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The postcard depicts the side terrace of the Pinehurst Country Club looking toward Maniac Hill, the famous practice range at Pinehurst, circa 1945-1950. Image courtesy of the Tufts Archives, www.tuftsarchives.org.

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The Research and Instructional Uses of Realia in Academic Library Archival Collections

by Beth Ann Koelsch

Abstract

The purpose of this research study was to illustrate the importance of realia for historic research and undergraduate instruction and to encourage academic archives to expand their collection development policies to include more artifacts. Through examination of the literature about the collection and use of artifacts in archives as well as information gathered from interviews with university professors, researchers, and archivists in academic special collections libraries at universities in the North Carolina Triangle area, a variety of opinions about the research and pedagogical value of three-dimensional materials is revealed.

Introduction

Academic library special collections are archival repositories for historical records. These institutions develop and maintain collections primarily for the academic community, both the faculty and students, that they are charged to serve. The collections are principally used for research, but are also utilized for undergraduate instruction. An archival collection can be comprised of many types of materials including handwritten letters, monographs, serials, account ledgers, diaries, photographic materials, audiovisual materials, electronic records, and ephemera and realia. When a donor offers a collection to an archive, the collection development archivist assesses the collection and decides what material will be accepted and what should be returned to the

donor or transferred to a library or museum.

Historically, special collections archivists have believed that documents, preferably handwritten, were the most important primary source materials.¹ The *Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* of the Society of American Archivists (SAA), the largest archivist organization in North America, states that the term *archival records* has traditionally implied unique “documents rather than artifacts or published materials.”² Archivists have not considered artifacts appropriate for their collections. The storage, description, and preservation issues for realia are different from, and usually more complex than, traditionally collected items. Archivists did not believe that the challenges posed by the materials were worth their time and energy because they were considered to have a limited value to researchers.

Literature Review: Terminology and Definitions

There is no universally accepted definition for realia. This lack of definitive criteria is a factor that limits the recognition of these materials as valid archival documentation. *Realia* can be defined as “three-dimensional objects,” “artifacts,” “museum objects,” or “specimens.” Some archivists distinguish realia as manmade versus naturally occurring objects. Some view a painting as realia and others consider it a completely separate category of artwork. The SAA glossary defines realia simply as a “three-dimensional object” and subdivides these objects into manmade “artifacts” such as a trophy and naturally-occurring “specimens” such as a rock.³

The term does not include three-dimensional audio-visual materials, any book-like materials, such as artists’ books, and usually excludes cartographic materials such as

globes. In their discussion of the use of realia in public libraries, the Children's Services Division Toys, Games, and Realia Committee defined realia as “actual articles and other three-dimensional objects of reality offered in words or pictures.”⁴ Bierbaum adds that “what sets apart realia, or ‘things,’ from all other types of nonprint media is the tangible connection to the real world...They are versatile, and may fill several learning objectives or educational needs. They are often meaningful without language.”⁵ When considering realia in a context specific to an archive, using terms such as “thing,” “artifacts,” and “objects” conveys the intended meaning.

Traditional Views and Technical Issues

Issues of usage, valuation, preservation, and storage add to the controversial nature of these materials. Jill Severn writes that:

In many archival repositories, artifacts are pushed to the very margins--literally and figuratively. Archivists discount, disdain, and worst of all, ignore these materials. Often, they don't process artifacts as part of the collections from which they originated. Artifacts appear in catchall series obscurely titled “separated materials” mixed in among other problematic materials like videotapes, and sometimes, even photographs. Often, artifacts don't appear in finding aids at all...Many archivists refuse to accept artifacts with collections preferring to direct donors to send these objects to a museum even though this means splitting the collection and ignoring the great attachment donors often have for items that are symbols of significant moments in

their lives.⁶

Even the Library of Congress classifies realia as “non-library materials” and states in their collection development policy that they will not accept “objects or materials which more properly belong to museum collections, such as paintings, sculptures or other three-dimensional works of art; nor will it generally accept furniture or furnishings, costumes, medals, coins, stamps, badges, emblems, decorations, personal effects, or any other objects or materials, generally out of scope for the Library’s collections.”⁷

Many archivists view realia that arrives as part of a manuscript collection as the price to pay in order to acquire useful (i.e. paper-based) materials. Archivists feel stuck with these objects because, according to Jan Brazier, often “there is no better place in an institution for them to be held.”⁸ Brazier continues: “Most archivists have a few cupboards or shelves of these museum pieces. Because we often work as sole archivists, or with a small staff, and with backlogs of undescribed series, these objects remain rarely or minimally listed.”⁹

Realia can be problematic for archives. The wide variety of possible objects presents troublesome preservation issues such as idiosyncratic storage and special environment needs and irregular sizes that make housing and shelving difficult. One of the SAA’s unofficial “Laws of Archivy” is: “If it doesn’t fit in the box, fold it. If you can’t fold it, toss it.”¹⁰ Brazier states that for archivists: “Our view is slightly ambivalent, for while we don’t like to see the detachment of objects from their documentation, their segregation is often desirable for better storage and use. It is not that objects per se do not belong in archives but that generally, for reasons of space, storage requirements, use and access, objects are felt

to best belong in museums.”¹¹ D. Vanessa Kam also points out that most archivists and librarians do not have the training to responsibly handle art objects.¹²

There is also the issue of the research value of realia. Michael Basinski, the assistant curator of the rare books collection at the State University of New York in Buffalo, views a backpack in the university’s collection that was owned by the poet and novelist Robert Graves as something that serves no scholarly purpose: “We’re a research institution and there’s not much research that can be done on a backpack. It’s basically a kick. That’s important, of course, but that’s what it is.”¹³ Severn writes that because most archivists are unfamiliar with the research possibilities of realia, they “miss a chance to educate users about a vital class of records and they miss opportunities to connect with a broader array of scholars who are unaware of the material culture hidden on repository shelves.”¹⁴

Few archivists have been exposed to the ideas of material culture studies that inform many museologists. Severn believes that:

In general, archivists have little knowledge and experience with mining the research potential of artifacts. Without a grasp on the ways in which artifacts can be understood—or in the parlance of material culture study—read--archivists cannot make effective and informed decisions about appraisal, arrangement, description, and ultimately, access.¹⁵

Marvin Taylor challenges his fellow archivists to reassess their views on the worth of collecting, preserving, and giving access to realia:

Why do we not process some materials as fully as others, privileging the correspondence, manuscripts, diaries, and other written documents of an author over other archival materials? The usual litany of answers includes the following: It costs too much, publishers weed out bad materials, scholars are primarily interested in academic materials, or, in archival terms, in biographical and literary materials about a writer or artist's development. All of these answers are laden with value assumptions with which the library is complicit. Such compliance, even if benign, does violence against those materials that question the processes of validation in our culture--and, in fact, all materials, even those more readily acceptable to mainstream culture. We in libraries can be the greatest enemies of the preservation of culture when we believe we are documenting ideas for the future but do not knowingly select materials that lie outside the academic/publishing/library complex.¹⁶

Reassessment of the Research Value of Realia

Some archivists and theorists, while not discounting the technical difficulties with properly dealing with these materials, believe in the value of collecting realia. Insight from the field of material culture studies has resulted in a new appreciation of the research uses of artifacts. Thomas Schelereth maintains that "objects made or modified by humans, consciously or unconsciously, directly or indirectly, reflect the belief patterns of individuals who made, commissioned, purchased, or used them, and, by extension, the belief patterns of the larger society of which they are a part."¹⁷

