

Reviews

Edited by Adrian Cunningham

Terry Cook (ed.), *Controlling the past: Documenting society and institutions: Essays in honor of Helen Willa Samuels*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2011. 434 pp. ISBN 1 931666 36 9. USD \$56.00 (SAA members USD \$39.95).

In her landmark 1986 article entitled 'Who controls the past?' Helen Willa Samuels gave us one of our contemporary archival mantras. It was she who first evoked George Orwell's quotation from 1984: 'who controls the past, controls the future, who controls the present, controls the past'. In doing so, one of Samuels' gifts to archivists has been the introduction of a new reflexivity into archival thinking, particularly around what she and Richard Cox have called our first responsibility – appraisal.

Appraisal is the warp and weft of archival work – it stands at the fulcrum of shaping what the future will know about the past. Or, as Terry Cook writes in his introduction to this collection, appraisal is the gateway function to all subsequent archival activity with decisions as to what to select for permanent preservation, what to document, what to digitise, all involving conscious decision-making which means that some archives are privileged over others. Cook goes so far as to argue that because every archival function requires an understanding of the impact of our decisions, 'appraisal is the only archival function – never ending, always opening to new possibilities' (p. 3).

As with Samuels's intellectual threads, which have become seamlessly interwoven into contemporary archival thinking and practice, the cover of this book reflects Samuels's interests in materiality, texture and colour through her personal collection of textiles. This book builds on Samuels's contributions to archival thought and the scale and

nature of the questions that she asks. Samuels has been continually encouraging archivists to think on bigger questions – about the co-creation of archives and their meanings, about the forces at work which shape the nature of the records and the need to appraise these along with the records themselves, and about the need to understand the contexts in which we work to shape the records.

Cook continues this tradition of extending our intellectual reach in this collection of essays. He brings together a stellar line-up of 18 leading archival thinkers who draw their lineage from the threads of Samuels's intellectual cloth. These writers maintain Samuels's tradition of asking big questions while building on her contributions to archival thought. This book is structured in three parts. It develops the theme of documenting modern society and its institutions in two parts: the first on documenting society – understanding, managing and appraising material; the second on representing society – and the challenges around documentation of archival materials. The two retrospective reflections were written without access to the rest of the book – one reflecting on the contributions of her writings and one from Samuels herself. The papers in this book are woven together with a searing introduction from the editor Terry Cook, whose warp plays with the many intellectual threads provided by Samuels while bringing together a personal weft to provide a range of contexts for the impact of her work.

In taking her archival gift – the question about who controls the past – back to its scribe, Cook introduces us to the least well documented and articulated aspects of archival work – how our professional thoughts and actions are shaped by our own private contexts. Bringing our personal lives into the public domain is important in order to give deep context to our own decisions, and yet it is something that many are uneasy about discussing. Cook's intellectual blowtorch starts very gently to explore the formative threads in Samuels's life, and she provides her own reflections on the contexts of co-creation of her ideas and the forces which have given her life meaning.

This book is an archival *tour de force* in the very best tradition. The leading thinkers of the day dance their intellectual pirouette around the ideas of Helen Willa Samuels, paying homage to her considerable

legacy and ensuring that the relevance of her work is understood by a new generation. Not only is this edited collection Terry Cook's gift to a friend and mentor but it is his own gift to the profession. It is a must read for all archivists.

Joanna Sassoon

Michael Piggott and Maggie Shapley, *Prime Ministers at the Australian National University: an archival guide*, ANU eView, Canberra, 2011. ix + 221 pp. ISBN 978 098072 8446. \$19.95.

The title of this handsome publication will surprise general readers, as the connections between prime ministers and the Australian National University (ANU) are not immediately obvious. One former prime minister (Bruce) was the first chancellor and another (Whitlam) was a visiting fellow. One future prime minister (Hawke) undertook postgraduate studies, though he did not graduate, and another (Rudd) completed his undergraduate degree at the ANU. In contrast to a solitary ANU graduate, nine of Australia's prime ministers, by my count, were graduates of Melbourne and Sydney universities.

