

The New Culture of Learning is a call to a new way of thinking about education. At its root, however, it is still looking at the fundamental question of how we help improve the learning of our students. At first glance, it seems to provide a model that could be difficult to embrace, but when looking more deeply at what is proposed, and looking at it through both a networked and a traditional lens, we can see areas where teaching archivists are already making strides to spur new teaching innovation.

The four books profiled here were brought together as a way to look at the literature outside the archives profession to explore ideas that teaching archivists can learn and integrate into their practices. This essay is also based on the premise that those of us who teach are always searching for ways to improve, to increase engagement with our collections, and to integrate new ideas into our teaching. Also, as faculty and others on campus discover the role our collections can play in their goals for increasing and enhancing the research opportunities of all students across the curriculum, we have more opportunities to teach and communicate the value of our collections.

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Archives and Archivists 2: Current Trends, New Voices

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The Irish poet William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) allegedly stated: “Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.” In *Archives and Archivists 2: Current Trends, New Voices*, editors Ailsa C. Holland and Elizabeth Mullins capture the enthusiasm of University College Dublin (UCD) School of History and Archives postgraduate students engaged in research since the publication of the first volume *Archives and Archivists* (2006). The first book, published as a celebration of the pioneering role of UCD’s thirty-five-year postgraduate diploma in archival studies, contains the works of recent archives school graduates and seasoned professionals. It does not attempt to arrange the essays within a thematic framework and is designed primarily to stimulate debate and foster discussion among archivists in Ireland. Moving beyond the filling of a commemorative bucket in *Archives 2*, Holland and Mullins, accomplished lecturers at the UCD School of History and Archives, have edited a volume by recently qualified archival practitioners, who through their passionate, well-written

essays move their isolated, domestic archival debate beyond the Emerald Isle to strike a chord among archivists everywhere. Capturing the UCD's and the School of History and Archives' mission to foster and support a research-intensive learning environment, the articles are organized into three thematic sections: "Postmodernism and Theory," "Perceptions and Memory," and "Advocacy and Archive Users' Perspectives." As will become evident in the proceeding discussion, these collected essays work well within and among the three sections. Each essay drives the debate forward by elucidating a different aspect of the archival subject under examination.

The first section, "Postmodernism and Theory," contains four essays that fully illuminate the influence of postmodernist theory upon the new generation of archival practitioners. Setting a strong foundation in the first essay, Antoinette Doran outlines the contours of the postmodern turn for archives and archivists. In a thorough discussion of postmodernism and its interaction within postcolonialism and feminism, Doran reveals how "postmodernism is the product of shifting cultural realities within twentieth century discourse" (p. 10). As the products of culture, archives are intimately linked to the social, political, economic, and academic implications of this discussion. Archivists, therefore, become not only the custodians of memory, but also the creators of history by regulating and choosing the documentary heritage that will exemplify their culture (p. 22). Dovetailing nicely with Doran's work, Julie L. N. Brooks examines how the debate on the role of "history" in the archival mission has shaped the development of appraisal theory in regard to the records of state (p. 23). Based on her examination of the North American archival literature of the last thirty-five years, Brooks argues strongly that the central relationship between history and archives remains the distinction between the trained historian of yore, who worked in archives, and the qualified archivist of today with a historical background, who is able to negotiate the postmodern recordkeeping environment replete with digital information and ever-evolving technologies. Like Doran, Brooks argues further that postmodern appraisal requires archivists to accept their own participation in the historical process and become scholars of the record who specialize in the history of the record (p. 46). Concentrating on the archival cataloging process, Harriet Wheelock's contribution reviews how archival institutions are using Web 2.0 applications and addressing the challenges of the postmodern debate. Wheelock argues that postmodernism requires archivists to engage the spirit of the present age to properly document it (p. 50). Wheelock suggests, however, that, as a consequence of the availability of Web finding aids, archivists could lose their professional roles as mediators and their voices for their archival holdings (p. 57). In the final piece, David Ryan posits that the study of personal *fonds* have been neglected in the professional archival literature. Echoing Wheelock, Ryan acknowledges the shifting terrain of contemporary recordkeeping practices. Ryan asserts that archivists must update appraisal

theory to capture the innovative ways in which individuals document their lives (p. 71). According to Ryan, this assertion gains even more salience, because personal papers “have the potential to complement and contradict the statist narrative of the administrative record” (p. 63).

