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# AMERICAN ARCHIVIST



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#### About the Cover

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These frames are from the *Hearst Metrotone News* newsreel about Marian Anderson's concert on 9 April 1939 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial. The Daughters of the American Revolution denied her the use of Constitution Hall. The Marian Anderson Citizens Committee, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, first lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes made possible the concert at the Lincoln Memorial before an audience of some 75,000 people. This segment of the newsreel, fourth of nine stories, is titled "Lesson in Tolerance at the Nation's Capitol!" and features Anderson singing "America." Steven Ricci uses film of this event as a case study to examines the contemporary restoration of legacy moving images in his article, "Saving, Rebuilding, or Making: Archival (Re)Constructions in Moving Image Archives." For the preservation of this newsreel, Blaine Bartell and Jeff Bickel of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) produced a 35 mm composite fine grain master positive and a 35 mm re-recorded sound track negative. The restoration work included repairing individual frames and splices and inserting occasional frames to keep the image and sound track in sync. The Anderson footage runs approximately one-and-a-half minutes from the total of nine minutes, thirteen seconds of the released newsreel. *Courtesy UCLA Film and Television Archive.*

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FROM THE EDITOR

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# Perceptions and Perspectives: From the Basement to the Boardroom

This issue provides timely and informed perspectives on the archival enterprise in the twenty-first century. Two articles explore the archival role in the digital universe where technology makes all documents look like buckets of bits. In “Digital Curation/Digital Archiving: A View from the National Archives of Australia,” Adrian Cunningham decries the blurring of important professional distinctions among digital curators, digital librarians, and digital archivists. He asserts that the archival role is fundamentally different from digital curation and that archivists must intervene actively across the entire records continuum. He urges archivists to move from the “basement to the board room” to ensure the permanence, authenticity, and context of archival documents.<sup>1</sup> He delineates the distinctly Australian strategy of beginning digital preservation with the records creators to ensure that good records are created and kept, rather than waiting at the door of the archives to see what comes in. The National Archives of Australia leverages the role of archivists and records managers in setting standards for digital recordkeeping within the parent organization.

In “Institutional Repositories and the Institutional Repository: College and University Archives and Special Collections in an Era of Change,” Elizabeth Yakel, Soo Young Rieh, Karen Markey, and Jihyun Kim explore the blurring of professional roles of librarians and archivists in universities. University librarians are developing digital repositories for university publications as they once collected analog publications of university departments and faculty. As they do so, collections-development librarians take on a new role “harvesting” faculty publications and related materials at the item level, without considering existing responsibilities of university archives or special collections departments to

<sup>1</sup> Sarah Tyacke quotes Terry Cook who noted in 1996 that archives are moving from “basement to board room,” in “Archives in a Wider World: The Culture and Politics of Archives,” *Archivaria* 52 (2001): 2.

identify and preserve departmental and faculty records that document university functions of research, teaching, and service. Archivists in universities must also move from the “basement to the board room,” or at least to the universities’ advisory committees for these digital institutional repositories in the university library.

By examining “The Creation and Destruction of the 1890 Federal Census,” Robert Dorman reflects on an earlier recordmaking and recordkeeping revolution and its consequences for the preservation of important government records. Dorman underscores the need for records management when new technologies change workflow. The 1890 census was the first to use punched cards to speed the compilation of statistics from the mass of raw data captured in the census. But the use of the new technology contributed to the failure to preserve the original census schedules, as had been done for all previous censuses. He explores how “economy and efficiency” in government operations worked against good stewardship of records in the nineteenth century and suggests the ominous parallels for digital recordkeeping today. One of the reviewers noted that this article contributes to our understanding of American archival history and our current concerns for archival preservation, administrative support, and public recognition of the role of archives in society, noting that administrative indifference has often been the greatest threat to archival records.

Two retrospective articles look back to look forward. In “Documentation Strategy: Mastodon or Retro-Success?” Doris J. Malkmus analyzes five implementations of documentation strategy and compares them to the framework of the original model. She finds that documentation strategy works when topics are clearly defined, implemented as ongoing efforts, and have influential leaders and a host institution committed to sustaining it.

In “*Vatican Archives: An Inventory and Guide to Historical Documents of the Holy See—A Ten-Year Retrospective*,” Francis X. Blouin, Jr., Elizabeth Yakel, and Leonard A. Coombs review the twenty-year history of their pioneering description of the Vatican archives, the migration of description in digital form, and the institutional requirements for maintaining and refreshing it. They explore ways of leveraging their work to enhance the use of this complex, rich, critically important body of records.

Generations of reference archivists bemoaned the education of historians. Two papers explore how reference archivists can participate in educating undergraduate students who would benefit from learning more about archives and how to use them. Xiaomu Zhou explores student archival research activity by applying ethnographic methods to observe one class of undergraduate students in American history for one term. Wendy Duff and Joan Cherry focus on one aspect of archival research, the orientation for undergraduate students. They survey students and faculty in four classes to probe how students and faculty

experience the orientation. They also introduce the necessity and difficulty of measuring “impact,” that is, the difference archives make in people’s lives as they explore the question that Bruce Dearstyne asked, “What Is the Use of Archives?”<sup>2</sup> Both of these exploratory studies propose models for understanding the roles of archivists and the impact of archives.

Although both are exploratory studies, they demonstrate the kind of empirical research necessary to understand how we interact with our users and how we can improve our services. As the author of *Providing Reference Services for Archives and Manuscripts*, I am naturally interested in studies of reference services and am excited by the implications of these papers for teaching students. Both offer models for evaluating archival orientation sessions and help reference archivists envision how their work affects students. Both papers urge reference archivists to test these models with further research.

Steven Ricci introduces the discipline of film studies and its influence on moving image archives. He explores the archival implications of motion picture restoration. He argues that new technologies for restoration require the archival profession to reassess traditional methodologies and to articulate new theoretical frameworks. He juxtaposes theory with a provocative case study of a contemporary restoration of legacy moving image collections in “Saving, Rebuilding, or Making: Archival (Re)Constructions in Moving Image Archives.”

In “It’s Complicated: Barriers to EAD Implementation,” Sonja Yaco reports findings from an exploratory survey of 16 archives that decided to implement Encoded Archival Description (EAD), but encountered obstacles in doing so. In addition to identifying barriers to implementation, such as lack of staff and a gap between the technology needed to publish EAD and the skills of many archivists, the paper discusses solutions and recommends means to assist archivists in navigating these obstacles.

Robert Spoo discusses the details of legal proceedings in which a copyright holder attempted to limit scholarly use of archival materials in “Archival Foreclosure: A Scholar’s Lawsuit Against the Estate of James Joyce.” Although archivists were not directly involved in this case, they made the records available to the scholar. The case illustrates the complexity of ensuring that copyright does not become a means of protecting privacy beyond intellectual property.

Jeannette Bastian, our Reviews Editor, assembles eight book reviews for this issue. These reviews help us understand the work done in our field and related disciplines.

This issue of *American Archivist* once again demonstrates the range and diversity of discourse in archival theory and in practice. It does not, however,

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Dearstyne, “What Is the Use of Archives? A Challenge for the Profession,” *American Archivist* 50 (Winter 1987): 76–87.

contribute to our discourse about the diversity of our workforce or of our documentation of diverse peoples in the full range of our society. To that end, I renew my plea from the last issue, "Diversity and the *American Archivist*: A Call for Papers." I eagerly await your replies.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Jo Pugh". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first and last names being more prominent than the middle name.

AmericanArchivist@archivists.org