

Not quite enough for truly ‘tackling the people problem’, but an excellent resource to get some real traction on the task.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.1000811>

Mary Caldera and Kathryn M Neal (eds), *Through the Archival Looking Glass: A Reader on Diversity and Inclusion*, Society of American Archivists, Chicago, 2014. xxiv + 296 pp. ISBN 978 1 931666 70 1. USD\$69.95.

With this publication, the Society of American Archivists indicates a commitment to leading archivists in an open discussion of the ongoing development of the archival profession. In a series of engaging chapters, sharing both personal accounts and the stories of clients and other stakeholders, a variety of authors explore the power of archives. The reader is asked to question the role of archives as a passive holding facility of ‘significant’ records, and the role of the archivist as describer and gatekeeper.

Archives are powerful. What we collect, describe, and make accessible becomes the source material for historians, journalists and authors. Records in an archive can be chosen for inclusion, or included through chance. Once part of an archive, the information a record contains gains a weight or importance that can be disproportionate to its original role. Authors will quote the evidence that they can locate and that evidence comes from available sources. Even when detailed records are available, these ‘primary’ source documents are often secondary accounts of events and people. It is much easier to tell the story portrayed in records than to explore the gaps – what is not included, what is missing. How can the gaps in the archive be highlighted? Can these gaps be filled?

As archivists, do we have a role in ensuring that our collections include both sides of a story? Should we aim to include records that tell the complex stories of all the individuals that make up our communities? In not addressing these questions, do we maintain a bias towards the views of those who might have proactively created and retained records? One of the key roles of the archivist is to place records in context, to describe the creator and the reason for the record’s creation. Through this contextual information, the reader can identify possible bias (intended or otherwise) of the author and the collection. How can the archivist ensure that this context is conveyed to the reader? *Through the Archival Looking Glass* explores these questions, investigating the role of community archives, community curation of collections and the possibility of the archivist as an active collector rather than arranger and describer of received records.

The identity of archivists is considered in several chapters, with discussion on positive discrimination programs to recruit, and expand the education of, a broader range of archival employees – in terms of gender, sexuality, and ethnicity, for example. While these are important considerations, contributors failed to place the question of diversity alongside the wider discussion of the impact of technology on *all* information professions. By placing digitised archival items online, users of archives can bypass the archivist’s carefully constructed description of context and provenance. In response, should archivists spend less time describing and more time locating a broad range of items to

add to the online archive? No chapter really explored the role of diversity within a changing environment of technology and online access. Jeffrey Mifflin's 'Regarding Indigenous Knowledge in Archives' discusses the use of technology to allow greater control of access to sensitive cultural material, however there are more questions to be addressed as we refocus our profession towards how technology is changing society and its relationship to records.

In contrast, the discussion of community engagement with archives is more thorough. All contributors advocated for archivists to develop trusted relationships with a broader range of record creators. A number of contributors encouraged archivists to consider what the written record means to diverse communities, especially in cases where official records have been used to persecute or to reinforce exclusion of individuals or particular groups of people. The role of oral communication, languages other than English, and how archivists might capture a broader range of record, is discussed by several contributors. T-Kay Sangwand's chapter 'Revolutionizing the Archival Record Through Rap' pushes the theoretical content with a discussion on the role of incorporating 'intangible records' such as performance into archives. Engaging with stakeholders can be challenging for a profession that might see itself as neutral, objective or passive. *Through the Archival Looking Glass* gives practical advice on how to embark on an inclusion project, whether the archivist is a member of a community group or an outsider.

Caldera and Neal have compiled a highly readable collection of essays. Contributors express a refreshing passion for the ongoing development of archival theory and practice. Often very personal in their accounts as to why diversity and inclusion is important, the contributors demonstrate a high level of intellectual rigour and a focus on practical and considered application of diversity programs. With a focus on providing practical advice, the authors have been open in their acknowledgment of mistakes of the past and the complexities that still exist. *Through the Archival Looking Glass* promotes understanding and encourages a broad dialogue. While written from a North American perspective, the book is inclusive of international experiences, and would be very useful in informing the debate in Australia on how we address inclusion.

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<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2014.1000895>

Caroline Brown (ed.), *Archives and Recordkeeping: Theory into Practice*, Facet Publishing, London, 2014. xxiii + 260 pp. ISBN 978 1 856048 25 5. GBP£49.95.

I was asked to review this book shortly after holding forth at a staff meeting on the importance of our practice being informed by a sound grasp of theory – so, for my sins, I could not say no and turned to this book with great interest.

As the title implies, this book aims to present practitioners with an overview of archival and recordkeeping theory, explaining its relevance to what we do. Edited by Caroline Brown, the book comprises seven chapters: