

## REVIEWS

**Anne J Gilliland**, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2014. 322 pp. ISBN 978 1 931666 68 8 (print), eISBN 978 1 931666 69 5 (pdf). USD\$69.95.

Most archivists would agree that they have to deal with a constant flow of changes, both technical and sociocultural, but do these changes truly bring anything new? In *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, Anne Gilliland explores the idea that ‘the digital age is but one more era in the archival temporal continuum’ (p. 5), and aims to provide archivists with an understanding of ‘where there is continuity with, and where change is needed in, traditional practices’ (p. 51). Gilliland comments that the subject of technology and archives can make some archivists nervous, but in her book, archivist readers can gain a foundational understanding (or perhaps expand their current knowledge) of why things are now done the way they are, without becoming overwhelmed by theory.

Gilliland is professor and director of the archival studies specialisation, Department of Information Studies, and director of the Center for Information as Evidence, at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. As a result of her teaching experience, she is quite adept at explaining concepts and summarising historical developments. Her book focuses in a refreshing way on the impact that technological changes have had on archival discourse: assessing what has truly changed or may need to change by tracing the lineage of archival paradigms, models and innovations. As an audiovisual archivist with only a few years of experience, to me this blend of history with emergent areas of research and theory adds a colour and depth to the foundational concepts of archiving, and is sure to engage many readers.

*Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives* begins with an introduction that briefly examines the role of an archive and introduces some emerging concepts. This is followed by a chapter putting the archive of today in context, and another providing an historical narrative on the place of America in the world’s archival discourse. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 track the development of archival description and access, metadata and machine-readable records to digital records. These topics converge in chapters 7 and 8, which explore research on electronic records management and emergent areas of study. Chapter 9 outlines recordkeeping models (a subject that perhaps would have been better explained earlier in the book), then chapter 10 ties things together by relating research back to the field of practice.

Despite being written from an American perspective, I found chapter 3, ‘The Quest to Integrate the World’s Knowledge: American Archival Engagement with the Documentation Movement, 1900–1950’, a particularly engaging read. Gilliland’s extensive knowledge of the participation in the documentation movement around the world quickly became apparent, and I found myself researching the various archives mentioned to see the particular way they have approached their work. I appreciated the way this history gave a real sense of American archival engagement with big questions in a

global historical context, drawing out not only the developments but also the setbacks (such as responding to World War II while still grappling with the accumulation of records from World War I). The book does this particularly well, outlining the significance and ongoing impact of historical developments in archiving, bringing the research and discourses right into the present.

One of the greatest strengths of Gilliland's book is that it successfully targets two different groups of archivists – 'budding' archivists, such as those making their way through the author's classes in graduate programs, and working archivists dealing with rapid technological changes. Nevertheless, the technical points in some of the later chapters do become rather difficult to follow for those who are not already well acquainted with at least some of the concepts. The number of acronyms, concepts, key figures and American institutes referred to steadily increases; when MARC AMC, EAD, APPM, SAA, ISAAR (CPF), CUSTARD, RAD, DACS, ISAD (G) and ICA appeared in the same paragraph it was easy to become disorientated. However, the reader should not become too lost as the book is well set out and broken down for ease of use, with topic boxes at the beginning of each chapter and notes. It is also easy to return to topics of interest, which you will probably find yourself doing – at times there are extensive (and quite relevant) endnotes which can be difficult to juggle when reading the first time through. This approach also accommodates the two different types of readers – the book can be read cover to cover to glean a general historical overview (especially useful for those who do not yet work in the field), or particular sections can be read to provide professionals with details on specific areas of archival work. I would recommend this book to anyone involved in the archival profession.

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**David Stuart**, *Web Metrics for Library and Information Professionals*, Facet Publishing, London, 2014. 208 pp. ISBN 978 1 866048 74 3. AUD\$92.50.

In the introduction to *Web Metrics for Library and Information Professionals*, author David Stuart quotes the sociologist William Cameron, who is reputed to have said of numerical analysis that 'not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted'. What you make of the saying depends on your attitude towards the use and abuse of numbers. For the numbers-averse, it amounts to an admonition – avoid them if you can. For the more quantitatively inclined, for whom data analysis is a practical tool and source of insight, the message is more an exhortation to get the numbers right.

As Stuart explains, web metrics can be thought of as the quantitative measurement of the creation and use of web content. Getting the numbers right with web metrics, has become important as online services have migrated comprehensively to the Web and the fortunes of companies and organisations depend on securing and maintaining competitive advantage on the Web. But to take the case of website evaluation, the days