

# THE AMERICAN ARCHIVIST

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## ABOUT THE COVER

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Documenting the American military experience in Iraq and Afghanistan presents new challenges for archivists. In this issue, Heather Soyka and Eliot Wilczek discuss the nature of counterinsurgency warfare and its implications for recordkeeping and documentation. One aspect they explore is the role of oral history in the twenty-first-century warfare environment. This photograph shows an oral history interview taking place on January 14, 2007, in Iraq. On the left being interviewed is L. Cpl. Travis J. Eno, United States Marine Corps (later promoted to corporal), then serving with Marine Wing Service Support Squadron 374 as a heavy equipment operator working the flight line at Camp Korean Village, Anbar Province, Iraq. He is being interviewed by Lt. Col. Kurtis P. Wheeler (since promoted to colonel), a Marine Corps reservist whom the Marine Corps History Division activated as a field historian to collect historical materials and oral history interviews related to Marine Corps operations in Iraq. In an interesting twist, when not serving with the Marine Corps Reserve, Lieutenant Colonel Wheeler is a high school history teacher, and Lance Corporal Eno had been one of his students before Eno enlisted in the Marine Corps. *Photo courtesy of the Library of the Marine Corps, Archives and Special Collections Branch, Quantico, Virginia.*

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# Nurturing Our Profession

Gregory S. Hunter

**T**he *American Archivist* begins its seventy-seventh year of publication with Jackie Dooley's Presidential Address entitled "Feeding Our Young." She asks if we are doing everything possible to welcome and nurture new archivists. This is a question all SAA members must answer, including the editor of the Society's journal. However, the question I must answer as editor is even broader: is *The American Archivist* not only feeding our young, but also nurturing the entire profession?

Of course, mine is not the only perspective on this question. As members of the Society and readers of this journal, it is important to hear your voice on this and other questions facing the profession. I hope you will feel comfortable communicating with me as well as any member of the Editorial Board or SAA Council. We look forward to hearing from you.

In the meantime, I owe you an answer to the question I posed. First, I have tried to encourage a diverse range of submissions so that every reader of the journal will find one or more nourishing articles in each issue. This is why I have avoided "theme" issues of the journal. In such issues, if the theme is of interest, you will find that issue of the journal quite engaging. However, if you are not interested in the theme, you may find little reason even to open the cover.

Second, I have tried to increase the opportunities for all archivists—new and not so new—to be involved with the journal. I have increased the number of peer reviewers of each article from two to three. As part of this change, I am committed to mentoring new peer reviewers as we work through the process

together. There also are opportunities to assist with the Reviews Portal, which expands the universe of professional resources receiving reviews.<sup>1</sup>

Third, all articles submitted to the journal go through a double-blind peer review process. The peer reviewers do not know if the author is a “new” archivist or not. Each article is judged on its merits, not the reputation of its author. Even today’s most prolific scholars had to begin somewhere—everyone was a “new author” at one time who needed nurturing as a scholar. I would be happy to talk with anyone who has an idea for a journal article. Helping develop the next generation of archival scholars is one of the pleasures of being a journal editor.

SAA’s Theodore Calvin Pease Award annually recognizes just such a new archival scholar. Created in 1987, the Pease Award recognizes superior writing achievement by an archival studies student. The essay by this year’s winner, Alex H. Poole of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, appears second in this issue of the journal. In “The Strange Career of Jim Crow Archives,” Poole traces the experience of African American scholars at the middle of the twentieth century. He shows how archivists at the time struggled to balance the professional responsibility of providing “full and equal access” with personal and community mores concerning race.

This issue also includes eight other articles from archivists at all stages of their careers. Their topics illustrate the range of concerns and issues facing the profession.

- Jean Dryden studies the impact copyright has on what U.S. archival repositories select for digitization and the extent to which they seek authorization from rights holders. She identifies a wide range of practices, including a shift toward a bolder risk-assessment approach.
- Karen F. Gracy and Frank Lambert explore the degree to which archivists are prepared to cope with an upcoming evolution in descriptive practices, asking: are we ready to surf the next wave of changes to descriptive standards? Their data suggest that archivists remain uncertain about their readiness to implement new or revised standards.
- Gregor Trinkaus-Randall, James Reilly, and Patricia Ford study the role of environment in the preservation of collections. They analyze a unique set of environmental data from storage and display areas in hundreds of Massachusetts cultural institutions. The environmental management guidelines developed during this project provide valuable information for a wide range of archival repositories.
- Stepping back in time, Jennifer Douglas and Heather MacNeil examine calendars and inventories at the Public Archives of Canada from the nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. They explore ways in which these finding aids incorporated and expressed, both explicitly and implicitly, institutional, professional, and social values.

- Heather Soyka and Eliot Wilczek focus on a contemporary issue, documenting the American military experience in Afghanistan and Iraq. These were different kinds of wars; it should be no surprise that their archival legacy will be different. The appraisal challenges presented by counterinsurgency warfare apply to other complex recordkeeping environments as well.
- Daniel Noonan and Tamar Chute explore the involvement of archives and archivists in data curation. They conclude that archivists should determine the role they wish to play—active participant, consultant, both, or neither—and highlight the expertise that the profession can provide for data curation.
- Krystyna K. Matusiak and Tamara K. Johnston present a case study of the digitization of nitrate negatives at the American Geographical Society Library. The goal of the project was to preserve and provide access to over 69,000 nitrate negatives. They support the view that preservation not only protects deteriorating archival materials, but also restores their usefulness as information resources.
- Finally, Kristen Hughes offers a cultural studies model of appraisal and asks us to re-imagine the documentary record for institutional archives. The metaphor of mapmaking may enable appraisal archivists to locate gaps and undefined terrain in the documentary universe, incorporate multiple viewpoints through collective documentation, and account for the nonrational, idiosyncratic, and personal aspects of recordkeeping.

The issue concludes with six book reviews about genealogy, managing cultural collections, implementing the incident command system, emergency planning and response, Waldo Gifford Leland, and organizing archival records. These reviews illustrate the current breadth of our professional literature.

My hope is that you will find much in this issue of *The American Archivist* to nourish you both professionally and personally. On behalf of everyone associated with the journal, I bring you best wishes for the spring and summer.



Editor

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