

Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion

Edited by Mary A. Caldera and Kathryn M. Neal. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014. 320 pp. Softcover. SAA members \$49.95, nonmembers \$69.95. ISBN 978-1-931666-70-1.

Diversity is the watchword of the day. Everywhere we turn are calls for greater diversity, and that's as true in the archival world as anywhere. But what does diversity mean for the archival profession? This collection of essays provides an excellent entry point to a range of issues archivists confront in efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in the profession and in the documentary record. Together they encourage us to think in new ways about what it means to build archives that reflect a multiplicity of views and to work with communities as they build their own archives.

The ten articles in this volume are a mix of case studies and reflective essays, with a touch of prescription thrown in. A common thread running through the book is that we must all take responsibility for ensuring that the archival record reflects diverse cultures and communities. In some cases, that might mean working collaboratively with librarians, public officials, volunteers, and other institutions to document a forgotten episode in American history, as the Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE) project has done. It might mean building relationships with cultural or ethnic communities to preserve their records in a mainstream repository, as the Minnesota Historical Society did. It might mean building such relationships but with the goal of providing assistance to underresourced community archives so that they can retain their records within the community. Or it might mean providing a space for a cultural performance without any expectation that the end result will be collections for the archives. In short, how we handle the responsibility for diversity and inclusion depends on where we are situated—geographically, culturally, professionally, personally—and what our particular universe looks like.

The two reflective essays that open the book help frame the discussion. Both address personal responsibility for preserving the documentary record and how our particular identities affect our approach to the task. In the article "Identity and Inclusion in the Archives," Valerie Love and Marisol Ramos eloquently write about the challenges they face as a lesbian and as a Latina, feeling that they straddle the fence between their professional and personal identities. Too often they are expected to do the work of documenting "their" communities, whether or not that is part of their job description. They argue that the burden should not fall on staff members who belong to a particular culture or

ethnic group: "The responsibility to create an inclusive historical record cannot rest on the shoulders of a few" (p. 3).

Mark Greene comes at the question of responsibility from a position of privilege, as a white male employed by a mainstream repository working to document diverse cultures and identity groups. Pondering whether mainstream institutions have authority to gather and interpret the records of these groups or whether those records more properly belong in community archives, he argues for a middle way "between complete cultural hegemony by large, mainstream repositories and infinite dispersion of documentation among innumerable, often underresourced community archives" (p. 36). In his middle way, archivists begin to see themselves as stewards rather than custodians of the historical record, providing assistance to community archives that wish to maintain their records, while engaging in an ongoing and meaningful way with those communities whose records are brought into mainstream repositories.

The case studies that follow provide glimpses into the histories of various communities and in so doing underscore the deep meaning that archives have for these groups. I found the articles on Asian American community archives and on the DOVE project particularly moving. The Densho Digital Archive was created to give Japanese Americans who were incarcerated in internment camps during World War II a chance to tell their own stories and thus counteract the images of Japanese Americans as "enemy aliens" conveyed by official records. From this digital archives sprang an online community that has become a hub for organizations and individuals. The Manilatown Archival Project in San Francisco was created to document the Filipino community, and, in particular, the thirty-year struggle to memorialize a hotel razed in 1977 that had housed Filipino immigrant workers in the first half of the twentieth century. When a Manilatown cultural center was finally constructed in 2005, it housed the archives of oral histories and other materials gathered by activists and provided space for community events. In the real or virtual spaces of the Densho and Manilatown archives, migrant and immigrant communities reclaim their histories and imagine themselves differently from the way official records portray them.

The Desegregation of Virginia Education (DOVE) project is a fascinating multi-institutional effort to gather the history of Massive Resistance to integration after the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision. In 1956, the Virginia legislature authorized the governor to shut down schools that integrated; some remained closed for as long as five years, causing black children to miss months or years of their education while white children were given tuition grants to attend private schools. Sonia Yaco initiated this documentation project at Old Dominion University when she learned that few school desegregation records existed in Virginia archives. She enlisted historians, librarians, archivists, public officials,

and others for an advisory board; they trained volunteers to conduct oral histories and inventory collections in repositories and in private hands. The resulting documentation prevented this important episode in American history from being forever lost to collective amnesia.

