

surrounding the agency's attempts to control the copying and circulation of maps, exacerbating problems around the construction of unauthorised mosques.

For those without a background in anthropology, the language and the theoretical framework may make this book a challenging read. Records are 'graphic artefacts', which have 'material qualities'; files are 'networked documents that move along narrow paths, greatly restricting the range of people who have access to their contents' (p. 63). While this study is not written for the recordkeeping professional, it provides a fascinating insight into recordkeeping practices of the CDA and is a powerful statement about understanding the context in which records are created and used. Hull shows how records, while developed and maintained within a highly procedural environment, provide evidence to enable the business of an organisation to be undertaken (it is noted that the main elements of Doxiadis's vision have been realised) they are not always the 'obedient tools of government' (p. 245). He has demonstrated how recordkeeping practices can be deployed, used and manipulated to influence outcomes according to the different political agendas of a wide network of interested parties involved in the transactions, with the CDA efforts to control activities being undermined by the agency's own records.

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Michael Piggott, *Archives and Societal Provenance: Australian Essays*, Oxford, Chandos Publishing, 2012. xxiv + 334 pp. ISBN 978 1 843347 12 5 (paperback), ISBN 978 1 780633 78 7 (online). AUD\$89.00.

One encouraging sign of the growing maturity of the archives and recordkeeping profession comes with the appearance of several recent books of extended thematic argument focusing on the nature and purposes of records creation, management and use. Michael Piggott's volume of 'Australian essays' focuses on 'the historical and societal setting of the Australian archives and records landscape' (p. 2) as a means of exploring 'some of the connections between Australian society and its records' (p. 4). While deeply rooted in a national–continental–societal context, it offers a valuable contribution to the international archival discourse.

As a laureate of the Australian Society of Archivists and a prominent figure in Australian archives and recordkeeping circles for four decades, the author needs no further introduction. This collection of essays brings together disparate writings and presentations (1980–2010) from a variety of archival, library and historical venues with several essays prepared for this publication. Each of the earlier essays has been updated with minor revisions and a new introduction and/or conclusion. In effect, it's a 'greatest hits' album, but re-mastered with added lyrics and new textures (context) of instrumentation.

The concept anchoring this collection of essays is societal provenance. Articulated by Canadian archivist Tom Nesmith, this view emphasises the breadth and depth of records, which 'reflect and shape societal processes' (p. 3). Records should thus be

examined in the context of their creators, the historical processes behind them, and their multi-level uses, including the imprint of archivists and recordkeepers on the record.

Piggott structures his essays under four headings: history, institutions, formation and debates.

History: In a new essay, Piggott identifies prominent themes illustrating the links between the production and preservation of records and elements of Australian culture, arguing that ‘British Australia was literally conceived in documents’ such as memoranda and letters regarding establishing the colony. The importance of understanding archival history frames re-purposed and updated essays on Schellenberg in Australia, the inflated claim that archives are an ‘indispensable resource’ for historians, and a humorous exploration of the limited power of documentary evidence to undermine the myth that as a graduate student future prime minister Bob Hawke had swum naked in a campus lily pond.

Institutions: Three essays focus on archival organisations. In ‘Libraries and Archives: From Subordination to Partnership’, Piggott explores the tug-of-war in archive–library relations, focusing on Schellenberg’s influence on the 1956 Paton Inquiry, which advocated separating the archival agency from the National Library of Australia. In a coda to this 1988 essay, he links the 1950s debates over the relationship between archives and libraries to recent ‘reversals’ that placed archives in Tasmania and the Northern Territory back under library control, with little discussion. Two other essays focus on the establishment of prime ministerial libraries (with some comparisons to presidential libraries in the United States, and other countries’ efforts to memorialise their political leaders), and the important role of the Australian War Records Section and its head, Dr C E W Bean, as the ‘first formal archives programme’ in the new Australian nation.

Formation: Critical to understanding the societal value of archives is examining how and why records are created and why they have or acquire archival status. The debate over destruction or preservation of name-identified census forms – ‘one of the very few occasions when matters of records appraisal have been thoroughly aired in public’ – leads Piggott to reflect on the inherent conflict between ‘privacy protection’ and ‘the ultimate denial of access’ (p. 147). (The better-known Heiner Affair merits only a brief mention here, and in two later essays.) An essay deploring the limited interest of the archival profession in documenting Australian business and the resulting gap in documenting society echoes similar concerns raised in the United States and other countries. Examining four ways in which Australian archivists have contributed to international discussions of appraisal, Piggott nonetheless offers the blunt assessment that they ‘have contributed little to appraisal theory and method which is genuinely original’ (p. 168). The one exception to this criticism is AS 4390, the Australian standard on records management, which provided the basis for the international standard for recordkeeping.

Debates: The longest and richest section of this volume presents or re-argues several crucial debates within the archival profession: the Records Continuum Model, personal recordkeeping as self-documentation, the role of collecting archives, the ‘poverty’ of recordkeeping history, and modes of indigenous recordkeeping. Each deserves further explication – more than a brief review essay can offer.

Examining Percy Grainger’s seemingly obsessive desire to document his own life leads Piggott to intriguing speculations on the role of personal recordkeeping, the nature of records as a form of artificial memory, and the ‘parallel and complementary

provenances' of records and personal memory. Archival theory, he argues, needs to accept and incorporate 'the idea of an oral record' (p. 212).

