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PROVENANCE

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Making Digital Preservation Practical: A Personal Odyssey¹

Christopher J. Prom

Thank you for the kind introduction. And thank you all for having me here to speak with you and to learn from you. I am so pleased to be doing so, since the theme of your conference — real world solutions — is near and dear to me. As noted, the theme of my remarks is “Making Digital Preservation Practical.” I will highlight some ways that archives can begin a systematic program to acquire, preserve, and provide access to born-digital materials, by reflecting on my own experiences over the past few years.

Before I begin, I’d like to stress that I am not a digital preservation expert, whatever the term ‘expert’ might mean in this context. That may seem like a strange thing to say given the title of my remarks, but I would like to emphasize that I have no formal training in computer science, digital curation, or a related area. I cared little for computers when I was undertaking my undergraduate work as a philosophy and history major. While completing a history dissertation, I tried to automate my note taking and sorting process, with very limited success. Even though

¹ Keynote address at the 2011 Society of Georgia Archivists annual meeting, held on November 3, 2011 in Morrow, Georgia.

I've done a lot with computers since then, I can say that the more I learn about digital technology, the less I feel like I truly understand it. The ground seems to shift so rapidly beneath our feet.

An incident from my early days as a budding archivist illustrates the limits of my skill. In the summer of 1998, I had just returned to Illinois after completing dissertation research in the United Kingdom. It was a nice trip, and I had gathered quite a bit of research material. I had spent a considerable amount of time tracking down sources from the closets and garden sheds of pensioners, then attempting to convince them to donate them to county record offices. Although I did not know it at the time, I was on my way to becoming an archivist.

Right after my wife and I returned to the States, I began writing up my dissertation, and I soon accepted hourly work in the University of Illinois Archives. Over the years, my part time work led to a full-time position. Knowing nothing about computers, I was given the task of putting our descriptive information online. I charged in where angels dared not fear to tread — and promptly deleted the entire descriptive record of the ALA Archives, representing over 25 years of work! After a half hour of panic, I sheepishly turned to the University Archivist, William Maher and explained the situation. Luckily, we recovered the database, since our Library had a forward-thinking IT manager who guarded against such operator error. I spent the next several weeks putting our other records online. Over the years, that simple project and others like it led Scott Schwartz and me to develop the Archon descriptive software, a product that is now moving toward new life in the ArchivesSpace project.

Why tell this story? Because it cuts close to the theme of this talk, 'Making Digital Preservation Practical.' If someone as error prone as me can learn enough about digital preservation to be make a go of it, anyone can.

Over the years, my dual interest in history and digital technology led me to think that the University of Illinois Archives faced a big problem, born out of our past successes. Over the years, we had developed excellent working relationships around campus, in the process of acquiring traditional paper based archives. As part of this work, we also came to possess of a wide range of digital files. Not knowing what to do with them, our solution was simple: to retain them on their original media and to note the existence of the disk in the finding aid. This resulted in what Ben Goldman has called the ‘disk in a box’ problem, one that I am sure is familiar to many of you.²

About five years ago, we became a bit concerned about this state of affairs. We began to copy the contents of newly accessioned media to a shared drive on our library’s server network. However, we were well aware that we were simply copying the files. They went into a folder labeled ‘Electronic Records,’ and remained inaccessible to our users. Over time, we managed to accession — and I use that term loosely — over one terabyte of born-digital materials, with no real intellectual or physical control over the items.³ We did not know precisely what we were keeping, and we were not managing it for long-term preservation and access. What we needed was a quick and easy way to get these files under control, while building capacity to systematically acquire, describe, and preserve born digital records. Unfortunately, I found few solutions in

² “Guest Post: Ben Goldman,” <http://e-records.chrisprom.com/?p=1993> (checked 29 December 2011)

³ In this situation, we were hardly unique. Forty-five percent of academic research libraries have not even assigned responsibility for the preservation of born digital content to one or more parties in the institution. Jackie Dooley and Katherine Luce, *Taking Our Pulse: the OCLC Research Survey of Special Collections and Archives* (Dublin, OH: OCLC Research, 2010), 57. <http://www.oclc.org/research/publications/library/2010/2010-11.pdf> (Checked 29 December 2011).

my cursory examination of the literature related to electronic records.

In 2008, I was thinking about this problem when presented with a rare opportunity: the chance to take a sabbatical. Noticing that the US-UK Fulbright Program would be open to the type of research I wanted to do, I applied for a fellowship that would support research at the Centre for Archive and Information Studies at the University of Dundee. I was thrilled to find out in April of 2009 that the proposal had been accepted. Today, I'd like to describe two things: What I learned from my research, and how I learned it.

My project began with the goal of developing a method that I, and hopefully others, could use to develop digital preservation capacity, competence, and trust. For me, learning how to 'do' digital preservation has truly been an odyssey, a mixture of the personal and the professional. According to the psychologist Erich Fromm, "The process of learning an art can be divided conveniently into two parts; one, the mastery of theory; the other, the mastery of practice."⁴ Both steps were necessary as I tried to master the art of digital preservation. First, I read digital preservation literature — something I had little time to do as a working archivist. Next, I spent time getting my hands dirty: assessing software tools that could be used to appraise, process, preserve, and provide access to born digital records.

Based on this work, I developed policy templates and software recommendations. These resources are intended to help 'small' archives begin a digital preservation program, using whatever resources they have at hand or can acquire with minimal outlay. They comprise the heart of my practical e-records project, and while I would never suggest that I have mastered the art of digital

⁴ Erich Fromm, *The Art of Loving* (Harper and Row, 1956), 5.

preservation, I do feel as if the project at least helped me be competent in it.

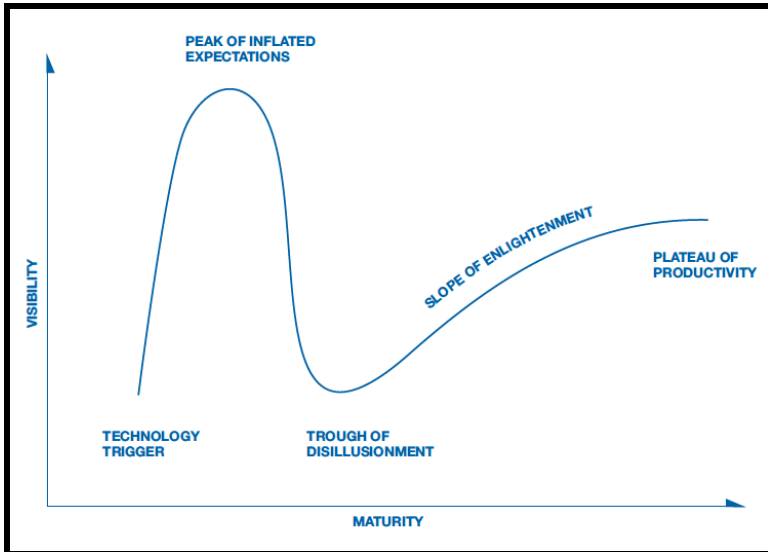


Figure One: Gartner Hype Cycle

In hindsight, I can see that my experience in pursuing this project roughly reflects the typical digital technology adoption process, which is perhaps best represented in the Garnter Hype Cycle (see figure one).⁵ For those of you who are not familiar with it, the Hype Cycle provides a way to understand the lifecycle of transformative technologies. Garnter Research uses it as part of their consulting business, which is to provide technology implementation advice. Today I am using the term in a slightly different way: as a structuring metaphor

⁵ A visual representation of the hype cycles is available at <http://www.gartner.com/technology/research/methodologies/hype-cycle.jsp> (Checked 12 December 2011).

to illustrate one way that we might engage with digital preservation activities, both personally and professionally.⁶

The hype cycle model proposes that big changes in an area of practice are initiated by a ‘technology trigger.’ After the initial excitement, problems set in and interest wanes. If, through hard work and some luck, the people developing the technologies begin to climb the slope of enlightenment, the field may develop into a set of mature, productive services. The hype cycle reflects my experience over the course of my sabbatical project. It also, in my opinion, represents the history of the archival profession’s engagement with digital preservation theory and practice.

In my personal case, the opportunity to spend 10 months in Scotland learning from British colleagues served as an effective technology trigger, in helping the University of Illinois Archives to systematically grapple with digital preservation. I could read the digital preservation literature and test software with a level of concentration that would have been impossible to achieve during my usual work schedule.

As I began the Practical E-Records Project, my excitement climbed rapidly. Naturally, I set up a blog to document my experiences. I did not think I had anything all that interesting to say, but I set it up simply to keep myself on track and to organize my thoughts. In the end, I’m glad that I did so. By blogging, I forced myself to actually understand and apply the concepts and tools I was reading about. Without that motivating factor, I’m sure I’d still be spinning my wheels.

My initial activities led rather quickly to what the Garnter Hype Cycle calls the ‘Peak of Inflated Expectations.’ From the lofty heights, I saw the many digital preservation tools, services, and approaches that had been developed over the past 15 years; the possibilities for

⁶ Project recommendations can be found at http://e-records.chrisprom.com/?page_id=508 (Checked 16 December 2011).

preserving digital information seemed endless. It reminded me a bit of the landscape I saw after our family spent the better part of a day climbing in the Scottish highlands: expansive, if a bit remote from my normal experience.

