

Module sixteen, 'Accessioning Digital Records' by Erin Faulder, outlines a range of models, standards and tools that can support the workflow for transferring and processing digital material that is provided in the second half of the module.

I thought this module was a little more confused than the other two. It starts by stating that 'accessioning is the archivist's first step in processing and preserving archival materials' (p. 121), when the other two modules have been clear in their approach that working with the creation process is the first step. Later, when introducing the accessioning workflow, it states that 'accessioning procedures formalise the steps an archivist takes to document the transfer' (p. 148). This mixed view of what accessioning is and where it fits in the overall appraisal and acquisition process makes it sit a little awkwardly alongside the previous two.

Nevertheless, there's plenty of value here, especially for collecting archives. The summary descriptions of the standards and models will be useful to those seeking to understand many of the acronyms for digital collecting. There's also a good summary of some of the infrastructure required to support digital collecting and preservation.

The second half of the module is a detailed step-through of a transfer workflow in the collecting archive context, including file format identification, validation and ingest, which will provide a good introduction to archivists. However, the workflow is presented as though everything will go swimmingly. I thought the several pages on validation should have been followed by some of the options available when validation fails – the more likely scenario in my experience.

Overall, I thought *Appraisal and Acquisitions Strategies* would provide useful reading to archivists taking their initial steps into digital collecting. It also reminded me that, in the collecting archive context, our American colleagues are leaders with digital collecting and have a range of experiences and implementations for the rest of the world to learn from. Maybe we in Australasia should be looking State-side to build the relationship we need to improve our professional practice.

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Digital Preservation Essentials, edited by Christopher J Prom, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2016, vii + 125 pp., AUD \$39.95 (hardback) ISBN 1 931666 95 4

Digital Preservation Essentials is part of the Trends in Archives Practice series published by the Society of American Archivists. Consistent with the series, the book has a pragmatic orientation. It consists of two parts: Module 12, Preserving Digital Objects, and Module 13, Digital Preservation Storage, both by Erin O'Meara and Kate Stratton. Each module begins with an introduction to the topic and concludes with recommendations for practice. Both modules include appendices identifying further readings, describing case studies and defining key terms. Module 12 includes additional appendices addressing preservation metadata and metadata schemas.

Erin O'Meara is currently Department Head in the Office of Digital Innovation and Stewardship at University of Arizona Libraries. Her career as a practitioner spans more than a decade and has had a focus on electronic records throughout. Kate Stratton studied under Helen Tibbo at the University of North Carolina, and is currently Collection Development Archivist at the Gates Archive. Their collaboration on the two modules has produced thoughtful and well-integrated insights and advice.

The series aims to be essential for both students and practising archivists and requires brevity in the treatment of topics. Consequently, the contents are essentially introductory. The two modules in this volume are no exception; however, they facilitate going further by ample footnotes and suggestions for further reading. Moreover, the main text and the selection of materials for inclusion in the appendices reflect both in-depth experience in digital preservation and extensive familiarity with the relevant literature. Both modules consistently present insightful summaries of what are often quite complex issues. Both offer practical advice that could be described as ‘cut to the quick’ while deftly avoiding oversimplification.

Module 12 appropriately uses the Open Archival Information System standard to organise the discussion of preserving digital objects. It does not attempt a synopsis of the standard, but uses key concepts, especially those of submission, archival and dissemination information packages, as touchstones to introduce a variety of practical concerns and ways to address them. Unfortunately, while the text is organised according to the three types of packages, the discussion logic follows processing, so that there are important insights on one type of package in the sections on the others.

With respect to what is preserved, Module 12 uses the term ‘archival materials’ rather than records. This is a serious shortcoming with significant consequences for the preservation of records. The discussion treats archival materials essentially as digital artefacts, providing no guidance, for example, on how to distinguish records contained in a forensic copy of a digital storage volume from software, system files, ‘readme’ texts and other non-record items, giving these types of artefacts equal weight in preservation. More fundamentally, it does not articulate any archival criteria for determining whether very impactful preservation actions such as normalisation or migration of formats preserve authentic records.

Similarly, while the series is intended for archivists in general, the discussion in Module 12 assumes that archives acquire archival materials via donation. Thus, there is no treatment of the possible benefits of integrating or even aligning archival policies and practices with institutional records management. The only mention of records management – and it is only a reference – comes in a case study in Appendix B in the module. Unfortunately, this short-sightedness is evident even in the definition of ‘chain of custody’ in the glossary of Module 12, where it is defined as starting with acquisition. If custody is not documented prior to acquisition, one cannot use the chain of custody as a basis for asserting authenticity.

Module 13 provides a good introduction to a variety of topics related to digital storage with specific concern for long-term preservation and sound advice for addressing them. Topics covered include storage media, tools, systems, management, practices and contracts for services. Unfortunately, like Module 12, it does not address records. For example, in discussing backup copies, it does not mention that generally in IT practice, ‘backups’ refer to mirror images of storage devices, not copies of records. The bottom line is that the guidance provided by this book is an appropriate basis for starting to deal with digital preservation, but it falls short in that the advice could lead to good practices for the preservation of digital artefacts, but would not suffice to ensure that records are being preserved.

While the book is of substantial value to archivists who need an introduction to practical aspects of digital preservation, these shortcomings limit its value for anyone outside the archival field who may have some knowledge of digital preservation, but wishes to learn about the preservation of records.

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