In 'Alchemist Magpies? Collecting Archivists and their Critics', Piggott rejects the argument that collecting archives lie outside the defined borders of professional archival practice. Among other justifications for collecting private records, he posits the growing scholarly and public interest in the private lives of 'forgotten people' and 'ordinary Australians' (p. 231). Greater attention to such documentation would counter-balance Australian archival practice, which he terms 'massively biased in favour of government records' (p. 229) and ensure a more comprehensive record of society.

'The Poverty of Australia's Recordkeeping History' (first published in 1996) might well have anchored this volume's section on history. More than 15 years on, Piggott concludes that his earlier analysis that too little is known about the history of recordkeeping and the archival profession 'remains largely and regrettably valid' (p. 236). In one of the book's most forceful evocations of 'societal provenance', he concludes that 'the historical sociology of recordkeeping ... has yet to be satisfactorily defined' (p. 246). He challenges his colleagues to begin.

Two essays, the first and last in the 'debates' section, deserve special consideration. In 'Two Cheers for the Records Continuum', Piggott commends this Australian construct as 'the world's most inclusive model for archives', but judges that 'it falls short of a "three cheers" accolade' (p. 187). He concludes that it does not provide a needed 'theory for a sociology of recordkeeping' and that the model fails to represent 'the innumerable contexts of document and record creation and non-creation' (p. 188). Yet, in the end, he suggests that, as one writer said about French philosophy, the Records Continuum should be treated like poetry – 'as essentially unparaphrasable and never fully explicable' (p. 189). It seems likely that this essay will please very few. Continuum supporters will find his praise half-hearted at best. Critics (of whom there seem to be few in Australia, he points out) will argue that he pulls too many punches.

Piggott's boldest contribution to archival debates, 'Acknowledging Indigenous Recordkeeping', argues that the 50,000-year history of Indigenous stories, knowledge and cultural recordkeeping systems 'should be acknowledged, understood and supported' (p. 251). Three examples support his analysis: the tanderrum agreement ceremony, contracts inscribed on message sticks and the cognitive recordkeeping illustrated by 'Dreaming archives' (p. 260). Quoting Deborah Bird Rose's appeal for anthropology to be a thorn discomfiting 'those who like their worlds neatly packaged' (pp. 262–3), Piggott suggests a similar role for archival science. He concludes that archivists must stop treating Indigenous recordkeeping as 'out of scope', and challenges his colleagues to summon 'the will to imagine a new, culturally inclusive, truly Australian archival science' (p. 265). This is a challenge equally for American archivists and for others around the globe.

In an exploratory 'Epilogue' Piggott offers some tantalising, but not fully realised, thoughts about the connections between archival records and death, including the 'archival afterlife' created by documentation of otherwise unknown individuals. There is much food here for digestion in future.

Although largely addressed to Australian archivists, this volume of essays offers rich and nuanced themes for consideration by archivists everywhere. One admires Piggott's effort to update and revise previously published essays and to group them under the concept of societal provenance. Nevertheless, one would like to see a stronger thematic development of this concept – perhaps in chapter conclusions – showing how they reflect societal provenance, and developing more clearly the context of his four

central themes. Much of the volume's value lies in sub-text. The reader must deduce the analytical points, linkages and underlying arguments. Piggott offers some of this, but more would be useful. On the other hand, perhaps we can all benefit from having to think over these important issues for ourselves. This may be Michael Piggott's greatest contribution, encouraging his colleagues to consider new ways of thinking about archives and recordkeeping.

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Pam Hackbart-Dean and Elizabeth Slomba, *How to Manage Processing in Archives and Special Collections*, Chicago Society of American Archivists, 2012. 156 pp. ISBN 1 931666 43 1. US\$69.95.

I vividly recall part of a conversation while I was undertaking study in the history of science field. It was an informal conversation after a seminar and I mentioned to two colleagues that I had previously worked as an archivist. They looked at me as though I was about to tell a fascinating story. 'Yes, an archivist', I confirmed. They both looked disappointed and one said: 'Oh, an archivist, I thought you said alchemist'. Holding this recollection, I chuckled on reading the opening lines of this volume, 'Archival processing is the alchemical means of facilitating access to material that do not come with predetermined access points,' enjoying the comparison with using esoteric knowledge to turn base metals into gold.

Context, significance, and value, especially of large, unsorted archival collections, are often only realised by the labour of archival appraisal, description and processing. This book focuses on managing processes of accessioning, arrangement, description, cataloguing and some aspects of preservation to make archives and manuscripts accessible to researchers, and includes some sections on processing electronic files, digitisation and online content discovery.

Archival processing is still essential to collecting archives, as we grapple with the documentary legacy of the twentieth century and earlier. The American university or college archive provides a good point of comparison to the University of Melbourne Archives and the authors were based at Southern Illinois University Carbondale and the University of New Hampshire, so I found much in the volume to engage me.

The first chapter outlines the components of processing programs conceived as projects or programs to be managed proactively and realistically based on clear goals and objectives that are results-oriented and patron-based (p. 5). They also highlight the need for workflows with identified decision points and work plans for processing activity. This focus is probably the strength of the volume. It also sets the rationale and activity of processing in the context of archival debates. I feel the authors are less successful in reconciling the realities of processing archives with theoretical debates.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, most archival programs tended toward less micro-processing (and micro-appraisal) of paper-based collections, not least due to the volume of material being preserved, acquired and collected by archives and the relative declining resources available to carry out such work. Paradoxically, the possibilities and