Unfortunately, there was a very dark cloud looming over this pretty landscape, in the form of the seeming technical complexity underlying most approaches to digital preservation. Specifically, the more I looked at *the Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS)*, the more confused I seemed to grow.⁷ As I found out later, I was far from the only person to feel this way. As William Kilbride, the Director of the UK's Digital Preservation Coalition likes to joke, the OAIS Reference Model was meant to solve a problem so complicated that NASA had to call in their European buddies for assistance!

In essence, the OAIS Reference Model describes a set of information technology systems, services, and policies that an institution must adopt in order to ensure that the archives is acting as a trusted agent. This means three things: acquiring records in way that preserves their context, storing them in a way makes them authentic, and rendering them in a way that makes them useful. As I puzzled over how the details of the model could be implemented in practice, I came to realize that different parts of an OAIS could be implemented by using some relatively easy-to-use tools and services. However, I found relatively little non-technical guidance as to how these tools could be fitted into a cohesive whole, at least with the types of budget resources available to the typical archive that has cared mainly for paper-based materials. How could the tools be implemented in a reproducible workflow,

⁷ Consultative Committee for Space Data Systems, *Reference Model for an Open Archival Information System (OAIS)*, January 2002, <http://public.ccsds.org/publications/archive/650x0b1.pdf> (Checked 29 December 2011).

particularly if one's staff had relatively little advanced training or experience with digital curation technologies?

These are the critical issues facing many repositories. We needed to transform our mission so that we can acquire and manage born-digital resources, even as resources contract. Turning to the profuse digital preservation literature, I perceived a set of complex projects, resources, advice documents, and peer reviewed articles. These sources — each of which was excellent on its own — emanate from such respected sources as the Library of Congress's National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program, the InterPARES Project, the European Union's PLANETS Project, and those affiliated with those projects.⁸ After reading this literature for much November 2009, I found myself falling deeper and deeper into what the Gartner Hype cycle calls the 'Trough of Disillusionment.' It probably did not help matters that I was finishing up during the dead of the Dundee winter, when the sun rose around 9 am and set about 3:30 pm!

I began to climb out of the trough, into the next part of the Gartner Hype Cycle — the so-called 'Slope of Enlightenment.' Although enlightenment is a good thing, climbing a slope required hard work, which in my case meant practicing digital preservation activities by testing and evaluating software. This exercise was most useful. As Erich Fromm puts it much more eloquently than I: "Thought can lead us only to the knowledge that it cannot give us the ultimate answer. ... The only way in which the

⁸ Library of Congress, "National Digital Information Infrastructure and Preservation Program Website", n.d., <http://www.digitalpreservation.gov/>; InterPARES Project, "Project Website", n.d., <http://www.interpares.org/>; Planets Project, "Planets Project Website", 2010, <http://www.planets-project.eu/> (Checked 29 December 2011).

world can ultimately be grasped lies not in thought, but in the act.”⁹

It is in the actions of retaining evidence, rendering files, and proving authenticity that we understand digital preservation. Completing these actions requires less effort than you might think, in spite of the complexity of the OAIS Reference Model or the diagram that has been developed to represent it.

It took me a long time to figure out that I didn’t need to understand or implement the OAIS diagram all at once. At substantial risk of oversimplification, I would even go so far as to say that preserving digital materials really is not that much different than preserving print materials. The trick lies in understanding which tools and services can be used in complete traditional archival functions such as appraisal, identification, arrangement, description, and storage. Once you align sound policies with skilled people and good systems, digital preservation becomes business as usual.¹⁰

Am I making this sound too easy? Perhaps, but I do think that any archivist can undertake a series of relatively simple actions to build digital preservation skills. Let me walk through the process that I used and that I recommend to others.

First, put your own house in order. By gaining control over your own digital files, you will inevitably learn what it takes to manage bigger buckets. In my case, I was forced to clean up my act when I received a notice that our email system was being migrated in several days. As a

⁹ Fromm, *The Art of Loving*, 78–79.

¹⁰ See William Kilbride, “Digital Preservation: What I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before I Started” (presented at the Practical Approaches to Electronic Records: the Academy and Beyond, University of Dundee, May 21, 2010), <http://www.dundee.ac.uk/cais/erm/WilliamKilbride.pdf> (checked 29 December 2011) for a similar perspective.

result, I began researching email preservation options, learning more than I ever wanted to know about how email systems work. Some of my email had been stored in local folders created by Alpine — an old terminal style email application originally developed for a Unix environment. After reading and blogging about all of this, I was able to develop a relatively simple process to move my own email to a more current, preservation-ready format.

The second step up the slope lies in lending a hand to others. This can take several forms. You can help people manage their own records more appropriately, develop guidance documents, set up technologies, or even provide digital legacy planning advice. By taking any of these steps, you will begin to expand the set of tools and services with which you are familiar, building your digital preservation capacity. Helping others leaves you in a position to take the third step: Developing a digital program statement.

By writing such a statement or by adapting an existing one, you will lay a sound foundation for the development of services that acquire and care for electronic materials.¹¹ Developing such a statement will serve several goals. At the most basic level, it will provide you a roadmap, setting out a series of policy and implementation steps that you will undertake over the next few years. Even if you cannot immediately provide all of the services that you specify, the existence of the statement will serve to engender trust among potential donors or other constituents. They will note with pleasure that you are seeking to expand your program by building born-digital collections. In other words, the statement will provide a framework around which you can develop and promote what you do. At a minimum, the statement should include

¹¹ A template statement is available at http://e-records.chrisprom.com/?page_id=540 (checked 29 December 2011).

the following elements: (1) a program mandate; (2) a list of partners; (3) a description of the scope of records to be preserved; and (4) a statement of guiding Values and commitments. Subsequent sections of the program statement (or related documents) can cover additional topics, such as pre-deposit services; acquisition procedures; and methods for processing, describing, storing, and providing access to preserved records.

Once such a policy is in place, you should move to acquire born-digital records, if you haven't already. This is step four in your plan to lead a dynamic, expanding program to digitally document the areas covered by your repository's mission. If you do have records, you should begin working with appropriate tools to undertake some of the preservation actions associated with traditional archival functions, such as processing and storage. Sure, you'll make some mistakes, but if you work with a copy of the original files, you'll save yourself from committing any unpardonable sins.

Probably the most important element in moving up the slope of enlightenment is setting out to become a trusted digital repository (TDR). As you may be aware, those in the digital preservation community have formulated a yardstick by which a repository's trustworthiness can be measured.¹² While your repository may not be able to immediately fulfill the formal criteria, you can work in that direction, using whatever technologies you have at hand.

I am a big believer in using the tools that are available to you. Most repositories already have what they need to set up what I call the Do-it-Yourself Trusted Digital

¹² RLG/OCLC Working Group on Digital Archive Attributes, *Trusted Digital Repositories: Attributes and Responsibilities (pdf)* (Mountain View, CA: Research Libraries Group, 2002), <http://www.oclc.org/research/activities/past/rlg/trustedrep/default.htm> (checked 29 December 2011).

Repository. The concept is described in detail on my blog, but the essential elements are simple to explain.¹³ In essence, by defining a set of local policies and procedures, you can build a method to accession, process, describe, and store records in an archival information packet.

In one of the best descriptions of the OAIS Reference Model, Brian Lavoie offered a graphical representation of the Archival Information Packet (AIP). His schematic is shown in Figure Two.

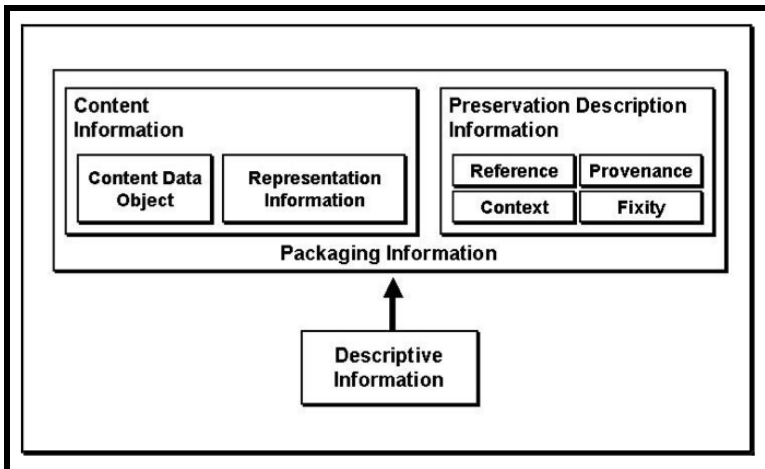


Figure Two: Elements of an Archival Information Packet¹⁴

This diagram tells us that we must keep three buckets of data, if we wish to effectively preserve records. It is not good enough to keep the files themselves (“content

¹³ See http://e-records.chrisprom.com/?page_id=754 (checked 29 December 2011).

¹⁴ Brian Lavoie, *The Open Archival Information System Reference Model: Introductory Guide*, DPC Technology Watch Report 04-01 (London: Digital Preservation Coalition, 2004), 12.

information”), although that is a start. You must also generate and preserve technical information about the files (“preservation description information”) and information explaining the scope and contents of the files (“descriptive information”). When all of this is wrapped together, an Archival Information Packet has been born. The rest of digital preservation work consists simply in keeping that packet alive.