Archivists may also be surprised by the title, as they are likely to associate the records of prime ministers with the National Archives of Australia and the National Library of Australia rather than with the ANU. It is true that in recent times some Australian universities have sought to set up prime ministerial libraries on the American model, but the ANU is not one of them. It does not hold the personal archives of any of the prime ministers. Nevertheless, with the help of a fellowship from the Australian Prime Ministers Centre in Canberra, Michael Piggott and Maggie Shapley have succeeded in locating a substantial body of disparate records created by, or relating to, all of Australia's 27 prime ministers.

The ANU Archives is both a corporate and a collecting archives. It has responsibility for the official records of the university, including personal papers of academics and the records of various historical projects, ranging from public lectures to the monumental *Australian Dictionary of Biography* (ADB). On the other side, and more widely known, are the holdings of the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, predominantly

the records of businesses and trade unions but also records of other types of organisations, union leaders, political activists and other individuals. The guide draws on this great variety of records, including University Council minutes, staff and student files, photographs, tape recordings, films, company letterbooks, union minutebooks, and runs of newspapers. As well as breadth, there is considerable depth in many of the descriptions of records. For instance, in the entry on Hughes, over three pages are devoted to the 1896–1917 minutes of the Sydney Wharf Labourers' Union. Throughout the guide, generous space is given to the *ADB* files, revealing the challenges that authors often faced in writing about the private lives of their prime ministerial subjects and the difficulties that the *ADB* editors sometimes faced in dealing with their authors.

The guide is organised alphabetically by prime ministers, rather than by provenance. This approach results in a certain amount of repetition. For instance, a description of Amalgamated Postal Workers' Union correspondence appears, with slight variations, under ten prime ministers. Similarly, in four entries there is an identical description of a university file on registration for National Service. Inevitably, the length and interest of the entries vary considerably. Relatively little was found on Reid, Page, Fadden or Keating. The Noel Butlin collection strengths are reflected in the longer and more significant entries on the sole businessman (Bruce) and three union officials (Hughes, Chifley, Hawke). Some of the material described is trivial in the extreme or has only a tenuous connection with the prime ministers, some of it relates to their fathers or wives, and often the records date from before and/or after the subject was in politics. My impression is that no amazing cache of records has been uncovered that will lead historians to reassess a particular prime ministership. On the other hand, a great deal has been found on the lives and broader careers of many of the prime ministers, and this guide will be a very useful reference work for future biographers.

Australian archivists will probably be most interested in the two sections that precede the record descriptions. The first is an essay entitled 'Prime Ministers in the archival landscape'. It deals succinctly with prime ministers as creators and keepers of records, the distinction between records of and records about an individual, and the history

of collecting these records by Australian institutions. In particular, it highlights the increasing preoccupation since the 1970s with prime ministers rather than with cabinet ministers or parliamentarians generally, expressed archivally in the prime ministerial libraries, the prime ministers' portal, guides to prime ministerial records, and the establishment of the Australian Prime Ministers Centre. The other section consists of ten brief case studies in which ANU records are used to investigate particular incidents, relationships and allegations involving one or more of the prime ministers. They illustrate the potential value and also the limitations of the records in shedding new light on questions raised by historians in the past. These studies of 'archives in action' give the volume a liveliness that is lacking in many conventional archival guides.

The guide is an attractive work, well laid-out, with good illustrations and a detailed index. The front and back covers are decorated with sepia-coloured portraits of each of the prime ministers, including a surprisingly youthful Julia Gillard. At the time (1983) she was President of the Australian Union of Students and the photograph appeared in the ANU student newspaper *Woroni*.

Graeme Powell

Anna E Bülow and Jess Ahmon, *Preparing collections for digitization*, Facet Publishing in association with the National Archives of the United Kingdom, London, 2011. 184 pp. ISBN 978 1 85604 7111 (paperback). Distributed in Australia by Inbooks. \$200.00.