Adrienne Hood, a historian and material culturist at the University of Toronto, insists that “everyday objects have a lot of value and should not be discarded.”¹⁸

Gloria Meraz and Severn are strong proponents of the research validity of artifacts. Meraz argues that “objects reveal in concrete form the subjects of historical discourse.”¹⁹ Severn challenges the belief that realia are not as legitimate a record if the creator collected rather than created the artifact itself by arguing that “the creator does create the artifact conceptually by investing it with meaning and by juxtaposing it with other artifacts and records that form the framework of his or her material life.”²⁰ Arguments about the very nature of what can provide information also come into play in this debate. Michael Buckland asserts that objects are “information-as-thing” since they can be resources for information and can convey knowledge. He disagrees with any view of information that does not include objects.²¹

An important research use for realia is for studies of pre-literate or illiterate people. Kevin Moore purports that “material culture is in fact the most democratic form of historical evidence.”²² Schelereth writes that the study of artifacts is necessary in “overcoming the inherent elitist bias of most literary remains that are the product of that small minority of people in the past who could write.”²³ In many cases, someone’s artifacts are the only records that the person existed.²⁴

Realia have an evocative quality that can be hard to articulate. Bierbaum states that objects “appeal to the cognitive and affective domains.”²⁵ Michael Rowlands and Richard Bradley explain that artifacts:

have [the] particular capacity to evoke and to establish continuities with past experience is pre-

cisely because as a material symbol rather than verbalized meaning, they provide a special form of access to both individual and group unconscious processes. Objects are culturally constructed to connote and consolidate the possession of past events associated with their use or ownership.²⁶

Realia are used by many disciplines. Michael Jarrell writes that while researchers refer to text-based materials much more frequently than they do realia, scholars in the fields of history, anthropology, and sociology do use artifacts to try to understand the situations in which they were created and used.²⁷ Bierbaum champions the versatility of realia; because artifacts are not “subject linked,” an artifact such as a costume can be incorporated into research in the social sciences, languages, and art.²⁸

Some archivists are reconsidering the traditional view that artifacts should be removed from archival collections and placed in museums. One of the fundamental arguments for keeping artifacts within an archive is “preserving the integrity” of a collection by not separating realia from manuscript material.²⁹ There are additional arguments in favor of having artifacts in archives. One of the primary differences between archival repositories and museums is access to objects. Archives are much more likely than museums to allow researchers to directly examine and handle their materials.³⁰ Another difference is that while museums interpret the meaning of objects, archives follow the tenet that, as Abby Smith writes, “the rawer the materials served, the better.”³¹ Smith elaborates on her culinary metaphor with the idea that “the more ‘cooked’--that is, selected, edited, shaped by an expert--the less integrity an item is deemed to have as

an object of research.” She points out that the role of librarians (and, again, by extension, archivists) is to provide access, not to judge and interpret.³² Finally, Kam suggests that the donors of collections might specifically prefer their artifacts to be accessible to researchers in an archive rather than be solely preserved in a museum.³³

Instructional Value of Archives

In the year 2000, the Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL) specifically affirmed the importance of teaching undergraduate students about primary sources in their Literacy Competency Standards for Higher Education.³⁴ The literature shows that there is enthusiasm and interest from both instructors and archivists for expanding instruction opportunities. Ann Schmiesing and Deborah Hollis assert that “incorporating special collections into teaching creates a unique environment in which to inspire students to become actively involved in their learning.”³⁵ Active learning is a common theme in most of the literature dealing with undergraduates using archival materials. Susan Meo writes that “teachers are building strategies to help students in historical skills such as analyzing motives and considering multiple perspectives. Using primary sources allows students to see history as an ongoing process of constructing the past, rather than a fixed body of knowledge.”³⁶ Working with archival materials can “enable [students] to be stewards of their own learning” by giving them the experience of sorting and judging documentation instead of simply relying on the pre-interpreted information in secondary sources.³⁷ Marcus Robyns asserts that teaching students to use primary sources in their research process helps them develop as scholars and that “the archivist can make a real dif-

ference in education by guiding students through the process of critical analysis, making the archives not only a repository of the past but also a challenging center of critical inquiry.”³⁸

However, undergraduate instruction using archives and archival materials is uncommon. Many students are not aware of the special collections libraries and archives within their universities.³⁹ Even students who are aware of the existence of their school’s special collections might not be interested in exploring the repository and learning about its holdings. Mark Greene writes that “students must overcome many false stereotypes to fully appreciate [archives]. These include false perceptions about the narrowness and drabness of archival materials and their inappropriateness for undergraduate use.”⁴⁰

Introducing students to visually and artifactually evocative materials can strongly engage undergraduates with archival collections. Bierbaum asserts that “the use of realia for teaching and instruction goes back to our very beginnings; for by their nature, objects are the essence of the real world and the optimal means of teaching about it.”⁴¹ Margaret Schaus gives examples on how objects can be used to teach: “What, for example, do whale bone stays from an eighteenth-century corset say about women’s roles, health concerns, distinctions of social class, large-scale fishing, or the garment industry?”⁴² Schaus believes that when students are working directly with artifacts, history is made to feel very “immediate.”⁴³ Sheng Chung adds:

A cultural artifact is easily accessible to students because it is a concrete, observable manifestation of a cultural belief, scientific break-through, or aesthetic accomplishment of an examined culture, as opposed to a piece of abstract information.

Therefore, educators can use cultural objects to explain aesthetic expressions, complex concepts, values, traditions, and ideas from various cultures....These cultural objects are preserved and passed down primarily due to their social, political, religious, or aesthetic significance and are accompanied by a rich repertoire of human beliefs and values.⁴⁴

Methodology

This research study consisted of interviews with academic archivists who are involved with reference services, undergraduate instruction, and public outreach as well as interviews with university professors who have used archival materials for their own research and for instruction. Specifically, the interviews were conducted with four archivists and three professors who are affiliated with universities in the Research Triangle area of North Carolina.

Interview Results

There was disagreement among both the archivists and the professors about the value of realia. One archivist who believes that “artifacts have intrinsic and evidential value,” admitted that neither general researchers nor students coming into the repository to do research for class assignments have used artifacts from her repository’s memorabilia collection. Another archivist reported that people wanted to see artifacts only for the curiosity value.

However, there were also stories about realia research usage. One archivist commented that “researchers have come in and used artifacts as a jumping off point to tell the larger story.” Additionally, there are instances where

journalists wanted to see particular objects for a magazine article they were writing and where textbook companies wanted scans of political buttons and other political material as illustrations.

Other archivists do not feel that realia has any value for archival collections. One said, "I don't know what you do with this kind of stuff except use it in exhibits." He continued, "I've never had any experience really with anyone coming in and looking at objects to determine some kind of thesis." He believes that artifacts do not belong in repositories where there is only one or two examples of an object, because, "I think that artifacts are more appropriate for places in which you can start to do comparisons among them in order to see changes over time...You have to have a critical mass of similar kinds of materials [for items to have research value]." This archivist admitted that "I don't have a background in museum studies and I'm sure that someone in museum studies would find many more ways of looking at artifacts."