The second section, “Perceptions and Memory,” comprises five articles that provide real-world examples that both further elucidate and question the postmodern theory of the preceding section. In the first piece, for example, Kevin Lohan analyzes the representation of archives in two Irish newspapers. After reviewing the Irish, British, and North American archival literature, where archivists lament the general public’s negative stereotype about their profession, Lohan grounds his survey in a postmodern approach to truth. To his credit, Lohan also utilizes Sir Hilary Jenkinson’s *Manual* to provide a counterpositivist approach (p. 84). As for the survey results, the coverage of archival issues remained on the whole positive. Negative stereotypes of archivists were extremely infrequent (p. 95). Perhaps the negative stereotypes were rare because archivists look to outsiders for professional definition and do not embrace what they do every day—embrace their own archival power.

The remaining four essays support this assertion by positively portraying the working archivist as healer, psychiatrist-historian, and diplomat. To illustrate, Pauline Swords discusses how Northern Ireland’s community archiving projects assist in the healing of divided communities (p. 99). Echoing Brooks’s discussion of the archivist as the historian of the record, Kirsten Mulrennan sensitively presents the historical development of recordkeeping practices for patient records at the Grangegorman Psychiatric Hospital, an Irish asylum. Leah Benson, in turn, diplomatically discusses the key issues surrounding the conflict between a society’s right to keep and disclose personal information for historical research and the individual’s right to privacy (p. 127). Furthering the conversation, Emma Saunders examines the unique path that Germany has taken surrounding the records of the East German State Security Service (Stasi). Although imperfect, Saunders shows how German society successfully negotiated the conflict between the right of society to know and the individual’s right to privacy and to control his or her personal records (p. 147).

Returning to Éire, the final section, “Advocacy and Archive Users’ Perspectives,” encompasses four articles, which document the efforts made by Irish archivists to promote the use of their holdings by family historians and educators at every level. In their essays, Niamh Collins and Catherine Wright detail how family historians resist standard characterizations, embrace diverse motivations, and exhibit a deep knowledge of the archival literature (p. 178). Moving beyond the archival canon, family historians have also embraced the research and learning possibilities provided by the Internet (p. 196). Catherine Wright, for example, points to the National Archives’ successful use of Web 2.0 technology

not only to address the needs of family historians, but also to stimulate user-led content, collaboration, and discussion (p. 196). Although collaborative outreach efforts between archivists and family historians have met with strong success, similar advocacy attempts with educators have proven less fruitful. In his discussion of elementary level education, Brian Kirby, for example, asserts that archivists must challenge their own priorities about educational outreach before they are able to change the perceptions of teachers about their services (p. 216). In the final piece, Louise Kennedy outlines the same obstacles faced by archivists advocating for instruction in primary sources for undergraduate university students (p. 222). Kennedy asserts that the technological and pedagogical changes occurring in education and information practices will force both educators and archivists to contemplate reconsidering the standing of archives in higher education (p. 230). Although these case studies contain Irish-specific educational terminology, this obstacle is overcome by their fine analytical argumentation and practical use as tools to inspire classroom discussion.

"Education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire." Whether or not correctly attributed to W. B. Yeats, the quotation characterizes the strength of this volume in two ways. First, the editors aimed to produce a work that captures the mission of the University College Dublin and the School of History and Archives to promote a supportive research-intensive learning environment within their master's-level program (p. 7). Second, the editors planned to provide an outlet for master's-level students to explore, express, and articulate the shape of future archives and records management strategies (p. 8). In these two endeavors, this edited volume has met with success. This book would be a strong additional classroom asset for introductory archives and archival theory courses. Since written by students, these essays would serve as an accessible entry point for other graduate students to understand the intricacies of postmodern theory set forth by the esteemed members of the archival pantheon. Although exhibiting the anxiety of viewing themselves through the lenses of outsiders, the authors present archival work as dynamic, rigorous, and multifaceted and archivists as many positive things to many people (p. 81). Perhaps unknowingly, they capture archivists as secure in their professional identity. To illustrate, they portray through their essays a profession willing to constructively confront its founding fathers and mothers and take on the additional roles of archivist as healer, psychiatrist, diplomat, and theorist. As this volume attests, the archival profession is not only growing, but finds itself in the secure hands of a new, inspired generation of archivists. This author looks forward to reading and citing the future work of this fiery cohort imbued with archives power.

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