

Advancing Preservation for Archives and Manuscripts

By Elizabeth Joffrion and Michèle V. Cloonan. Chicago:

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Advancing Preservation for Archives and Manuscripts by Elizabeth Joffrion and Michèle V. Cloonan, a 2020 addition to the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) Archival Fundamentals Series III, is not a replacement for the long-standing classic on preservation written and revised by Mary Lynn Ritzenthaler for the earlier and second iteration of the series (*Preserving Archives and Manuscripts*, 2010); rather, it augments and expands on preservation issues and sets up an updated framework for archivists. The earlier title continues to provide basic preservation concepts, but this new title updates with pertinent topics such as digital preservation, sustainability, risk management, and the trending concept of More Product, Less Process (MPLP), to name some of the contemporary issues covered. The editor of the series, Peter Wosh, and the SAA Publications Board are to be commended for seeing this need to update, while recognizing the continuing value of the earlier volume.

The two authors of *Advancing Preservation for Archives and Manuscripts* are well known in the field of preservation, having published both books and articles on the topic for archives, libraries, and museums. Cloonan's *Preserving Our Heritage: Perspectives from Antiquity to the Digital Age* (ALA/Neal Schuman) was awarded the 2016 SAA Preservation Publication Award.¹ Cloonan is a professor in the School of Library and Information Science, College of Organizational Computational and Information Sciences, and dean emerita of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at Simmons University. Joffrion was a senior officer at the National Endowment for the Humanities and brings a wealth of knowledge on funding and digital issues to her writing and, as current director of Heritage Resources at Western Washington University, is well versed in day-to-day management of archives and special collections. She has also taught at Catholic University and Western Washington University. Together, they bring to this volume their broad knowledge of cultural heritage issues in preserving and managing hybrid collections and thoughtful considerations for contemporary issues and ethical decisions, while focusing their attention and expertise on preserving the types of materials in archival collections. One of the particular highlights of the work throughout is the historical background they provide to place archives, and, indeed, cultural heritage collections, writ large in the context of "how we got where we are now." Having this context enables readers to

see the progress or stumbling blocks of cultural heritage from that historical perspective instead of in a vacuum.

The growth and wide use of digital content has profoundly changed archives forever, and the preservation and storage of emails, websites, and digital documentation has become the norm for archivists, even while they recognize the continuing need for safeguarding physical materials in their collections. This hybrid approach to collections preservation and collecting is one of the foci and is referenced within the framework in much of the content of *Advancing Preservation for Archives and Manuscripts*. This strikes me as very pertinent for both early-career archivists, perhaps most focused on digital, and for career archivists who may have dealt more with paper-based materials in their earlier careers. Providing a perspective for all archival managers to create a hybrid approach to all formats addresses many preservation issues in today's cultural heritage world.

From planning to funding to organizational structure, this title provides a sound basis for establishing, growing, and sustaining an archives preservation program within a larger organization or when the archives is a stand-alone entity. The framework approach and the thoughtful consideration of ethics and inclusion, in my opinion, means that this book is not just for archives and manuscripts, but clearly provides useful information and could be considered required reading for librarians and museum collections managers. The framework is based on the idea that preservation is part of all decision-making for collections, that it is the care and protection for current and future use of collections to provide access across time. This framework thus covers all activities of archives that touch on collections from access to digitization, storage to risk management, and disaster planning.

Both authors are well qualified on the broader issues that all cultural heritage institutions grapple with today. They have also published in those areas that cover contemporary topics being discussed in the broader community. One example is Cloonan's 2018 *The Monumental Challenge of Preservation: The Past in a Volatile World* by the MIT Press. Joffrion is most noted for her work with Native American reconciliation.² For this series, the authors cover a broad range of current topics, thus providing in one volume a framework for consideration of establishing, managing, and creating thoughtful preservation policy for issues that have great currency in the discussions of today. "Our premise is that preservation, regardless of the format addressed, must be understood in a broad professional, social, and political context that shapes preservation programs" (p. 2). Having set up this expectation, they proceed to address the many issues in today's world.

