

## REVIEWS

## The Scholarship of Reviews

Bethany Anderson

ReviewsEditor@archivists.org

As Reviews Editor, two things never cease to amaze me: the rapidity and diversity of the archival profession's scholarly output. At the same time, I have become increasingly aware of the many forms (and formats) that the profession's scholarship takes. In other words, we are not talking solely about "books" anymore. This scholarship is analog, born digital, and many times available as both. While many forms of this scholarship are reviewed on the *American Archivist* Reviews Portal—software, technologies, digital archives and humanities projects, resources, guidelines, and best practices, to name a few—the boundaries of what constitutes a "publication" are nonetheless fluid and evolving. Over the last few issues, the Reviews Section has thus begun to include more reviews of published scholarship that extend beyond the boundaries of the analog book. In this issue, for example, we see reviews of a "blook" and a Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) report available as a PDF. Regardless of publication format, the reviews in this issue of *American Archivist* not only continue to evaluate and highlight the ways in which this scholarship moves conversations in the profession forward, but they also contribute to and advance those discussions about recent and emerging scholarship.

The eleven reviews and one review essay in this issue engage with recent scholarship and invite archivists to rethink aspects of their professional practice. In her review essay "DIY Music Archiving," Adriana P. Cuervo discusses three recent publications on music archives, and explores ways archivists can incorporate a "do-it-yourself" ethic, stemming from community-driven music preservation, into their own practice. Cuervo points out a thread that runs through the volumes—the importance of not discounting affect, emotional connections, to archival materials—as one that should likewise be woven into archival theory and practice. Expanding the boundaries of archival theory, and thus practice, is also a theme of *Engaging with Records and Archives: Histories and Theories*, edited by Fiorella Foscarini, Heather MacNeil, Bonnie Mak, and Gillian Oliver. Reviewed by Amy Cooper Cary, this volume speaks to the diversity of approaches to engaging with archives—the communities creating them, the users accessing them, the complex histories contextualizing them, and the silences that can be read in them, to name a few.

Beyond engaging with archives, archivists must also interrogate the silences and the sometimes uncomfortable histories of the records in their holdings. Ricardo L. Punzalan's review of *Agents of Empire: How E. L. Mitchell's Photographs Shaped Australia* by Joanna Sassoon explores a work that challenges archivists to rethink their practice as they disentangle what photography, archives, and imperialism portend for the curation and preservation of photo archives. As Punzalan notes, the archival afterlives of these photographs play an important role in their (re)contextualization and thus their interpretations. Archival silences, too, play a role in understanding and interpreting archival materials, as Charlotte S. Kostelic demonstrates in her review of *The Silence of the Archive*, by David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson. Kostelic describes how this work requires archivists to confront and contest those silences as they reevaluate their own practices. But sometimes silences arise from displacement; Christopher M. Laico assesses *Displaced Archives*, edited by James Lowry, as a timely intervention into discussions about archival displacement and advocacy among the international archival community.

Accessing archives and records may prove challenging when those materials exist in precarious and/or dynamic environments, or are embedded in different (and complex) layers of local, state, and federal information infrastructures. Julie Rogers considers the ephemeral nature of news archives—regardless of format—in her review of *Future-Proofing the News: Preserving the First Draft of History* by Kathleen A. Hansen and Nora Paul. In her review of *Environmental Information: Research, Access, and Environmental Decisionmaking*, Eira Tansey discusses Sarah Lamdan's volume on accessing environmental information, data, and records, and the ways Lamdan navigates readers through the rules and regulations that create and govern that content. Both of these reviews indicate the urgency of preserving and understanding how to access records and information that have implications for all citizens, and how these publications can both serve as calls-to-action and essential guides.

Two reviews assess publications specifically attuned to the needs of practitioners tackling metadata standards and specialized formats. Carly Dearborn reviews *Digital Preservation Metadata for Practitioners: Implementing PREMIS*, edited by Angela Dappert, Rebecca Squire Guenther, and Sébastien Peyrard, and evaluates the strategies and approaches outlined by the book's contributors for adopting and using PREMIS in different contexts. Implementing standards and best practices in any context, however, depends on one's needs and available resources, as Andy Uhrich notes of Anthony Cocciolo's *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*. But Uhrich discusses the ways in which the volume serves as a user-friendly guide to media preservation regardless of one's level of experience with audiovisual formats.

Archival scholarship looks as much at theory and practice as it does at the status of the profession and what it means to be an archivist. Three reviews address publications that shed light on conversations and assessments of the archival profession and allied professions. One of these reviews is by Edith Halvarsson, who analyzes *Keepers of Our Digital Future: An Assessment of the National Digital Stewardship Residencies, 2013–2016* by Meridith B. Mink. Halvarsson compares this report from CLIR on the National Digital Stewardship Residencies (NDSR) to other assessments of initiatives across the United States and the United Kingdom, and articulates the need for longitudinal studies of digital preservation residency programs to better understand outcomes and needs. In her review of *Feminists Among Us: Resistance and Advocacy in Library Leadership*, edited by Shirley Lew and Baharak Yousefi, Stacie Williams looks at a volume on leadership—and the ways intersectional feminist frameworks can lead to more equitable workplaces and labor practices. Her review invites us to imagine, along with the publication's contributors, the ways in which feminist-inspired leadership fosters labor equity and workplaces that better position us to be responsible stewards. Lastly, Marcella Huggard reviews Kate Theimer's *Well, What Came Next? Selections from ArchivesNext, 2007–2017*, a “blook” or a published selection of entries from Theimer's blog, *ArchivesNext*. Huggard notes the ways in which the publication serves as a snapshot into the profession during the early 2000s and 2010s, and the scholarly debates that emerged from this forum.

There are many ways to engage with archival scholarship; reviewing publications is one, but nonetheless an important way to do so. As the reviewers in this issue have shown, reviews not only serve as a barometer for the changes in theory and practice that scholarship signals, but they also enable us to challenge and reflect on our practice as archivists.