* joins a growing number of books in which scholars take up archives not merely as sources for their research but as their topic of study, and where archivists can gain some immensely interesting and important perspectives on their work. This is not a perfect book by any means, for reasons I will discuss, but it is certainly a work that archivists interested in the theoretical underpinnings of their work, archival educators teaching the next generation of practitioners, and archivists seeking to build a scholarly literature for their own field must reckon with, build on, react to, and add to their arsenal of scholarly writings.

Burton, the volume's editor and the author of an interesting book on the creation by Indian women of an archive of sorts (*Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing House, Home, and History in Late Colonial India*, published by Oxford



University Press in 2003), clearly lays out the purpose of this book in her introduction. She notes that the volume is a contribution to the continuing discussions about the “relationship between evidence and history” being debated in the academy, by the public, and by government officials (p. 1). Burton also indicates that the notion of archives considered by the various authors in the volume is not limited to the traditional views of repositories but also extends to a “variety of unofficial sites” such as inscriptions, tapestries, and tattoos—reflecting a rich and sometimes unwieldy literature for the archivist or those concerned with the nature of archival evidence (p. 3). It is interesting, indeed, that as some scholars have expanded the concept of the “archive,” often suggesting that they will conduct research far from archival repositories and the assistance of archivists, they also have returned to reconsider the meaning and role of archives in particular.

It does not take Burton long to get to the main thrust of the collection of essays. She writes: “Though their own origins are occluded and the exclusions on which they are premised often dimly understood, all archives come into being and as history as a result of specific political, cultural, and socioeconomic pressures—pressures which leave traces and which render archives themselves artifacts of history. By foregrounding a variety of archive stories, this collection aims to unpack some of those histories and to begin to diffuse the aura which now more than ever surrounds the notion of ‘real’ archives, especially those with which historians have dealt” (p. 6). Archivists may sigh, fully knowing that their repositories and their records are the results of many different forces and factors, but they have not embraced the investigation and reporting on such matters, even in their finding aids. It appears to have been left to others to do this, and archivists need to evaluate these studies critically and to ask some important questions of themselves about their responsibility to address this in their own professional literature.

Burton believes that telling these stories is of critical importance because archives have “dynamic relationships, not just to the past and the present, but to the fate of regimes, the physical environment, the serendipity of bureaucrats, and the care and neglect of archivists as well” (p. 6). In other words, these stories are also about archivists, but while we can learn much from the historians about how to approach some aspects of archives, I am not confident we learn that much about ourselves. And the reason may be as much philosophical as methodological. Many of the essays in this volume address how various personal, structural, political, and other factors intrude into the making and using of archives, and here archivists can be enlightened and challenged to rethink just what it is they are involved in. Yet, when it comes to digging into the practices and current circumstances concerning modern archives, many of the authors come up a bit short, and that is to be regretted in this interesting and important publication.

The essays are grouped into three sections. The initial section, "Close Encounters: The Archive as Contact Zone," includes essays about how differing attitudes about miscegenation held by both the creators of original records and the archivists caring for them in Britain and India affected a scholar's research; the challenges of conducting research in the impoverished, restrictive, and unstable archives in Uzbekistan; the difficulties of researching the history of the passport in the post-9/11 United States; the work of a nineteenth-century naturalist and ethnographer in creating an archives of his life and work in the context of the British empire; a case study of a queer Latino using her body as an archive; and the travails and challenges of researching in the archives of cyberspace and understanding what it means. The second group of essays, "'Official' Archives and Counter-Histories," considers the history of archives in modern France; German archives and the making of the nation—not merely the government archives but those of the people through their personal documents; the biography of a family archives (the Russian noble family Bakunin), whereby the notion of an archives can be considered outside of its traditional, institutional framework; British feminism and archives, considering how the suffragettes developed meaning through their writings and papers; architectural and planning archives in Kohler, Wisconsin, where imagined spaces are depicted and the role of the archives appears to be more complicated than usually accepted; and fiction and newspapers in nineteenth-century Egypt and how they create a context for interpreting other archives. The final section, "Archive Matters: The Past in the Present," includes essays about conducting research about the 1976 Soweto uprising in the State Archives of South Africa, and how this archival program supported the racist regime; archival research about the claims of indigenous peoples in British Columbia, considering the challenges of accepting oral tradition as bona fide legal and historical evidence; and the debate about history, evidence, and historical scholarship in Australia in the past couple of decades. It would require a far longer review to describe all of the essays in any degree of detail, so I will focus on one in each section and then make some general assessments about the volume.