Preparing collections for digitization is a welcome addition to the reference shelves of archivists and collection managers who are undertaking digitisation projects. Over the past ten years, several papers and publications have been written on digitising archival collections. These publications have included handbooks and toolkits on 'how to digitise', copyright issues relating to digitisation programs, technical standards for capturing digital images, enhancing access to digital collections and digital preservation issues.

Both authors, Anna Bülow and Jess Ahmon, work in the preservation section of the National Archives of the United Kingdom. Ross Spencer,

a technical researcher in digital preservation at the National Archives, contributed to the book. Like the larger cultural institutions in Australia, the National Archives has been developing a digitisation program for many years. The authors' experience and advice on the practical nature of digitising collections is gratefully received by those of us still setting up and learning about the digitisation of archives.

It is not surprising, with two authors who specialise in preservation, that the strength of the book is on preservation concerns for digitising original documents. The book also includes chapters on digitisation in the context of collection management, resources, suppliers and equipment for image capture, the digital image and setting up the imaging operation.

Chapter 1, 'Digitization in the context of collection management', argues that digitisation should be embedded in an institution's collection management strategy because it brings benefits to the preservation, use and development of the collection. It cites preservation, use and development as three key reasons for digitising. Building on digitisation frameworks developed by Public Record Office Victoria, Australia (2008) and Rieger (2008) the authors introduce the reader to the 'four phases' of digitisation programs. Phase one includes the selection of material, assessing copyright issues, funding the project, surveying and preparing the collection. Phase two includes undertaking the actual image capture, processing the results, creating metadata, structuring the image set and creating an archival set of master files. Phase three includes preparing the data set for online presentation. Importantly, the authors note that the marketing and managing of digitisation projects should always be included in any digitisation program, stating 'digitization will always result in long-term financial implications for the operating institution' (p. 12). Phase four involves managing and financing the long-term preservation of the digital images as well as the originals. The authors note that 'planning to keep digital content accessible for at least ten years should be feasible, but the resource requirements for maintaining a digital collection might even be higher than the continuing preservation needs of the original' (p. 13).

Chapter 2, 'Before you digitize: resources, suppliers and surrogates', lists a range of specialists required for digitisation programs, covers the positives and negatives of outsourcing digitisation projects to a commercial supplier and cites the continuing role of microfilm as a preservation medium for many institutions. In chapter 3, Ross Spencer discusses the technicalities of the digital image in an accessible manner. He covers basic decisions relating to the image specification, resolution, bit and colour depth and colour management. Spencer notes that there is no recommended professional industry standard with regard to digital image specifications. He encourages institutions to develop individual standards to share with other institutions with a view to building a common standard in the future.

Chapter 4, 'The process of selection', and chapter 5, 'Surveying collections', focus on developing a strategy and overall plan for the digitisation program. Once a collection has been surveyed and documents selected, the digitisation program work flow, including tasks relating to document preparation, can be developed. Chapter 6, 'Equipment for image capture', offers advice on features to consider when purchasing imaging equipment, such as image specifications, speed of image capture, physical limitations, software and ease of use, technical support, sustainability, and cost. The basic operation and strengths and weaknesses of a range of scanning equipment – including flatbed scanners, overhead scanners, digital cameras, sheet-feed scanners and large format scanners – are summarised.

Chapter 7, 'Preparation of document formats and fastenings', and chapter 8, 'Preparation of damaged documents', provide useful information about the preservation and conservation of original documents. The photographs and diagrams in these chapters are especially helpful as they illustrate some of the specialist equipment and concepts relating to the preparation and conservation of original documents. The authors remind us that the preparation of documents for digitisation takes time and should be properly factored into the digitisation workflow. Chapter 9, 'Setting up the imaging operation', concludes this helpful publication with advice on how to physically set up the digitisation workspace, including the size and layout of the workspace, health and safety considerations, tools and materials, and

cleaning and maintenance. The authors encourage us to monitor and track the digitising program using statistics, so that evaluations can be made and the digitisation program can be improved upon. Staffing, including the use of specialists, and training in areas such as basic preservation, is covered briefly.

