


(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

the book blurb as a cultural and media historian. His work has only been available in English since 2013. This book is a translation by Adam Siegel of his *Das Rumoren der Archive. Ordnung aus Unordnung* from 2002. Its appearance in English, 13 years after its publication in German, is representative of the increasing attention his work is attracting mainly through reference by other scholars loosely grouped under the umbrella of media archaeology. Ernst has a particular interest in the French metaphysical conceptualisation of the archive filtered through his own cultural background in the German-Prussian archival science tradition. In Ernst's articulation, media archaeology looks to uncover the administrative traces of records creation, formation and organisation. This contrasts to the often more limited attention by some media scholars who tend to focus only on the elements of physicality of media. His work is situated within the much broader stream which is often called 'the archival turn'.

In many ways Ernst provides a succinct introduction to the conceptualisations of his intellectual forebears, including but not limited to Michel Foucault ('archive ... as a system that governs not only the emergence of ... statements but also their current functioning', p. 7), de Certeau ('history's absence ... is reflected in the archive, which despite its floods of paper is not a hoard of wealth but an unforgettable lack, which never stops updating itself: this state of going missing is what the use of the archives transforms into research questions', p. 18), Groys ('highlighting the archive as a machine for the production of memories, one that fabricates history out of the material of unassimilated reality', p. 11), Furet, Deleuze, Derrida and Farge ('the scraps and fragments are "gathered in this vast sanctuary of words once spoken and now dead", the archive ... the archive not so much as "author" but as restructuring and prefiguration', pp. 13–14). To these conceptualisations, Ernst seeks to add considerations of media archaeology – 'looking within the archival space to more closely examine the operative agencies at work' (p. 8).

The text is quite hard-going for pragmatic archival types like me. It is full of the word plays of semiotics. But of course, this unsettling of the language is the agenda – to think again about how to perceive archives. Ernst clearly states: 'Archivists, look out: not everything that is called an archive is actually an archive' (p. 7), and that reference is clearly made in reference to Foucault and what I interpret to be Ernst's critique of Foucault's understanding of archives.

Often the work of media scholars seems to be stuck on the notion of archives as tightly protected dead, silent and forbidding places awaiting the liberating gaze of the expectant historian. And sometimes this approach just serves to irritate archivists by positioning us all as some form of obsolete, cranky caretakers of a document cemetery. But Ernst's work is in contrast to this superficial and easy conceptualisation. He is informed about archives. Here he discusses not only the philosophic trends but also the work of archival theorists, referencing particularly the Prussian archival tradition but also contrasting that tradition to the French approaches to archives, in which he positions Foucault's plea for serialised, thematic approaches to archives. Ernst references Muller, Feith and Fruin through the work of Adolf Brennecke (the German archival theorist as yet untranslated into English as far as I know). Of course, for one immersed in the archival praxis, these references appeal most directly. They also cause some questions about the translation. I can only imagine the difficulties involved in translating this dense text, but I suspect that Brennecke did not really refer to 'the pony-tailed registrar', or that in 1841 the French Minister of the Interior did not really require departmental and municipal archives to pay 'respect for their funds' (pp. 62–3). But this griping is trivia, and is a factor of translation not in the original text. It is fabulous to read a media archaeologist who has engaged with our formative archival literature and concepts.

Ernst is deeply engaged in the digital. In this book, analogue and digital are discussed obliquely in terms of the processes, consequences and difference through things like presentation, transmission, immediacy, reconstitution and storage.

The book of essays is erudite and eclectic. Noting that archivists will find some challenges with the way archives have been conceptualised, the essays range widely across huge cultural landscapes

of past and present. Examples of chapter titles may provide a sense of this: ‘DRACULArchiv’, ‘From Louis XIV to Big Brother: Monitoring’, ‘The Mechanisation of the Archive’ or ‘The Gaps Are the Archives’. Similarly, the use of metaphor is intriguing and thought-provoking – ‘archives may be regarded as hallucinogenic substances’ (p. 17), ‘the archival container is a coffin’ (p. 26), ‘data filters at the site of the shelf list, catalog [*sic*], or inventory’ (p. 84). The presence of literature and film is ubiquitous in these essays, as should be expected from a cultural theorist. Here we find reference to Günter Grass (‘We from the archive’), Jorge Luis Borges, Gustave Flaubert, Dante, along with film-makers Stanley Kubrick, Oliver Stone, Ridley Scott and Wim Wenders.

Would I recommend you buy this book? Possibly not. But I would certainly encourage you to dip into it should you find it in a library – and libraries supporting archives and records studies should definitely have a copy. Some of Ernst’s work is available on the Internet, and I would recommend that you read *Digital Memory and the Archive*, available at <http://melhogan.com/website/wp-content/uploads/2013/11/Ernst-Wolfgang-Digital-Memory-and-the-Archive.pdf>. The publication of *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder* and the emergence of media archaeology as part of ‘the archival turn’ should quite appropriately be a continuation of the wake-up call to our profession – most obviously issued by Michael Piggott in raising our professional attention to such issues. Maryanne Dever at the University of Technology Sydney is perhaps our most prominent scholar working in this field, and has notably edited a special edition of *Archives & Manuscripts* (vol. 42, no. 3). But generally speaking, Ernst is a standalone in his understanding of archival theory. Engagement with these scholars is not obvious from the archives community – for example, the British/Finnish scholar Jussi Parikka was a Distinguished Scholar at the University of New South Wales School of Arts and Media in February last year. How engaged are archivists in the conversations that are seeking to frame our discipline?

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### **Is digital different? How information creation, capture and discovery are being transformed**, edited by Michael Moss, Barbara Endicott-Popovsky and Marc J.

Dupuis, London, Facet Publishing, 2015, xvi + 217 pp., GBP £49.95 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 856048 54 5

The editors’ stated purpose for this book is to introduce students to issues surrounding the transition from an analogue to a digital environment. The various contributors examine whether analogue practices and procedures are still valid and if they shape or distort practices and procedures in the digital world.

The contributors are an impressive group, very clearly subject-matter experts in their relevant areas. They seek to offer differing perspectives on the role of information professionals in the rapidly changing digital landscape, which, the editors state, is ‘challenging the very existence of the traditional library and archive’ (p. xvi), largely through changing user expectations of an ‘online’ experience. Working within a state archive in Australia, these are very real challenges for us and I approached the book with interest from a professional practitioner perspective rather than that of a student.