In the book's first section, Craig Robertson's description of his work on the history of the passport in the United States ought to grab the attention of any archivist. He starts his essay by detailing the various levels of security he must go through to enter the National Archives, reminding him (and us as we read his thoughts) that archives are about government power and control. Robertson muses, "Documents do not simply appear in state archives. Individuals for whom they have been everyday files determine which documents are sent to archives, where they are then selected and classified according to specific criteria. Once anointed with the objectivity of their location in the archive, officials select who can read them and under what conditions" (p. 69). Yet, it is not only in the post-9/11 security procedures that Robertson finds reason to reflect on records

and the power of the state. As it turns out, the records of the Passport Office are controlled by “one long-term official” who has written an “unofficial history of the United States passport” and who has no inclination to allow anyone access to these records (p. 72). This leads Robertson to ruminate about the history and role of the National Archives, and he is not the first outsider to do this. His reflections are made more complicated because of the inadequacy of the Freedom of Information Act process, which promises that records more than twenty years old will be in that repository. This scholar throws up his hands and wonders just what anyone can do to get redress for such a problem, but his more important task is to recognize how the process of creating passport records delineates the nature of archival creation and maintenance. Robertson argues, among other things, that archives are the result of “particular technologies and procedures”; he continues, “even before documents have been classified in an archive, they have been constructed as ‘investigative modalities,’ their very documentary form affecting what has been recorded” (p. 83).

Jennifer S. Milligan’s essay on the relationship between the development of the modern French state and its National Archives, in the second section of the volume, is another essay archivists will find of use. As Milligan reminds us, the French National Archives has a “history that is deeply implicated in the politics of the nation-state as well as the production of scholarship and the promotion of national memory and identity,” provoking her to ask just what an archives is about (p. 160). As it turns out, Milligan finds that “control over the memory of the state’s exercise of power over citizens” is at stake. The formation of the French National Archives and its holdings is a historical investigation seeking to understand “the complexes of ideas, practices, material, and power that make this collection and its communication to a variously defined ‘public’ possible” (p. 160). What results is a bit different from the standard history of this important archival institution, a history that often focuses on its establishment, its pronouncements of being a people’s archives, and its role as a perpetuator of pioneering archival principles and practices. Instead, Milligan determines that the archives was “more than a mere repository of governmental knowledge; it was an active articulation of the relationship of nation and state” (p. 169). Milligan wants us to move beyond mere acceptance of the standard view of the archives as a repository for historical investigation and to see it as a historical invention in its own right. How did the French National Archives gain its sense of authority? In striving to answer such a question we can understand the “limits of the archive’s power to speak in the name of history” (p. 178).

In the final section of the book, Helena Pohlandt-McCormick writes about conducting research on the 1976 Soweto uprising in the South African State Archives, a repository complicit with the destruction or obstruction of records related to many aspects of the racist apartheid government. Pohlandt-McCormick notes that the 1996–98 work of the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission revealed the “culpability of archives and other government institutions in the destruction of records,” uncovering the “importance of such institutions in relation to public memory and history” and showing how “individual experience interacts with the discursive and political power of institutions in the process of articulating, preserving, inventing, silencing, and destroying memory” (pp. 314–15). She describes how, even with a new openness and changes in government and archival practice, there continue to be efforts to destroy or conceal records and to protect those who were involved in the apartheid regime. She reflects, “a new culture of remembering and accountability brings new evidence and historical understanding into the open, but it also brings with it new challenges” (p. 320). It is obvious, from reading this and other essays in the volume, that one challenge will be dialoguing with historians and others wishing to use and comprehend the nature of archives.

As the reader should be able to surmise from my description, the authors of these essays offer an expansive idea of archives. As such scholars often do, they write of the “archive” as a means of considering not just record groups and manuscript collections in traditional archives (note we tend to refer to our world as “archives”), but as a way of getting at nearly every means by which humans document themselves and leave traces of their existence. Many archivists will scratch their heads about how the archive is discussed, wondering if it has anything to do with what they are about or should be concerned with. Of course, I selected these three examples because they relate directly to real archives where real archivists work. What many of the other contributors offer is a more critical, outsider analysis that relates to matters considered by only a small number of archivists.

What frustrates me, at times, is the lack of effort to look at the archival literature, some of which directly reflects the issues these authors are considering. Some authors actually look at the archives of archives (something archivists have not done as well and as often as they should), but it is surprising how little effort is made here to tap into the full depth of archival knowledge and practice. For instance, Renée Sentilles, in her essay about cyberspace archives, describes an “odd professional paradox at the heart of all of this electronic archiving: despite worries of having too much material, historians are the ones *most* likely to want to digitize everything. Another rule of the profession is ‘save everything.’ One never knows when a piece of information has historic evidence. As much as historians might view the amount of material now available with a certain amount of trepidation, we also have emerged from a culture of scarcity that has preprogrammed us not to discard anything” (p. 143). Archivists have certainly encountered this issue before, and they have had many discussions with historians about this matter over the decades. (I certainly have, and I have documented it in my own writings about appraisal, as have Terry Cook, Margaret Hedstrom, Tom Nesmith, and countless others.) And herein is the problem. The fairly rich

archival literature on this matter, and on many of the other topics explored in this volume, has been almost universally ignored.

Some may breathe a sigh of relief and think they are fortunate that historians, literary and cultural studies academics, and other scholars haven't probed farther into the archival lair. Yet, it is important for archivists to read essays such as we find in *Archive Stories* because they bring new life and provide new perspectives on the most fundamental questions challenging archivists today.

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**Confession and Bookkeeping: The Religious, Moral, and Rhetorical Roots of Modern Accounting.**

By James Aho. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2005. xvii, 131 pp. \$40.00 ISBN 0-7914-6545-4.

