

these communities have partnered with archival organizations and built significant collections that otherwise would have never appeared on archivists' radar.

Baker also makes a point to highlight the importance of affect, or feelings, in the context of popular music heritage. The love and devotion that fuels amateur archival programs often keep their staffs engaged, the doors open, and the collection growing. These materials produce an emotional response within their respective communities, and this should be factored into professional archival practice. We cannot ignore the emotional connections that people make to documentary heritage, and some measure of affect would be useful to incorporate into appraisal strategies as well as into public programming. Making meaningful connections with the public we serve is as important as applying arrangement and description standards to our finding aids. Because we can all be a little bit country, and a little bit rock 'n roll.

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## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> See, for example, publications such as Cristine Paschild, "Community Archives and the Limitations of Identity: Considering Discursive Impact on Material Needs," *American Archivist* 75, no. 1 (2012): 125–42; or Joanna Newman, "Sustaining Community Archives," *Aplis* 25 (March 2012): 37–45.
- <sup>2</sup> For a broader description of the DC Punk Archive, visit <https://www.dclibrary.org/punk>.
- <sup>3</sup> See <https://library.louisville.edu/archives/luma> for details on the Louisville Underground Music Archive.
- <sup>4</sup> Institutions represented in the book include the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Library and Archives, the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign's Sousa Archives and Center for American Music, Rice University, and the University of California, Los Angeles.
- <sup>5</sup> Baker draws on Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner's work on "Communities of Practice," <http://wenger-trayner.com/introduction-to-communities-of-practice>.

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## Agents of Empire: How E. L. Mitchell's Photographs Shaped Australia

By Joanna Sassoon. Melbourne, Aus.: Australian Scholarly Publishing, 2017. 260 pp.  
Softcover. \$44.00. Illustrations (some color). ISBN 978-1-925333-73-2.

Archivists and scholars of photography are often faced with the challenge of representing and interpreting the legacy of colonial practices of image production, dissemination, and dispersion. A key question in this context is understanding the role of photographs in constructing knowledge about colonized lands and cultures as well as their enduring effects in current understandings

of the past. According to Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, “Photographs are both images *and* physical objects that exist in time and space and thus in social and cultural experience.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, in their creation and circulation, photographs perform particular functions and carry meanings beyond their images alone. These functions do not necessarily cease once placed in archival care. Consequent archival interventions on photographs, including their description and preservation, further use and reuse, and reformatting and digitization, ultimately add to the context of images as objects of knowledge representation. It is in this vein that archivists and photo historians alike will find that Joanna Sassoon’s *Agents of Empire: How E. L. Mitchell’s Photographs Shaped Australia* makes the greatest contribution to current scholarship.

*Agents of Empire* centers on the life and photographs of British-born photographer Ernest Lund Mitchell (1876–1959), whose images became the most widely reproduced and circulated in Western Australian newspapers and publications of the early and middle twentieth century. The book weaves together accounts of Mitchell’s life as a struggling traveling photographer, the enduring effects of his photographs in shaping British imperial visions of Australia, and the afterlives of these images in archival institutions. Sassoon’s writing, from the deep perspective of a photo historian and archivist based in Western Australia, is a prime example of a work by a historian with acute archival sensibilities. Indeed, Sassoon’s mastery of these related disciplines shines in this work. Sassoon demonstrates acuity in mobilizing a preponderance of archival sources to weave together an insightful narrative.

*Agents of Empire* is divided into three main sections: “Production,” “Reproduction,” and “Preservation.” The introduction that opens the book perfectly encapsulates its two main theoretical contributions in the fields of colonial history and archival studies. First, Mitchell’s photographs served as “agents” of empire that facilitated the construction of ideas of Australian landscapes and identities. Second, the “archival afterlives” of his photographs continue to construct these ideas into the present. Also worthy of note is the generous interspersion of numerous photographs, newspaper clippings, and other relevant documents that not only complement but also help drive Sassoon’s arguments and narration. Indeed, readers will appreciate these reproductions as both illustrative and informative.

In “Production,” Sassoon follows Mitchell’s early life and journey as a photographer. This section begins with his childhood years of growing up partly in Australia and returning to England, including an apprenticeship with his cousin that exposed him to the printing business and photography. It then focuses on Mitchell’s return to Australia as a young adult; his career as a traveling photographer in New South Wales and Queensland; his successful studio in Perth, Western Australia; his success as an in-demand photographer for

government and leading publications; and, finally, the decline of his lucrative studio and failed farming venture. In many of his travels, Mitchell also photographed Chinese immigrants in North Queensland and Aboriginal communities in the north and south of Western Australia. In this section, Sassoon highlights how Mitchell's perspective as an immigrant Englishman who gradually assimilated into Australian society greatly influenced his depiction of rural, agricultural, and mining regions of this British imperial territory. Here, the author leads readers to comprehend how Mitchell created a particular visual aesthetic that made his photographs represent a version of Australia that inspired British migration.

The second part of the book, "Reproduction," further explores the storied and controversial elevation of Mitchell's photographs as "official" depictions of Western Australia and Australia before national and international audiences. The running theme of this section is the fraught politics of mobilizing photographic images to promote migration by depicting a generic "anywhere" Australia and timeless Aboriginal communities by downplaying their specificity in popular periodicals and official government collections overseas. Sassoon details the intriguing world of commercial picture agencies that enabled the circulation Mitchell's photographs in various publication and exhibition venues, thus contributing to their wider international consumption. This is a fascinating account of the role photographs play in image-building that stimulates investment and depicts imperial progress. But the images captured present a different version of reality than experienced by their own creator. Mitchell's personal experience of financial hardships as a farm owner contradicts his photographic illustration of landownership showing rural harmony, wealth, and progress.

