Archives 101

By Lois Hamill. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2021. 302 pp. Hardcover $115.00, Softcover $48.00, and eBook $45.50. Hardcover ISBN 978-1-5381-3300-2; Softcover ISBN 978-1-5381-3301-9; eBook ISBN 978-1-5381-3302-6.

*A*rchives 101 by Lois Hamill is part of the American Association for State and Local History Book Series co-published with Rowman & Littlefield, which currently includes 84 titles. This relatively slim book is written for busy professionals and volunteers who manage historical collections at small cultural organizations, such as historical societies and local history museums. It covers basic definitions, concepts, and workflows that are relevant to small organizations, from acquiring and processing new materials to exhibiting and making them available to researchers.

Lois Hamill is the head of Special Collections and University Archives at Northern Kentucky University. *Archives 101* is her third book. Her previous books are *Archives for the Lay Person: A Guide to Managing Cultural Collections* (2012) and *Archival Arrangement and Description: Analog to Digital* (2017). Her earlier books no doubt helped Hamill develop her clear descriptive abilities of archival concepts and workflows for readers who have little-to-no experience in the archives field. Hamill's extensive experience with digital archives informs related chapters in this new book, which is a revised and expanded edition of *Archives for the Lay Person.*

A quick side-by-side comparison of *Archives 101* to *Archives for the Lay Person* shows that chapter headings are the same with some word variations and updated language (e.g., "Additional Personnel" in the new book versus "Additional Manpower" in the earlier edition). A significant revision and expansion is Chapter 7, "Managing Digitization Projects," which is new in *Archives 101.* This is not surprising, as much has changed in the world of archives, digitization, and digital exhibits in the ten years between the publication of the two books. The new chapter in *Archives 101* details electronic file management, including naming and metadata conventions (accompanied by visualizations); file structure; storage; digitization project management; and delivery of digitized records (e.g., through websites, digital repositories, and software). The chapter also outlines how to host Community Scanning Days.[1] The additional reading and resources for each chapter have changed slightly, with Hamill removing some citations and adding others. However, many of the recommended resources in *Archives for the Lay Person* were stable URLs that have been maintained and updated in *Archives 101.*

The first half of *Archives 101* walks readers through the work archivists do behind the scenes, such as acquiring new materials and preparing them according to professional standards of arrangement and description. Hamill builds on each chapter, showing how "Arrangement and description are two halves of a whole" (p. 25). She also provides helpful tools like a finding aid template, which was developed

in collaboration with colleagues at Northern Kentucky University, and a finding aid application guide to help readers understand the categories, structures, and requirements of *Describing Archives: A Content Standard* (pp. 37–42). Hamill also walks readers through the process of creating a catalog record with PastPerfect, a popular collections management software used by many small cultural heritage organizations. Hamill clearly outlines steps for using PastPerfect, bolds important terminology, and includes screenshots of the software. This will be helpful for new PastPerfect users who consult *Archives 101* soon, but likely less relevant for future readers as software tends to change rapidly. Other helpful conceptual visualizations show file management structures and naming conventions for documents and photographs.

In the book's second half, Hamill introduces best practices for making collections available to the public and keeping them safe and secure. In Chapter 8, "Reference and Researchers," she covers some of the common challenges archivists face, such as helping first-time users who have poorly formed research questions, and offers standard procedures for how researchers should engage with archival material and follow security guidelines. In this chapter, she also explains the importance of keeping records of research activity for collection maintenance, development, funding, and publicity. Although security is a concern mentioned throughout the book, Chapter 9, "Security," is dedicated to this topic and offers best practices for reading room management, collections processing, exhibits, and more. Chapter 10, "Exhibits," is one of the strongest. Hamill guides the reader through the conception and planning of an exhibit, best practices for documenting items included on display, the importance of universal design, formats for exhibit labels, and virtual exhibit ideas. The remaining chapters cover best practices for collections environmental controls (Chapter 11); archiving multimedia materials (Chapter 12); working with external specialists such as appraisers and vendors (Chapter 13); managing volunteers, students, and temporary employees (Chapter 14); and disaster preparedness (Chapter 15).

Throughout the book, Hamill italicizes key words, which she defines in a glossary in the book's back matter. She largely draws the definitions from the Society of American Archivists' (SAA) *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology*, which is available on SAA's website.[2] At the end of each chapter are reading recommendations and additional resources that provide in-depth coverage of various topics. Often these resources are available online, which means they are accessible to readers who need advanced help. Four appendices include detailed information about guidelines and policies, sample forms and workflows, examples of accession records, and a list of archival supplies vendors.

The index is only four pages, which I thought was a bit short for an introductory guide. However, it is logically structured. For example, while reading Chapter 6, "Photographs: Part 2—Management and Use," I began to wonder how the topic of rights, as discussed on page 84, was represented in the index. Photograph copyright

is a confusing and common concern for researchers and archivists, which made me wonder if a reader would be able to easily find information about this topic in the index. "Rights" is not listed in the index, so I looked at the entry for "photograph," under which there are ten subtopics. "Rights" is not one of them, but under *See also,* the reader is directed to "copyright." None of the copyright subtopics direct the reader to photographs specifically, but the subtopic of "intellectual rights" is listed and refers the reader to page 84, which inspired my initial thought.

Throughout the book, Hamill points out ethical concerns and provides advice that is in line with SAA's professional values.[3] However, in the chapter on external specialists, her advice on valuation of items or collections is a little murky. She explains how readers can establish a rough estimate for the cost of an item or collection with a little research, but that "if a more reliable valuation is required, an appraiser can help" (p. 184). Archivists providing monetary appraisal is something that has been drilled into me as verboten, but perhaps this is unrealistic outside of the classroom or managed differently in historical societies. It was also surprising to see that books might need to be handled with cotton gloves (p. 172) and that no gloves were recommended when handling photographs (p. 59). In my experience, gloves are not worn when handling books but are recommended when handling photographs.

Overall, this is an eminently readable introduction to archival practices and a useful guide to help people begin hands-on archival work quickly and with confidence. Hamill's prose is clear, concise, and jargon-free. As I finish my MLIS program with a concentration in archives management, this book reads like a review of my coursework. It could easily be handed to a new archives employee or volunteer to give them an overview of core archival concepts. Even for employees or volunteers at larger institutions who might be focused on one aspect of archival work and isolated from other departments, *Archives 101* provides a thorough look at the work of a cultural institution when it comes to processing, making available, and storing documents, photographs, and other objects.

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Notes

1   Community Scanning Days are special events held by local history organizations and libraries during which community members bring photographs, maps, and other records to be scanned on the spot and added to the institution's digital collections or drop off their items to be scanned and picked up at a later date.

2   The URL that Hamill provides to *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (http://www2.archivists.org/glossary) redirects to the new *Dictionary of Archives Terminology* (https://dictionary.archivists.org), both published by the Society of American Archivists.

3   Society of American Archivists, *SAA Core Values Statement and Code of Ethics,* revised August 2020, https://www2.archivists.org/statements/saa-core-values-statement-and-code-of-ethics.