

This list is followed by a reference to a best-practice guide published by the Archives and Records Association UK and Ireland available online (Helen Lindsay, *Volunteering in Collection Care*, 2010). It is in this source that you get the goods, not from the brief listing of issues. This is in contrast to the much more detailed treatment of issues in the chapters from the first edition.

Preserving Archives remains an authoritative overview of the subject, written by experienced practitioners and archival educators, and valuable as a one-volume reference on the many aspects of archival preservation, from managing a pest control program (with illustrations of six common insect types, p. 191) to exhibiting archives. On page 161, the extracts from reports by couriers to exhibitions are sobering reading, one of which concludes: ‘As a result no one was waiting to meet the by-now frazzled courier, and the borrowing institution, being in a different time zone, was closed.’ I can particularly recommend Chapter 9 on moving records, having recently overseen the move of three kilometres of records across the Australian National University campus. On reading on page 142, ‘the failure of the archive to ensure the security and wellbeing of its holdings during the course of the move is the very reverse of what every director of archives wishes to experience’, I could only agree.

Maggie Shapley
 Australian National University
 © 2015, Maggie Shapley

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2015.1047816>

Susan Howe, *Spontaneous Particulars: The Telepathy of Archives*, Christine Burgin/ New Directions, New York, 2014. 80 pp. ISBN 978 0 811223 75 1. USD\$29.95.

Susan Howe describes *Spontaneous Particulars* as a ‘swan song’ (p. 9). Originally conceived as an illustrated slide-show lecture, the beautiful colour images and text brought together in this slim volume form a tribute to the pleasures of working with literary manuscripts and ephemera, pleasures she fears may be diminished as new technologies transform how we engage with such artefacts. ‘We need to see and touch objects and documents,’ she writes, ‘now we often merely view the same material on a computer screen – digitally, virtually, etc.’ (p. 9). Howe opens with the indisputable proposition that ‘the nature of archival research is in flux’. Although she does not elaborate explicitly on the implications of such flux, this idea nevertheless frames her creative homage to the ‘material details’ (p. 21) or ‘historical-existential traces’ (p. 24) that for her make an archive an archive. They are also the qualities of the archival experience that inspire her work as a poet and as a remarkable literary critic.

Howe’s attachment to cards, paper, scraps and thread in *Spontaneous Particulars* should come as no surprise to anyone familiar with her creative history. Originally trained as an artist, from her earliest experiments in concrete verse the page was for Howe always more than a basic support to words. She concerned herself with the page itself (‘You could [...] turn the paper sideways or upside down’¹) and the very shape of words upon the page. She talks of how her sketchbooks from this period were filled with lists of words, ‘usually nouns typed then cut out and pasted in’.² Thus, for Howe the manipulation of the page or a work’s physical assembling was always inseparable from its textual assembling. In this respect her attraction to – and investment in – the

materiality of archived literary papers and in particular to the papery remains of a poet such as Emily Dickinson³ are more than explicable. Indeed, in a delightful elaboration of the derivation of the word ‘text’, Howe reminds us that it comes from the Latin *textus*, meaning quite literally a ‘thing woven’ or something joined or fitted together (p. 19).

Howe’s question of how technology is reshaping engagements with archives is a live one. As a Dickinson scholar, Howe would doubtless appreciate the benefits of my being able to introduce an undergraduate literature class to the marvellous resources of the Emily Dickinson Electronic Archives (<<http://www.emilydickinson.org/>>), something that would have been impossible in an era when archival access was entirely spatially bound. And this is certainly one of the supreme gains of the digital era. But what does it mean that we can look but not touch? As Rimmer et al. make clear in their study of researchers’ habits and preferences, even when high-quality digital surrogates are available, the physical object ‘nevertheless remains the “gold standard” for study’.⁴ Much as I would like to resist the language of ‘loss’ when debating the transition to the digital, the elegiac tone of Howe’s account of the physical handling of archived artefacts and of the spontaneous reflections that flow from such interactions suggests we must never lose sight of the importance and impact of these in-person encounters. Indeed, when Howe writes of taking ‘the time to look at (and touch) some of the many typed and re-typed drafts, notes scribbled on prescription forms, stories cut from newspapers and pamphlets’ (p. 39) that William Carlos Williams accumulated in the process of writing *Paterson*, it reads like an ironic echo of that poem’s celebrated refrain, ‘No ideas but in things’.⁵

