

The book also includes in-depth notes for those wanting to do more research. Overall, Tucker's work provides a grounding in the passion and process of genealogical research as a gendered practice in American culture, with a focus on NOLA and its specific circumstances. It would behoove all archivists to develop a better sense of where we fit into the historical records continuum while understanding and appreciating those who keep their families' histories.

© Tanya Zanish-Belcher

Wake Forest University

## Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom

By Abigail De Kosnik. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2016. x, 430 pp. Hardcover and EPUB. Hardcover \$45.00, EPUB, \$32.00. Hardcover ISBN 978-0-262-03466-1; EPUB ISBN 978-0-262-33675-8.

One of the most exciting trends in archives today is the realization that the histories of marginalized or overlooked subcultures are, in fact, worth remembering. This trend provides a wonderful opportunity for archivists to exponentially expand the richness of the overall cultural record, by working proactively to capture, preserve, and make available documentation generated by these subcultures. We have begun in earnest to break free from the traditional model of documenting elites and notable figures or institutions at the expense of hitherto ignored or fringe voices. Institutions and individual archivists alike are working to capture and document the histories of racial and ethnic minorities, women, LGBTs, the poor, and other groups less traditionally connected to the center. It can be a daunting task, especially when combined with the added hurdle that so much evidence produced today is born digital, therefore inherently unstable and liable to erasure from the record.

All the more wondrous, then, that in many case it is nonarchivists, or self-taught archivists, who have taken up this difficult yet culturally vital task. University of California, Berkeley, media studies professor Abigail De Kosnik tells the story of one such endeavor, underway for years by that most devoted and intense group of people—media fans. Her deeply researched and impassioned study, *Rogue Archives: Digital Cultural Memory and Media Fandom*, examines how disparate groups of media fans (that is, fans of particular films and television shows) have been coming together to preserve their own creative and cultural record in the face of many obstacles, including disinterest by professional archivists, the transition from print to digitally based creative expression, and

corporate resistance to losing control of media products. In the process, fans have pioneered a new form of archives that democratizes cultural memory and wrests traditional ideas of cultural canon away from the mainstream toward a dynamic and ever-changing concept of what is considered “legitimate.” It’s a bold and work-intensive effort, and De Kosnik’s book is infused with a great sense of optimism, triumph, and sheer admiration of the degree to which “rogue archivists” have seized control of the development of the archival record both from mainstream institutions (publishers, movie and TV studios) and from professional archivists. Certainly as an archivist who promotes the archiving of fanworks as important cultural artifacts, I am heartened to see this ongoing struggle to let the creators take control of their own archival destinies and ensure the preservation of their creative efforts.

De Kosnik defines “rogue archives” as digital archival efforts characterized by constant availability to the user and zero barriers to entry, and by content that can be downloaded or streamed in its entirety (with no regard for payment or copyright restrictions) and which would rarely, if ever, be preserved in a traditional archives. Such rogue efforts came into significant play at the start of the digital era, as increasingly widespread and democratic Internet access caused public memory to be loosened from state or institutional control. Rogue archivists—people who did the work of archiving, but in most cases had no formal LIS training, no library or archival science degree, no connection to an institution—took it upon themselves to preserve the records of their own subcultures by constructing accessible online archives and populating them with vast amounts of material, based on informal limited selection and preservation criteria. An intense cultural shift came into play as part of this process: archiving was taken out of the hands of professionals and into those of impassioned fans intimately familiar with the materials they were creating and preserving. In the process, they gave the power of interpreting history and shaping the documentary record to the *users* rather than to the traditional arbiters of information (the archivists, the state, the corporation). This may seem shocking to traditional, formally trained archivists, but, in fact, rogues by and large have done precisely what they set out to do, and they have done it well; that is, they have successfully preserved and made accessible (often on a larger scale than brick-and-mortar archives have) the fruits of their groups’ creative efforts. In the case of media fans, the largest part of these efforts involves *fanfiction* (a.k.a. “fanfic”)—fiction written by fans that uses a particular source text or texts as a point of departure for the creation of original stories, characters, or interpretations of the original text.

De Kosnik uses the online fanfic community as her object of study in this book because fans not only have a long and ongoing tradition of “memory-based making” through remixes and transformative works that challenge the copyright and antiduplication barriers that haunt traditional archives, but also have

experience in constructing a number of active and large-scale digital fanfiction archives.<sup>1</sup> Fans are a particularly dynamic breed of archivists because they often represent two sides of the coin: they not only archive the material, but they create it as well. Fan input and participation throughout all stages of the archives life cycle result in individualized and idiosyncratic styles of archiving. Fan communities are ideal platforms for rogue archiving because fans have a way of seizing control of canon and canonical practices and turning them to their own wants and needs, while avoiding the traditional profit motive; this is, in fact, a perfect definition of rogue archiving practice. In the process, fans have made available immense quantities of creative materials (materials that are archived by only a very few traditional archives) for free and without requiring access to archival management systems, reading rooms, finding aids, or librarians and archivists to mediate between users and objects. De Kosnik posits that fans have been pioneers in this democratization of archiving.