The book does not include detailed information on metadata capture or digital delivery systems, but some references are provided indicating where more information about these topics can be found.

The publication is written in clear English and is easy to use. It can be 'dipped in and out of' with the help of a clear contents listing at the start of the book and a comprehensive index. The chapter summaries at the end of each chapter are particularly useful for a quick understanding of the chapter's content; and the bibliographies, also placed at the end of each chapter, offer useful suggestions for other publications that could extend our knowledge further. There are three pages of further reading references, including websites, at the end of the book.

Preparing collections for digitization is a practical guide for digitising archives, with an emphasis on the preservation aspects of preparing collections for the digitisation process. It is particularly useful for archives that deal with a wide range of materials, media and formats, including manuscript or printed heritage materials, where long-term preservation is a priority. It is a helpful resource, particularly for collection professionals who are embarking on digitisation projects, with many good references and pointers to further information.

Kylie Moloney
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Ross Harvey, *Digital curation: a how to do it manual*, Facet Publishing, London, 2010. xxii + 225 pp. ISBN 978 1 85604 733 3. £44.95.

Digital curation is a rapidly growing field. It is becoming increasingly difficult for the novice to make sense of the variety of standards, projects and initiatives and pick what is key; and for the practitioner to maintain knowledge of the wide range of current projects. With *Digital curation: a how to do it manual*, Ross Harvey has given both novices and practitioners a valuable tool.

While the title implies a focus on the practical aspects of digital curation, the manual also includes background on the emergence of the discipline and key concepts, making it a useful text for a novice. Practitioners will appreciate the currency and comprehensiveness of the manual and extensive links and references to research projects and initiatives.

The manual is divided into three parts: digital curation: scope and incentives; key requirements for digital curation; and, the digital curation lifecycle in action. The structure is based on the Digital Curation Centre's Curation Lifecycle Model, with the chapters in parts 2 and 3 of the manual addressing each element of the model in turn.

Part 1 provides a valuable introduction to digital curation, defining key terms and its emergence primarily from e-sciences and e-scholarship. It also examines capability issues associated with digital curation. This part also contains a clear overview of two key frameworks: the Digital Curation Lifecycle Model and the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) standard.

Part 2 covers the 'full lifecycle actions': curate and preserve; description and representation information; preservation planning; and, community watch and participation. Part 3 addresses the eight 'sequential lifecycle actions': conceptualise; create or receive; appraise and select; ingest; preservation action; store; access use and reuse; and, transform. The three 'occasional lifecycle actions' of reappraise, dispose and migrate are also covered. Chapter 13, in particular, contains an excellent analysis of the pros and cons of different preservation approaches and identifies the many tools available to support digital preservation.

The book, while recognising the background of digital curation in e-sciences and e-scholarship, has a broader focus on common digital curation principals and practice across e-research, libraries, archives and others. However, some chapters do focus more heavily on research data than others, for example, chapters 9 and 15.

The manual has an accompanying website at <http://www.neal-schuman.com/curation/> that includes links to checklists, templates and the websites of digital curation projects and initiatives. While a useful resource, it is rarely referred to in the manual.

Many books on digital preservation have suffered from publication lead time, appearing dated as soon as they hit the shelves. *Digital curation: a how to do it manual* does not suffer from this failing and includes references up to and including 2010.

While text-heavy, the manual benefits from a clear layout with plenty of white space, clear headings and break out boxes with key points. Some diagrams and tables accompany the text.

There are a few minor inconsistencies in the text, for example in chapter 7 Harvey cites conflicting definitions of technical metadata. This is not Harvey's error – the conflicting definitions derive from different sources and standards – but without acknowledgement and explanation of this it could be a source of confusion for the unwary. However, these do not detract from what is an excellent resource.