You have to admit it: this book has an arresting title. If the comparison of apples and oranges—both of them fruit, after all, and both good for us—is enough to elicit objection, a book that proposes to connect the Catholic religious practice of the confession of sins with the invention of double-entry bookkeeping as a tool of business would seem preposterous on its face. What's next? How space aliens affected the keeping of diaries? But wait a minute: maybe there is something here after all. Both confession and bookkeeping demand a degree of honesty in the service of some desirable goal, and both have long histories of development. For archivists, bookkeeping and other financial recordkeeping are part of the stuff of everyday life; what archives does not have such materials? Anything, therefore, that prompts reflection on the cultural meaning of recordkeeping systems and practices is likely to offer a useful perspective on professional practice. Accordingly, here might indeed be a book we ought to pay attention to.

Aho, a sociologist, comes at the subject from an interest in the history of accounting. As with many topics, this one has more of a history than nonspecialists know. The standard narrative, advanced most fully in the 1930s by A. C. Littleton, describes a shift over time from "bookkeeping fictions," often expressed in narrative form, to "scientific facts," represented quintessentially by numbers. Such an explanation has the ring of truth. It's easy to presume that financial records consist of clear, objective facts, for few facts are apparently less ambiguous and more real than those that can be expressed quantitatively. Two plus two never equals nine, and that's that. In recent years, however, under the influence of (who else?) Foucault and others, a "critical sociology of accounting" has emerged, and all those numbers in ledger books suddenly seem less straightforward. Instead, "accounting schemes are socially contrived, culturally

relative, and historically contingent" (p. xii). So far, so good, though by now this seems less of an insight than it once might have. If everything else that scholars study is socially constructed—race, gender, and all the rest—why not specific business practices, too?

Aho wants to make a contribution to this discussion by showing the connection between the larger moral vision of religion and the literally mundane practice of double-entry bookkeeping, which he renders "DEB" for convenience. It is no coincidence, he says, that in 1215, the Christian church, not yet divided by the Reformation, mandated annual confession of sins by all believers and that "soon thereafter" DEB came into common use by European merchants. That "soon" gets him into trouble. While he has looked at the appropriate secondary works on the history of confession (Bernard Poschmann, Bernard Haring, Thomas Tentler, and others) and at John Noonan's seminal history of changing church attitudes toward usury and the charging of interest on loans, Aho is far from surefooted in his historical account. When he misquotes the basic Latin formula used in confession (p. 42), it's clear that he's in unfamiliar territory. Worse, he mashes together distinct phenomena into a frankly amateurish chronology that no historian would tolerate. In the space of two paragraphs (pp. 26–27), we go, in this order, from Bernard of Clairvaux (twelfth century) to Raymond of Penafort (thirteenth century) to Gregory the Great (sixth century) to the Council of Trent (sixteenth century) and finally to Ignatius Loyola (1491–1556), who seems here to be writing in 1964. (We could also, by the way, do without the throwaway reference to Martin Luther as "one of Christian history's most notable obsessive-compulsives.") True, these sources all used the word "confession," but they meant some very different things by it, one from another. This dizzying omnium-gatherum makes sense only if these writers collectively inhabit some undifferentiated place called "the past," in which gaps of five hundred or a thousand years don't matter just because everybody is way back there somewhere.

Moreover, Aho stumbles badly over what was called "scrupulosity," the problem of those who internalized too well the church's moral injunctions. If, as the moral theologians instructed, I won't be forgiven of my sins unless I tell them fully and exactly in confession, what if I make a mistake? Suppose I say that I disobeyed my parents ten times, and I actually did it eleven? Doesn't that one unconfessed (and therefore unforgiven) sin mean that the confession itself was a lie and therefore additionally sinful? The precision that the practice apparently demanded could potentially lead to a never-ending downward spiral of anxiety, with the sacrament intended to convey God's pardon becoming only a means for repeated condemnation. While scrupulosity was indeed a persistent problem among some laypeople in confession, it was never that for most of them, and it was, in any case, routinely denounced by the church and by priests. Clerics expended considerable energy in urging their penitents away from scrupulosity, not toward it, telling the scrupulous that they should, in effect, lighten up. Aho goes off track

by presuming that this scrupulosity was the rule rather than the exception. Most confessions were not about this at all. Thus, to say that “meticulous record-keeping in areas other than business” (p. 41) spawned an equivalent scrupulosity in bookkeeping is too long a leap. It is also the worst kind of “post hoc, ergo propter hoc” argumentation. We must look for DEB’s sources elsewhere.