The book includes three sections: section 1, "Preservation Frameworks," includes the history and principles of archival preservation; section 2,

"Implementing and Managing a Preservation Program," includes planning, administering, preserving a hybrid collection, and risk management; and section 3, "The Ethics and Moral Implications of Contemporary Preservation Practices." As an example of one broad issue, consider chapter 9, "Sustainable Preservation Practices." After defining their use of the term taken from the United Nations 1987 report that considers both present and future generations' needs, the authors proceed to establish a list of important actions to be studied. The importance of sustainable energy use and reductions of pollution and greenhouse gases are worldwide issues about which cultural heritage institutions have engaged in conversation for a number of years. The authors discuss improving energy efficiency of HVAC systems, considering retrofits for historic buildings while maintaining those buildings, and designing new purpose-built structures, emphasizing the need for individualizing options for facilities and collections beyond the paper-based. For example, the thoughtful list for "responsible stewardship" (p. 145), clearly lays out the actions archivists can take to work with facilities and administration management teams to optimize buildings as the envelopes of protection for collections. I believe this is the first time the topic has received attention within the Archival Fundamentals Series, and it sets a path for today and into the future, both for the series and for the archives community to be part of sustainable energy use.

Chapter 8, "Risk Management: A Programmatic Approach" in section 2, is also groundbreaking within the series and rightfully falls under the topic of managing preservation, as climate change will increasingly negatively impact collections in the absence of assessment and management through planning and prevention, based again on what is possible for each individual organization. Such practical information can inform and advise cultural institutions broadly, beyond archives and manuscript collections, though archivists can be the game changers and movers within any larger organization, bringing together a broad group of staff for such considerations, preparation, and forward thinking. Perhaps more specific to archives is the discussion of the community archives movement in section 3, another thoughtful addition to the series. The need to collect and preserve the history of marginalized communities is a continuing effort for archives—for example, Tribal archives and community archives that include cultural, religious, and ceremonial materials. The collection and preservation of "in-the-moment events," such as the January 6, 2021 attack on the US Capitol, is only one example of the importance of quickly securing materials from an event that might otherwise be thrown away, as well as saving digital content that will document that event for history. "Preservation is a political act" (p. 168), and the authors contend and address that issue by confronting the role of archives within the political realm as an important step in supporting the archival record of what some may wish to forget or deny.

Chapter 7, “Preserving Analog and Digital Media” (section 2), addresses the integrity and authenticity of digital files and the need for early and clear management of such files and their backup. The authors also clearly address naming protocols for files and generating storage of multiple copies of files. A figure on page 123 is especially useful for clearly considering the multiple issues for digital access over the long term. In a concise and multistaged process, the authors reference the National Digital Stewardship Alliance’s “Levels of Digital Preservation” matrix, which covers the aspects of digital files that assure their validation and long-term access. Section 1 includes a history of preservation with useful citations for those who wish to delve deeper into the historical progress of preservation development and programs that supported this need for archives.

And last, I must commend the excellent references and resources provided by the authors. Professional organizations, both national and international, are provided with references, such as the National Heritage Responders, a resource for disaster response organized and funded through the American Institute for Conservation’s Foundation and IFLA, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions, which might not be well known to archivists. Such useful references will provide resources and connections for new and seasoned archivists.

I would be remiss if I did not also point out the sample policies in the appendixes which can be used to create policies where they are lacking in one’s institution. The surveys, standards, and key studies in preservation cited throughout the chapters can lead the reader to additional resources as needed, which again speaks to the breadth of knowledge and scope of the authors and to the well-researched completeness of this highly recommended volume, *Advancing Preservation for Archives and Manuscripts*.

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¹ “Preservation Publication Award: Preserving Our Heritage—Perspectives from Antiquity to the Digital Age by Michèle V. Cloonan,” Society of American Archivists, 2016, <https://www2.archivists.org/node/20777>, captured at <https://perma.cc/Y28S-Z8AD>.

² See Elizabeth Joffrion and Lexie Tom, “Broken Promises: A Case Study in Reconciliation,” *Archival Issues* (2016), <http://digital.library.wisc.edu/1793/78521>.