The possibilities inherent in rogue archiving, as De Kosnik notes, are great. She mentions these as including

- “The possibility for vast quantities of cultural content to be preserved and made accessible to a broad public—marking an end, in certain spaces, to... “the selective tradition”, which always grants priority to the culture that supports the narratives and identities of the dominant group
- The possibility for subcultural and marginalized groups to have archives of their own, on digital networks, constructed and operated by members of their communities...
- The possibility for ‘mass audiences’ to invert the sociocultural hierarchy that places them at the bottom of the power structure of media, and to exhibit, en masse, their ability to treat the cultural industries’ products as the . . . basic matter from which they construct meaningful texts...
- The possibility for a . . . holding-in-common of all culture as shared resource and property” (p. 10).

Heady possibilities indeed!

Much of the book deals with the evolution of these archives, and their stories can be useful to archivists or wannabe archivists looking to establish new digital collections. De Kosnik is also concerned with explaining the social and cultural advantages of fan communities and the archives they create. The majority of fanfic writers are and have always been women, and these emerging archives-cum-social networks have provided women a forum in which to express themselves creatively without fear of sexist reprisals; they have performed much the same function for queer fans as well, and for people of color. All these marginalized groups, often ignored or actively shunned by

mainstream cultural producers as well as by some traditional archivists, have found a safe harbor in fan communities and an ever-expanding library of materials relevant to their concerns in rogue fan archives. The lesson here for the mainstream archival community is recognizing that they ought to be looking at underrepresented communities and records creators and trying to fill in gaps in the documentary record. De Kosnik talks briefly at one point about the emotional power of archives, connecting it to the rise in community archiving and the feelings of autonomy and connection that this practice gives to the documented. This emotional power deserves our respect and consideration, for it can produce new and enthusiastic groups of users/creators of archives.

Not all the book will be relevant to archivists' immediate interests, although it certainly would be for people interested in the development of social networks and the evolution of fanfic-driven communities. De Kosnik gives over many pages to discussing the meanings of and freedoms inherent in fanfiction, including its protean nature, as well as to describing the "free culture movement" itself, of which rogue archives are a component. She also talks about the concept of fan archiving as "performance" and discusses the transition from print fanfic to digital (utilizing what I think is a labored metaphor using *Star Trek Voyager* characters Captain Janeway and Seven of Nine), and, as a media studies professor, she is sometimes prone to the academic jargon of that field. However, these are minor quibbles at best and do not detract from De Kosnik's fascinating and, I think, immensely plausible conjectures about the effects and potential of rogue archives.

All in all, rogue archiving represents the dawn of something new in the archival world. De Kosnik quotes Jacques Derrida's *Archives Fever*, in which Derrida argued for a "new theory of the archive," where the archives looks forward to the future and change. As De Kosnik says, "this archive that is never closed, but is always laden with promise, with the promise of what will come and the promise of what it, the archive itself, will become each time new contents enter it through its opening, through its always-being-open: this is the archive that the new archons have discovered, and of which they make good use" (p. 280). In the case of rogue archives, the users are the new creators and archons, the ones who "make the laws that govern the textual archives they encounter, take possession of, explore, and exploit" (p. 279). De Kosnik's gracefully written and knowledgeable work salutes, as do I, this new age where archives are powered by the people themselves.

© Jeremy Brett

Cushing Memorial Library and Archives, Texas A&M University

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> These archives include, most notably, Fanfiction.net (FF.net) and the Organization for Transformative Works' Archive of Our Own, but De Kosnik mentions several others, as well as more traditional digital platforms such as the Internet Archive.

## Module 8: Becoming a Trusted Digital Repository

By Steve Marks, edited by Michael Shallcross with an introduction by Bruce Ambacher. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2015. xxv, 68 pp. Softcover, PDF, and EPUB. Members \$19.99, nonmembers \$29.99. Softcover ISBN 1-931666-84-9; PDF ISBN 1-931666-85-7; EPUB ISBN 1-931666-86-5.

Digital preservation has become an essential area of responsibility for archivists. To date, the practice of digital preservation has been guided by one key standard: ISO 14721, or the Open Archival Information System (OAIS). OAIS outlines the language and framework for describing long-term preservation systems and delineates the roles and responsibilities of system participants, but it does not provide any metrics by which to evaluate preservation repositories in terms of their trustworthiness. Appraisals of trustworthiness must necessarily extend beyond a technical evaluation to include an assessment of the entire ecosystem in which the repository resides, including organizational factors such as staffing and funding, and appropriate risk management practices. In this broader assessment, frameworks for evaluating trusted digital repositories play a vital role. These frameworks have blossomed over the last fifteen years; some have progressed from guidelines to international or national standards. For example, the Data Seal of Approval is quite popular in Europe, and DIN 31644, originally developed as a catalog of criteria from the nestor project, is now a German national standard.<sup>1</sup> The oldest and perhaps best known of these frameworks (at least in the United States) is ISO 16363, which was originally published in 2007 as the *Trustworthy Repositories Audit & Certification: Criteria and Checklist*, or as it is more commonly known, TRAC.<sup>2</sup> Given the long history and recognition of ISO 16363 and TRAC, it is not surprising that *Module 8: Becoming a Trusted Digital Repository* focuses solely on that particular standard. However, it misses an opportunity to introduce readers to the other frameworks and to speak more abstractly of the commonalities between them, extracting from them the essentials of a trusted digital repository. This absence of international perspectives on trustworthy digital repositories, as well as a lack of discussion on the procedural aspects of the audit process (promised in the title of the module, but never delivered), mar what is otherwise an excellent treatise on ISO 16363.