Indeed, the archivists who have a background in museology were much more enthusiastic about realia. One archivist said, "I think that there's a real use in artifacts. I think that there's an emotive use, I think there's an inspirational use, I think that there is a real factual use." He described the type of research that can be done with artifacts: "There are people who are interested in product and there are people who are interested in process, and artifacts allow people who are also interested in process to go just a notch deeper and say, 'Okay, what's going on here?'" One hypothetical example he shared was that if a researcher could have access to a photographer's camera and realize how heavy the camera was and how difficult it must have been to

maneuver, the researcher would have an insight into why the photographer's photographs were sometimes blurry. This archivist also described some differences between the understanding of artifacts in an exhibition and artifacts in an archive: "Developing exhibitions you draw conclusions [about artifacts] for visitors and having similar material in [an archival] collection allows researchers to draw conclusions that we haven't thought of."

Ironically, the very people whose museum training has given them an appreciation of the importance of artifacts are also the most reticent about allowing access to them for researchers. One of the archivists whose training was in artifact handling said: "How willing are we to provide access to artifacts? I can tell you that we probably would be very reluctant to bring out a box of beakers for a patron. I would have to facilitate that visit and I probably wouldn't let a patron handle an item. I err on the side of the artifact...I wouldn't expect people to know what to do." Because this archivist views artifacts as "sacrosanct," and because artifacts in his repository are stored off-site and requires a staff member to personally retrieves them from storage, he requires researchers to justify any request to see objects from the collections. He mentioned a situation where a researcher requested to see a cornerstone of a building. This cornerstone was large and heavy and it was stored off-site. The archivist interviewed the researcher to ascertain whether he actually needed information that could only be gleaned from the actual cornerstone, or would an examination of a photograph of the cornerstone suffice. The archivist concluded that this particular research scenario did not justify the time and effort that would be required to give the researcher direct access to the object. The archivist explained:

We described it as best as we could to [the researcher]. . . The “I’ve seen the real [object]” desire is a visitor’s standpoint versus a researcher’s standpoint of value. [The researcher] asked pointed questions about markings. Certainly, if he was doing a paper on masonry--markings, techniques--it would be more valuable. He was writing a history and I said, “What information do you need off of it?” He said, “I just know you have it and I want to see it.” And it felt a bit much to carry a huge stone.

Collecting Policies for Realia

The collecting policies among the institutions of the archivists that I interviewed varied. Some archives had clearly formulated policies while others dealt with decisions about materials on an *ad hoc* basis. At one repository, the archivist said that they “will take anything pertaining to [their collection specialty] that can be stored and preserved.” Another archivist admitted that there was not a written collecting policy on non-traditional materials at his repository but that “it would probably help if there were.” Yet another archivist who works without a collecting policy said that they try to avoid accepting objects unless there is a very clear connection to the general collection focus, the provenance is well-documented, and there are no special preservation or storage difficulties. Without a clear collecting policy, archivists fear that they “will just gather stuff” and run out of storage space. Another problem for the archivists is that in many cases the artifacts lack adequate documentation about provenance and context.

Even when archivists decide to collect realia, they

struggle to determine what specific types of materials to collect. Sentiments such as, “It’s difficult to anticipate what people will use in the future, but we have to or else this kind of stuff will just disappear” were expressed by most of the archivists interviewed. In many cases, an archives does not have input on what is sent to them. For example, one archivist related that “the donors send us what they want to send us and we are left trying to decide what do we keep and what we don’t keep. We do want to have some record of the ‘real life’ of the corporation rather than just these dry documents; you want to have something that says, ‘They had a party and this was the commemorative t-shirt.’”

Archivists also struggle with the question of whether artifacts belong in an archives or in a museum. One archivist phrased the issue as: “You have to figure out where it will do the most good and where it will serve the public the best.” Another issue is the consideration of what is best for the artifact itself. A museology-trained archivist said, “I think that in library training there isn’t a lot of emphasis on ‘the thing.’ Without proper training, you can really run the risk of not caring for artifacts well. We don’t want to do a disservice to the thing by damage, neglect or loss.” This issue is a complex one and needs to be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Instructional Uses of Realia

Undergraduates are usually introduced to special collections libraries at an instructional session arranged by an archivist and an instructor. Students come to the archives and are given a lesson on how archival materials differ from regular library materials and how to use them. They are then shown a selection of materials from the collections that are

relevant to the subject matter of their class. Sometimes the students simply examine the materials, other times they work with the materials for an in-class exercise or are assigned a research project. For some instructional sessions, the instructor and archivist work closely together to choose the archival materials that will be used in the session. Other times instructors have a list of materials they want to use, and in other instances the archivist is expected to prepare the entire presentation without any instructor input. I asked each archivist his or her view on the instructional value of realia. One archivist reported that he uses these materials because “it helps students see [historical figures] as real people. That kind of use has value to it.” Another archivist said, “I think realia are very important for instruction. There is nothing better than having an actual item to contextualize information or represent a person. It becomes more real...and makes things come alive.” She also thinks that realia are very important to include in instructional sessions because “when you’re talking about something and there is a piece of paper and there is [also] a physical artifact that is somehow tied into that piece of paper, the piece of paper becomes much more interesting and important to the student.”

The instructors, even the ones who rarely used realia in their own research, were uniformly positive about the value of these materials when working with students. One instructor said, “I find that sometimes the realia touches a nerve with people. I don’t know the psychology behind it, but to hold this object that somebody held one hundred years ago...opens a window onto that person’s existence that you might not really understand by reading something.” She is a strong proponent of using realia with her classes:

I find that a lot of my students aren’t historians...

and that their sense of history is ‘you read the textbook’ or ‘you go online and do research’ so that the students we have now have grown up entirely digitized. They don’t have to touch the document. They don’t even have to open a book. They can get it all online. Not to contest the technology, because it’s wonderful and we should embrace it, but [it is important] to destabilize that sense of history and to make them think of history in terms not so much of these taken-for-granted-histories. *Re-alia* opens up different ways of seeing history that aren’t always represented in our textbooks.

Another instructor discussed the ineffable qualities of artifacts and how they have affected her students: “Students really feel privileged to touch that material...It’s nonverbal. That’s the point. You have to look at the [students’] faces or watch them put the thing down and say ‘Oh my God!’” She described her students as “naïve viewers” for whom looking at artifacts affords them a particular type of educational experience: “When people have to figure out what they’re looking at they don’t forget it because it’s part of a process. It’s not like the other stuff you have to memorize for an exam. It’s a different type of learning because it’s an experience, it’s not just learning...It makes the information that they’re reading about more interesting.” She explained that when students are presented with an item without being given any accompanying contextual information and they figure out “that’s what that is,” it gives her students “a kind of frisson.”

The final question to instructors was whether or not they assign their students to use archival materials for re-

search papers and if so, whether or not they would accept a paper based solely on research of realia. Not all of the instructors require students to use manuscript materials. One instructor who requires her students to use primary materials also gives them the option of using digitized images. Another instructor does not require her students to use archival materials because “items are delicate and if they don’t prize that material, they’re not going to treat it right and they’re also not going to write a good paper.” The consensus seemed to be that these instructors did not think that non-textual material offers enough contextual information on which to base a successful research paper.

