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REVIEWS

Records, information and data: exploring the role of record-keeping in an information culture, by Geoffrey Yeo, Facet Publising, London, 2018, xvi + 208 pp., AU$130 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 783302 260

In this volume, Geoffry Yeo brings together and updates a number of concepts from his early writing as well as ideas from his 2015 Jenkinson lecture. Its purpose is to '. . . consider whether or how the management of records (and archives) differs from the management of information (and data)' (back cover). As with Yeo's previous writing, this is an erudite and well-researched piece of work, substantiated with a wealth of references. Most of the seven chapters include only a handful of endnotes, preferring instead to employ sidebar notes that briefly explore concepts introduced in the main text while remaining somewhat in context of the prevailing narrative. I should also mention that my doctoral research was based, in part, on some of the ideas expressed by Yeo in the earlier work, and that he was an interview participant in my research.

Much of the book is definitional, seeking to tease out the differences in the way we think about records, information and data, and, consequently, integrate these concepts into professional contexts. In doing so, Yeo clearly distinguishes their characteristics as well as their societal and organisational roles, making a strong case that recordkeeping is distinct from the related disciplines of information and data management – with significant implications for our profession.

In Chapter 1 ('The making and keeping of records: a brief historical overview'), Yeo provides a brief historical account of recordkeeping. While many others have previously covered this ground, the point of this chapter is to provide a high-level societal contextualisation to be later contrasted with ideas around information and data. In this account, Yeo emphasises the development of professionalism associated with recordkeeping and the emergence of the Archivist/Records Management dichotomy. In this context, and unlike many other Northern-Hemisphere authors, Yeo does devote space to ideas around the records continuum (devoting a large sidebar note to the topic, p. 20), but, misses the point somewhat by focussing on affordances of the Records Continuum Model rather than continuum theory itself. He does however proceed to use the (hyphenated) term record-keeping throughout the book, acknowledging a 'holistic view of records [and] contexts' while electing to maintain some distance from 'Australian thinkers'.

Having set the recordkeeping scene, in Chapter 2 ('Thinking about archives and records: the transition to the digital') Yeo provides a teleological account of records and recordkeeping, beginning with consideration of the way that records may manifest through time. A discussion of the shift to digital recordkeeping provides the context for considering the fixity/fluidity of records and challenging notions of aggregation and order (all of which, may I say, are rather antipodean considerations). This leads into a brief treatment on the impact of postmodern thought on recordkeeping and archival theory, focussing on Terry Cook's four paradigms. Having unpacked the nature and manifestation of records, Yeo then concludes by exploring whether the introduction of the term 'information' is in fact, indicative of a fifth paradigm of recordkeeping.

Chapter 3 ('Archivists, records managers, and the rise of information') discusses the recasting of recordkeeping professions in terms of 'information' across various jurisdictions in a quest for organisational traction. Here, Yeo analyses how ideas around 'information', as the watchword of emergent culture and economies, has impacted organisational structures

and functions, professional organisations, and international standards. He then teases apart terms such as 'information management' and 'information governance' in relation to activities, previously encompassed by 'records management', and raises issues relating to whether records can be managed as information (or vice versa). There are no answers here, rather, an unpacking of the issues to be addressed in subsequent chapters.

In Chapter 4 ('Finding a way through the hall of mirrors: concepts of information'), Yeo deep-dives into the concept of information, drawing on sources as diverse as philosophy and mathematics, in a quest to discern a consensus definition. He concludes that such a definition is elusive, with a variety of accounts offering pluralities of definitions (for example, information science offering seven distinct 'conceptualisations of information'). In particular, Yeo explores whether information is a thing, an affordance of something else, or some sort of interpretive phenomenon that takes place in the mind. Again, no answers, but an observation that such a complex and ill-defined concept as information 'cannot be the kind of entity that we can hope to manage or control' (p. 97) – particularly in the way that we have come to understand the recordkeeping professions.

Yeo continues this definitional explanation in Chapter 5 ('Records and data') with a similar analysis of the term 'data' – the increasing use of this term in our profession driven by the contemporary race to adopt data-oriented processes. He contrasts definitions of information and data, noting that distinctions between structured and unstructured data are blurring given the rise of powerful data-driven analytics tools. Yeo also challenges the oft-considered neutrality or factualness of data declaring that 'data are never autonomous; they are often equivocal; and are always shaped by the circumstances that led to their creation' (p. 120). As with information, he concludes that the term 'data' offers a similarly shifting foundation upon which claims about management or control may be made.