For a long time I puzzled over the OAIS Reference Model diagram, thinking that it would be difficult if not impossible track to the required data for each individual file in a digital collection. One of the objects of my testing work, the files of the American Library Association’s Office of Intellectual Freedom, held over 34,127 files. Thinking archivally, one way to control such a large number of records is to treat them as an accumulation. This is the way we treat the individual documents, photographs, and other records that we keep in record center boxes. Accumulated records are simply groups of records sharing a common relationship to a records creator or a function (a record series), and they can be held in a single archival packet. Treating large groups of records as aggregations makes particular sense for small archives, particularly those wishing to follow a more product, less process model for digital archives.¹⁵

By viewing aggregates as the object of digital preservation, we can overlay our existing tools and services onto the AIP diagram, filling in the framework for a do-it-yourself repository. My attempt to do this is shown in Figure Three.

¹⁵ Mark Greene, “MPLP: It’s Not Just for Processing Anymore,” *The American Archivist* 73, no. 1 (Spring/Summer 2010): 175-203.

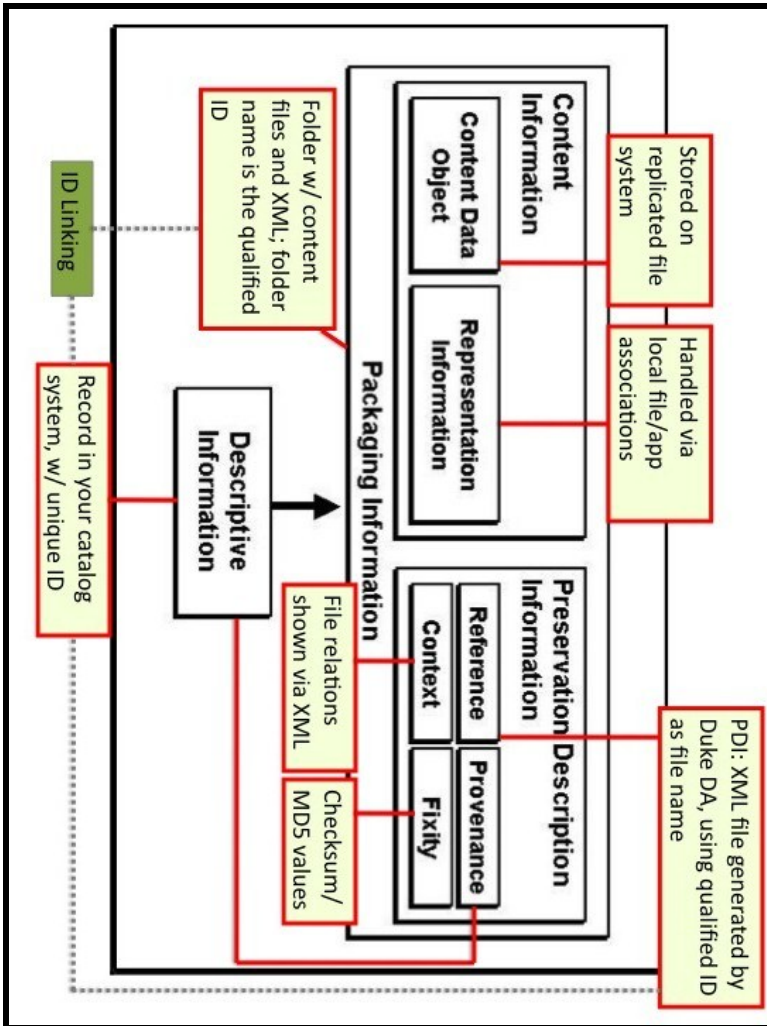


Figure Three: Elements of the AIP in a Do-it-Yourself Repository

Without descending too far into details, I would like to point out several things:

1. The system is in the process of implementation at the University of Illinois, led by my colleague Angela Jordan. While our Library is developing an application for long-term storage of digital objects from the University Archives, the system—code named Medusa—is not yet ready to accept content. In the meantime, the University Archives is able to store all the digital files that we have accessioned in a way that makes them ready for easy transfer into the new system, when it is available.
2. Each element in our system is a software or hardware application that we were already using or which we could implement without any direct help from an IT professional. To track descriptive information, we simply create a record for the Archival Information Packet within our catalog system, Archon. (One could just as easily use the Archivist's Toolkit or another application for this function.) The packet itself is provided a folder name that is the same as the ID of the descriptive record to which it is linked. The packet holds the files we have accessioned and an XML file that is generated by a program developed by Seth Shaw at Duke University, the Data Accessioner.¹⁶ The files themselves, as well as the preservation description information ("PDI") generated by the Data Accessioner, are stored on a replicated file server. Since we do not modify or rearrange the files in the archival packet, their provenance and original order is preserved for posterity.
3. We track file types, making sure that we have software to view or display them in a current

¹⁶ <http://library.duke.edu/uarchives/about/tools/data-accessioner.html> (checked 29 December 2011).

operating system. Where we do not have such software, we readily admit that fact in the descriptive record, providing some indication as to how people might render the files.¹⁷

4. We generate ‘online’ and ‘nearline’ access copies for each archival information packet. We also link these access copies to the descriptive record. They function as what the OAIS reference model calls a Dissemination Information Packet. The online copies are provided in our “E-Records Repository,” via a simple directory-browsing application that we customized for local use.¹⁸ Nearline copies are available by contacting the archives; they can also be provided on USB stick, CD, or other media.

Figure four provides a schematic view of our end-to-end processing, storage, and access workflow that we use under the do-it-yourself repository model; additional details are available on our staff website.¹⁹

While the Gartner Hype Cycle illustrates my personal attempts to grapple with digital preservation literature and methods, I have also come to believe that it is a good metaphor for describing the development of digital preservation as subfield in the archival profession. For example, it is easy to find evidence that members of our profession celebrated the possibilities of digital

¹⁷ This strategy may not be perfect, but it provides what we feel is good enough preservation, relying on the fact that most files have been created or used in readily accessible applications. For the rest, we assume that humans are clever. If we need to get access to an obsolete file, we will locate software from the growing digital preservation community. As needed, we can migrate content to new formats over time.

¹⁸ <http://www.library.illinois.edu/archives/Electronic%20Records/> (checked 29 December 2011).

¹⁹ <http://www.library.illinois.edu/archives/staff/digital/index.php> (checked 29 December 2011).

preservation; those on both ends of the battles over the nature of electronic records work showed such excitement.²⁰ But this high did not last long. Soon, most archivists were plunged into the depths of despair, which lasted for a good part of the first decades of the new millennium. Tools to do effective electronic records were simply not available, leaving most archivists unable to effectively pursue practical approaches to preserving electronic records. It has been a hard climb up the slope of enlightenment, but I do feel as if, professionally, we are now seeing glimpses of what Garnter terms the ‘plateau of productivity.’

Emerging to this location will require teamwork and collaborative leadership. It will require us to nurture partnerships not only in our own institutions, but within the broader digital preservation community. It will require that we experiment with new technologies and services, but in a coordinated way, so that those that truly prove their worth made available to the whole community, in a sustainable fashion.

I hope you do not infer from my somewhat breezy talk today that all of the problems of digital preservation have been solved, or that identifying, preserving, and providing access to electronic records is easy. Recent work that I have been doing with email has convinced me preserving digital information is hard work, but it is possible.²¹

²⁰ David Bearman and Margaret Hedstrom, “Reinventing Archives for Electronic Records: Alternative Service Delivery Options,” in *American Archival Studies: Readings in Theory and Practice* (Society of American Archivists, 2000), 549-567; Linda Henry, “Schellenberg in Cyberspace,” *American Archivist* 61, no. 2 (January 1, 1998): 309-327.

²¹ “Email Preservation Options,” Practical E-Records, November 17, 2011. <http://e-records.chrisprom.com/?p=2351> (checked 29 December 2011).