Analysis and Conclusion

The thesis that I tested in this study was that the undervalued uses of realia should justify an increase in the collection of these materials in academic special collections. I realize that there are additional challenges that these materials impose with storage and preservation, but I did not delve into the questions about how archives would negotiate these challenges. Archives must work within their limitations, and collection decisions need to be made on a case-by-case basis that take into consideration the collection foci of each archive as well as technical, physical, and budgetary considerations. Conclusions drawn from results of this study are not intended to be definitive assessments of the value of these non-traditional materials for special collections. However, these results offer insight into a few of the issues that academic archivists need to consider in their collection development plans.

Research Value

The people I spoke with were not in agreement about the scholarly value of realia. I had hoped that there would be more research interest in and use of these materials. At this point in time, it appears that realia are primarily employed in exhibits, but academic disciplines are always evolving and as scholarship in material and popular culture studies increases, the use of realia should also expand. I believe that archivists need to redefine the idea of what constitutes “research value.” Realia have research uses beyond the traditional historical research for which most archival collections have been used in the past. These non-traditional materials can be used for a variety of research projects, including those about design and on the particulars of someone’s day-to-day existence. An issue that I had not anticipated was whether or not you need a critical mass of similar materials in order for artifacts to be useful for research. If this is the case, then there is certainly an argument against an archives maintaining the odd object here and there in their repositories.

Instruction

Although I do not feel that I came away with the ringing endorsement of the research value of realia that I was seeking, I think I found that these materials can be very valuable for undergraduate instruction. These materials seem to capture the interest and imagination of students and make history come alive for them in ways that traditional text material does not. Anyone who has encountered eighteenth- and nineteenth-century handwriting can attest to the difficulty of reading these documents, making it intimidating to try to decipher diaries and letters. As we are becoming an

increasingly visual culture, realia will be understood more and more as sources of education and information. As it stands, these materials can be used in conjunction with textual material in order to create a richer documentation of history than can be done with the materials separately.

Ideas about what “belongs” in an archives continually evolve. Archivists must make case-by-case judgments every time they accept a collection into their archives about what is appropriate to keep. They have the difficult tasks of not only assessing which materials have current research value but also predicting what future researchers will find useful. Realia, with all of its challenges, should be part of these valuations.

Beth Ann Koelsch was appointed curator of the Women Veterans Historical Project at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro in 2008. The project traces the contributions of women to the military since World War I, and has a large collection of artifacts, uniforms, photographs, letters, diaries, scrapbooks, and oral histories from women who served in the American armed forces and in related service organizations. Koelsch received her MSLS from the School of Information and Library Science at The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2007.

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2009 Gene J. Williams Award Winner

The Gene J. Williams Award, presented annually by the Society of North Carolina Archivists, recognizes excellence for a paper on an archival topic written by a North Carolina graduate student for a graduate-level course. This award honors the late Gene J. Williams, archivist at the North Carolina Division of Archives and History and at East Carolina University, and charter member of the Society of North Carolina Archivists.

The Future of Archival Reference: Services, Technology, and Trends by Keeley Murray

Introduction

One of the foremost services provided by libraries is reference. This is because users often need answers to questions about research methods and the library's collections and services. Archives have traditionally provided reference services as well, especially since their collections may offer only limited access to the public. Though they have many differences, libraries and archives are both finding it necessary to adapt to new technology and consider possibilities for a wider range of reference services. Methods of providing archival reference are constantly evolving to meet the changing needs of users. Users' needs are also changing because of new developments in technology. Considering the ubiquity of the Internet, the reach of an archives' services can be much wider. This increases the number of remote users and therefore increases the need for online access to at least a

part of an archives' holdings. Many different ways of achieving these goals are currently being explored.

Evolving Users

According to James Cross, “[it] is with users and use that most of the research in archival reference has been concerned with in the past decade.”¹ Though librarians and archivists have always provided reference services, there is currently a shift away from the librarian or archivist serving as a gatekeeper of information. Instead, there seems to be a greater focus on the user and providing access to collections.

Potential users of archival collections are indeed changing. Much has been written about how user attitudes are changing because of the Internet and the personalization it allows through Web 2.0 technologies. It seems true, as Richard Cox notes, that “researchers, patrons, and other users have a ‘right now’ mentality” when it comes to services offered over the Internet.² Today’s users are also increasingly accustomed to a do-it-yourself approach to research. Since so many users are familiar with the vast quantities of information available on the Web, they “may have higher expectations of what archives can provide...[and] expect that they will be able to get a version of the original and use (manipulate) the material dynamically.”³ While in a traditional setting, “the user is heavily dependent on the archivist” to provide information about and access to collections, users now frequently do their own research remotely through library and archives Web sites, and may resent the fact that they cannot access all the information they need via the Web.⁴

Additionally, patrons of archives are becoming an increasingly diverse group. As Cox also notes, “[with] the

advent of the digital age, representatives from a variety of disciplines are increasingly interested in the role of archives, realizing the remarkable implications for this creation and shaping of our public and private memories.”⁵ Use of archival collections is becoming more democratic, no longer just for academic researchers but for anyone who wants to access the information. The increasing availability of information about archives online is a primary catalyst in this change. In fact, Katharine Salzmänn predicts that the “demand for complete access to archival records will continue to increase...as more and more repositories make their descriptive finding aids available on their Web pages.”⁶ In addition, even though records in an archives might primarily document local history, via the Internet they “could attract remote researchers including academic scholars, local historians, graduate and undergraduate researchers, and alumni who relocated after graduation.”⁷ Because anyone with an Internet connection can presumably search for and find the Web site of an archives, access its available finding aids, and explore the collections, more people are interested in taking advantage of these resources for both academic and personal projects.

Evolving Reference Services

Like their users, the reference services offered by archives have also changed. As previously mentioned, many archives now publicize the contents of their collections by providing access to finding aids online. Many online finding aids are simply digital versions of the paper copies found in the repository; however, many repositories are experimenting with additional content and functionality in their finding aids, such as hyperlinks to digital documents or online cata-

logs. Archives can also use their online presence to provide outreach; having a Web site with detailed information about the collections and contact information may bring in more users.

Traditionally, archives have provided reference services to patrons in person, and by phone or post. Fax was then added as a means of quick communication. Today, it seems that the vast amount of communication between patrons and archivists is done via email. Using digital reference rather than corresponding by letter or phone makes services much quicker for patrons. Email may also offer something closer to real-time communication for remote patrons in a way that faxing or letter-writing could not, and neither party has to worry about scheduling phone calls around business hours.

In addition to changing methods of communication, methods of access to archival collections are changing as well. As Cox states, “archivists have been given the opportunity to make their holdings available to a greater number of people than ever before. The reach of the reference room has expanded from a physical room located in a building to a virtual theater on a worldwide scale.”⁸ Digitization in particular is facilitating this expansion, as many repositories make some of their collections available on Web sites or via “scan on demand” services. In the past, most users were required to visit the physical archives to do extensive research or view physical items in their original state. With the advent of scanning and other forms of digitization, many documents can now be viewed online or sent electronically, and the user does not have to visit the archives at all. This development has dramatically enabled and increased remote use of collections.

