

## REVIEWS

**Aaron D Purcell**, *Academic Archives: Managing the Next Generation of College and University Archives, Records, and Special Collections*, Chicago, Neal-Schuman, 2012. xx + 315 pp. ISBN 978-1-55570-769-9. US\$95.00

**Alison Cullingford**, *The Special Collections Handbook*, London, Facet Publishing, 2011. xiv + 210 pp. ISBN 978-1-85604-757-9. £54.95

These two books, one from the university sector in the United States and the other from the United Kingdom, are both well-written and thought-provoking. The authors belong to a new generation, and their books are valuable guides for today's practitioners across a variety of organisations, not just university archives and special collections in libraries. These titles are superior to traditional manuals, because they do not present practice as essentially timeless once key principles have been established. Instead, they begin from the perspective of today's engaged professional, are firmly concerned with finding solutions to current challenges and look clearly to the future.

Aaron D Purcell explores practice in academic archives (what we, in Australia, would recognise as university archives) in the context of the history and current state of the wider profession. This book is divided into three parts – archives and the academic environment; building and updating an academic archives program; and the future of academic archives. He begins by charting his own professional journey and frankly discusses problems facing new entrants to the profession who want to pursue careers in academic archives. For example, he acknowledges the problem of the bottleneck of employment in US university archives, where there can be fierce competition at the entry level, a hiatus in the middle and atrophy near the top (p. 12). Chapter four, 'Mission and vision building for academic archives', provides accessible and practical advice on how to shape a program, rather than management theory. Here, Purcell emphasises the critical need for archivists with responsibility for programs within larger organisations to develop and extend their leadership skills (summarised in 'Common traits of an archival leader', p. 106).

Purcell's discussion of collection development for academic archives, including documentation strategies and oral history projects, is both historically grounded and inclusive of contemporary concerns, such as the responsibility of documenting diversity. He has a broad understanding of 'modern' manuscripts (pp. 65–9) and presents examples that span the historical and political spectrum. Some of the content in this book is very specific to the American context (for example, the treatment of records management and acquisition by purchase), but there is good pragmatic advice for recordkeeping professionals with planning and staff responsibilities and not just in universities. Purcell writes with confidence about a complex subject: the present and future of academic archives in the United States. His basic theme is change and how to respond to it.

Alison Cullingford's *The Special Collections Handbook* has a different focus from Purcell's. Her experience has been largely confined to one university library, but she

has used research in the field, including major American publications, to inform her synthesis of preferred practice in special collections, whether in university libraries or elsewhere. Cullingford's book really is a handbook: each chapter is presented in language that is clear, but not oversimplified and includes a short list of further readings, as well as examples and case studies. Useful websites are also listed, and the book has a companion website (see <http://specialcollectionshandbook.com>). The usefulness of these 'useful websites' will naturally depend on the organisations that publish them maintaining their web content. The companion website will depend on Cullingford's enthusiasm and energy for its future maintenance and development.

The book begins with 'Collections care', introducing the physical dimension of collections management. Cullingford builds in virtual collections and services for virtual users throughout, helpfully providing a summary (p. 119) of where to find this advice. The use of social media is included across several areas, not just working with users. Unlike Purcell's book, this book includes objects and has helpful guidance for archivists and librarians who have to deal with physical objects, as well as documentary collections. Due attention is paid to everyday issues, such as working with volunteers and health and safety. *The Special Collections Handbook* has a strong focus on communication: with users and other existing stakeholders and also in terms of devising strategies to extend audiences and locate sources of additional support. Advocacy is presented as an integral part of the role of the special collections librarian/manager, both internally and externally. The future is seen as a challenge for special collections, due to the combination of difficult times and the pressure of the imperative to digitise (p. 181).

Finally, for Australian readers, here is a challenge. Both books discuss 'hidden collections' and recent efforts to develop strategies in managing uncatalogued, unprocessed and uncontrolled collections within manuscript or special collections. Is it time for an Australian professional discussion on this issue?

*Academic Archives* and *The Special Collections Handbook* are recommended reading for university archivists, librarians working with archives (wherever they, and the records, may be located) and for government archivists interested in understanding the professional world outside their own institutional boundaries.

Sigrid McCausland

*Charles Sturt University*

© 2013, Sigrid McCausland

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/01576895.2012.760161>

**Russell D James and Peter J Wosh (eds)**, *Public Relations and Marketing for Archives: A How-to-do-it Manual*, New York, Neal-Schuman Publishers with the Society of American Archivists, 2011. xiv + 273 pp. ISBN 978-1-5557-0733-0. US \$80.00

*Public Relations and Marketing for Archives – A How-To-Do-It Manual* provides a brief, but broad overview of the key elements of marketing, public relations and stakeholder engagement for archives. 'Over the past 30 years, conference presenters, graduate educators, association consultants, and workshop leaders have urged archivists to pay greater attention to advocacy and outreach' (p. 1).

As a Society of American Archivists co-publication, it seeks to support the profession in encouraging basic advocacy and the promotion of the services of