

Interdisciplinary Approaches to Archives

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We often talk about the archival literature as a conversation, a dialogue between archivists past, present, and future about the critical issues impacting our profession. Amy Cooper Cary says it well in her introduction to the Fall/Winter 2023 issue of *American Archivist*: “this literature that we are creating is a conversation—our articles do not stand alone but interact and respond to one another. Our literature mirrors our annual conference—we are in constant conversation with our professional colleagues, our students, our researchers, and our practice.”²

As important as it is to have these conversations within the profession, it can also be helpful to look beyond our professional boundaries and consider how scholars in other disciplines are thinking about and using archives. We are fortunate in this issue to feature reviews of multiple books from scholars outside of the archives field who offer unique takes on what archives mean to them.

We begin with three reviews that consider how structures of power both affect and are reflected in government archives around the world. *Exceções Legais ao Direito de Acesso à Informação: Dimensões contextuais das categorias de informação pessoal nos documentos arquivísticos* [*Legal Exceptions to the Right of Access to Information: Contextual Dimensions of Personal Information Categories in Archival Documents*], written by Welder Antônio Silva and reviewed by Shirley Carvalhêdo Franco, examines the tension between the right to privacy and the right to information access as they relate to government records in Brazil. *Moroccan Other-Archives*, written by Brahim El Guabli and reviewed by Laila Hussein Moustafa, considers how the experiences of marginalized communities in Morocco are often missing from official records and archives, leading researchers to turn to unconventional sources to tell these groups’ stories. *War on Record: The Archive and the Afterlife of the Civil War*, written by Yael A. Sternhell and reviewed by Eric Stoykovich, describes how US government officials’ efforts to gather and publish records of the Union and Confederate Armies after the American Civil War has impacted both public and scholarly understanding of the conflict ever since. Although Silva is a professor of archival science and an archivist, El Guabli and Sternhell both come from other fields, demonstrating the continued impact of the archival turn in multiple disciplines.

Two other books in this issue feature interdisciplinary scholars, and both explore the connections between archives and material and visual culture. *In Visible Archives: Queer and Feminist Visual Culture in the 1980s*, written by Margaret Galvan and reviewed by Elizabeth E. Engel, reconstructs the stories of groundbreaking queer and feminist artists through an examination of their archived works. The diverse contributors to *The Materiality of the Archive: Creative Practice in Context*, edited by Sue Breakell and Wendy Russell and reviewed by Craig Simpson, unpack the theme of archives as objects and use material theory and practice to challenge the ways we encounter, study, and steward archival collections. Both books consider how the inclusion of material and visual culture in archives impacts the ways we perform archival research and the stories that archives can tell.

The final two books included in this issue bring us full circle as they reexamine traditional components of archival theory and practice that have led to oppressive structures and consider how archivists can enact more liberatory, inclusive frameworks. *The Remaking of Archival Values*, written by Victoria Hoyle and reviewed by Anna Holland, interrogates and challenges conventional assumptions about the purpose and meaning of archives and evidence, offering alternative approaches informed by contemporary critical archival theorists and Hoyle's own experiences as an archivist. *Archiving Cultures: Heritage, Community, and the Making of Records and Memory*, written by Jeannette A. Bastian and reviewed by Lily Hunter, touches on many of the themes covered by other books in this issue, from colonialism's influence on Western ideas of archives' purpose and meaning to the ways that oppressive power structures in the archives have marginalized non-Western histories and cultures. Bastian, like other authors featured in this issue, calls on archivists to expand our definition of archives and records to embrace a broader, more diverse spectrum of human experiences and ways of meaning-making.

Additionally, between September 2023 and March 2024, we featured nine new microreviews of archives-related publications on the Reviews Portal, which range in topic from archives and human rights to legal records documenting magicians in Tudor England. We also published three new reflections on John Fleckner's work as part of the first installment of our Intergenerational Conversations series. We are excited to begin the next installment of the series this year, which will focus on SAA presidential addresses.

We hope you will continue to join us on the Portal and here in the journal as we see where our conversations about archives take us next.

On the Reviews Portal

(Published between September 2023 and March 2024)

INTERGENERATIONAL CONVERSATIONS

- Jancosek, Jordan. "Records Surveys and a Healthy Collection Lifecycle." Intergenerational Conversations series. February 26, 2024. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2024/02/26/records-surveys-and-a-healthy-collection-lifecycle>.
- Ortega-Chiolero, Selena. "Community-centric Collections: Reassessing John Fleckner's Perspectives on the Commonalities Between Museums and Archives." Intergenerational Conversations. January 8, 2024. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2024/01/08/community-centric-collections-reassessing-john-fleckners-perspectives-on-the-commonalities-between-museums-and-archives>.
- Thornhill, Kate. "Nineteen Years Since the Last Revolution and the Next: More Connectivity, More Technology, and Now Generative Artificial Intelligence." Intergenerational Conversations series. November 2, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/11/02/nineteen-years-since-the-last-revolution-and-the-next-more-connectivity-more-technology-and-now-generative-artificial-intelligence>.

MICROREVIEWS

- Allen, Hali. Review of *Beyond the Book: Unique and Rare Primary Sources for East Asian Studies Collected in North America* by Jidong Yang. March 5, 2024. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2024/03/05/beyond-the-book-unique-and-rare-primary-sources-for-east-asian-studies-collected-in-north-america>.
- Guensch, Megan. Review of *Everyday Magicians: Legal Records and Magic Manuscripts from Tudor England* by Sharon Hubbs. October 17, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/10/17/everyday-magicians-legal-records-and-magic-manuscripts-from-tudor-england>.
- Howard, Andrea. Review of *Archives and Human Rights* by Jens Boel et al. September 5, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/09/05/archives-and-human-rights>.
- Howdeshell, Ashley. Review of *Placing Papers: The American Literary Archives Market* by Hildreth Chen. December 14, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/12/14/placing-papers-the-american-literary-archives-market>.

- Hunter, Lily. Review of *A Cultural Arsenal for Democracy: The World War II Work of US Museums* by Clarissa J. Ceglio. October 12, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/10/12/a-cultural-arsenal-for-democracy-the-world-war-ii-work-of-us-museums>.
- Knoles, Jessie. Review of *The Special Collections Handbook* by Alison Cullingford. February 16, 2024. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2024/02/16/the-special-collections-handbook>.
- Pun, Raymond. Review of *In the Herbarium: The Hidden World of Collecting and Preserving Plants* by Maura C. Flannery. October 10, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/10/10/in-the-herbarium-the-hidden-world-of-collecting-and-preserving-plants>.
- Riggins, Adina. Review of *Presidential Archivist: A Memoir* by David E. Alsobrook. December 11, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/12/11/presidential-archivist-a-memoir>.
- Semrau, Laura. Review of *Teaching Through the Archives: Text, Collaboration, and Activism* edited by Tarez Samra Graban and Wendy Hayden. September 8, 2023. <https://reviews.americanarchivist.org/2023/09/08/teaching-through-the-archives-text-collaboration-and-activism>.

NOTES

- ¹ All views expressed in this essay are the authors' own. They do not represent the views of the authors' institutions nor any agency or office of the US government.
- ² Amy Cooper Cary, "It's a Conversation," *American Archivist* 86, no. 2 (2023): 256, <https://doi.org/10.17723/2327-9702-86.2.256>.