Problems with New Developments

As with any new development in services, archives will face pros and cons of using technology to promote their collections and communicate with patrons. While email provides for much faster reference services, “this added speed and efficiency means patrons will have increased expectations of receiving an equally rapid answer to their problems.”⁹ Cross suggests that “[for] archivists, there is likely to be tension between providing technology-mediated vs. traditional reference service, since the satisfaction for archivists providing remote service is not as high as that inherent in providing in-person service.”¹⁰ This may be because the archivist is less able to use visual cues from the patron to detect their level of understanding or approval of the archivist’s work.

Likewise, putting more content online at first may seem to be inherently beneficial, but “[as] more and more content goes up on the Web, users of archives will soon anticipate finding digital samples, if not fully digitized archival collections, online.”¹¹ Having an online finding aid, especially if it is a traditional finding aid, is not the same as having a searchable database of the collection. Patrons may find out about collections via the finding aids, but that information may also inspire more questions for reference archivists because they are rarely comprehensive item-level descriptions of the collections. As Cox says, “finding aids were not intended for remote users, so it makes sense that traditional ones do not work effectively in cyberspace.”¹² Archivists need to put in a lot of work to effectively adapt finding aids to the Web environment. Because many archivists are unlikely to go back and convert all their traditional finding aids to digital formats, and those digital formats may take

various forms, users may be confused by the disparities in the availability of online content.¹³

Current Uses of Technology

While much has been written and speculated about possible developments in archival reference, it is interesting to take a look at what services archives are actually providing. A 2003 study of 100 Association of Research Libraries (ARL) university archives conducted by Katharine Salzmänn revealed that only 46% had finding aids (described as an outline with box and folder listings) available online, and not all of those finding aids used HTML or EAD. As for digitization of the actual collections, “only seven (7%) of the Web pages provided Web-based archival collections and included a digital initiatives statement on the repository Web page.”¹⁴ Salzmänn also found that the most popular parts of the collections to digitize are often photographs. This may be due to photographs providing a higher level of interest for the Web site of an archives and the fact that they are easier to view online than, for example, a hand-written manuscript. Salzmänn concluded in her study that many “archives Web pages provide remote users with general information about repository holdings and with a means of contacting the university archives staff for more information...but they are still in the initial stages. For the most part, actual content is lacking and remote users still need to rely heavily upon the archivist when conducting his or her research.”¹⁵

One can assume that some of the archives mentioned in the study have updated their Web pages since this study took place. For example, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (an ARL member library, though the universities surveyed in Salzmänn’s study were not listed),

now states on its Web site that the majority of its finding aids are available online, and that all of its processed record groups can be searched in the library catalog. The finding aids do use either HTML or EAD but still vary in scope and detail. The site offers an option to search the entire site, including the finding aids. The Web site provides a phone number and address, but also email contact information and an online inquiry form. UNC-Chapel Hill favors online exhibits featuring photos and text from selected collections rather than attempting a mass digitization approach to its holdings. Some of the online exhibits feature bibliographies that will help users find the documents mentioned in the text of the exhibit. In general, UNC-Chapel Hill is updating its archival reference services, but as many have predicted, in most cases entire collections are not available online.

Other libraries in North Carolina have similar options. An informal look at the Web sites of several archives in the state show some of the reference and access services they offer:

- North Carolina State Archives (<http://www.archives.ncdcr.gov>)
 - * Many (not all) finding aids available online
 - * Some online projects (mainly images)
 - * Reference by email, phone, and mail
 - * In-person assistance in research room
 - * Copying services (fees for some users)
 - * No time limit on research requests
- University of North Carolina at Greensboro, University Archives (<http://library.uncg.edu/depts/archives/>)

- * Many (not all) finding aids available online (searchable)
- * Some online exhibits
- * Email/phone reference (chat reference for library in general)
- * In-person assistance in research room
- * Copying/scanning services (for a fee)
- Duke University Archives (<http://library.duke.edu/uarchives/>)
 - * Many (not all) finding aids available online (searchable)
 - * Several digitized collections (other than exhibits)
 - * Reference by “Ask Archives” (submit a form), email, phone
 - * Research guides and pathfinders available
 - * Copying and scanning services

These archives still follow a somewhat traditional model of access. Though they are now putting more content online, rules about use of the reading room and the collections are still very formally stated. The Web sites also attempt to explain how to use a finding aid, but for a user who is more accustomed to searching catalogs or databases, a finding aid may look very confusing and need further explanation. Presumably the user can then contact the archives for more information, but remote users may decide that the archives will not be of use to them if they have difficulties with finding aids. Though the current literature promotes advancing reference services with technology, it seems that since reference

is not an archive's only focus, actual practice has not caught up as quickly.

Interview with a Public Services Archivist

In addition to reviewing some archival Web sites, an interview with an archivist working in public services provided some insight into the current state of archival reference. The interviewee is the head of the public services branch of a large state archives. The interview questions can be found in Appendix A.

The interviewee is head of a branch of the state archives that contains five branches in total. The public services branch consists of a correspondence (email, etc) unit, the reference unit, and a new unit focused on cemeteries, including laws and security as well as original documents pertaining to cemeteries. The archivist has a master's degree in public history. The interview was mainly focused on the current services provided as well as the archivist's opinions on the future of reference both at her archives and in the profession in general.

The archivist stressed that email is now the primary mode of communication for off-site reference inquiries. She stated that they receive double the number of emails as they do postal mail. However, she noted that email does not necessarily mean faster responses to inquiries, as the staff is still limited by what they can answer because of time and workload. There is no time limit on research to answer a reference question, and the time needed to answer a question mostly depends on what materials are used to find the answer. For example, if someone inquires about a will, the question can usually be answered quickly because the archives has an index of wills (in book and scanned electronic

form) that can be searched quite easily. However, if there is no index for a particular type of record, the question can take much longer to research.

The archivist had a lot to say on the subject of digitization. She noted that the more information they put online, the more inquiries they get about that particular subject. This is one of the main reasons why putting content online does not necessarily mean faster reference service. With items online bringing in more questions, the workload for the staff increases as well. She did say that in some cases putting content online does help speed up access. For example, the archives' collection of death certificates were recently purchased by ProQuest and digitized for their database HeritageQuest Online. The database made those collections searchable, so now the archives staff does not have to continually pull out the paper copies for researchers. The archivist did note that not everything has this kind of research value. In fact, the archivist feels that some of the archives' holdings are really not worth digitizing. Comparison of the amount of time it would take to digitize the collection and the current level of use is the archivist's primary criteria for what should be digitized. Another concern is that once the archive begins digitizing a collection, it is often beholden to an IT person outside the department to keep the digitized content updated.

The archivist agreed with the findings from current literature concerning the evolution of users. She said that many people now expect instantaneous answers to questions and that everything will be online. Users do not often consider impediments to the process of getting resources online, including the time and money needed for digitization and the fragile condition of many archival items. Though she does

see a high demand for digital surrogates, the archivist still maintains that it is more useful to assess which items will be most valuable in an online format and digitize those first. She was also of the opinion that serious researchers will eventually need to see the original documents anyway. Currently, the archives is working on digitizing finding aids, but that the process takes time because of the size of the archives' collections. She did predict that in five to six years, the repository's current policies on digitization may change because of increased demand and high expectations for online content.