More fruitful is Aho’s examination of the connections between business recordkeeping and the rhetorical traditions of antiquity, which flourished in the Italian Renaissance cities where DEB was first articulated. One wishes that these “rhetorical roots” were not relegated to the book’s subtitle, for the real contribution of this volume is there. In their origin, ledgers were not intended to be mere compilations of numerical data; they were expected to have a style, even a literary style. Luca Pacioli (1445–1517), author of what is generally acknowledged to be the first textbook in accounting, summarizing principles already in use, had been trained well in the rhetoric of Cicero and other ancient masters. Aho does a good job of laying this out. Any speech, narrative, letter, or account (in the non-financial sense) was supposed to have three parts: an *exordium*, the introduction, which addressed someone in particular, even the different someone we ourselves became with the passage of time; a *narratio*, a presentation of the information itself in an orderly and concise manner; and a *peroratio*, a conclusion, in which a final summary was given, with attention called to the important points at issue. So it was with early bookkeeping. Many ledger books, prepared according to Pacioli’s model, began with an exhortation such as “In the name of God and Profit.” Then came the narrative of information, often combining words and numbers. Aho offers (p. 71) a hypothetical example: “Giovanni Bessimi shall give, on this day, CC [i.e., 200] lire, which he promised to pay us.” Finally, came the peroration, a summary in which the column of assets and the column of liabilities added up to the same amount. Looking at bookkeeping records in this way permits a view beyond the hard data apparent on the surface and allows us to see how cultural conventions spilled over their original boundaries to affect one another, even in apparently unrelated aspects of life. The book’s real success, therefore, is in its exploration of this rhetoric of recordkeeping, not in the misplaced effort to tie bookkeeping to confession.

This is a slender volume (less than one hundred pages of text), and it is dense enough to be a little slow going. For archivists, however, persevering is profitable—pun intended—despite the shortcomings. It is always useful for those who manage collections of records to know about the people and circumstances producing those records. For those of us who insist that context is essential in understanding records of all kinds—this is what provenance is all about, isn’t it?—this book offers an opportunity to come to a deeper appreciation of that context.

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**Collaborative Access to Virtual Museum Collection Information: Seeing through the Walls**

Edited by Bernadette G. Callery. Binghamton, N.Y.: The Haworth Information Press, 2004. xv, 123 pp. ISBN: 0-7890-2933-2. Copublished simultaneously as *Journal of Internet Cataloging* 7, no. 1, 2004. ISSN: 1091-1367. Cloth, \$34.95 Paper, \$17.95.

Libraries and archives have a long-established tradition of providing collection information—catalog records, finding aids, inventories—to the public and to encouraging direct public access to resources. Collaboration has also been a watchword for the two professions. Librarians developed and use a strong cataloging standard and detailed controlled vocabularies; they regularly employ copy cataloging, using or building on the work of other catalogers. Archivists, who are more likely to be dealing with unique materials, banded together to develop and use the MARC/AMC format and EAD and embraced the controlled vocabularies originally developed in the library field. With these widely accepted community standards and a vendor base that supports them, the move to on-line public access catalogs (OPACs) and the expansion to include digital library and imaging programs were natural developments.

In contrast, museums focus on exhibitions—presenting collections to the public in highly designed settings with a significant contextual and interpretative component. Museum catalogs are seen primarily as working tools for museum staff rather than as discovery tools for the public; the generic term “collections management system” (CMS) puts this purpose front and center. Responsibility for the content of the systems is often shared by curators and registrars, who come from subject and museum studies backgrounds, respectively, and would generally not consider themselves “information professionals.” While there are certainly discipline-based vocabularies, developing broad community agreement on object cataloging standards and terminology remains an elusive goal.

As a result, efforts to make museum collection information available to the public on the Web are several years behind those of the library and archives world. The suggestion to simply release a museum’s CMS on the Web (as libraries have done with OPACs) is likely to meet with strong resistance, largely because of the interpretative tradition but also because of concerns about data quality and privacy. While a link to the catalog is usually front and center on a library or archives Web site, museum sites are more likely to feature information on current special exhibitions or programs, with on-line exhibitions or collections highlights in second place, and detailed collection information even less prominently displayed, if even available. This is starting to change, but the tools—software and standards—to present museum collections data and images on the Web are still in their infancy (or, at best, adolescence).



The editor of this volume, Bernadette Callery, librarian, archivist, and information science educator (Carnegie Museum of Natural History and the School of Information Science of the University of Pittsburgh), notes that “museums are about interpretation—that interaction that takes place between people, objects, and information in the particular intellectual and social environment of the museum.” In so doing, she sets the stage for the accompanying essays about six collaborative projects to present or study “virtual museums”—efforts to translate the museum experience to an on-line environment.

The six case studies represent efforts at the Experience Music Project, Seattle; the University of Washington Libraries and the Museum of History and Industry, Seattle; the Ohio Memory Online Scrapbook, coordinated by the Ohio Historical Society; the National Museum of the American Indian; a survey of six museums holding Chinese collections; and a survey of on-line databases in natural history museums. It is interesting and perhaps instructive to note that nearly all of the twelve authors are librarians, archivists, or information science educators, not museum curators, registrars, or information managers.

Callery’s thought-provoking introduction is an excellent starting point for reading the six very different essays, placing them in context, providing links among them, and introducing some of the more general concepts. She also explains and interprets the various components of the volume’s long, complex, and somewhat obscure title.

“Searching for Nirvana: Cataloging and the Digital Collection at the Experience Music Project” walks the reader through the development of standards and a collection catalog at the Seattle rock ‘n’ roll and popular music museum. The process involved collaboration among a broad group of staff members within the museum: curators, catalogers, programmers, and consultants. The descriptive metadata drives interactive user tools, providing access to a wide variety of digital media—images, text, music, gallery views—and allowing both on-site and Web visitors to search, manipulate, and explore the collections. Or rather, it *did* allow Web visitors to do these things: the system is currently only available in-house due to financial constraints, costs of software migration, and the “migration” of project staff to other institutions. A classic example of the risks of on-line projects: long-term maintenance is as much an issue (and cost) as the initial outlay of effort and funds.

