for example. I also would perhaps suggest not reading the epilogue—in some ways its discouraged tone about living in the United States in 2017 is very jarring after the optimistic and engaged tone of the rest of the volume. One does not need to end a retrospective on a celebratory note, but I think in some respects, the epilogue does the rest of the volume, which is worth reading, a disservice by diminishing what the blog accomplished over its ten years.

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The Silence of the Archive

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The Silence of the Archive is the latest installment of Facet's Principles and Practice in Records Management and Archives series developed as a core set of texts for scholars and practitioners in the fields of archives and records management. Like the rest of the series, the text is largely written from a British perspective. David Thomas, Simon Fowler, and Valerie Johnson critically engage with the concept of archival silences. The authors each have extensive experience working in the public sector as archivists and records managers, lending to the book's focus on a public records tradition rather than a manuscript tradition. Simon Fowler and David Thomas, in addition to having decades of experience working for The National Archives (U.K.) and its predecessor the Public Record Office, each hold academic positions at the Centre of Archives and Information Science at the University of Dundee and Computer and Information Sciences at the University of Northumbria, respectively. Valerie Johnson similarly has years of experience in public records in the United Kingdom and currently serves as the director of Research and Collections at The National Archives. The examples highlighted in *The Silence of the Archive* come from experiences with public records in the United Kingdom, Australia, South Africa, and the United States, among other countries. This book explores the ways in which archival practices can result in silences within the archival record and outlines ways archivists can try to counteract this phenomenon. *The Silence of the Archive* is largely theoretical but provides key recommendations for improving the records landscape to prevent archival silences. The book can serve as a guide to raise consciousness about archival silences among both archivists and users of archives.

In *The Silence of the Archive,* archival silences are defined as gaps in the archival record. In chapter 1, "Enforced Silences," Fowler unequivocally states that "sources and archives are neither neutral nor natural" and that the inherent quality of archives as nonneutral spaces is the reason that archives contain silences (p. 1). Silences are created and enforced within archives as a result of the practices central to the work of archivists. Fowler illustrates the narrow view of history that archives provide using Verne Harris's description of archives as "at best a sliver of a sliver of a sliver" due to "deliberate and inadvertent destruction by records creators and managers" (p. 14). Examples from the United Kingdom of the ways in which this sliver becomes narrower include Prime Minister Anthony Eden's willful destruction of records related to the Suez Crisis; the "Migrated Archives" of former British colonies removed to offices in the United Kingdom to prevent embarrassment or indictment of colonial officials; and the deliberate decision not to create records, such as Prime Minister Tony Blair's government deciding not to document meetings or circulate minutes. Archival silences are further proliferated through destruction due to war or conflict. Archivists play a central role in creating or preventing archival silences because of their role as selectors of records. Fowler complicates the discussion of appraisal by suggesting that what is often selected for inclusion in the archives is not always what users would like to find. Users want evidence of marginalized narratives and individuals seen in history, but these records may not always be those selected for preservation.

The silences that Fowler defines in the first chapter are unsurprising examples of archival silences, but, in the second chapter, "Inappropriate Expectations," he expands his definition of archival silences to include other ways in which access to archival records is obstructed. Metadata records for archives—what Fowler refers to as "catalogues" but what American archivists refer to as "finding aids"—can obscure records from users when interfaces do not facilitate the finding of collections. It is not just the usability of a search interface that can obscure the records but also the structure of the data that users may not understand. Users may be confused by subject headings and how to use them in searches, or they may not be familiar with the structure of a finding aid (p. 59). When users consult these resources in a reading room they have reference archivists to assist them, but when these resources are online, users may not have the same help available. The transition from analog finding aids and analog records to digital resources and records challenges archivists to find new ways to remediate silences in the archive.