The archivist feels that for her particular archives, technology is best used for outreach rather than comprehensive access at this time. She wants to work on getting finding aids online so patrons can see what is in the collections, and would also like to create more research guides, articles on how to use the collection, and pathfinders. She would also like to reach out to young people (such as high school students) and encourage early education in the use of primary sources. This was very interesting, as outreach is somewhat overlooked in the literature on archival reference. Ideally, she would provide more computers in the research room so archivists could instruct patrons in using sources such as HeritageQuest Online. Technology can be used for access to materials, but a Web site could also stress that just because something is not online does not mean it doesn't exist.

The Future of Archival Reference

After reviewing current literature, services offered by archives, and speaking to someone working in the profession, some possible future trends are evident. It seems that

email is now the preferred method of communication for most reference inquiries. Chat reference is an increasingly popular service in traditional libraries, and could be used for reference in archives as well. As Cox notes, “Instant Messaging provides a means of chatting with information seekers on the Internet and has already been considered and implemented by some archives as a means of delivering an online reference service.”¹⁶ Currently it does not seem that chat is the most popular form of online reference for archives, but it might develop more precedence in the future if users demand it. Cox points out that there is no standard IM program and that this may cause issues for archival reference. However, there are universal IM clients such as Digsby or Pidgin that would allow a reference archivist to log in to multiple chat programs at the same time and not require users to download a specific program before they could chat with an archivist.

Innovations in finding aids will likely develop, including “browsing and searching options...designing a user-friendly display as a Google-like box...using HTML documents, rather than PDF, which can be searched more easily.”¹⁷ Some archives are already implementing some of these developments, but wider implementation would help users immensely. Cox also suggests that Web 2.0 tools such as Wikis could possibly replace traditional online finding aids, but “the possibility of using wikis in conjunction with archival reference services has yet to be fully explored by archivists.”¹⁸ Developments in providing access to digital surrogates of archival materials will continue as well. The archives mentioned in this paper all have various digital projects underway, and archives that desire prominence in the field will need to continue to develop their online content, functionality, and display.

With new developments in technology and reference in archives, there will be new requirements for the education of archivists, the staffing of archives, and funding for digitization projects. Archivists will no longer be able to limit training to traditional archival services such as arrangement and description. Like librarians, they will have to become technology mediators if not technology managers. Though many archives and libraries have outside IT support, archivists will have to keep up to date on the new ways they can provide reference services. Users have consistently demanded updated technology and it can be assumed that this demand will only increase.

Many archives cannot extend their reference services to include technology because they lack the staffing and budget to do so. Frances O'Donnell stresses that “[archival reference] is a part of archival work that also needs to be understood better by library administrators.”¹⁹ The main reason it is important for library or archives administrators to understand the work that goes into archival reference is that the administrator is often in charge of resource allocation. If administrators are made aware of the need for technology and the funds or staff needed to improve reference services, archives might be more likely to receive them.

Obsolescence of technology will also have to be taken into account when creating online content. Archivists will have to consider how digitized and born-digital records will be preserved for future use. Web sites, wikis, and online repositories will have to be updated, and chat and email programs will have to be maintained.

The continued addition of technology to archival reference is a complicated process, evidenced by the fact that many archives' reference and digitization services are run-

ning behind what users might expect. Archivists will have to continually assess the needs of their users as well as collaborate with administration and IT departments to update their services. Though some might think of archives as static repositories of old records, archival reference is truly an evolving field and archives can continue to provide patrons with useful information by keeping in step with 21st century technology.

Keeley Murray is a recent graduate of the Library and Information Studies Program at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro. She originally submitted this paper for Cat McDowell's "Introduction to Archives Management" class.

NOTES

1. James E. Cross, "Archival Reference: State of the Art," *Reference Librarian*, 56 (1997): 11.
2. Richard J. Cox, "Machines in the Archives: Technology and the Coming Transformation of Archival Reference," *First Monday*, 12, no. 11 (2007), <http://firstmonday.org/htbin/cgiwrap/bin/ojs/index.php/fm/article/view/2029/1894>.
3. Ibid.
4. Cross, "Archival Reference: State of the Art," 11
5. Cox, "Machines in the Archives."
6. Katharine Salzmänn, "'Contact Us': Archivists and Remote Users in the Digital Age," *The Reference Librarian*, 85 (2004): 44.
7. Ibid, 46.
8. Cox, "Machines in the Archives."
9. Ibid.
10. Cross, "Archival Reference: State of the Art," 19.

11. Cox, "Machines in the Archives."
12. Ibid.
13. Cross, "Archival Reference: State of the Art," 19.
14. Salzmann, "Contact Us," 44.
15. Ibid, 39-50.
16. Cox, "Machines in the Archives."
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid.
19. Frances O'Donnell, "Reference Services in an Academic Archives," *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 26, no. 2 (2000): 117.

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little bit about what you do at the archives and your educational background.
2. What kind of reference services does the State Archives provide?
3. About how long is spent answering each reference question? For example, how long will archivists spend researching something for a patron?
4. Is the fact that archives contain items that are rare or fragile an impediment to reference services?
5. Do you think that more online material would help archivists provide faster reference services?
6. Do you think that more patrons are expecting customized research and for there to be more online content provided at the archives?
7. What are some ways you use technology to provide reference services? Do you predict any new advances in using technology for archival reference in the future?

REVIEWS

Randall C. Jimerson. *Archives Power: Memory, Accountability, and Social Justice.* Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009. 466 p. Appendix, notes, and index. \$56.00 (nonmember); \$40.00 (member).

Books seldom try to take on as much as *Archives Power* does in attempting to form a unified argument of the relationships between archives and society, and more seldom do they succeed. However, Randall C. Jimerson weaves together a well-organized case that the role of the archivist (and archive) must be an active and powerful one with the public. Far from seeking neutral truth or being passive “handmaidens of historians,” Jimerson posits that archivists are acting and should act as professional advocates through their collections policies, organization methods, outreach, and access policies (p. 106). This “archivist as activist” role gives the profession the additional responsibility of serving the public good by constructing social memory; essentially, the archivist is a co-creator of the archive.

Jimerson first synthesizes the history of archivists and their interactions with society from the beginnings of written records in ancient Mesopotamia through the present day. With a writing style that is academic yet accessible, he pulls his examples and ideas from a broad range of scholarly thought, enabling him to appeal not just to archivists, but to the broader audience of policymakers and scholars--groups that influence the funding and course of action of archives.

The author uses his third chapter to provide evidence that archives, archivists, and archival evidence can be utilized to resist and rebel against political power or other

forms of oppression or are used to fortify and validate political power. While I find his assertion valid, his argument is somewhat weaker for his examples of the fictional writings of George Orwell and Milan Kundera that span the bulk of the chapter (p. 140-185). Though these authors' works are relevant to archival evidence interacting with political power, I feel he could have used the space for more engaging real-life examples.

Those concrete examples are much more apparent when Jimerson moves on to discuss the role of archives in serving the public good, promoting "accountability, open government, diversity and social justice" (p. 237). Citing the Nelson Mandela Centre of Memory and Commemoration Project in South Africa, Jimerson shows that the archival record has a significant role in reconciliation, justice, and forming national memory. As holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel states, "Memory may serve as a powerful remedy against hatred" (p. 243). Outlining the role of the archive in accountability and transparency, he uses the Iran-Contra scandal as an example of sound archival practices, as backup evidence survived despite zealous efforts by Col. Oliver North and John Poindexter to destroy records and even falsify records to cover up their actions. This role of accountability is just as important in corporate archives as well, as the destruction of accounting documents by the firm Arthur Andersen during the Enron scandal led to costly lawsuits, criminal charges, and eventually to the creation of the Sarbanes-Oxley Act.