Overall, the manual is an excellent introduction to the field for the novice and a useful summary of current trends for the practitioner. Harvey has the rare ability to synthesise a huge range of information into a coherent whole.

Rowena Loo
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Peter J Tyler, *State Records NSW 1788–2011*, Desert Pea Press, Sydney, 2011. x + 150 pp. ISBN 978 187 686 111 7. Available free upon request from State Records New South Wales and online at: <<http://www.records.nsw.gov.au/about-us/50-years-at-state-records/files/state-records-nsw-1788-2011-a-history-pdf-826kb>>.

Commemorating the implementation of the New South Wales *State Archives Act 1961*, this very elegant volume provides a comprehensive analysis of the struggle to manage and preserve government records in that state in the context of political and organisational difficulties. Chapters are arranged chronologically, which makes understanding the book's complex themes easier. The author has skilfully crafted a balanced mix of facts with an analysis of the political environment and its impact upon the archives and its goal of legislative authority. Tyler incorporates important debates about the tension between library and

archives within these themes, enabling this aspect of our professional development to be viewed in a wider political context rather than as an isolated theme. This crafted analysis also successfully examines current issues such as the digital revolution, which is the title of the final chapter. The administrative history style additions – including descriptions of bodies such as the ‘History Board’ of 1891, the biographies of directors, members of the executive and bibliography of publications add value to the book.

The book is arranged in five chapters. The first, ‘Indifference, Ignorance and Neglect, 1788–1910’ explores attitudes to recordkeeping from the appointment of Arthur Phillip as inaugural Governor of the Colony of New South Wales to the interest in recording the history of the state as its centenary approached in 1888, and the initiation of the *Historical Records of New South Wales* publication series. Chapter 2, ‘Public Library Takes Charge, 1911–1960’, takes up in 1911 when the newly formed Mitchell Library took control of state archives and public access commenced along with the challenges of managing public records in a library environment. Of particular interest is the establishment of an archives department within the library in 1953 and the push for separate archives legislation aided by Schellenberg’s tour of Australia in 1954. The third chapter, ‘Pioneering Legislation, 1961–1975’ starts with the enabling of the Archives Act in June 1961 and covers events such as the quest for a new purpose-built storage facility. Chapter 4, ‘Divorce and Settlement’ covers the period after the state archives became administratively separate from the State Library of New South Wales, with the relocation of the archives to The Rocks and the establishment of a Records Management Office in 1976. The final chapter, ‘The Digital Revolution’ examines the period following the *State Records Act 1998* and the creation of the State Records Authority in January 1999.

The author states in his preface that the book is ‘aimed at archivists, librarians, administrators, historians and interested citizens who wish to know more about the origins and developments of a vital part of our heritage’ and indeed, the book is pitched just right for this group. After showing the title to the rest of the family who rolled their eyes, I felt a certain trepidation as I started to read – we are a very theoretical

profession and was this going to be a 'dry' read? Surprisingly, I enjoyed it – I could well relate to the themes, it flowed logically and the background story to 1961 is very informative. The illustrations are well chosen and the size just right.

My only complaint upon finishing it was that it left me wanting the archivist's side of the story. The photograph of the archives staff at the Mitchell Library enquiry desk in 1974 wearing 'Ask Me Anything' t-shirts left me intrigued to know what reference service was like back then. The fact that so many of the staff have been with the institution for so long means that there must be some great stories to capture. So maybe that is the archives' next history project?

Annabel Lloyd
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Francis X Blouin Jr and William G Rosenberg, *Processing the past: contesting authority in history and the archives*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011. x + 257 pp. ISBN 978 0 19 974054 3. £47.50.

'What is it exactly that you do?'

It's a line you might use when you meet an intriguing stranger at a party. Surely it should not be needed between historians and archivists? But where once these professions were linked, sometimes almost identical, that is now no longer true.