“Revolutionizing the Archival Record through Rap” is a provocative essay that addresses the difficulty of preserving the history of people who do not rely primarily on the written word to make and keep memory. T-Kay Sangwand argues that Cuban hip-hop is an interactive “performance-based memory-making practice” that is impossible to capture in a tangible form (i.e., through video recording) (p. 97). She wants archivists to question what constitutes an archival record—might the performance itself be the record?—and in turn to reorient their roles to become facilitators of preservation rather than custodians of the records. While Sangwand’s ideas are intriguing, I wish she had provided a clearer explanation of how her proposed collaborative archiving between archivist and performers would work.

The essays on indigenous knowledge in archives and on working with native groups offer thoughtful suggestions on how archivists can be ethical curators of materials in their collections that relate to indigenous cultures. For example, archivists need to be flexible in administering collections gathered in another time that may include photographs and recordings of sacred dances and rituals, or other sensitive items. While equal access to collections is a basic tenet for archivists, in situations like this, restricting access to members of a tribe might be the more ethical approach. At the very least, archivists should establish ongoing communication with native groups about how to handle such materials.

The final essays in the volume concern efforts to diversify the archival profession. Yale University archivists developed an innovative program in which New Haven high school students preserved their family and community histories. The project exposed students, families, and teachers to archives and archival work, creating potential archivists, donors, and users. But the project was equally beneficial for the archivists involved, who had an opportunity to engage with students from backgrounds different from their own. This sort of experience—gained through service learning and community engagement projects—must be an important part of archival education curricula, as Anne Gilliland suggests in her article on pluralizing archival education. She uses the term “pluralism” (less polarized and politicized than “diversity,” in her view) to signify “respecting the multiplicity of perspectives, practices, and people” involved in record creation, preservation, and use (p. 236). I found Gilliland’s article cogent and persuasive, suggesting ways to think not just about archival education, but more generally about how archivists can be more thoughtful and engaged in a multicultural world.

The articles in this book offer a multitude of approaches and examples of how to think about and strive for diversity and inclusion in the archival world. Taken together, they make a good case for Mark Greene's "middle way." There is room and need for both community archives and mainstream archives committed to the endeavor of documenting diverse peoples and histories. One issue that this volume barely touches on is the need to foster inclusion of people with disabilities as records creators, users, and archivists. Aside from that, this is an excellent and very engaging book. I expect it is already sparking conversation about what diversity is and how it may be realized, as editors Mary Caldera and Kathryn Neal had hoped. Caldera and Neal have succeeded in their effort "to illustrate the multitude of perspectives and issues, to provide a vehicle by which new voices can be heard along with more familiar ones and new concepts examined along with new treatments of established ideas" (p. xix). In years to come when we gaze through the archival looking glass, perhaps like Alice we will find not just ourselves reflected back to us, but a wonderland of people and events and histories and spaces not previously seen or imagined. Oh frabjous day!

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Crisis, Credibility and Corporate History

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This work sets out to review expectations and strategies of companies, academia, and the public about using company history for communication and marketing purposes in part to "redress the sometimes unconscious bias of some recent archival literature towards the public sector and especially central government" (p. ix). Twelve brief essays based on presentations by European marketing specialists, corporate archivists, and scholars at the Symposium of the International Council on Archives, Section on Business and Labour Archives (14–16 April 2013), discuss the role of corporate history in business, approaches to historiography, and interactions between business leaders, historians, and researchers. Using case studies of Maersk, Roche, Gunther Quandt Group, Toyota, and IBM, authors describe uses of records by businesses coping with challenging pasts and struggling to regain, retain, or improve credibility with employees, stakeholders, shareholders, and the public. Marketers and communications specialists preparing to celebrate a company anniversary may find helpful tips here. But while articles on historiography based on company and