Jimerson next brings together all of the relationships between archives and society and provides a road map for the profession to advance and serve through the twenty-first century. First off, as archives and archivists continue to

become more diverse in collections, formats, and missions, he believes that we should embrace this diversity, arguing that this “breadth of experience, perspective and background...gives the archival profession much of the strength it needs to serve society” (p. 282). Calling for a revised archival ethic to include a social justice mission, he asks us to embrace objectivity, but not confuse it with neutrality, or “balance.” Instead, we should ensure that professional principles such as “respect for logical coherence, fidelity to evidence, candor, honesty, and the like must accompany any advocacy for moral or political values” (p.293).

I believe the ideas Jimerson sets out regarding the relationships of archives to society are an accurate portrayal, and that the future of archives as developed in *Archives Power* is prescient. However, perhaps it is a tribute to Jimerson and other prominent archival thinkers (such as Verne Harris, Mark Greene, and countless others) that these concepts seem to me as a young archival professional to be rather orthodox principles. *Archives Power* is possibly the best attempt yet at synthesizing the roles, relationships, and responsibilities our profession has with society today and in the future--a mighty task. Yet the principles of “archivist as author,” “archivist as activist,” and “archivist as safeguard of government accountability” are no longer revolutionary ones within archives. As the profession advances, *Archives Power* should be a useful tool for communicating these concepts to the broader arenas of academia, government, and business.

Zachary Elder

The George Washington University

Michele F. Pacifico and Thomas P. Wilsted, eds.
Archival and Special Collections Facilities: Guidelines for Archivists, Librarians, Architects, and Engineers. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2009. 191 p. Appendixes, glossary, bibliography, and index. \$35.00 (nonmember); \$25.00 (member).

The construction and renovation of archival spaces is a risky business. Money is scarce and the opportunity to improve special collections facilities must not be squandered through an ignorance of possibilities or an insufficient consideration of needs. Further, a major physical plant or system upgrade is likely to be a rare occurrence that will define and limit a repository's collections and services for decades. Given the long-term implications of design and construction decisions, it is crucial that archivists, architects, and engineers are able to clearly discuss their needs, concerns, and plans. The guidelines presented in this brief volume help bridge the communicative divide that separates archivists from design professionals, and it should be required reading for all of the principals involved in the refashioning of archival space.

Written by members of the Society of American Archivists Task Force on Archival Facilities Guidelines, this volume contains nine chapters that address the following subjects: building site, building construction, archival environments, fire protection, security, lighting, materials and finishes, storage equipment, and functional spaces. Each chapter is structured similarly, beginning with a brief rationale for the development of a particular set of guidelines and then parsing the recommendations to help make the most pertinent information readily accessible. For example, the

security guidelines are divided into multiple sections that discuss security requirements and design recommendations within a variety of common archival contexts, such as the building exterior, stacks, loading dock, reading room, and exhibit area. In addition to providing a wealth of very specific information about topics as disparate as the undesirability of clerestories and the virtues of astragals, each section makes reference to relevant external standards, like the Hollow Metal Manufacturers Association's prescribed testing for door assemblies. As a well-conceived reference work, this volume also includes a detailed subject index and three very helpful appendixes: a list of prohibited construction materials, a glossary of architectural and construction terms, and a bibliography of additional design and construction standards.

Within the United States there is no national standard governing the construction of archival and special collections facilities. The absence of a common standard, as archivists well know, is a fertile ground for the rise of local peculiarities. Without the sanction and limits imposed by an acknowledged authority, every construction project struggles to begin anew and any lessons learned are seen as the product of unique circumstances and idiosyncratic choices. By gathering together the architects, preservationists, and archivists needed to create these facility guidelines, SAA has once again acted to create the beginnings of a meaningful community standard, a standard that will give archivists the credibility to argue for resources and the knowledge to act as responsible stewards.

For the curious, clerestories are a series of small windows along the upper part of a wall and an astragal is a piece of molding or flashing that shields a locking

mechanism from unwanted external manipulation.

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Ann Roberts. *Crash Course in Library Gift Programs: The Reluctant Curator's Guide to Caring for Archives, Books, and Artifacts in a Library Setting*. Westport, Connecticut: Libraries Unlimited, 2007. 141 p. Bibliography, appendixes, and index. \$30.00.

Ann Roberts's *Crash Course in Library Gift Programs: The Reluctant Curator's Guide to Caring for Archives, Books, and Artifacts in a Library Setting* is a simplified manual for librarians on how to manage special collections. Every library has been generously donated (and often forced to take) material that does not comply with its collecting policy. Roberts's work is Archives 101 for librarians who find themselves the curators of such collections. As she states in her introduction, the book is "intended to be an easy to understand guide for caring for items of historical value" (p. ix). *Crash Course in Library Gift Programs*, divided into five chapters, provides an overview of all the basics in handling special collections, such as preservation, arrangement and description, access, and outreach.

Describing libraries as victims of generous donors of special collections items, Roberts discusses the importance of having a collection development policy and using the policy to say no. She instructs the reader in how to write a collection policy and provides examples of policies

as well as a sample deed of gift form. The author discusses alternatives, such as locating another repository for the material, to taking unwanted collections. “Happy Home or Final Resting Place,” the second chapter, touches on preservation issues of the various formats and provides a delightful critique, “Lamination Damnation,” on lamination. Roberts provides only bare bones information on each format, listing resources for further research. The title “A Meaningful Life” does not tell us much about the third chapter, which covers a plethora of topics including reference, processing, marketing, outreach, and digitization. The last two chapters discuss security; disaster planning, preparedness, and recovery; copyright; managing volunteer staff; and working with library board members.

The five chapters cover a very broad range of topics. Many, such as how to care for metal, have only a couple of paragraphs and are not fully discussed. Roberts does provide frequent references to further reading in case the reader needs more in-depth knowledge of the subject matter. The section on genealogy is particularly helpful to librarians. Most libraries have some local history and genealogical materials. As Roberts points out, genealogical research is booming and often library staff are not trained to do reference with these special materials. Roberts again suggests additional resources, in this case local historical or genealogical societies.

Including so many varied topics in each chapter and providing only minimal organization is not the most useful presentation of the information. The chapter titles, though witty, do not tell the reader what the topics are. Although the titles are broad, the subtitles are more descriptive and are listed in the table of contents. Description and arrangement

are such an important part of archiving that this topic could have had its own chapter, separating it from marketing and outreach. Giving disaster planning, preparedness, and recovery as well as copyright their own chapters and providing clear descriptive titles would have been more helpful to the reader.

The writing is jargon free and new terms are carefully and clearly defined. The tone is informal, sprinkled with humor. Roberts provides many examples of documents and forms, which would be more readily accessible in an appendix. The appendixes include the National Park Service's list of window film suppliers as well as a list, created by the author, of archival supply vendors. There is a fairly well-developed index, but a brief glossary would have been helpful to the "reluctant curator."