Chapter 6 ('Representation, performativity and social action: why records are not (just) information') is, perhaps, the most important of the book. Having unpacked all three terms (records, information, and data), Yeo introduces the concept of occurrents: temporal entities (such as events and processes) that are bounded in time, and explains how records are persistent representations of occurrents. He spends some time delving into the nature of representations, before moving on to the idea of speech (and, by extension, document) acts in which utterances of propositions correspond to performative acts (for example, 'I bequeath … ', or 'I apologise …') that manipulate social constructs. Yeo argues that it is this performativity or 'doing things with records' (p. 147) that differentiates records from information and data. These, along with evidence, memory, identity and so on, then become potential affordances of interaction with records. Yeo notes that '… each user [of records] may evoke different affordances of meaning, including affordances that the record's creator did not intend' (p. 156).

Finally, in Chapter 7 ('Managing information or managing records?'), armed with these insights into the performative nature of records, Yeo returns to the tensions between recordkeeping and information/data management. He argues that information (and, often data) management is usually concerned with the maintenance of up-to-date and accurate propositions – two features that are not generally concerns of records. Instead, records remain useful for understanding (possibly erroneous) propositions made through time. He draws upon the previous chapter's conclusion that information alone is not rich enough to provide for the performativity required of records – particularly the representations that have been used to perform social acts – to finally articulate how '… we cannot hope to understand records and practice record-keeping simply by adopting concepts and methods from information management or data administration' (p. 184).

In this volume, Yeo has distilled a broad range of thought into a cogent argument for the distinctiveness and necessity of recordkeeping amidst the information culture of the twenty-first

Century. At over 100 US$ for 200 odd pages, this paperback is certainly not inexpensive (though I do note that its purchase price is discounted for member of CILIP – the UK's library and information association. Perhaps some sort of arrangement could be made with ASA for this and other publications?). Even so, I have no qualms in recommending that every recordkeeping professional should try to get hold of a copy and consider its implications. Apart from being a thought-provoking and insightful read, it provides clarity for those trying to advocate for recordkeeping while negotiating the cultural shifts towards information and data as pre-eminent paradigms. In particular, it positions us to use the vocabulary of information and data when '... politically necessary, while remaining aware that it offers an inadequate basis for reflective professional thinking about records and record-keeping' (p. 199).

Gregory Rolan
Monash University

greg.rolan@monash.edu

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Permanent record, by Edward Snowden, New York, Metropolitan Books, 2019, viii, 239 pp., $US17.99 (hardback), ISBN: 978-1-250-23723-1

Edward Snowden's *Permanent Record* is the story of a whistleblower's betrayal of covert intelligence gathering programmes originating in the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and National Security Agency (NSA). Programmes that he argues aimed to implement a step change in the very basis of American espionage. In Snowden's words, to move espionage from 'targeted surveillance of individuals to mass surveillance of entire populations' (p. 1). Edward Snowden was a systems engineer and architect, the kind of person NSA and CIA needed to transition from human to computer and network based intelligence gathering. In his own words, Snowden's role in this transformation was to: 'Make it technologically feasible for a single government to collect all the world's digital communications, store them for ages and search through them at will' (p. 1).

Snowden grew up in a respectable middle-class family that valued patriotism and service, values that caused him to respond to his nation's call after the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington. Over the course of multiple jobs as a contractor with CIA and NSA between 2006 and 2013, Snowden became increasingly disillusioned with the surveillance implications of America's 'war on terror'. Disturbed by what he perceived as a gross betrayal of the public interest, Edward Snowden went public on NSA and CIA's covert programme of mass surveillance in 2013. On 6 June, *The Guardian* published details of NSA's harvesting of phone records from over 120 million Verizon subscribers[1]. The following day, in a second disclosure published simultaneously by *The Guardian* and *The Washington Post*, Snowden revealed project PRISM, a surveillance program that collected email, voice, text and video chats of US and other users of common collaboration and communications tools created by Microsoft, Google, Facebook, Yahoo, Apple and other tech companies[2]. Further disclosures detailed operational systems that searched and analysed global Internet data (codenamed Xkeyscore), intercepted undersea and other data communications links (code-named Tempora & Muscular) or established co-operative agreements between Five Eyes (FVEY)[3] partners with each other and others for the collection and sharing of mass and targeted surveillance information (codenamed Project 6, Stateroom and Lustre)[4].