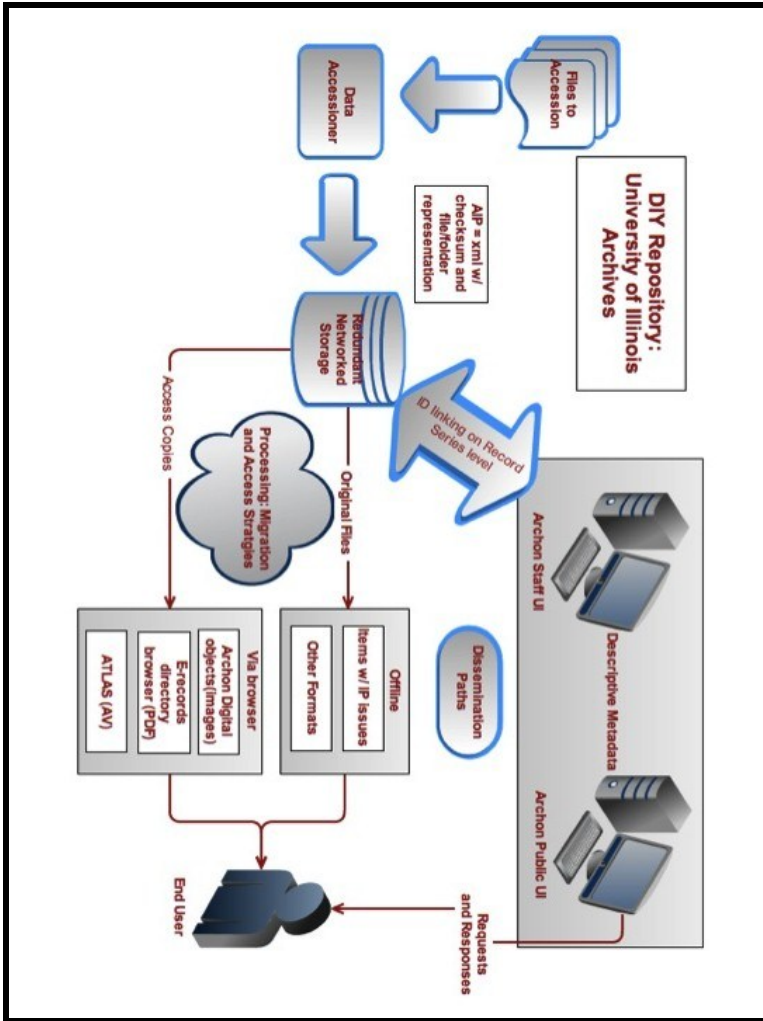


Figure Four: University of Illinois Do-It-Yourself Repository

One final point: I would encourage you to do whatever work you undertake in a way that allows you to experience the Tao of Digital Preservation. The Tao of Digital Preservation is that the nameless state that can only be experienced as a path. It can never be fully grasped; it merges all conflicts and contradictions into its ineffable wholeness. It will require you to be comfortable with the fact that digital objects both exist and don't exist. It will require you to contemplate the problems posed by that issue. It will require you to actively live out solutions, as you cultivate the way. Trust that many others are walking similar paths, and, above all else, know that the work you complete as a digital archivist will touch the lives of many people in the past, in the present, and in the future.

Christopher J. Prom is Assistant University Archivist and Associate Professor of Library Administration at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. He holds a PhD in history from the University of Illinois and also studied at the University of York (United Kingdom). Chris is a Distinguished Fellow of the Society of American Archivists and has received several other research fellowships including, most recently, a 2009 - 10 Fulbright Distinguished Scholar Award. He maintains the Practical E-Records Blog and is most recently the author of a Digital Preservation Coalition (UK) Technical Watch Report, "Preserving Email."

Functional Analysis and the Reappraisal of Faculty Papers: A Practical Application

Gregory Schmidt and Michael Law

In 2009, *Provenance* published an article examining the reappraisal and functional analysis of faculty papers in university archives.¹ The present article examines a case study of the practical application of the model that emerged.

The original article addressed the ways that faculty papers are appraised, arranged and described, as well as positing a course for reappraisal of existing collections. What emerged was an intellectual, but not physical, reorganization of the finding aid. Retaining the original location data, the materials were grouped into more logical subdivisions based upon the Records Disposition Authority (RDA) for Alabama state records. As personal manuscripts, the papers of faculty members are not official records, but by applying the RDA framework, the material which contributed to the functioning of the university as an

¹ Schmidt, Gregory, and Michael Law. 2009. "Functional Analysis and the Reappraisal of Faculty Papers." *Provenance: The Journal of The Society of Georgia Archivists* 27, 51-75.

institution, and the arrangement of once haphazard materials could now be far more logical.²

By addressing the finding aid alone, the project achieved many of the benefits of reappraisal without physically altering the collection or encountering the drawbacks of deaccessioning.³ Still, some of the benefits of reappraisal could only come from a hands-on rearrangement of the material. These benefits include easier retrieval and reference, better housing and preservation, and most especially space. While gaining space is an additional benefit of reappraisal, and should not be central reason for undertaking it, the gain is often significant enough to make the time investment worthwhile.⁴ It was with that in mind that the authors of the original *Provenance* article used the newly reorganized finding aid to restructure the physical collection to match.

The process of bringing the physical collection in line with the finding aid might be thought of as both a useful end of its own, and what could become a regular second step in the reappraisal process. It further simplifies the redesign of the finding aid, and engages the collection, which may have gone unseen in the intellectual redesign. While the rearrangement does affect the physical materials, it still does not bring deaccessioning into the process. It does, however, provide an overview of the collection and highlight parts or items that may be ripe for reexamination later.

² Chaudron, G. (2008). "The Potential of "Function" as an Archival Descriptor." *Journal of Archival Organization*, 6(4), 269-287.

³ Karen Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives; A Reply to Leonard Rapport," *The American Archivist* 47, no. 1 (1984): 44.

⁴ Sheila Powell, "Archival Reappraisal: The Immigration Case Files," *Archivaria* 33 (Winter 1991/92): 104-116.

The process, as undertaken by the authors, accomplishes two overarching tasks: giving organizational form to problematically arranged and described collections via the finding aid; and developing something of a pattern, or template, for instituting reappraisal across the collections on a regular basis. The process centers around the finding aid, and breaks reappraisal into three discernible stages. It requires the archivist to revisit the collection three times over a 15-25 year period. First, the archivist revisits the finding aid with some form of template (in the authors' case the RDA for Alabama). Then, using the finding as a guide, realign the collections. Finally, after giving the new guide and arrangement sufficient time to prove their worth, revisit the collection and compare usage and collecting needs.⁵

This was the heart of the initial idea behind reappraisal; reengaging older collections to see if they, and more specifically their arrangement and description, still hold up to modern appraisal standards. Deaccessions, gains in space, and improvements in housing and reference are all possible by-products of the process, but the goal is to make the collection better meet researchers' needs. If the collection is no longer of use (or never was), or if the initial handling by the archive left the collection less usable, reappraisal is the opportunity to bring collections up-to-date.⁶

Leonard Rapport initiated the conversation around reappraisal in the early 1980s and through peaks and valleys of interest it continues today.⁷ There was initial

⁵ Leonard Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," *American Archivist* 44 (Spring 1981): 143-150;

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Jackson, Laura Uglean and D. Claudia Thompson. "But You Promised: A Case Study of Deaccessioning at the American Heritage Center, University of Wyoming," *American Archivist* 73 (Fall/Winter 2010): 669-685.

resistance from archivists fearing a backlash from donors and the public regarding possible deaccessioning and what they felt was renegeing of the archives commitment. Since then, the profession has taken on a more fluid perspective regarding permanence of collections, even going as far as forgoing the word “permanent” and replacing it with “enduring.”⁸ Resistance to reappraisal, therefore, revolves not around theoretical problems, but the practical capacity of the archive to undertake projects. It is true that reappraisal projects can absorb staff time and work space, but the typical return in shelf space alone often makes the investment worthwhile. In Auburn University's case, scarcity of existing shelf space and the dispersed nature of multiple accessions made the exercises worthwhile. In addition to addressing these practical concerns, the timing of reappraisal was especially opportune given Auburn's ongoing digital library and EAD conversion projects. This may not be the case for every library, but it while it is easy to say that backlogs take precedence over projects like reappraisal, not routinely doing so means allowing collections to go untouched and unseen for decades.

When Rapport first posited his ideas about reappraisal, he did not envision it as a single-sitting project. Rapport was a constitutional records archivist at the National Archives, and over a 35 year career saw the rot of countless collections that were never touched, let alone reevaluated, even as the agency and the profession underwent drastic changes. Rather, he viewed the process in line with the *longue duree* notion of the historical record. Rapport introduced a process that would be evolutionary in nature and multi-stepped and multi-faceted in design and implementation. He provided no step-by-step instructions for the process, instead focusing on the reasoning and overall benefits of conducting reappraisal at all. He insisted

⁸ James M. O'Toole, "On the Idea of Permanence," *American Archivist* 52 (Winter 1989): 10-25.

that records (and manuscripts by association) did not exist in archives merely for their own preservation; they are there to be used. That usage can be tracked and evaluated in intervals over time, and compared with developments and enhancements within the profession, and the place the records hold within the institution overall. The process, he wrote, could, and should take a generation to complete and consider all facets of the record's place in the overall collection.⁹

Some misinterpretations of Rapport's idea led some to feel that he was simply applying date stamps on the life spans of collections and blindly discarding the oldest records.¹⁰ This was hardly the actual case. What Rapport suggested was more along the lines of an instituted generational review. Once every twenty years or so the archivist should just take a good look around the holdings; especially those collections that have not seen light for that entire period. If there have been changes in the institution's mission, or advances in archival methods, the holdings should be evaluated in that light and kept up-to-date.¹¹ For the Malcolm McMillan Papers, that reexamination did not mean weeding or expiration. It showed the flaws of the original arrangement and description, and the promise of a new method.

Indeed, the authors reengaged the McMillan Papers twice over a three-year period; first intellectually via the finding aid, then physically re-handling the actual material. The product was a useful, logical finding aid, a thorough re-housing and consolidation (which saved a tremendous amount of space), and a more readily accessible, reference able, clean, precise, usable set of records. The process discarded no part of the collection, yet completely transformed it. The review period of a generation is now

⁹ Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause, 144.

¹⁰ Benedict, "Invitation to a Bonfire," 44.

