

Despite the title, this is not a step-by-step ‘how to’. Overall, this book provides a good starting point for understanding what linked data is, thinking about the applications and benefits of linked data, how it can be applied to cultural heritage collections and how to make metadata more useful and accessible.

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**Forging the Future of Special Collections**, by Arnold Hirshon, Robert H. Jackson and Melissa A. Hubbard (eds), introduction by Robert H. Jackson, Chicago, ALA Neal-Schuman, 2016, 288 pp., USD \$85.00, ISBN 978 0 838913 86 4

This recently released volume is promoted as a work that offers ‘More than simply a guide to collection management, this book details myriad ways to forge the future of special collections, ensuring that these scholarly treasures advance knowledge for years to come.’ The editors Arnold Hirshon, Robert H. Jackson and Melissa A. Hubbard, through their collaborations with a broad and exciting range of contributors, certainly fulfil this claim. The text is an outcome of the ‘Acknowledging the Past, Forging the Future’ national colloquium, held over two days in October 2014. Organised by Kelvin Smith Library, presented in collaboration with River Campus Libraries (University of Rochester), Vanderbilt University and Washington University Libraries in St Louis, this groundbreaking event brought together collection specialists, including librarians, private book collections and antiquarian booksellers, from across the United States.

A recurring theme, throughout the volume, is that special collections have a rich history, yet face a whirlwind of challenges – digital, financial and institutional. How can we leverage their strengths to build a more secure and accessible tomorrow?

‘Reflections on the Meanings of Objects’, by E. Haven Hawley, focuses on the ‘meanings of objects in special collections, especially as they relate to memory, authenticity, and social practice’ (p. 3). ‘Affinities and Alliances: Thoughts on Acquisitions, Collection Development, and Donor Relations’, by Jim Kuhn, notes that a written collection development policy is key to having conversations about potential gifts and acquisitions. Jon A. Lindseth, in ‘Where Does the Collector/Donor Community See Special Collections Today’, acknowledges the need to pursue digitisation programs while arguing that retaining the original documents is central to special collections. ‘Collecting Communities: The Role of Special Collections Librarians and Archivists in Creating New Life for Community-Based Collections’, by Melissa A. Hubbard, expands upon this conversation around digitisation through looking at the need to develop robust platforms, facilitate linked metadata and change attitudes in our communities; ensuring communities are engaged as partners. ‘The Role of the Auction House’, by Selby Kiffer, also looks at changing attitudes around what is collected, with the movement away from traditional collecting towards the collecting of popular culture. Kiffer goes on to observe, importantly, that it is all our jobs to make books at least as interesting to the public as art (p. 49). Athena N. Jackson, in ‘Forging into the Future: Facing Digital Realities and Forecasting Endeavours for Special Collections Librarianship’, provides career insight into trends in the arena of digitisation for special collections.


Joel Silver, in ‘Lawrence Clark Powell Revisited: The Functions of Rare Books Today’, takes up the interesting notion of rare books fulfilling the dual role of ‘entertainment and information’

(p. 64) – especially the audience appeal of high-value collection items – highlighted by the popularity of antiques and collectibles reality television series. In ‘Special Collections Libraries and the Uses of the Past (Apologies to Herbert Muller)’, Paul Ruxin advocates for the continued benefits of descriptive bibliography within special collections, in capitalising on what books can reveal through close, physical examination. (The volume under review is dedicated to the memory of Ruxin.) In ‘Everything Old is New Again: Transformation in Special Collections’, Alice Schreyer talks about the barrier of competition between institutions and the value of proactive collaborative collecting, particularly emphasising the need for collaboration to occur within the pre-acquisition phase. ‘Special Collections and the Booksellers of Today’, by Tom Congalton, addresses some of the cross-overs, increasingly seen in special collections management, in the skillsets of librarians, curators and booksellers.

In ‘Acknowledging the Past’, Daniel De Simone submits that – while digital text has blown open the doors of libraries – the love of books still unites collectors and researchers. The challenge lies in finding new ways to encourage new and younger audiences. In ‘Literary Archives: How They Have Changed and How They Are Changing’, Ken Lopez offers readers an overview of changes in archives and researchers wanting more than paper; photographs and other materials also offer crucial insights into the lives being collected. Stephen Enniss, in ‘Objects of Study: Special Collections in an Age of Digital Scholarship’, also talks about change, how our attitudes to manuscripts have shifted over time and how these changing attitudes have affected opportunities in contemporary archives. Of particular note is the potential of monetary value as a driving factor in the creation and survival of writers’ archives. ‘Considering the Present: Special Collections Are the Meal, Not the Dessert’, by Jay Satterfield, details how original materials within special collections offer vital teaching resources. Active learning through ‘exuberant chaos’ enables students to ‘find a fragment of awesomeness and make it their own’ (p. 124), a philosophy that resonates with the need to relax the gatekeeper and rights enforcement roles of librarianship.

Christoph Irmscher, in ‘Teaching with Special Collections’, also presents a strong case for special collections as essential in scholarly engagement, particularly for collaborative, project-based assessments. ‘From Siberia to Shangri-La’, by Sarah Thomas, reaffirms the challenge of scale in special collections and the continuing need for less processing, with more product. ‘The Once and Future Special Collections’, by Mark Dimunation, is a fitting conclusion to this volume with a series of suggestions for special collections to ensure their continued relevance, and growth, into the future. Dimunation pays particular attention to the notion of special collections taking their own pulse and being alert to the landscape within which such collections are situated.

This volume, though focused on special collections within university settings, offers a solid context for those working within these extraordinary types of spaces.

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**Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder**, by Wolfgang Ernst, translated by Adam Siegel, Rowman & Littlefield, London, 2015, 108 pp., GBP £49.95 (hardback), ISBN 978 1 442253 95 7

A sequence of 24 short but pithy ruminations make up this book. Only 97 pages in total, it packs a punch. Ernst is Professor of Media Theory at Humboldt University of Berlin and described in