The authors of *Processing the past* explain that the book began with 'a casual encounter' between an historian and an archivist when the historian (Rosenberg) visited the archives to undertake research, and wanted to discuss some general problems about accessing materials. The archivist (Blouin) was 'more than willing to offer counsel but [was] somewhat amused by how little the historian seemed to know about what the archival process was really about.' The historian, for his part, was struck by how little the archivist knew about new directions in historical understanding. What followed was 'a prolonged and increasingly interesting conversation', out of which emerged this book. The authors' stated aim is to explore 'the changing elements of historical and archival practice', and to examine the 'increasing

distance between the work, training, and outlooks of historians and archivists' that the authors call 'the archival divide'.

Their key conceptual tool is that of 'authority'. Where once there was a shared understanding between historians and archivists as to what constitutes authoritative history and what gives authority to the records acquired and managed by archivists, that understanding exists no longer. As historians explore recent cultural and linguistic 'turns' that shape historical understanding, many have been asking questions not easily answered by examining archival records. Archivists meanwhile have been grappling with the sheer bulk of records that have been created on paper in the mid- to late twentieth century, and with the challenges of preserving electronic records. Shared notions of 'historical importance' could no longer be translated into strategies to preserve records. While historians have broadened the scope of their questions, and many still adhere to a 'keep everything!' notion of archival practice, archivists have realised that, as Blouin and Rosenberg put it, 'archives cannot embrace the idea of providing all documents for answering all questions'. Many archivists now focus on identifying and being guided by the 'essential' qualities of the record, and by the context of its creation. The documentation worth keeping, these archivists say, has to be that which is essential to the functions of the organisation or institution. What they may not realise is that historians, in their turn, have been exploring how political and social institutions work and are shaped by large socioeconomic and cultural factors, including even language itself. Blouin and Rosenberg spend the first half of their book counterpointing these ideas and developments in history and archives, and bring the analysis to rest at the end of part 1 by pondering the implications of the 'archival divide' in the conceptual understandings currently underpinning the thinking of archivists and historians.

Historians and archivists already familiar with these developments may find that part 2 of this book extends their knowledge in more useful directions. Archivists can bring themselves up to speed on what 'social memory' is, why historians spend so much time on it, and where traditional archives sit within it, in chapter 6. Historians who read chapter 7 will be asked to reconsider any residual ideas they may have about archives being 'inert' or 'neutral'. Archival processes

have to be read as carefully as the documents themselves, the authors remark, quoting Ann Laura Stoler and her work on reading archives within and against 'the archival grain'. In chapter 8 historians can learn something of the detail of what archivists actually do from day to day, and archivists, especially those working in collecting and 'identity archives', can reflect on how their practices shape the record and thus help to create historical knowledge. Archivists and historians alike will be interested in chapter 10, 'Archives and the Cyberinfrastructure' on digital preservation and access. Archivists already working in this area may not find anything new here, but for others, this chapter offers a thoughtful and genial introduction.

In a short concluding chapter, Blouin and Rosenberg suggest ways that historians and archivists can begin to bridge the 'archival divide'. In order to write good archives-based history, the authors insist, historians must understand the ways repositories assemble and manage their material. And even archivists working with contemporary material need some basic historical literacy, and still need to know the kinds of questions scholars will be asking of that material, if they are to serve their users adequately. This chapter is perhaps the thinnest of the book; on the whole the authors seem more intent on describing the problem than suggesting solutions. But at a practical level, they mention the use of web-based technologies to develop parallel finding aids that enable researchers to contribute their own descriptions of records, and their experiences in using them. The authors do not discuss these possibilities in depth, and indeed, reveal a degree of discomfort with these systems by still assigning inverted commas to 'YouTube' and 'Web 2.0', long after many of us have stopped bothering. Still, it will cheer some readers to know that Blouin and Rosenberg have heard of the 'semantic web', even if they shy away from exploring its implications.

