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

demands for digital access including remote access emerging in the same period have tended in the opposite direction as 'archivists face an increasing number of requests for item level description' (p. 4). Although there is further discussion of this issue later in the volume (chapter 5, pp. 72–75), the authors do not resolve this tension and it is probably unrealistic to expect it of them, although I would have liked them to engage with this issue in a more sustained way.

The authors deal with competing tendencies in archival processing in terms of prioritisation (chapter 2), based on a series of criteria including demand, need, significance, impact and effort. Included are a decision matrix and priorities rating sheet, which help rank priorities. Instinctively, archivists often know what the priorities are or should be, but it helps to document and remain accountable to these as it is surprisingly easy to drift away from them. The outcome of a priorities-based processing program will always be an unevenly processed collection, a state of being to which managers of large collections need to be existentially adapted. The Royal Geographical Society of London's six million pound 'Unlocking the Archives' project provides an alternative model.

The main body of the book is titled 'Managing Processing' (chapter 3) and covers workflows from acquisition to publication and documentation including arrangement, description, repackaging, as well as issues particular to special formats like audiovisual collections, electronic files and objects. There is some interesting discussion of reprocessing, an inordinate challenge for partly processed large collections that have become muddled or subject to new requirements (for example, online finding aids and digitisation); legacy collections (for example, those processed before computerisation); as well as dealing with new additions or accretions to existing collections and series. The Australian Series System is able to deal with some of these issues, but without system flexibility to document complex relationships this can be challenging.

The section dealing with processing (and preservation) of electronic files is competent in covering the range of issues encountered from preservation strategies (for example, normalisation and its limitations) to some of the techniques and expertise applicable to this domain (for example, computer forensics and the extraction of metadata), but this discussion did not communicate the adeptness of experience apparent in some of the other sections of the book. The bibliography on this topic will date quickly, and is not well digested and selected to promote sources useful to the processing archivist. Nonetheless, the authors' observation that the best preservation strategy is not necessarily the most direct path to making files quickly available to users is a valid one and forms a link to the overall intention of the volume.

The main innovation referred to in this chapter is Mark Greene and Denis Meissner's 'More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing' (MPLP) focused on getting collections to researchers faster, promoting arrangement adequate to user needs, minimal steps necessary for preservation, and sufficient description to promote use. While this is an admirable goal and workable with expert on-site users of archival collections in the short term, it may not serve other purposes well (for example, supporting digitisation and online content delivery) and the authors do not promote a one size fits all approach.

Further chapters on preservation (chapter 4) and managing processing staff (chapter 6) yield some useful information and advice: a guide to repackaging essentials and non-essentials (presumably following the MPLP approach); references to tools for audiovisual format identification; and the role of paraprofessional staff, volunteers and student interns in processing programs.

The chapter that translates least well to the Australian (and UK) archival context concerns the impact of description, standards and innovation (chapter 5). Some of the standards and practices were unfamiliar to me or occupy a more or less important place among standards. The International Standard on Archival Description ISAD (G) is mentioned only briefly as a 'data content' standard and the critical authority descriptive standard ISAAR (CFP) not at all. The Australian Series (or relationships) System does not figure.

The standards pertaining to 'data structure' are identified as 'Machine Readable Cataloging (MARC21) for catalog records, Encoded Archival Description (EAD) for finding aids, Dublin Core for digital resources, and Visual Resources Code 4 for identification of a work or image in a collection'. A range of authorities and thesauruses are referred to as 'data value' standards, comparable to those existing in Australia designed for similar purposes.

Standards and methods for publishing web-based finding aids including HTML, PDF and XML are mentioned and examples of style sheets and macros for converting text and data into EAD XML files are given. Publishing online data entered into archival collection management systems is also mentioned as one possible approach. In addition, there is a brief discussion of collection management systems providing support for archival workflow, including processing. The issue of digitisation is returned to (pp. 72–75) and the point made that processing procedures should allow for selecting materials for digitisation and capturing metadata for digital objects. Consider the impact of the decision to digitise a collection on its processing early in the workflow. Repositories for managing and publishing digital objects are only briefly mentioned, but salient points are made about applying archival principles to guide the level of metadata used to support digitisation, reusing descriptive data and working effectively with colleagues who digitise collections working outside the archival program.

What follows is a brief discussion of alternative or 'enhanced' access like indexing and other forms of detailed description or subject access, user-generated tags and tag clouds, subject guides and the Use of Web 2.0 tools (including social media) for outreach. Crowd-sourcing is discussed in terms of 'viewing processing as an outreach activity' and readers are urged to 'consider and adapt new standards and approaches to description' where this moves archives closer to connecting patrons with collections. Outside the scope of professional outreach activities, the book does not engage with the nature and methods of digital humanities research (or research in general), which is however understandable given the size, intended audience and nature (a handbook) of the publication.

Evaluation and assessment (chapter 7) is the subject of the concluding chapter, which provides some measurement tools and encourages benchmarking. Although most archives collect user statistics, these may not relate directly to processing outcomes and evaluation, except anecdotally. It is an assumption that processing will achieve the goal of encouraging and facilitating access to collections. This volume encourages us to take evaluation and assessment seriously and to use the results to improve processes.

The volume includes a bibliographic essay and appendices of processing planning and assessment forms, and website resources, as well as an index. At 150 pages it is short enough to absorb quite quickly. The chapters relating to planning and managing processing and staff resonated and enthused me more than the other chapters and I was more engaged towards the beginning of the book than the end. This handbook addresses what remains the core challenge of the archival profession of turning papers, artefacts and digital files into privileged sources for research. Especially for those

working in collecting and community archives and archival and special collections in libraries and historical societies, it is a worthwhile read.

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