Crash Course in Library Gift Programs does not compare to works such as Gregory Hunter's 2003 SAA publication, *Developing and Maintaining Practical Archives: A How-To-Do-It Manual, 2nd ed.*, which carefully covers how to begin an archival program and extends to four hundred pages. Roberts's work is clearly an introduction for librarians who have little knowledge of special collections or archival concepts. The author provides a broad range of topics with little depth, but offers resources for additional research. As is typical of Libraries Unlimited's *Crash Course* series, the topics are broken down into simplified digestible bits. Roberts's humor makes the subject less intimidating to the novice. The book is an easy read and appropriate for its intended audience.

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Fiona Cameron and Sarah Kenderdine, eds. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2007. 480 p. Illustrations, bibliography, and index. \$43.00.

Digital projects seem compulsory for today's archivists. Indeed, recent library and archives studies graduates can testify that coursework in digital collections management is required knowledge for aspiring information professionals. Fiona Cameron, research fellow at the University of Western Sydney, and Sarah Kenderdine, director of special projects at the Museum Victoria in Melbourne, serve as editors for *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage: A Critical Discourse*, a timely collection of theoretical essays exploring the roles of curators, archivists, and collecting organizations in creating and interpreting digital cultural heritage.

This book, part of MIT's Media in Transition series, aims to provide a "critical and theoretical appraisal" of the roles of institutions in interpreting and representing cultural heritage through technology (p. 2). Authors include practitioners and theorists in an attempt to present a critical theory of cultural heritage and a discourse of praxis. The book is broken into three parts: Part I, Replicants/Object Morphologies; Part II, Knowledge Systems and Management --Shifting Paradigms and Models; and Part III, Virtual Cultural Heritage.

Part I explores the role of archivists and curators, as custodians of memory, in assigning meaning and choosing what is represented in digital cultural heritage. It is also concerned with the relationship between digital and physical collections, including professional anxiety about "real"

versus digital objects. Peter Walsh explores the power of the photograph and the concept of reproduction, not just in photographing physical objects but also in copying photographic images themselves, concluding that through reproduction, the once elitist “discourse on art... is available to anyone” (p. 30). Andrea Witcomb argues that digital objects have materiality and should be considered original as well as that the process of interpreting multimedia alongside material objects empowers museum visitors. Fiona Cameron discusses the issue of digital historical collections that are limited by the “object-centered museum culture” that has been institutionalized through practice and ideas about original versus copy (p. 6). Deidre Brown explores the possibilities of reinterpretation and interaction with cultural heritage by indigenous groups through digital media. Beryl Graham attempts to define digital art and how it pushes the boundaries of physical works of art. Finally, Sarah Cook explores the world of digital art, particularly the process of creating content online.

Part II investigates the politics of power and reshaping of institutions involved with digital cultural heritage. Susan Hazan questions the concept of museum professionals as “experts,” as well as a perceived “crisis of authority” created by user interaction with digital objects (p. 8). Angelina Russo and Jerry Watkins discuss the potential for audiences to connect with cultural heritage institutions through their framework entitled “Digital Cultural Communication” (p. 149). Fiona Cameron and Helena Robinson challenge traditional collections documentation and databases and encourage the creation of collaborative online collection documentation. Harald Kraemer delves deeper into collections documentation for contemporary art,

particularly the concept that “documentation is interpretation” (p. 212). Ingrid Mason argues for the need for cultural information standards, especially collection development and preservation policies, through an understanding of the sociopolitical nature of information practices. Gavan McCarthy explores the future of digital cultural heritage through the use of contextual information networks that allow the linking and sharing of information from generation to generation. Suhas Deshpande, Kati Geber, and Corey Timpson propose a framework based on appraisal theory to create an audience-centered approach (considering how content is used and interpreted by the audience) to the virtual museum. Finally, Ross Parry and Nadia Arbach explore what they consider the emergence of “increased personalization, localization, and constructivism” and how this paradigm will have an impact online and media-based museum learning (p. 281).

Part III examines the idea of “virtual heritage,” which interprets cultural heritage through spatial archives and virtual reality (p. 301). Sarah Kenderdine discusses the emergence of the panoramic views in virtual reality to create an illusion of immersion. Erik Champion and Bharat Dave explore the concept of “place” and “placeness” in virtual heritage projects. Bernadette Flynn challenges the concept of authenticity of exact 3-D replicas of monuments or artifacts, by demonstrating the importance of creating “social and cultural presence” to allow users to interact with a specific place or moment in history (p. 364). Slavko Milekic argues that virtual heritage must emphasize quality over quantity, support user interaction, and make virtually-presented information “meet or exceed a real-life experience” (p. 370). Maurizio Forte explores “ecological

and cybernetic approaches to investigating virtual worlds” for cultural heritage (p. 13). Scot T. Refsland, Marc Tuters, and Jim Cooley propose collaborative mapping of geospatial cultural heritage using new technologies. Rodrigo Paraizo and José Ripper Kós discuss the representation of urban heritage through interactive hyperdocuments. Finally, Juan Antonio Barceló theorizes about artificial intelligence in virtual heritage as it relates to archaeology.

This collection is well-organized and relatively clear in its topical boundaries, given the fuzzy nature of its subject matter. The introduction provides a precise, clear summarization of each part and essay, which will help most readers determine the most relevant pieces before delving into each essay head-on. At first blush, this collection of essays would seem an ideal source for library futurists and doctoral candidates. It is also written for practitioners and graduate students, along with faculty and researchers, as demonstrated through the use of practical examples such as Web sites, digital collection projects, and virtual reality software. Most of the essays are written with a scholarly and theoretical tone, but there is an attempt to tie theory with practice through the consideration of new institutional and professional practices. While the work will find itself mostly in the hands of researchers and scholars, it aspires to reach the everyday archivist or curator.

Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage approaches the themes of authority, materiality, user-centered design, and interpretation from and by curators and archivists with a critical eye. While the work is rooted in ideas from theorists such as Marshall McLuhan, Walter Benjamin, Jean Baudrillard, Michel Foucault, and Jacques Derrida, the authors push theoretical concepts such as the Gaze, the

Archive, the Aura, Simulation and Simulacra, and others into the uncharted realm of digital cultural heritage. It comes at an important time in archival studies, where we as practitioners can reconsider and formulate new ideas from our old assumptions. The authors use the term “museum” where they could just as easily use the term “archives,” and push the reader to re-imagine the role of the archivist and curator. The work presents new ways of thinking about what we do as archivists, particularly our role in decision-making about what is represented and accessible in digital cultural heritage projects. The museum studies field has similar works regarding digital museum projects, but this work appears to be the first that makes an effort to reach into the archives world. While many critical theorists have addressed our traditional notions of “the archive” and “the archivist,” none have focused specifically on creating a theory of digital cultural heritage for archivists.

This stout volume is an intriguing examination of the emerging field of digital cultural heritage. While sections on 3-D objects and art may not be as relevant to many archivists, the work manages to present a creative harmony of theoretical concepts that might be chewed upon by archivists. It can help students, academics, and practitioners consider our everyday practices with a critical eye in order to better understand the decisions we take for granted as well as possibilities for the future of the cultural heritage we seek to preserve. *Theorizing Digital Cultural Heritage* is recommended for students, faculty, and practicing archivists who select, interpret, appraise, or design digital projects.

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