

Editorial

Does the scent and texture of a record provide context that has hitherto been generally ignored in the rush to embrace digitised and born digital formats? As Maryanne Dever observes in her article ‘Provocations on the Pleasures of Archived Paper’, paper, rather than swiftly disappearing as predicted by the advent and adoption of digital formats, is proving to have a long ‘afterlife’. Is it possible that one day, something like this kind of attention to the materiality of paper will be focused on the digital supports of contemporary recordkeeping and cultural documents? What would that kind of appreciation be like? Dever advocates for a ‘material literacy’ to counteract the lacuna created when too much attention is given to words and their meanings. Dever’s thought-provoking article makes a number of observations about these often-overlooked and marginalised dimensions of the physicality of the record which astute and attentive researchers and archivists can learn to ‘read’ in order to tell a different story to the content of the record itself. In this regard, ‘materials in disarray’ could be just as much ‘evidence of me’ as fastidiously ordered diaries or expertly arranged papers.

Interestingly, in the Reviews section, Colleen McEwen looks at another dimension of the materiality of paper records, namely their circulation within networks of power as discussed in Matthew S Hull, *Government of Paper: The Materiality of Bureaucracy in Urban Pakistan*. Documents are not only used to carry out the work of bureaucracy and provide evidence of that work, they can also be used to shape the bureaucracy itself. Although a business system was acquired in 1966 to manage electronic records of land holdings and compensation payouts for the development of Islamabad, Pakistan’s capital territory, public servants refused to engage with it because it would have made information too readily available to everyone, thereby disrupting relationships structured around the circulation of paper records through particular networks of influence and patronage.

Pauline Joseph, Lecturer in Records and Archives Management at the Department of Information Studies at Curtin University, and her co-writers, Michael Gregg and Sally May, present a case study of retrospective digitisation involving a partnership between the Western Australian Museum Maritime History Department and Curtin University Department of Information Studies. The resulting article, ‘Digitisation of the WA Welcome Wall Collection: A Case Study’, gives us a blow-by-blow account of how an outreach and interpretation project morphed into a digitisation and recordkeeping task. The original Welcome Wall project, through which members of the general public were encouraged to relate their stories about emigration to Western Australia, produced a series of paper records. The decision to digitise these and link them with records in the museum’s online maritime history collection provides an opportunity to discuss some of the lessons and pitfalls of such a project, and the kind of business process questions that need to be addressed to attempt such a project successfully. In a perfect world, as Joseph and her colleagues observe, records managers would have been involved in the Welcome Wall project from the outset, advising on how to manage the incoming data as records. As a case study, it provides an instructive lesson in this

regard, but also in what can be done (in an imperfect world) when a retrospective digitisation project is required in order to capture data within a recordkeeping system.

In 'Recordkeeping Metadata and Archival Description: A Revisit', Jinfang Niu examines the evolutionary processes that metadata undergo from the moment of their creation to their archival preservation. The processes of transformation Niu describes, inheritance, extinction and mutation, could, she argues, be useful for 'rais[ing] awareness about the appraisal and selection of metadata in digital curation practice'.

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