¹¹ Rapport, "No Grandfather Clause, 144.

underway, and usage can be tracked with the knowledge that it is the materials themselves under review, and not their arrangement and description.¹²

Physical rearrangement also allowed the opportunity to begin evaluating some of the theoretical ideas established or referenced in the original article; namely, that the bulk of the process could be handled via the finding aid, without touching the collection, and the RDA guidelines could serve as a viable framework for manuscript collections despite not being official state or university records. The hope existed, for instance, that if enough patterns began to emerge throughout the reappraisal, there might be an effect upon the nature of the archival mission or collecting policies.¹³ This turned out to be somewhat true. McMillan was the long-time chair of the Auburn University History Department. As such, his papers, while still not officially university records did contain a sizable number of documents concerning the administrative end of his time as a faculty member. Many faculty can document the teaching and research products of their tenure, but a much smaller number can document much in the way of administrative action. This was particularly important in McMillan's case because of the length of time he served as chair, and the events of the somewhat tumultuous time during which he served.

Moreover, the legal and practical standards for handling some of those types of records are far stricter today than they were either during McMillan's tenure, or even at the time of original appraisal. This means that records that may have been kept in the collection as part of his personal papers would today possibly be extracted and

¹² Powell, "Archival Reappraisal," 104.

¹³ Tom Hyry, Diane Kaplan, and Christine Weideman, "Though This Be Madness, yet There is Method in 't': Assessing the Value of Faculty Papers and Defining a Collecting Policy," *American Archivist* 65 (Spring/Summer 2002): 57.

made a part of departmental or college administrative records.

Regardless of whether or not extraction is possible or practical, the collection can be linked to university records via the finding aids. Encoding the finding into university and non-university series and employing descriptive standards equal to those of university records provides a cross-reference function without disturbing *respect des fonds*. It is in this context that EAD formatting can be complimented and extended through Encoded Archival Context (EAC). EAC is designed specifically for this function of identifying and linking inter-relationships between record sets. As EAD, and further EAC, become more standardized, this type of relational description will become easier, and more routine. This means that particular tags and headings can be regularly applied to new accessions of faculty papers upon initial processing.¹⁴

Beyond the finding aid, however, there are multiple benefits to reexamining collections. For the McMillan Papers, the benefits that the authors had hoped for, as well as some that were unforeseen, began to emerge during the rearrangement.

The most important product of the work was the gain in shelf space. That was an initial goal for the process. With few exceptions, some gain in space will be nearly automatic with any re-housing and/or re-folding of any collection. For the McMillan Papers the gain was immense. Again, without deaccessioning a single item, the bulk size of the papers was reduced by roughly forty percent. The gain will, of course, not be that significant for every collection, but for archives like Auburn University's, where

¹⁴ Richard V. Szary, "Encoded Archival Context (EAC) and Archival Description: Rationale and Background." *Journal Of Archival Organization* 3, no. 2/3 (2005): 217-227.

every foot of space is precious, any gain makes a strong argument for reappraisal.¹⁵

The McMillan Papers arrived in the archives in three separate accessions. By the last, the papers amounted to fifty-three records center boxes, ninety-seven note card boxes, and a set of microfilm which was extracted and made a part of Auburn's overall microfilm holdings. The note card boxes are rife with notes McMillan kept during his half-century study of southern history. Even subdivided into sets, the note cards lack context with the rest of the collection. By and large, the cards are summaries of texts that McMillan read during the research conducted for his own manuscripts.

To deaccession the note cards would, in part, mean falling victim to Gerald Ham's fear that persistent reappraisal would make archives merely a weather-vane for current historical trends.¹⁶ Even properly contextualized, the notes represent research in an area that has dramatically changed since McMillan was an active historian of the South. Many of the texts he consulted and annotated in the cards are now out of date. It is conceivable that modern researchers could make use of the cards as they are, but it is questionable. A large part of reappraisal is understanding where to draw the line between conceivable use and likely use.

In any respect, the reappraisal project that may well target those note cards for deaccessioning or perhaps some type of sampling, is presently at a more preliminary stage. By Rapport's reckoning the McMillan Papers are in what may be called a "testing phase." By first addressing the finding aid, and then the physical arrangement of the papers, the stage is now set to track any variations in the type of usage the papers receive.

¹⁵ Greene, "I've Deaccessioned," 12.

¹⁶ F. Gerald Ham, "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (January 1975): 5-13.

In addition to the gain in shelf space, and the more logical arrangement, another benefit was consolidation of the papers from their disparate shelves. After transferring papers from ringed binders into file folders, removing empty folders, and tightening empty box space the collection went from 53 RC boxes to 31. Besides clearing usable shelf space, the reduction also allowed for bringing all of the collection together in one set of closed stack shelving. This makes reference and retrieval significantly simpler and faster. It also increases the value of shelf browsing to have the full collection housed together.

During the re-housing process, there was a folder to folder matching to align the physical collection with the new finding aid. The process brought to light problems with the original cataloging. For instance, some folders were empty, and others were not precisely where they were described to be. This means that not only now is the new finding aid less chaotic in its order, it also more accurate in its descriptions and location data.

In all, the two authors spent roughly three days in consultation, listing, rearranging and EAD formatting of the finding aid. At a second interval there was another four days spent re-housing and realigning the physical materials. That is the time of two archivists for seven days. That time frame compares well to any processing time standards.

The fairly spare amount of time devoted yielded a gain of twenty-two cubic feet of space, a drastically more logical and usable collection, a finer context for linking faculty manuscripts to university records, and a template for engaging further collections. It is not difficult to argue that the expense in time was well worth the resulting benefits of the process.

Especially if it can fit into broader digitization, or reformatting projects, the McMillan Papers are a clear example of successful, multi-stepped reappraisal.

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Preservation of the Video Game

Allison M. Hudgins

Archivists have witnessed the preservation pitfalls of aging paper, videotape, and film and may wonder what the future holds for the video games of this era. Will children fifty years from now be able to play Super Mario World? More importantly, will historians lose objects that have made a significant cultural impact on the society of the late twentieth century and early twenty-first? If a variety of institutions do not take up significant preservation efforts then the games of today could slip away more quickly than one might think.

In recent years video games have become objects that not only reflect the society in which they were created, but also shape the way that society learns, works, and plays. The U.S. Army uses video games as training simulators, studies are being conducted on the behavioral effects of multi-player cooperation games, and First Lady Michelle Obama has asked game designers to develop games that fight childhood obesity.¹ These new media materials are becoming objects of interest to historians,

¹ Samantha Murphy, "Gamers Hold the World at their Controls," *New Scientist* 206 (2010), no. 2761: 37-39.

educators, sociologists, artists, computer scientists, and in turn, archivists. Yet just as archivists begin to address preserving video games, they are finding that these materials face a multitude of preservation problems far different from other archival materials. The most urgent concern may be the rapid physical deterioration of games and the little time left to save certain formats, some of which have only a few decades before components break down. Other challenges include a lack of interest in their preservation, aggressive copyright protection, and high costs associated with their preservation. Yet, several promising projects have emerged that deliver some hope that these fragile materials will not disappear forever and with them information key to understanding a society deeply involved in digital worlds and the roots of an emerging art form.

Why Should We Preserve Games?

Archives have long worked to preserve the materials of governments, organizations, and individuals by selecting the materials that have enduring value to the creator and to future researchers. Often the materials selected are those objects that give a glimpse into the past by shedding light on a past culture, event, or institution.² Now archives and libraries are beginning to ask, could a video game be such an object? Have they risen so far in the culture to be considered useful enough to the future researcher to merit preservation?

Video games can be viewed in a few ways from the archival perspective. First, games can be an artifact worthy of preservation because of who authored them. Game corporations or game designers might maintain a corporate archive for their own purposes or even as an institution that allows the public to connect with the past accomplishments

² Helen R. Tibbo, "Archival Perspectives on the Emerging Digital Library." *Communications of The ACM* 44 (2001), no. 5: 69-70.

way, academic archives could begin to see a need for the preservation of video games.

Another way that archivists might view a video game is as a cultural artifact. Archives with a wider mission to preserve materials that contribute to historical research might encounter these objects as artifacts that help depict life in the early twenty-first century, as video games become more prominently intertwined with modern culture. In an interview with *The Atlantic*, Henry Lowood, Curator for History of Science & Technology Collections and Film & Media Collections at Stanford University, said “The cultural history of our world is wrapped up in digital worlds, and in the future, if people want to understand our culture, they’re going to need documents and information.”⁴

Challenges to Preservation

Digital games face a number of preservation challenges, some similar to the challenges faced by other materials, some distinct to the format of the game. The most prominent of these challenges are the physical deterioration of the storage media the games exist on, the copyright rules dictating use of the material, the cost of preservation, and the lack of attention or interest that these materials encounter.

The most immediate preservation problem that video games face is the physical deterioration of the media on which the data is stored. As media storage formats age they develop “bit rot” or “bit loss,” a deterioration of data in the form of holes that appear in the code.⁵ Each part of code is vital for a program to work correctly and even minor decay can render a file unreadable. Bit rot can

⁴ Clay Risen, “Pac Rat,” *The Atlantic*, March 2010, <http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2010/03/pac-rat/7911/>.

