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# AMERICAN ARCHIVIST



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#### About the Cover

Louis Armstrong was captivated by audio recording technologies introduced in the 1940s. He recorded thousands of hours of his private life: autobiographical fragments, interviews, musical recordings, and informal (often candid) conversation. Armstrong was emotionally invested in his recordings; he numbered and indexed them and decorated many of the boxes with collage. The images on the cover (from “Reel 67”) illustrate how archival holdings reveal intimate, honest insights into the lives of their creators, undisguised and unmediated, as though we peep through a keyhole into intensely private moments. In the article, “‘For Posterity’: The Personal Audio Recordings of Louis Armstrong,” author Ben Alexander notes that the “tapes document an amazingly candid and frank relationship with, to use Armstrong’s word, posterity.” The audiotapes are part of the Louis Armstrong Archives at the Louis Armstrong House and Archives at Queens College, the City University of New York. Michael Cogswell, Baltsar Beckeld, and Lesley Zlabinger were generous and helpful in sharing the remarkable images in this issue.

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FROM THE EDITOR

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## Diversity and the *American Archivist*: A Call For Papers

Leading this issue is Elizabeth W. Adkins's presidential address, "Our Journey Toward Diversity—And a Call to (More) Action." Adkins organizes the first part of her address by identifying meanings of the word *diversity* in two contexts: demographic diversity within the profession and within the Society of American Archivists (SAA), and diversity in the historical record.

Adkins notes that SAA has been working to address demographic diversity for more than thirty-five years but that much remains to be done. Demographic diversity of the authors published in *American Archivist* is, I suspect, even less than the small, albeit growing, demographic diversity within the profession. I have not done a study, but a casual glance at the gallery of contributors suggests the answer. Although the gallery for this issue is perhaps more diverse than usual, it is clear that we need to hear from many other voices. We are always mindful of the need for diversity on the editorial board and among peer reviewers too.

Diversity in entry-level professional education is an important way to bring diversity to the profession. Adkins notes the collaborative effort of UCLA; Monash University in Melbourne, Australia; and Renmin University in Beijing, China, to explore recordkeeping and archival education needs of Indigenous, ethnic, and other marginalized communities in Pacific Rim nations and to assess how well existing programs meet their needs. Anne Gilliland, Sue McKemmish, Kelvin White, Yang Lu, and Andrew Lau report on the first stages of this initiative in "Pluralizing the Archival Paradigm: Can Archival Education in Pacific Rim Communities Address the Challenge?" Their findings suggest the need for much work.

Archivists have done somewhat better at documenting a fuller diversity of human experiences in the historical record. For a generation and more, archivists and curators have sought and built collections relating to many peoples and many groups. Louis Armstrong was one of the first African Americans

to be seen in popular culture both in the United States and in the world. In his paper, “‘For Posterity’: The Personal Audio Recordings of Louis Armstrong,” Ben Alexander explores how Armstrong used a variety of recording media to negotiate between his public persona and his private reality.

This issue presents three articles relating to archival theory and practice. Geoffrey Yeo continues his thoughtful analysis of the *record* in “Concepts of Record (2): Prototypes and Boundary Objects.” He introduces concepts from psychology and sociology and provides citations to new bodies of literature of potential interest. The concepts of *prototypical objects* and *boundary objects* clarify the discussions regarding the proper management of objects in acquisitions committee meetings of a National Park Service unit with library, archival, and museum collections. His paper is closely argued but rewards a focused reading.

Archivists have called for user studies for a generation, but Wendy M. Duff, Jean Dryden, Carrie Limkilde, Joan Cherry, and Ellie Bogomazova are the first to explore how practicing archivists regard user studies in “Archivists’ Views of User-based Evaluation: Benefits, Barriers, and Requirements.” Susan E. Davis offers a sobering assessment of institutional readiness for electronic records in “Electronic Records Planning in ‘Collecting’ Repositories.”

This issue also contains other notable contributions: a prize-winning student paper, a perspective, and a case study. At the 2007 SAA Annual Meeting in Chicago, “Our Archives, Our Selves: Documentation Strategy and the Re-Appraisal of Professional Identity” by Elizabeth Snowden Johnson received the Theodore Calvin Pease Award for the best student paper. Although it is somewhat disconcerting to find young people writing about my younger days as if they were history, her paper is a thoughtful analysis of the documentation strategy in the context of its time.

In “Applying DACS to Finding Aids: Case Studies from Three Diverse Repositories,” Michael Rush, Lynn Holdzkorn, Prudence Backman, Dan Santamaria, and Andrea Leigh demonstrate how *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (DACS) was applied in three very different repositories: a manuscript repository, a state archives, and a film archives. They also demonstrate how papers from one SAA program session can be combined to produce a paper for *American Archivist* offering a variety of perspectives about a topic of interest. I attended this session in a packed ballroom. I have urged other program presenters to consider this model as one way to transform the shorter oral presentations typical of an SAA program session into a longer, more substantive written presentation for publication. I hope others follow their example.

In his introduction to Elizabeth Adkins, Bruce Bruemmer notes that he learned not to make fun of brands in front of a corporate archivist. This lesson was reinforced for the *American Archivist* when it published the political poster *Sun Mad* on the contested cover of the Fall/Winter 2003 issue. In his perspective, “Digesting the Raisins of Wrath: Business, Ethics, and the Archival

Profession,” business ethicist Andrew Abela sorts through some of the resulting furor. He does not provide an answer to Richard Cox’s contention that one cannot be an ethical archivist and a corporate archivist, but he does provide both a framework for thinking about ethics and for developing a support structure to enable ethical action by archivists.

Terry Eastwood, a distinguished archival educator from Canada, leads our reviews section, compiled by Reviews Editor Jeannette Bastian. In 1995, he reviewed the seven volumes in the first Archival Fundamentals Series. In his review essay here, “Fundamentally Speaking: The Third Version,” he reviews the volumes in the Archival Fundamentals II series, both from an international perspective and across a generation. The review section concludes the issue with reviews of ten books and two websites.

President Adkins also notes that the *American Archivist* Editorial Board is actively soliciting articles on diversity. We talked first about having a special focus in this issue to accompany the published version of her address and to appear in future issues of the journal. Soon, however, we realized that we need to address diversity in every issue. In his introduction of President Adkins, Bruce Bruemmer quoted scholar A. Bartlett Giamatti:

Leadership is an essentially moral act, not, as in most management, a protective act. Leadership is an assertion of vision, not simply an exercise of style. It is the moral courage to assert a vision of the institution in[to] the future, and *the intellectual energy to persuade the culture of the wisdom and validity of that vision.*

The *American Archivist* seeks that moral courage and intellectual energy in its pages. It cannot do so unless the profession embraces diversity in all its meanings, writes about it in all its variety, and submits papers to the *American Archivist*.



AmericanArchivist@archivists.org