While Mitchell's photographs were not produced in the context of anthropological fieldwork, they nevertheless came to be used as visual ethnographic records. Indigenous studies scholars might find useful the book's description of the circulation and repeated use of Mitchell's photographs of Aboriginal Australians as "anthropological" images in encyclopedias, textbooks, government publications, postcards, adventure narratives, and fictionalized retellings of anthropological expeditions.

The final and concluding part of *Agents of Empire*, "Preservation," will perhaps resonate most deeply with archivists. Here, Sassoon discusses Mitchell's personal recordkeeping practices in terms of documenting, organizing, and storing his prized and fragile negatives. Mitchell saw the historical value of his own work, and how he arranged and presented his images reflects this. The book attends to the emotional and commercial push and pull behind this photographer's decisions on what to keep and what to let go as he dispersed his photographs to various libraries, archives, museums, and private collections, including those of family members and friends.

An important concept for archivists is Sassoon's notion of "archival afterlives," which in the context of the book indicates "how the character of his [Mitchell's] archives and the way they are managed by cultural institutions continue to shape the way that their place in history can be understood" (p. ix). Toward the end, Sassoon calls the reader's attention to the loss of some of Mitchell's images and the destruction of the original boxes of his negatives that provide important contextual information about his photographs. Such loss and destruction, especially in the hands of cultural institutions, further disintegrate the bond between the photographs and the context of their creation and use. Furthermore, Sassoon contends that prioritizing image content over the material contexts lead to significant loss. In the archival field's current preoccupation with digitization, she cautions, "Documenting and digitising photographs simply for their image content runs counter to the knowledge that it is precisely the physical or textual traces on the photographic object, and information from its context which provides the evidence to understand what the photograph was designed to *do*" (p. 245).

Save for a brief introduction, the book immediately jumps to Mitchell's biography and photography. Thus, it lacks a detailed discussion of relevant scholarship, and interested readers may find it useful to consult related publications that complement this work, in particular, works that tackle the historical and social contexts of colonial photography. A few nonexhaustive resonant works that immediately come to mind are James R. Ryan's *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (University of Chicago, 1997); Eleanor M. Hight and Gary D. Sampson's *Colonialist Photography: Imag(in)ing Race and Place* (Routledge, 2002); Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart's *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (Routledge, 2004); Laura Wexler's *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (University of North Carolina, 2000); Mick Gidley's *Edward S. Curtis and the North American Indian, Incorporated* (Cambridge, 1998); Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan's *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* (I. B. Tauris, 2003); Zahid Chaudhary's *Afterimage of Empire: Photography in Nineteenth-Century India* (University of Minnesota, 2012); and, finally, Jane Lyndon's *Calling the Shots: Aboriginal Photographies* (Aboriginal Studies, 2014). These publications expand on the entangled themes of photography, imperialism, and archives.

Archivists and historians alike will surely find *Agents of Empire* illuminating in its layered portrayal of an important figure in colonial photography and the archival afterlives of his images. It should be a must-read for archivists who wish to ponder the consequences of archival actions in the interpretation of photographs under their care. Faculty and students of colonial history and archives will benefit from Sassoon's narrative, which encourages deep

reflection on the many ways photography shaped, propagated, and enabled imperial aspirations.

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## NOTE

- <sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1.

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## Keepers of Our Digital Future: An Assessment of the National Digital Stewardship Residencies, 2013–2016

By Meridith B. Mink with the assistance of Samantha DeWitt, Christa Williford, and Alice Bishop. Foreword by Abby Smith Rumsey. Washington, D.C.: Council on Library and Information Resources, December 2016. 89 pp. Open Access PDF. Freely available at <https://www.clir.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2017/10/pub173.pdf>.

CC BY-NC-SA 4.0. ISBN 978-1-932326-57-4.

The need for archives to equip themselves for the unique challenges of preserving digital resources has been recognized for some time.<sup>1</sup> However, understandings of what “stewardship of digital resources” entails in practice is still evolving and has become an active area of research over the past ten years. Despite initiatives such as Digital Preservation Outreach and Education (DPOE), A Curriculum Framework for Digital Curation (DigCurV), Carolina Digital Curriculum Project (DigCCurr), and the Society of American Archivists’ Digital Archives Specialist (DAS) Curriculum and Certificate Program, no uniform view yet exists on what skills are required for effective digital stewardship across the archives and heritage sector. This is reflected in higher education courses in information science in the United States and the United Kingdom, where coverage of digital stewardship skills vary. Many archives are themselves at an early maturity stage when it comes to preserving digital resources and will need to acquire an understanding of how available skills and frameworks translate into their local contexts.

In recognition of gaps between organizations’ need for digital stewardship and the availability of professionals with the right skills to take on this work, the first National Digital Stewardship Residency (NDSR) was launched in 2013. The goal of the NDSR pilot was to build a new generation of practitioners who could lead in the area of digital stewardship. The pilot was designed around a discrete nine-month project that enabled recent graduates to acquire hands-on skills in an