The book is genuinely co-authored. Each chapter is a blend of Blouin's and Rosenberg's writing, so both authors have contributed to the entire book. Perhaps there is a limitation here: both authors are from the United States and their thinking draws mainly on material familiar to them, which is scholarship from the US and, to a lesser extent, from Europe. By contrast, Australia, South Africa and Canada rate just a nod

here and there. Still, the book is free of the unevenness and disjunctions that often characterise multi-authored books. There must have been genuine conversation between these two scholars; each has listened intently to the other, and this shows in the style of the writing. Each author has had to set aside any professional jargon he may otherwise have used because each has had to explain the fundamentals of his profession to the other. Each will give the other nowhere to hide, in other words, and the result for the reader is smoothly flowing prose, complex in ideas but relatively simple in style. That is a singular achievement, one that by itself is a step towards bridging the 'archival divide'. The book therefore stands as an invitation to others to follow, if they wish.

Anne-Marie Condé
National Museum of Australia

Jennie Hill (ed.), *The future of archives and recordkeeping: a reader*, Facet Publishing, London, 2011. 244 pp. ISBN 978 1 85604 666 4 (paperback). £49.95.

'There has never been a more interesting time to be an archivist.'

Such a bold and intriguing statement sets the tone for this fascinating collection of reflective essays that explore the past, present and future of archives and recordkeeping from a Western perspective. In many ways this statement summarises the mixed feelings of excitement and concern that many archives and recordkeeping professionals express in literature, conferences and other forms of discourse. The internal recognition of the value and potential the profession offers to the broader community versus a sense that the profession is under serious threat as professional boundaries blur and archival ideas and practices are hijacked by other established and emerging professions. For anyone curious, concerned or passionate about the future of archives and recordkeeping, this book is definitely worth considering.

Although a small volume at 244 pages, its content is intellectually rich and thought-provoking. Drawing on the talents of many notable

archival academics, researchers and practitioners, the book explores the evolving nature of archives and the role of the archivist within the context of various changes which are shaping and contesting the archival and recordkeeping profession.

The *Future of archives and recordkeeping* is neither a practical 'how to' manual nor a heavy theoretical text. The intended audience is primarily post-graduate archives administration students and archives professionals interested in refreshing and further developing their understanding of the archival profession. The book assumes – and to deeply engage with the content it requires – at least a basic understanding of archival theory, philosophy and historiography.

The book examines the effect of challenges and changes such as technology and postmodernism on the role of archivists and archives. It considers the drivers and effects from the lens of those inside and outside the profession. By viewing the profession from both these perspectives this book avoids being a work of professional navel-gazing, presenting instead a brilliantly contextualised, thought-provoking, insightful and well-considered synthesis of why it is such an interesting time to be an archivist.

The book emphasises the importance of archivists in understanding and engaging in the changes that impact on the profession. There is a sense of urgency in the call to look both inside and outside the profession as a critical step for it to emerge as a more robust and relevant profession during the twenty-first century. The book explores contemporary challenges through the following four themes or parts: Defining archives; Shaping a discipline; Archives 2.0: archives in society; and Archives in the information age: is there still a role for the archivist?

'Defining archives' explores the roles and relationships between the archivist and archive user. It opens with a chapter by Victoria Lane and Jennie Hill that seeks to contextualise the archive and archivist in the past, present and future and open the discussion on four key themes. Lane and Hill explore the evolution of archival theory and practice from the positivist shadow of Jenkinson through to the development of postmodernist perspectives of archives and the role of archivists.

Sue Breakell further explores the relationship between archive and user. Her chapter includes a discussion of the greater role archives and archivists play in popular culture as demonstrated by the highly popular television series, 'Who do you think you are?', which provided a strong and highly visible connection between archives and their communities. She concludes: 'The better the archivist can understand the context of the user's interaction with archives, as well as the context of the archives they want to see, the better we can both engage with discussion and accommodate the changing needs of our audiences' (p. 34).

