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AMERICAN ARCHIVIST



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About the Cover

The Indian Primer, a pocket-sized manual published in 1669 and reprinted in 1684, was an aid for Native Americans learning to read in their own language. The Massachusetts word printed above the vowels translates loosely as “Things that speak,” and the word over the diphthongs as “Things that speak twice.” John Eliot, a seventeenth-century Puritan minister in New England, translated the King James Bible and other religious texts into Massachusetts (nearly identical to Wôpanâak, the traditional language of the Wampanoag Nation) and taught Native American converts to read in their own language. The Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project studies seventeenth- and eighteenth-century documents in the indigenous language in an ongoing effort to “reclaim” the “dormant” ancestral tongue. In “‘Closing the Circle’: Native American Writings in Colonial New England, a Documentary Nexus between Acculturation and Cultural Preservation,” Jeffrey Mifflin discusses Native literacy in the colonial era, points to the role of archival repositories in the reclamation of endangered languages, explores the significance of language reclamation and cultural diversity for indigenous peoples, and reflects on possible implications for archival practice. *Courtesy of the Massachusetts Historical Society.*

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FROM THE EDITOR

Writers: Conversation and Collaboration

Mary Jo Pugh

My comments for this issue are in two parts. Here I consider the diverse range of articles, covering theory and practice and beyond in this issue. Papers address the documentation of Native Americans and lesbians, the preservation of electronic records, documentation strategy, and advocacy. Three case studies ground theory in professional practice.

In “Closing the Circle’: Native American Writings in Colonial New England, a Documentary Nexus between Acculturation and Cultural Preservation,” Jeffrey Mifflin studies advances in language revitalization, particularly the Wôpanâak Language Reclamation Project in Massachusetts, and their relationship to archival documentation. First, he situates documents in the creation of the written language to capture the Wôpanâak language more than three centuries ago. Second, he examines the linguistic techniques used to analyze archival documents to reclaim the language for contemporary Native Americans. He expands our understanding of uses of archival holdings for many disciplines, including Native American studies; early American literature, literacy, linguistics, and anthropology; and how such diverse academic work extends meaning for larger groups, in this case, Native Americans of the Northeast. He reports on collaboration among Native Americans, linguists, and archivists. This deep analysis provides insight for contemporary discussion of the Protocols for Native American Archival Materials.

In their “Envisioning the Archival Commons,” Scott R. Anderson and Robert B. Allen offer a more theoretical and detailed vision for the archival commons suggested by Max. J. Evans in “Archives of the People, by the People, for the People” and by Magia G. Krause and Elizabeth Yakel in “Interaction in Virtual Archives: The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collections Next Generation Finding Aid,” both in *American Archivist* 70 (Fall/Winter 2007). Anderson and Allen imagine a postmodern archival approach that exploits the available highly networked interactive environment to expand the discovery and uses of the cultural heritage communities of which archives are a part.

Henry Gladney, an experienced engineer, presents the “Trustworthy Digital Object” for archival preservation of electronic records in “Long-Term Preservation of Digital Records: Trustworthy Digital Objects.” He reaches across one version of the digital divide—between engineers and archivists—and makes a genuine effort to understand archival requirements for long-term preservation and to explain his technical solution to archival readers. He notes that the cost of preserving analog records does not include the enormous upfront costs of producing them. In contrast, the cost of preserving digital records can be built into the much lower cost of producing them.

Elizabeth Snowden Johnson and Doris J. Malkmus discussed documentation strategy in recent issues of *American Archivist*.¹ Larry Hackman looks backward to look forward in his perspective, “The Origins of Documentation Strategies in Context: Recollections and Reflections.” In the late 1970s and early 1980s, he was among a group of archivists who developed documentation strategy as one part of a larger strategy for assessment, planning, and advocacy for the profession. Advocacy is now one of the three strategic goals for the profession; re-examining the context of the early 1980s may help the profession clarify its goals today. He also helps archivists understand the development of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC). This paper is an example of collaboration among archivists extending across generations through published literature.

The authors of three case studies provide exemplary models of practice set in the larger context to help other archivists learn from their experience. In 2008, Susan E. Davis reported on her survey of archivists in collecting repositories.² These archivists recognized the critical importance of managing electronic records, but did not have resources available to do so. In this issue, Michael Forstrom offers concrete advice for “Managing Electronic Records in Manuscript Collections: A Case Study from the Beinecke Rare Book & Manuscript Library.” He also provides a thorough guide to reading and resources for archivists needing to educate themselves for this task. His footnotes identify available resources and direct archivists to the support they need.

In “Lifetimes and Legacies: Mortality, Immortality, and the Needs of Aging and Dying Donors,” Linda Long reflects on her experience working with a dying donor, lesbian author and artist Tee Corinne, and moves us while offering lessons learned. For example, she joins Forstrom in the practicalities of retrieving personal papers in electronic form. Geoff Wexler’s introduction extends her

¹ Elizabeth Snowden Johnson, in “Our Archives, Our Selves: Documentation Strategy and the Re-Appraisal of Professional Identity,” *American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 190–202, and Doris J. Malkmus, “Documentation Strategy: Mastodon or Retro-Success?,” *American Archivist* 71 (Fall/Winter 2008): 384–409.

² “Electronic Records Planning in ‘Collecting’ Repositories,” *American Archivist* 71 (Spring/Summer 2008): 167–89.

experience by engaging the extensive literature about aging, dying, and death. Most archivists at one point or another deal with aging and dying donors and with their survivors. All of us must face our own mortality and deal with that of others. This paper, which grew out of a session at the 2007 SAA Annual Meeting, provides resources for doing so. This article evolved from a session with a number of short papers, but another example of collaboration among writers reminds us of collaboration among archivists, records creators, and heirs to identify and preserve legacies for future generations.

John R. Lawton and Heather Block Lawton discuss “Public-Academic Library Collaboration: A Case Study of an Instructional House and Property History Research Program for the Public.” The case study serves two useful purposes for *American Archivist*. It discusses the opportunities for collaboration and partnerships between librarians and archivists. Like Mifflin, the Lawtons, too, study documents and their use, study central to archival knowledge.

Finally, in “To the Limit of Our Integrity: Reflections on Archival Being,” Scott Cline rises beyond both theory and practice to explore the very essence of archivists as human beings engaged in the archival enterprise. In his poetic and moving essay, he suggests four core values forming what he calls *archival being*, the manner in which we, as archivists, engage with the world, both individually and collectively. Last year, SAA president Mark A. Greene spoke of “The Power of Archives: Archivists’ Values and Values in the Postmodern Age” and asked Council to approve the creation of a task force to consider whether it makes sense for SAA to adopt a values statement.³ This essay challenges us to examine our core beliefs and how they influence our actions as archivists.

SAA Council requests that the *American Archivist* publish a special edition or section to celebrate the seventy-fifth anniversary of SAA in 2011. We will issue a call for papers, relying on your research and writing to engage and explore the topic: extend the conversation and collaborate with writers across generations, look back to look forward, find the good and the bad, as we ponder the meaning of seventy-five years of professional development.



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³ *American Archivist* 72 (Spring/Summer 2009): 13–41.