In chapter 3, "The Digital," Thomas discusses how the digital revolution has complicated archives and archival silences. This chapter is particularly important as it highlights potential causes of silences in digital archives that are more complex than standard digital preservation tropes. Thomas outlines three paradoxes introduced by digital records: that "greater openness [has] led to increased

destruction of records," "that more records may mean less information and less knowledge," and "that more records may mean archives end up with smaller collections" (p. 65). Thomas notes that, while archivists may have traditionally considered obsolescence as the primary concern for the potential loss of digital records, the larger challenge in dealing with them is the scale of digital creation. Thomas's decision not to engage with the already well-worn hobbyhorse of the digital dark age is refreshing since the topic of archival silences is a ripe place for people to speculate about the limitations of digital preservation. Thomas does not dismiss the challenges that archivists face when collecting and managing digital collections. Digital continuity—the management of digital records from their creation through every stage of their life cycle—is a larger challenge for archivists and records managers as loss is more likely to occur before the records are transferred to the archives. Additional challenges present themselves when archivists attempt to manage sensitivity reviews for records to be released given the number of records that need to be reviewed.

The shift from analog to digital has changed users' expectations for access. Thomas highlights that users expect content rather than descriptions of content when searching for archival collections. Thomas emphasizes the importance of a user-centered approach to the presentation of archival collections as interfaces that are not user-friendly lead to users having difficulty finding what they seek and, "in effect, archives silencing themselves" (p. 72). Thomas suggests that the decision by many archives to license their holdings to popular genealogical search sites results in archives being in danger of losing traffic to some of their most used collections (p. 91). These companies have money to spend on interfaces and technologies that are more inviting, powerful, and user-friendly than the systems employed by archives (p. 92). While partnerships with outside companies can provide more users with access to archival collections, archives endanger themselves by not supporting users through their own search interfaces.

Johnson and Thomas, in chapters 4 and 5, "Dealing with the Silence" and "Imagining Archives," respectively, both address ways in which individuals have dealt with silences in the archives. Users can uncover what has been silenced by submitting public information requests, but legislation is not the only way to respond to silences. Thomas explores how individuals have filled silences with imagined records or forgeries. In the case of Shakespeare, for instance, people have imagined documentation about his life to fill in years where records do not exist. In some cases, this has led to the forging of records about Shakespeare's life. In other cases, the connection between records and identity leads individuals to imagine the possibility of records that do not exist. In the case of the trial of Ieng Sary (co-founder of the Khmer Rouge who died before testifying), his victims and the wider public cannot examine the trial records because the case was never brought to a verdict. People are left to imagine the records that could have been

created. Johnson notes methods that archivists have taken to engage with silences in their archives in chapter 6, "Solutions to the Silence," by recognizing the ways in which voices are silenced. Community archives can add previously silenced voices to the archival record, and cocreation can help "resolve the difficulties concerning records of some of the most vulnerable people in society" (pp. 149–50). Johnson and Thomas recognize the amount of work that archivists have to do to ensure that previously silenced voices are heard in the archives, but they also recognize the work that historians do to uncover voices that have been silenced.

In the final chapter, "Are Things Getting Better or Worse?," Thomas outlines major changes to archives in recent decades and how these changes have affected archival silences. The most significant of these changes is the move toward the digital (p. 163). Thomas recognizes that collecting digital materials has allowed archivists to select more records than they may have been able to with paper collections, but even with inexpensive storage, challenges to collecting digital content exist. The chapter neglects to mention opportunities for appraisal of digital collections at scale nor does it cover the environmental costs of storing digital collections, but it recognizes other drawbacks to current practices for collecting digital content. While a thread that runs through each of the chapters of *The Silence of the Archive* is the ways in which archival silences are created both intentionally and unintentionally, another uniting theme is that archival silences are to be expected and are unavoidable. Thomas highlights the relationship between history and archival silences noting that "the shrewdest and most knowledgeable archivists have always recognized that archives are at best an approximate approach to the truth" (p. 175). Perhaps the most important lesson for practicing archivists to learn from this book is that silences will be present in their collections regardless of the work they do to limit these silences. This is not to suggest that archivists should avoid their duty to appraise collections, but recognition of the fact that silences are to be expected. Thomas urges archivists to ensure that "the silences are appropriate and properly managed and not the result of political pressure, poor processes or inappropriate use of technology and that they are recognized for what they are" (p. 177). For archivists to limit silences in their collections, texts such as *The Silence of the Archive* can serve as an opportunity for consciousness-raising and reflection on our professional practices.

Thomas, Fowler, and Johnson's contribution to the Principles and Practice in Records Management and Archives series is a valuable theoretical work for archivists interested in challenging silences in the archival record. They present challenges that archivists will face as digital collecting increases across institutions, and they outline opportunities to uncover the silences.

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