⁵ “SPS: Bit Rot,” *Software Preservation Society*, http://www.softpres.org/glossary:bit_rot (checked July 5, 2011).

happen for a number of reasons and it affects each format differently. Magnetic disks, like floppy disks and hard drives, are some of the most vulnerable media storage formats. Over time the magnetic properties fade, and the bit cells lose polarity resulting in weak signals and eventually a loss of data. Games were published on floppy disks until the mid to late 1990s, when newer storage media began to supersede floppy disks. According to the Software Preservation Society, floppy disks have a lifespan of approximately 10 to 30 years depending on storage conditions.⁶

Cartridge games, like Sega Genesis and Super Nintendo games, are more stable because they use Read-Only Memory (ROM) chips to store data. In *Before It's Too Late: A Digital Game Preservation White Paper* the authors write that, "ROM cartridges are made of durable material, and most commercial cartridge-based games are burned to masked ROM cartridges, which have considerably longer life spans than most other digital media."⁷ ROM chips are vulnerable to moisture and battery acid leaks but overall they are more stable than other storage formats.

There is a type of ROM that is much more susceptible to bit rot, called EPROMS, a reprogrammable ROM used mostly for prototype games. These formats use electrons to program the chip, setting the memory cells to either a 1 or 0 position. Over time the insulation around the chip breaks down and allows the electrons to escape, causing the memory cells programmed to the 1 position to

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Judd Ruggill, et al., *What If We Do Nothing? 'Before It's Too Late: A Digital Game Preservation White Paper* (International Game Developers Association, 2009), http://www.igda.org/wiki/images/8/83/IGDA_Game_Preservation_SIG_-_Before_It%27s_Too_Late_-_A_Digital_Game_Preservation_White_Paper.pdf (checked July 5, 2011).

revert back to the 0 position. This loss of data eventually leads to corrupted files and an unreadable piece of software.⁸

Another major obstacle in the preservation of video games is copyright law. Game companies defend their intellectual property aggressively, and efforts to combat piracy can sometimes result in the unintended consequence of limiting access to their games, even for preservation efforts. In the past archives that led efforts to make games available to the public for play were required to wait until the copyright expired, and by that time the games might be lost, either because there were no copies available or the data had become corrupted rendering it irretrievable.⁹ Because of this problem an exemption to the Digital Millennium Copyright Act (DMCA) was granted in 2006, which allows archives and libraries to create preservation copies of obsolete computer programs and video games.¹⁰ While this exemption is a great boon to archives and libraries, it does not mean that industry support is not needed or that all copyright obstacles can be overcome. For one, there are Digital Rights Management (DRM) codes imbedded in some software which prevent copying or migration to new formats at the code level, even if this migration is legal and covered under the copyright exemption.¹¹ Games are also written to be difficult to copy,

⁸ "A Small Lesson in Bit Rot," *System Failure*,

<http://my.ais.net/~xtreme/SF/Bit-Rot/> (checked July 5, 2011).

⁹ Christopher Mims, "Our Rotting Video-Game Heritage," *Technology Review*, July 28, 2010,

<http://www.technologyreview.com/blog/post.aspx?bid=377&bpid=255>
38.

¹⁰ "Billington Approves DMCA Exemptions," *Library Times International: world news digest of library & information science* 23, no. 3 (2007): 34.

¹¹ Ryan B., "The Video Game Industry and DRM – Time for a Change." *Yale Law & Technology* (blog), March 18, 2010,

in a proprietary language, and documentation of how the hardware functions is often kept secret. Ultimately this means that archives trying to preserve video games will run into problems they do not encounter with other copyrighted materials. Either they will be physically prevented from accessing the content of the game by DRM codes or stopped by the difficulty in reading the code itself. These protections make no distinction between an archives' fair-use copying and piracy.

Even if an institution is interested in preservation efforts, the costs are so high there are relatively few places doing this type of work. "Funding for an effective preservation infrastructure is severely lacking, and it's hard to convince cash-strapped agencies that saving video games is worthwhile," writes Clay Risen, contributor to *The Atlantic*. Preservation of any kind is expensive and video games require specialized efforts and technology to support their continued existence. Some institutions, such as the Software Preservation Project, solicit donated scans or original software in order to address the challenge of preserving the overwhelming number of commercially released games.¹²

Video games can also suffer from the attitude that they are too new to be in need of immediate preservation. However video games have a much shorter life span than books or film, which can last for decades, even if stored in less than optimal conditions. Worse, video games require complex, obsolete hardware, which faces its own preservation challenges, in order to be read and played. Waiting until these games are deemed old enough or culturally significant enough to be worthy of preservation is, in many cases, not an option.

<http://www.yalelawtech.org/ip-in-the-digital-age/the-video-game-industry-and-drm-time-for-a-change/>

¹² Risen, "Pac Rat." "SPS: About Us." *Software Preservation Society*, <http://www.softpres.org/about> (checked July 5, 2011).

The attention that preservation receives from the gaming industry is mixed. Gaming companies, especially the larger ones, want to have access to past games and have the resources to maintain their own game archives. Often they have become aware of preservation threats after losing the source code of early games and have taken steps to preserve their works.¹³ Yet this awareness is not always pervasive. James Newman commenting in 2009 on the state of video game preservation in the U.K., writes that,

We have encountered shoeboxes under CEOs' desks and proud parents' collections of tapes and press cuttings. These are the closest things to a formalized archive that we currently have for many of the biggest British game development and publishing companies... [I]t is symptomatic of an industry that, despite its public proclamations, neither places a high value on its products as popular culture nor truly recognizes their impact on that culture.¹⁴

There is also an extreme pressure exerted by gaming companies to value the newest games and denigrate the older ones, so that when old games are made available for purchase they come at extremely reduced rates. In 1992 *The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past*, a Super Nintendo cartridge game, sold for about \$70. Today the same game can be downloaded through the Nintendo Wii virtual

¹³ John Andersen, "Where Games Go To Sleep: The Game Preservation Crisis, Part 3," *Gamasutra*, March 10, 2011, http://www.gamasutra.com/view/feature/6301/where_games_go_to_sleep_the_game_.php?page=1.

¹⁴ James Newman, "Save the Videogame! The National Videogame Archive: Preservation, Supersession and Obsolescence," *M/C Journal* 12, no. 3 (2009), <http://journal.media-culture.org.au/index.php/mcjournal/article/view/167> (checked July 5, 2011).

console for \$8.¹⁵ Very few game stores carry games older than a few years, and if they do the games are found in a bargain bin and are sold for a fraction of the original cost. Game companies view their own products as objects of instant obsolescence and spend their resources promoting the next newest game.¹⁶

The perceived low monetary value of these older games is damaging in at least two ways. First because gamers are unwilling to spend very much money on old games, game companies make little effort to keep them on the market, much less to provide a fully accessible catalog of their games. It is not surprising that profitable vintage games, like the *Zelda* series, are available but out of the thousands of games produced in the 1980s and 1990s only 413 are currently available on the Wii virtual console for North America and Europe.¹⁷ Second, because the value is so low, the perception by the general gaming public is that these games are numerous and expendable, when neither may be true.

In order for non-industry preservation projects to succeed there must be a level of industry support; whether it comes from companies giving the rights of financially unimportant games to archives or providing metadata and materials that contribute to the understanding of a game. In the introduction to *Before It's Too Late: A Digital Game Preservation White Paper* (2009), Henry Lowood expresses a similar sentiment directed at game developers,

If we fail to address the problems of game
preservation, the games you are making will

¹⁵ "The Legend of Zelda: A Link to the Past," *Nintendo.com*, http://www.nintendo.com/games/detail/5oMtHuB3aOHOawfC6brZ6myQY4fIQ_ (checked July 5, 2011).

¹⁶ Newman, "Save the Videogame!"

¹⁷ "Virtual Console Games Out Now," *Nintendolife*, <http://vc.nintendolife.com/games> (checked July 5, 2011).

disappear, perhaps within a few decades. You will lose access to your own intellectual property, you will be unable to show new developers the games you designed or that inspired you, and you may even find it necessary to re-invent a bunch of wheels.¹⁸

Encouragingly, it appears that these concerns are being addressed by the industry. In a survey conducted in 2010-2011 by *Gamasutra*, fourteen gaming companies responded to questions about their preservation policies. Microsoft for example reported that they keep multiple copies of materials in climate-controlled vaults in on and off site locations. It also plans to transfer games produced before 2000 to newer more reliable storage devices in order to avoid bit rot. Likewise, Capcom Japan reported that it has a process for preserving source code, but admits that, like many publishers, it had no preservation policy in place until the early 1990s. They also recognize that copying code to new storage media is not a permanent preservation solution, especially as the amount of data needed to run the game grows in size.¹⁹ Industry support, along with academic and non-profit institutions can all play a role in finding solutions to the preservation problems facing video games.

Preservation Solutions

The preservation of digital objects is often approached in two ways, either through migration or emulation.²⁰ An emulator is a program that recreates the

¹⁸ Ruggill, et al., ““What If We Do Nothing?””

¹⁹ Andersen, "Where Games Go To Sleep, Part 3."