“Collaborative Cataloging: Using Dublin Core to Unite Local Heritage Organizations” and “Building a Common Catalog for Cultural Heritage Repositories: A Case Study of the Ohio Memory Online Scrapbook” chronicle a different kind of collaboration: highly professional institutions served as leaders, mentors, and service providers to small, local museums and historical societies to create a central resource for historical images. Adapting a service provider model made possible the consistency critical for effective access and removed the burden of this labor intensive and skilled work from the local

repositories. Centralized technical support and servers also removed another potentially crushing burden for small organizations, making it more likely that the projects will remain viable and accessible.

The interactions among museum collections, members (particularly children) of cultural groups, and museum visitors documented in “Stories Told: Tribal Communities and the Development of Virtual Museums” allowed the National Museum of the American Indian (NMAI) to step beyond collection information and interpretation to a fuller engagement with children, educators, and community groups and, as a result, to enhance both the collection information and interpretation itself. The results were clearly beneficial to both the museum and to the children who participated, though once again, the ephemeral quality of Web-based resources is revealed: the site created for the virtual museum project is no longer accessible at the URL included in the essay.

The final two essays, “Chinese Collections in Museums on the Web: Current Status, Problems and Future” and “Patterns of Identification of Potentially Sensitive Data in Natural History Museum Online Catalogs” report on surveys of two specialized museum communities, addressing the current state of affairs for on-line museum catalogs. This type of study will bear fruit as community standards for presenting museum object information on the Web slowly develop.

The title of this volume is complex and obscure. Do we truly “see through the walls” in this volume? Yes and no. Whose walls? Are we seeing into the museums or more into the workrooms of the staff members struggling to find effective ways to make collections available in the virtual environment? I would suggest the latter, but contend that it is a valid and useful way to seek out paths to the final goal of truly seeing through the walls. And is “collaborative access” really demonstrated? Again, yes and no. The collaborative aspects of these projects vary widely, from internal work, to cross-institutional efforts, to museum-to-community engagement. All could be characterized best as “collaborative approaches” rather than “collaborative access.”

What is a “virtual museum”? More than the “about the collection” or “collection catalog” section on a museum Web site, could this be the collaborative access that the volume points to? If, for example, all natural history museums agreed on standards for their collection information, could this come together into a true virtual museum, where we could truly see through the walls? The two Dublin Core projects—tellingly, more library/archives initiatives than traditional museum efforts—show that this could be possible. It is a worthy goal to aim for.

A final note or quibble: copublished as an electronic volume in the *Journal of Internet Cataloging*, this book suffers from being a bit of both. Each essay is prefaced by co-indexing entry notes, copyright statement, document delivery service information, and a list of keywords. There are two title pages. Between

the title page and the table of contents is a long list of indexing and abstracting services. While this most likely streamlines the process of getting a volume both to press and on-line, all of these unnecessary elements make for a less than appealing design.

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### **A Visual Artist's Guide to Estate Planning**

Based on a conference cosponsored by the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation and the Judith Rothschild Foundation. Colorado Springs, Colo.: The Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation, 1998. viii, 278 pp. Illustrations and forms. Appendix includes resources (publications and organizations). Out of print, but available on-line from the Marie Walsh Sharpe Art Foundation Web site at <http://www.sharpeartfdn.org/estateplnbook/estateplanning.htm>, accessed 16 October 2006. ISBN 0-9665188-0-2.

### **Artists' Estates: Reputations in Trust**

Edited by Magda Salvesen and Diane Cousineau. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2005. xiv, 381 pp. with 88 black and white illustrations, including many portraits. Index. \$34.95. ISBN 0-8135-3604-9.

Standard archival texts offer little advice specific to acquiring and caring for the archives of artists, and indeed, the indexes to these texts tend to skip from "artifact" to "authority file" without revealing anything relating to the artist's world beyond a nod to copyright. Of course, not everyone works at an institution such as the Archives of American Art or my own institution where artists' archives are emphasized, yet it is not that unusual for an archivist to acquire a collection containing artworks, to discover a backlogged legacy collection containing undocumented art issues, to be approached by an artist's estate eager to donate, or to have to sort out licensing agreements for the use of copyrighted materials of a literary or graphic nature. The demands of multi-media and commercial appropriation, and an institution's push to maximize intellectual property assets combine to throw us into a complex world extending outward from the archives into the musical, literary, and graphic arts arenas.

Therefore, it is a relief to discover two books related to artists' rights that hold insights and solid information presented in a form both useful and entertaining. The first book, *A Visual Artist's Guide to Estate Planning*, is packed with specific details, a glossary, and sample forms. The second, *Artists' Estates: Reputations in Trust*, offers anecdotal information collected as oral histories and

case studies that allow us to observe law and theory translated into real-life practice. Both are specific to the world of visual artists, but contain valuable perspectives relevant to authors and composers as well.