If archival encounters with ‘things-in-themselves and things-as-they-are-for-us’ (p. 18) are what dominate *Spontaneous Particulars*, it is with a view to revealing how it is through these encounters that such objects are ‘re-animated’ and ‘re-collected’ (p. 24). Howe is quite emphatic that meaning does not inhere in these objects, is not fixed, but is generated through our encounters with them: ‘Each collected object or manuscript is a pre-articulate empty theater where a thought may surprise itself at the instant of seeing. Where a thought may hear itself see’ (p. 24). She also celebrates the way physical trips to the archive provide opportunities for free association – after the manner of her own flights in *Spontaneous Particulars* – and moments of serendipity. Interestingly, it is precisely this latter possibility (‘where discoveries can be made, apparently by accident’) that marked the difference between the digital and ‘being there’⁶ for participants in Rimmer et al.’s study. The notion of serendipitous connection is also highlighted in Howe’s enigmatic subtitle, ‘the telepathy of archives’. If telepathy is that form of communication that eludes or exceeds scientific explanation then this is precisely the nature of the connections that the archive supports. Howe writes of a reading room within Yale’s Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library: ‘in this room I experience enduring relations and connections between what was and what is’ (p. 43). And it is the physical object – the literary remains – when held or touched that enables the scholar-as-medium to commune with the dead.

Spontaneous Particulars is a difficult book to categorise. It is ultimately a collage-like collection of images and loosely associated fragments in the form of reflections on specific archival scraps, moments of autobiographical revelation and elements of textual criticism. Conventional publishers would likely find this format too challenging and so it is pleasing to see that the Christine Burgin/New Directions collaboration has committed to publishing this unconventional work of beauty and magic.

Endnotes

1. Interview by Jon Thomson with Susan Howe in *Free Verse: A Journal of Contemporary Poetry and Poetics*, issue 9, 2005, available at <http://english.chass.ncsu.edu/freerverse/Archives/Winter_2005/interviews/S_Howe.html>, accessed 6 April 2015.
2. Interview by Jon Thomson with Susan Howe in *Free Verse*.
3. Howe has published a number of works on Emily Dickinson, including *My Emily Dickinson*, North Atlantic Books, Berkeley, CA, 1985. She also provided the preface to Marta Werner and Jen Bervin's *Emily Dickinson: The Gorgeous Nothings*, Christine Burgin/New Directions, New York, 2013, which I reviewed in *Archives and Manuscripts*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2014, pp. 102–4.
4. Jon Rimmer, Claire Warwick, Ann Blandford, Jeremy Gow and George Buchanan, 'An Examination of the Physical and the Digital Qualities of Humanities Research', *Information Processing and Management*, vol. 44, no. 3, 2008, p. 1378.
5. William Carlos Williams, *Paterson*, New Directions, New York, 1963.
6. Rimmer et al., p. 1384.

Maryanne Dever

University of Newcastle

© 2015, Maryanne Dever

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2015.1047817>

T Mansfield, C Winter, C Griffith, A Dockerty and T Brown, *Innovation Study: Challenges and Opportunities for Australia's Galleries, Libraries, Archives and Museums*, Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation, CSIRO and Smart Services Co-operative Research Centre, Sydney, 2014. viii + 87 pp. (http://museumsaustralia.org.au/userfiles/file/GLAM_Innovation_Study_September2014-Report_Final_accessible.pdf)

Increased collaboration between galleries, libraries, archives and museums – here called the GLAM sector – has been an ongoing subject of discussion for close to 20 years. In the second half of 2014 an *Innovation Study* report was released by the Australian Centre for Broadband Innovation, CSIRO and Smart Services CRC, adding an up-to-date Australian perspective to the existing literature.

Conducted between February and June 2014, the study involved consultation with senior staff from the GLAM sector, a two-day 'futures workshop' in Sydney and the gathering of additional feedback on the results of that workshop from those unable to attend. The stated aim: to examine 'the key transformations this sector needs to make to thrive in the emerging digital environment of the next two decades' (p. vi), and to encourage all institutions to fully embrace the digital.

There is value here for people unfamiliar with recent developments. Parts of the body of the report provide short, accessible summaries of key debates in the sector, and Appendix B includes a useful overview of innovative research being conducted by Mitchell Whitelaw, Sarah Kenderdine, Daniel Johnson and others. There are also strong contributions from sector leaders such as Alex Byrne and Seb Chan. And the resulting recommendations – around public and community engagement, reuse, development of new funding sources, and the need for a national collaboration framework and national leadership and collaboration forum – while not adventurous, are sound.