The first part concludes with a chapter by Alexandrina Buchanan that considers the understanding of archives from the perspective of other disciplines. In this chapter Buchanan recognises the archive as 'contested territory' and draws inspiration from Jacques Derrida's observation: 'Nothing is less reliable, nothing is less clear today than the word "archive"' (p. 37). She concludes that 'the profession as a whole appears too willing to dismiss alternative ideas of the archive as incorrect, and therefore unhelpful, rather than different, and therefore potentially revelatory' (p. 55). Buchanan urges the archival profession that the 'new ideas of archive are ones which the archival profession should engage, not in a defensive rearguard action, nor in a spirit of pathetic gratitude that it is our "turn" now, (especially since, after 20 years, it seems likely that the current "archival turn" will soon have run its course). We have a role to play in these debates over the archive' (p. 55).

The second part of the book, 'Shaping a Discipline', examines the apparent conflict between traditional archival thought and practice, and new ways of thinking and working. It comprises of two substantial chapters, one by Luciana Duranti and the other by Erik Ketelaar.

Predictably but eloquently, Duranti considers how the traditional ideas and practices of diplomacy carry relevance and value in the contemporary digital age, particularly in relation to the appraisal of digital records. Duranti draws on the work of the InterPARES research project to provide a practical perspective of her ideas. She concludes that 'we need to continue to develop the science of diplomacy and its methodological tools so that the appraisal of the next complex form of

digital records (e.g. holographic) in the context of the new activities that will use them will not find us unprepared' (p. 86).

Ketelaar explores the idea of archives as art versus archives as science by taking the reader through a journey that traces the development of archival thought and practice weaving in many of the ideas discussed further elsewhere in the book. He concludes: 'It might be both'.

On face value the title of part 3, 'Archive 2.0: archives in society', gives the impression that it will focus on the influence and impact of Web 2.0 technologies on archival thinking and practice. While it does include discussion about technologies, this part covers much more. Harris's chapter considers archives as instruments of power and the value of archives that are generated from all aspects of a society. Kate Theimer takes a more technology-centric view of the interaction between archives, archivists and users. She explores the role of technology in enabling greater interaction. Andrew Flinn explores how the emergence of community archives, which are made and shaped by the active participation of the community, challenge but do not undermine, traditional archival principles of neutrality and stability.

Having explored where we have come from and how we got to where we are today, the final part, 'Archives in the information age: is there still a role for archivists?', considers how archives and archivists may successfully adapt and thrive now and into the future.

Adrian Cunningham provides an overview of the traditional approach to 'archives as space' and presents a compelling case for post-custodial archives.

Nicole Convery takes up Cunningham's observation of the tension between the dual mission of archives as cultural heritage and archives as the source of authentic evidence supporting the 'recordkeeping' mission. While the concept of recordkeeping encompasses both missions, Convery argues that the cultural mission has been overshadowed, particularly in more recent times, by the recordkeeping one. She argues that by being linked more closely to cultural value, archives and archivists may be more readily dismissed in a business environment where the focus is on accountability, auditability and transparency. Convery explores this myth before considering the role

of archives and archivists in a user-centric digital world, drawing on ideas from the information continuum and records continuum to address the imbalance between the cultural and recordkeeping missions.

Richard Cox also draws on this tension between the cultural and recordkeeping mission, particularly in relation to archival appraisal in the final chapter of this part and the book as a whole. Cox considers the unique aspects of the archive profession within the context of information professions, focusing on appraisal as a key point of difference and value.

This strong collection of contemporary archival perspectives will also serve as a reference point for years to come as archives and recordkeeping evolve further or perhaps undergo a radical change. The book provides a snapshot of views and ideas in the midst of a paradigm shift. Over the next decade or so it will provide a valuable basis for evaluating how archives and archivists have navigated the challenges and harnessed the opportunities currently on offer. These include the relationship between traditional and contemporary archival thinking, the role and relationship between archivists, other disciplines and the community, and the state of what seems to be an ongoing tension between the cultural and the recordkeeping mission.

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