A *Visual Artist's Guide to Estate Planning* resulted from a meeting held at the artist Philip Pearlstein's New York loft in April 1997. Over thirty artists, lawyers, executors, family members, and financial advisors participated in creating a guide, the goal of which is to help artists ask the right questions and to find the appropriate advisors for estate planning. The need for such a book is summed up by Harriet Shorr, one of the artists, who says, "Dead artists leave two bodies, their own, and a body of work" (p. 1). We naturally have human insights into the motivation of an artist at the end of his or her life and career, and into the grief and passion a surviving spouse will bring to negotiations, and we may share a sense of the importance of the artist's body of work, but unless we also understand the implications of U.S. tax law since 1969, we won't know why the artist prefers to establish a charitable trust rather than simply donating materials so that we can get on with our business of arrangement and description. Archivists must work in tandem with and for the artist as well as for future researchers, so it is important to acknowledge that artists and their estates have unique concerns and to take any opportunity to learn about them. Knowing the perspective of a donor is essential to successful negotiations for a collection, and understanding at least the basics of art tax law will give an archivist an edge in anticipating the concerns of the donor.

This book discusses at length the choice of executor in estate planning. It is helpful from an institution's perspective to understand that the duty of that person is "loyalty to the beneficiaries" (not, as we might fantasize, pure dedication to scholarship) and that the costs of closing an estate can be considerable (p. 23). When an archivist attempts to convince an executor that a donation would be welcome to help with processing and preservation costs, the executor has to balance this request with the costs of storage, insurance, appraisal, and fees to attorneys and accountants.

While the text is completely focused on the needs of artists, it does not ignore standards for archival and historical documentation. For example, the book advises that "potentially embarrassing materials that hurt the living should not be destroyed; rather, they should be restricted for an appropriate number of years. . . . Do not try to over-control the future" (p. 41).

Current U.S. tax law is hard on artists. A living artist can only deduct the cost of materials, called the "cost basis," not the market value of works of art, manuscripts, or archives when donating them to a museum, library, or archives. For this reason, more and more artists in this country establish a trust or foundation through which to achieve the best results for income and preservation of their creative output. Magda Salvesen and Diane Cousineau have produced *Artists' Estates: Reputations in Trust* to explore this situation.

Salvesen writes, "I see each of us who looks after estates or foundations as the anchor—the one whose belief has to remain steady—and whose life, in the process, is enlarged and deepened through contact with the artist's work (p. xiv). She explains in the introduction how her own involvement with an artist, first as assistant, then as wife, and finally as widow, led her to begin collecting the experiences of other widows and companions. The bulk of her book consists of fascinating interviews in question-and-answer format with the people who manage the foundations of some rather high-profile artists. We have read about them in the newspapers, but here we get an explanation of more than just the sensational details surrounding the estates of Roy Lichtenstein, Jackson Pollock, Richard Diebenkorn, Romare Bearden, David Smith, and Mark Rothko, to name a few. The concerns for preserving the artworks, fully documenting the career of an artist, maintaining market value for the benefit of survivors, authenticating supposed artworks, and managing the use and display of artworks in accord with the artist's wishes are discussed along with the roles of galleries, collectors, and estate administrators.

Throughout the book, an awareness of the value of public archives is held in balance with arguments in favor of foundations (which the authors estimate number between forty and fifty in the United States today). An entire chapter is devoted to an interview with Stephen Policari, who, as director of the New York branch of the Archives of American Art (AAA), is well qualified to offer insights. He comments on the increasing complications of artist's estates through blended and multiple families and because of increased human lifespan. The AAA's goal is to get all its collections into the public domain, but with recent budget cutbacks, it cannot pursue new collections or continue its esteemed oral history program. He stresses the importance of collaborations with other institutions in preserving the record of the arts in the United States, but offers some harsh criticism of the J. Paul Getty Museum, which he sees behaving as if it were in competition with the AAA.

Another chapter is devoted to an interview with Ralph Lerner, author of the excellent reference book *Art Law: The Guide for Collectors, Investors, Dealers, and Artists* (New York: Practising Law Institute, 1989, 1997, 1998, 2005). He provides helpful information on the Visual Artists Rights Act of 1990 in protecting the moral rights of the artist. These rights, including the Right of Integrity and the Right of Authorship, are more aggressively protected in the Berne Convention and need to be on the radar of archivists dealing with artworks. Lerner also compares the U.S. system of tax and inheritance law with those of Britain, Germany, and France and surveys the Tax Reform Act of 1969, which has resulted in the proliferation of foundations in the arts.

High-profile acquisitions of artist's archives are sometimes spotlighted in the media, reminding us of our own limited budgets. It seems to always be a

“trove” acquired for an “undisclosed amount.”\* These big ticket items are the exception to the rule, but they serve the purpose of drawing our attention to the many issues surrounding artists’ archives. These two books do not supply all the answers we seek in becoming better custodians of artists’ archives, but they stimulate thought and remind us of the artist’s point of view in the constantly evolving legal and artistic realms.

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### **A Prisoner in the Garden: Opening Nelson Mandela’s Prison Archive**

Nelson Mandela Foundation. Johannesburg: Penguin (2005). 209 pp. \$29.00. ISBN 0-6700-3753-2.