²⁰ David Anderson, Janet Delve, and Dan Pinchbeck., "Toward A Workable Emulation-Based Preservation Strategy: Rationale and Technical Metadata," *New Review Of Information Networking* 15, no. 2 (2010): 110-131.

functions of one system in another, usually newer system. Video game systems, for example, come with built in emulators, typically for the system directly preceding it. Migration is the process of copying data from an old media storage format, such as a floppy disc onto a newer more accessible format, such as a DVD.

There are however difficulties with both of these solutions. First, the cost of migrating data from format to format can be exorbitant and there is a risk that some of the data will be lost. Second, when not developed by the game companies most emulators are illegal and are often used for piracy. Even if an institution were able to develop or acquire a legal emulator, emulated games are not necessarily suitable for preservation. Emulators only include the bare code of a game. The context, the physical hardware, the TV or computer that runs the game, the packaging, and the instruction booklet are lost. Furthermore, because emulators are not usually developed commercially they become obsolete and are usually discontinued before they are perfected. Emulators are also not usually designed for preservation. The game may not be transferred correctly, resulting in poor quality or glitches. There is also no metadata associated with the game and most of these emulators and ROMS, the game format that emulators read, are stored on temporary servers. Leaving games to be preserved by independent emulators then is a poor option.²¹

Some institutions have begun to develop strategies for preserving games, for example the Internet Archive's Classic Software Preservation Project (CLASP) project. CLASP operates a dark repository, collecting original consumer materials for preservation but keeping its holdings restricted until the copyright expires or the rights are granted to the archive. In order to preserve games, they

²¹ Christopher Mims, "Our Rotting Video-Game Heritage."

make perfect digital copies with help from their technical partners the Software Preservation Society (formerly the Classic Amiga Preservation Society). These institutions focus on the magnetic disk formats like those used in the Atari ST.²² In order to preserve these formats they are “creating tools that can read a disk at a very ‘low level.’ In fact, they can literally pick the bits off the disk surface.”²³ They have also set standards for preserved games, discounting hacked or cracked versions or re-releases, as these versions often have missing sequences, music, or changes that affect game play. In the future they hope to release a public catalog with basic metadata on the holdings.²⁴

Henry Lowood of Stanford University has been involved in video game preservation since 1998, when very few others considered the project worthy of consideration. Since then he has become co-Principal Investigator in a project funded by the Library of Congress, “Preserving Virtual Worlds”.²⁵ The project aimed to develop preservation standards for digital games and interactive fiction. They selected eight case study games with varying creation dates, original hardware, and rights status in order to gain a better understanding of the challenges associated with preserving games. The project identified several steps that archives, libraries and museums can take to preserve

²² “SPS: About Us,” *Software Preservation Society*, <http://www.softpres.org/about> (checked July 5, 2011).

²³ “Welcome to CLASP,” *The Internet Archive*, <http://www.archive.org/details/clasp> (checked July 2011).

²⁴ Henry Lowood, “Play History with Games: Steps towards Historical Archives of Computer Gaming,” (Presentation, Electronic Media Group Annual Meeting of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works, Portland, Oregon. 14 June 2004.): 6, 11, <http://cool.conservation-us.org/coolaic/sg/emg/library/pdf/lowood/Lowood-EMG2004.pdf> (checked July 5, 2011).

²⁵ Henry Lowood, “Henry Lowood,” *Stanford University*, <http://www.stanford.edu/~lowood/> (checked July 5, 2011)

games, including developing metadata standards, collection management policies, and reaching out to game designers and gamers in order to encourage active participation in the preservation of their materials and culture.²⁶

Also at Stanford University is the Stephen Cabrinety Collection in the History of Microcomputing, part of the Department of Special Collections at Stanford University Libraries, consisting of retail software, hardware and video games, mostly from the 1980s and 1990s. The Stanford Special Collections website offers a publicly accessible list of game in the collection, complete with publisher information, date of publication, and operating system. In the future they also hope to include scans of box images and manuals.²⁷

Another archive interested in the preservation of video games and their documentation is the University of Texas Videogame Archive, which collects materials related to the game making process and a special focus on the beginnings of game development. The archive, which operates as part of the Dolph Briscoe Center for American History, takes donations including hardware, software, promotional materials, art, and papers related to the daily business of game creation.²⁸

In 2007 Richard Garriott, creator of the *Ultima* series, and other early game designers, including Warren Spector, creator of *Wing Commander* and *Deus Ex*, approached the University of Texas archives about

²⁶ J. McDonough, R. Olendorf, M. Kirschenbaum, K. Kraus, D. Reside, R. Donahue, A. Phelps, C. Egert, H. Lowood, & S. Rojo, *Preserving Virtual Worlds Final Report* (2010), 5-15.

²⁷ "The Stephen M. Cabrinety Collection in the History of Microcomputing." *Stanford University*, <http://library.stanford.edu/depts/hasrg/histsci/index.htm> (checked July 5, 2011).

²⁸ "The UT Videogame Archive: Mission." *The Dolph Briscoe Center for American History The University of Texas at Austin*, <http://www.cah.utexas.edu/projects/videogamearchive/mission.php> (checked December 4, 2011).

donating their personal papers and works with the goal of preserving these materials related to the early history of video game design. They were concerned that these materials would be lost and that examples of early gaming making materials might prove useful to those studying the roots of an art form. The University of Texas Videogame Archive has grown to include 1,500 video games, more than 150 boxes of industry documents and many hardware devices. Though not usually set up to allow patrons to play these games, the archive does host special exhibits of their vintage games like at a recent Explore UT event, when local school children were invited to experience games from the 1980s and 1990s.²⁹

Preservation of the Gaming Experience

While some archives focus on preserving the documentation of game creation and of the game itself, others are working to preserve something far more ephemeral: the gaming experience. Games do not arrive as lines of code alone, but exist in a context, both social and physical. Without these contexts the gaming experience can be significantly different from the original experience. The social context is the culture in which the game was created and the references that it makes to knowledge players are assumed to have. People removed from this social or cultural context will miss some of the communication occurring between contemporary designers and players. This removal of the social context occurs with many types of archival materials and archivists and scholars have experience reconstructing this sort of information. In contrast, retaining the physical context may prove to be more unfamiliar ground.

The physical context could be anything from the cartridges or optical discs, to the game packaging, player's

²⁹ Jensen, "At a University Archive, Yesterday's Cutting-Edge Video Games Play On."

guides, art books, as well as contemporary technologies needed to play the game, and if the games are removed from that context the gaming experience will be altered. How then can an archivist recreate the gaming experience when the technologies needed to play the games are long gone? One example of how to solve this problem comes from a group at the Georgia Institute of Technology. Ian Bogost, a professor at Georgia Tech, and a group of students created an emulator which allows Atari 2600 games played on a modern LCD monitor to look fuzzy and blurred as they did on an old CRT TV. This emulator allows a modern audience to experience games the way they were played in the 1970s, and to be played the way that the game designers intended. Game designers purposely used the blurry TV screens of the day to program color gradients, and took the ghosting images into account when animating characters.³⁰

Other efforts aim to record the look of a game by creating video of game play. The main proponent of this effort is the Machinima Project at the Internet Archive. The website defines Machinima as, “filmmaking within real-time, 3D virtual environments, often appropriated from existing video game engines.”³¹ Archivists have experience with preserving video and this option offers future generations a look at games that may no longer be available. This static record of the game is no replacement for the interactive game itself, but it may supplement other preservation efforts.

³⁰ Chris Kohler, “Atari 2600 Emulator Simulates Old-School TV Images,” *Wired Magazine*, April 2009, <http://www.wired.com/gamelifelife/2009/04/atari-emulator/>.

³¹ “Welcome to Machinima.” *The Internet Archive*, <http://www.archive.org/details/machinima> (checked July 5, 2011).

Conclusion

Games are challenging to preserve; they are complex technologies that require expensive and difficult to maintain systems, yet they are a part of this culture, and as vital as film to previous generations. In fact, video games share many of the same qualities as film from the perspective of an archivist. They both must overcome copyright considerations, as most are produced by large companies and individual artist's rights must be respected, they require technologies to view the works, they are media that exist to be experienced and that experience cannot be exactly recreated or preserved, and they often need advocates for their preservation.

In 2006 Lowood and a committee of game designers and journalists released a game canon, much like the National Film Registry's list of culturally significant films. The games are: *Spacewar!* (1962), *Star Raiders* (1979), *Zork* (1980), *Tetris* (1985), *SimCity* (1989), *Super Mario Bros. 3* (1990), *Civilization I/II* (1991), *Doom* (1993), the *Warcraft* series (beginning 1994) and *Sensible World of Soccer* (1994).³² The games were chosen for their innovations, like the first multiplayer game, or first of a genre, like *SimCity*, which was the first god-game, a game that gives the player control over a world. Efforts like these promote the legitimacy of video games as artifacts of cultural importance and will aid preservation projects, convincing skeptical institutions that time and money should be expended to save these vulnerable pieces of our culture.

³² Heather Chaplin, "Is That Just Some Game? No, It's a Cultural Artifact," *New York Times*, March 12, 2007, <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/03/12/arts/design/12vide.html> (checked July 5, 2011).