There are so many angles I could take in reviewing *A Prisoner in the Garden* that it is difficult to know where to start. I could comment on the exquisite reproduction of letters, photographs, posters, newspaper clippings, official government forms, and other archival documents. I could praise the brilliant juxtaposition of historical documents from the period of Nelson Mandela’s imprisonment by the apartheid government in South Africa with the contemporary South African context, especially the ambiguous legacy of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, new freedom of information and archives legislation, and the struggle to come to terms with the past. I could remark on the impeccable archival research and detective work to discover and rediscover archival fragments hidden in the official record and dispersed among many private archives. Instead, I will focus on why I believe that every archivist should purchase, savor, and share this book.

This book is a product of the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Commemoration Project that was launched in 2004 with an exhibition titled: *466/44: A Prisoner Working in the Garden*. The exhibit, developed in conjunction with the National Archives, displayed portions of Mandela’s official prison file along with archival documents from private collections. The book is a collaboration of research by Anthea Josias, Lauren Segal, Mayra Roffe Gutman, and Carolyn Hamilton; of curation by Lauren Segal and Anthea Josias; of design by Clive van den Berg and Nabeel Essa; and of writing by Carolyn Hamilton, Verne Harris, Mac Maharaj, and Anthea Josias. It is part of a much larger endeavor that aims to open Mandela’s prison file, now housed largely at the National Archives, systematically through the Centre of Memory and Commemoration; to identify

\* Edward Wyatt, “Public Library Buys a Trove of Burroughs Papers,” *New York Times*, 1 March 2006, B1.

and locate sources held in many collections that document the liberation movements; and to promote an archive for social justice that documents stories and disseminates information in the continuing struggle for freedom and democracy. The book draws its title from a photograph of Mandela leaning on a spade in the “prison garden” taken in 1977 when the South African authorities allowed journalists to visit the Robben Island prison to prove that the prisoners were well treated.

*A Prisoner in the Garden* illustrates and tells a very complex story in which archives serve as the flashpoint. The first chapter sets the stage for understanding the fugitive, incomplete, and dispersed nature of archives that, at the same time, are priceless and powerful. Chapter 2 shows in explicit detail how people in positions of authority use the human need to communicate as a powerful tool to exert control. It demonstrates how revoking the freedom to create or use an archive becomes an important weapon in the arsenal of repressive regimes. Following on, chapter 3 focuses on the politics and the emotions evoked on 21 September 2004 when Donald Card, a former detective in the security police, personally returned two of Mandela’s prison notebooks to him. The final chapter, dedicated to “A Closer Reading” of the prison file, focuses on how the documents in the exhibit and reproduced in the book reflect Mandela and his captors, Mandela’s inner world, and Mandela and the outside world.

This book would appeal to anyone interested in Mandela’s life and the struggle to overthrow the apartheid state, but it holds special allure for archivists. It is narrated in such a way that the story of Mandela’s life and work, the stories of comrades, prison guards, family, friends, the security establishment, and the larger state apparatus are inseparable from the story of the prison archive itself. Facsimiles of official prison records, such as a record of family visits, an inventory of letters written and received, and official correspondence explaining that certain letters were not released, illustrate how prison officials made and kept records obsessively to monitor and control the prisoners and to distort their perception of the world outside the prison and the outside world’s perception of them. Copies of censored letters and pleas for the release of outgoing correspondence show how meticulously the prison guards combed through all communications. The carefully selected examples also show graphically how the prisoners maneuvered within the system to improve their conditions gradually and to send coded messages to family, friends, and supporters.

Fundamentally, *A Prisoner in the Garden* is a book about the power, beauty, frailty, joy, and sorrow in archives and in the stories that they hold. It shows so plainly how the prison archive (and all archives) are replete with tensions and contradictions between remembering and forgetting, opening and hiding, official and personal, disgrace and redemption, destruction and preservation, fact and fiction. Chapter 3 on the return of two of Mandela’s prison notebooks is a poignant example of the emotive power of possessing, concealing, and handing

back archival documents. The contents of the notebooks (original drafts of seventy-nine letters written by Mandela between April 1969 and April 1971) are compelling in and of themselves, if the examples reproduced are indicative of the notebooks as a whole. Archivists will be fascinated by the story of how the notebooks came into the possession of a former detective in the security police, why he decided to preserve them and not return them to the authorities, and how he and Mandela interacted during the public ceremony marking their return. Mandela had forgotten about the notebooks, but once in his hands, like so many other examples in the book, they began to stir memories. Photographs and commentary from Mandela about his reactions to the revealing and rediscovery of letters, statements, and photographs are scattered throughout the book.

In light of the richness of the documentation reproduced in this book and the interweaving of content and context, standard archival definitions seem flat, dull, and simplistic. Are archives only “materials created or received by a person, family, or organization, public or private, in the conduct of their affairs and preserved because of the enduring value contained in the information they contain or as evidence of the functions and responsibilities of their creator”?\* Can archives really be neatly bounded in a “record group” or “fonds”? Should archivists reject records of questionable provenance or lack of “completeness”? *A Prisoner in the Garden* illustrates how such narrow perceptions of the archive run counter to the potential of archives to serve as sources of memory, of stories, of learning, and of healing.

The reason that I recommend this book to all archivists is that it stimulates the imagination for what archives are and can be: an infinite record, an oppressive tool, a tapestry of memories lost and found, personal and official. It will help archivists answer the perennial questions: what are archives and what are they good for? This is a book that you can show your colleagues, friends, and family who find archives and archivists mysterious. It touches emotional cords, not only because it amplifies the story of one of the world’s longest-held political prisoners, but also because it shows how archival documents, from the most mundane bureaucratic form to the deeply personal diary, encapsulate traces of people’s lives and of society that can be activated to understand and deal with the past and the present. If you ever wanted a coffee table book about archives, this is it. But don’t treat it only as a coffee table book. Read it, engage with it, and challenge it. *A Prisoner in the Garden* is the first in a series of endeavors to make sure that “the archive does not remain within the walls of repositories.” Which archive is unspecified, but the book should inspire all archivists to make sure that their archive is likewise liberated.

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\* Richard Pierce-Moses, *A Glossary of Archival Terminology*. On-line version available at [www.archivists.org](http://www.archivists.org), accessed 5 July 2006.



**An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures**

By Ann Cvetkovich. Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2003. xi, 355 pp. Index. Cloth, \$84.95. Paper, \$23.95. ISBN 0-8223-3088-1.

In recent years, the archival profession has become increasingly interested in the role of archives in mediating, and thus shaping, the documentary record and knowledge derived from it. Known as the “postmodern perspective,” this view rejects the belief that archivists are the impartial guardians of an objective historical record, and argues instead that they play a critical role in the creation of society’s memory and its memory losses. Postmodernism encourages the profession to revisit some very basic questions: what archives are, what archivists do, and why they do it.

Ann Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings: Trauma, Sexuality, and Lesbian Public Cultures* makes an important contribution to the growing literature on this topic. Cvetkovich is not an archivist but a professor of English at Duke University specializing in feminist theory, queer theory, and nineteenth-century studies. Her book argues for the importance of recognizing forms of trauma that belong to the realm of the normal and everyday in addition to the catastrophic (e.g., slavery, war, genocide). By rejecting rigid distinctions between private and public trauma, Cvetkovich is able to identify a category of “insidious trauma” that, while overlooked in psychiatric and psychoanalytic studies, operates nevertheless and especially on oppressed populations. Cvetkovich focuses on the effects of insidious trauma on lesbians. She studies a range of cultural texts authored by lesbians as both providing evidence of trauma, and working through it to create new possibilities of community.

The “archive of feelings” of which Cvetkovich writes may not be immediately recognizable to archivists. For Cvetkovich, the phrase refers to a range of cultural texts that may be considered collectively by virtue of a shared authorship by twentieth-century artists, activists, and everyday women who are also lesbians. Such texts include not only traditional archival sources such as diaries and photographs, but published novels, poems, essays, video and film productions, and performance art as well. Cvetkovich’s expansive understanding of “archive” derives from a community-based sense of provenance rather than one based on the authority of a specific individual or organization. According to Cvetkovich, the writings of Dorothy Allison, the videos of Pratibha Parmar, the performances of bands such as Tribe 8, and the manuscripts held by the Lesbian Herstory Archives constitute a singular archive because they derive from the shared experience of lesbian individuals.

Although Cvetkovich’s use of the term “archives” will find little support in professional glossaries or textbooks, it finds some explanation in the recent professional literature. Writers such as Frank Boles, Mark Greene, and others

argue that there is no universally true or objective meaning of “archives,” only a working consensus within specific cultural and historical settings. Cvetkovich’s book implies that lesbian communities (and other minority populations) have developed understandings of archives different from those of professional archivists. This minority understanding isn’t “wrong,” only different in its emphasis on the value of documentation as a source of memory rather than transactional evidence.

For many archivists, the book’s final chapter will likely prove the most accessible. “In the Archive of Lesbian Feelings” examines the vital role of archives (in the traditional sense) as both repositories of historical sources and creators of meaning. Cvetkovich argues that lesbian archives provide evidence of trauma in the diaries, photographs, and other materials they include, and embody a creative response to such trauma through the activities of acquiring, preserving, and providing access to source materials. Lesbian archives are thus not only a support for studying the traumatic history of an oppressed group; they are also the collective evidence of a proactive response to that history.

The remainder of this chapter studies two different sorts of archives that have developed in order to provide “safe havens for lesbian history”: community-based, grassroots archives such as the Lesbian Herstory Archives and institutional archives that acquire lesbian collections, such as the New York Public Library. Cvetkovich’s comparison of these archives settings is fascinating. Writing with great respect and affection for both sorts of archives, she shows how the activities of each are grounded in very different understandings of the purpose of archives, the populations they serve, and the historical record to which they provide access. Cvetkovich’s argument assumes that there is no universal, transhistorical definition of archives, and implies that the role of archivists is therefore always situational and context-specific.

Cvetkovich’s *An Archive of Feelings* is a valuable addition to the literature on archives and postmodern thought. In addition to foregrounding the power of archives in community formation, it contributes to a growing appreciation of the contingent and contextual basis of archival activity.

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