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Reappraising Leonard Rapport’s “No Grandfather Clause” at Thirty

Ashby Crowder*

Identifying enduring value in records is elemental to the concept of archives. Consequently, the question of reevaluating past determinations of endurance goes to the core of archival theory. Despite the substantial professional literature on the appraisal of records, relatively few archival scholars or practitioners have analyzed how and whether archivists should revisit original appraisal decisions.¹ Professional organizations are only beginning to deal with the issue formally. While archivists could benefit from more professional guidance in reappraisal, the small amount of literature that does exist suggests a consensus that reappraisal, when done properly, can be a component of sound collections management.

* The views presented in this article are the author’s own, and do not represent the official positions of the National Archives and Records Administration.

¹ No monograph in English treats this question. Books on appraisal typically devote only a few sentences or paragraphs to reappraisal. See, for example, Barbara Craig, *Archival Appraisal: Theory and Practice* (Munich: K. G. Saur, 2004); Frank Boles, *Selecting and Appraising Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005); and Richard Cox, *No Innocent Deposits: Forming Archives by Rethinking Appraisal* (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2004).

While the principal archival theorists of the Western world, the Englishman Sir Hilary Jenkinson and the American Theodore R. Schellenberg, held contrasting views on archival appraisal, neither directly addressed the question of reappraisal. Leonard Rappoport touched off the debate in 1981, and virtually all scholarship on reappraisal pays homage to Rappoport as the person who broke the taboo on questioning permanence and stood up for a controversial approach to collections management. For all the assumed controversy around Leonard Rappoport's recommendations in his 1981 piece entitled "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," his view that reappraisal can be necessary, ethical, and appropriate has had a remarkable staying power.² Not only have Rappoport's ideas been incorporated into mainstream archival practice in the course of three decades, but even in the wake of their articulation in the pages of *The American Archivist*, they elicited nowhere near the slew of rejection that the subsequent literature suggests. For all the supposed debate on whether reappraisal is acceptable, it appears that no archivist has published a direct, categorical rejection of reappraisal in every instance. Works on the subject are overwhelmingly supportive of reappraisal. In the late 2000s, the Society of American Archivists began the process of formally developing guidelines for reappraisal and deaccessioning. This paper argues that a consensus on reappraisal largely favorable to Rappoport has quietly emerged. It also argues that reappraisal has earned its place as one among many acceptable tools to manage modern collections.

A critical step in accepting reappraisal is recognizing that the notion of absolute archival permanence is an illusion. Permanent retention is not only impossible, but undesirable. No record can be preserved forever from

² Leonard Rappoport, "No Grandfather Clause: Reappraising Accessioned Records," *American Archivist* 44:2 (1981).

the perspective of geologic time. By permanence we must mean not literal permanence but its functional equivalent or, as James O’Toole observes, preservation “into the indefinite future.” Rapport contends that records may be considered permanent at the time of appraisal but later lose their permanence. For this reason, Rapport disapproves of the concept of “permanent records” and proposes the rather clunky designation “records worthy of continued preservation” as an alternative, although he admits that permanent is a “convenient term for which no simple substitute comes to mind.” A recognition of the impossibility and undesirability of literal permanence led archivists to begin referring to “enduring value” rather than “permanent value.” William J. Jackson also points out the ambiguities inherent in the idea of permanence and observes that whatever permanent value may be, it “must be based on continuing value.” These alternatives to permanence are more accurate and also more flexible, as they imply that criteria for retention may change, which is precisely the kind of conceptual shift reappraisal advocates support.³

Writers favoring reappraisal as a collections management tool have different perspectives and experiences that influence their approaches to reappraisal. For Rapport, archivists’ unwillingness to reappraise stems from a lack of self-confidence and imagination as well as a reluctance to overturn previous appraisal decisions.⁴ He observes that limitations on spatial, material, and personnel resources mean that archivists must consider which records they can afford to keep. Rapport argues that old accessions should be subject to the same appraisal criteria as new

³ James O’Toole, “On the Idea of Permanence,” *American Archivist* 52:1 (1989), 11, 23; Rapport, 148-149; William J. Jackson, “The 80/20 Archives: A Study of Use and its Implications,” *Archival Issues* 22:2 (1997), 143.

⁴ Rapport, 144-145.

accessions. He asks: “If we wouldn’t accept them today, why would we permit these records to occupy shelf space?”⁵ Rapport maintains that public funds should not support the preservation of records that do not have sufficient retention value, and insists that research use is the primary determinant of such value. Reappraisal solves the problem of records that should not have been accessioned, records that were poorly appraised or not appraised at all, and records whose value no longer endures.⁶

Rapport proposes integrating a reappraisal program as a regular and systematic component of holdings management. Archivists should be required to make the case for keeping records rather than to come up with reasons they should be deaccessioned.⁷ They should determine whether there exists a “reasonable expectation,” and not just a “conceivable expectation,” that the records in question will ever be used.⁸ Essentially, Rapport is recommending that records be subject to a cost-benefit analysis.

Rapport, recognizing potential negative consequences of loss of information and context associated with reappraisal, offers some comforting words and proposes some safeguards. First, archivists should not fret too much over the mere act of destroying unique materials. Few unique government records are scheduled or appraised as permanent in the first place. Applying the same standards to old records that apply to new ones does not pose a problem if previous standards have been improved upon. To legitimize the deaccessioning process, a review process can be instituted so that multiple individuals or committees must authorize the new decision.⁹

⁵ *Ibid.*, 143.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 144.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 149.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 146-148.

Rapport’s argument for reappraisal drew a critical response from Karen Benedict, but her “Invitation to a Bonfire” appears to be the only article in our professional literature explicitly arguing that reappraisal is a poor and dangerous choice. While Benedict recognizes that reappraisal may be necessary under certain circumstances, she cannot accept it as a routine part of archival management. She warns that regularly deaccessioning records by balancing cost against use is a shortsighted solution that may “seriously undermine an archival program.” Benedict contends that archivists must approach reappraisal with far more care than librarians. “There is no other repository,” Benedict warns, “where a copy of the same item, or even another item containing the same information, will repose.” Benedict recognizes that past appraisal decisions may not be perfect, but advises that they should be allowed to stand unless the previous appraisal criteria were “generally unsound.” She considers large-scale reappraisal acceptable only as a “crisis management technique” of last resort; even when it is necessary to make space, deaccessioned records should be microfilmed. Reappraising can also send the wrong message to resource allocators, Benedict cautions. If records can be so easily discarded, funding authorities may decide to save money by reducing archival holdings.¹⁰

Some of Benedict’s objections are thoughtful while others rest on questionable assumptions. The observation that lack of use may indicate poor reference services or inadequate finding aids should give pause to ardent reappraisers who see level of use as the sole criterion for reappraisal.¹¹ Other arguments, however, fail to convince.

¹⁰ Karen Benedict, “Invitation to a Bonfire: Reappraisal and Deaccessioning of Records as Collection Management Tools in an Archives: A Reply to Leonard Rapport,” *American Archivist* 47:1 (1984), 44-47.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 48

Benedict's concept of the absolute uniqueness of archival records is flawed. For example, government documents are produced in multiple copies and different documents can in fact have the same informational content, her contention that once an individual document is destroyed the information it contains is gone forever is not always true. Context may be lost, but not necessarily unique information. Reappraisal in crisis situations—the only kind she can accept—may lead to far worse decisions than an unhurried reappraisal. As Jackson points out, reappraisal cannot be carried out in a “rational and consistent manner” if done in the midst of a crisis.”¹²

While Benedict was alone in publishing a written rebuke, a number of archivists have written in support of reappraisal as a legitimate archival function. Some contributions reinforce Rapport's points while others support enhanced reappraisal efforts, albeit not on Rapport's exact terms. William Jackson stresses that reappraisal initiatives form a critical component of sound archival management. His preliminary research on applying library bibliometric studies of use to archival repositories suggests that the “80/20 rule”—the finding that 80% of research use involves 20% of the collection—applies to archives as well as it does to libraries. Jackson contends that anticipated use has not been a sufficiently weighted criterion in appraisal decisions. He predicts that archivists will have serious trouble with resource allocators if they continue to spend 80% of their space, processing materials, and staff time “for no apparent purpose.” According to this view, funding authorities will not and should not support the retention of “valueless records.”¹³

Archivists should, Jackson argues, abandon the notion that their entire collections are permanent. Rather, they should focus on retaining records for as long as they

¹² Jackson, 141-142.

¹³ *Ibid*, 139.

are useful. Reappraisal decisions need not be made willy-nilly. The very bibliometric techniques that revealed the 80/20 problem can be used to trace the patterns of use of archival materials and therefore support sound reappraisal decisions.¹⁴ Jackson is concerned with the practical application of reappraisal policy, and he devotes no consideration to the ethical dimension. His preoccupation with the possible objections of resource allocators once they learn of the “80/20 rule” contrasts with the lack of consideration for harming the public image when developing a reappraisal program.

Sheila Powell and Caryn Wojcik defend reappraisal but take issue with Rapport’s arguments. For Powell, reappraisal “does have a place in archival theory, but not for the reasons put forward by Leonard Rapport.” Powell considers reappraisal appropriate when an original appraisal decision is “discovered to be incorrect or incomplete” or when a newer accession is found to better document the same activities.¹⁵ She bases her views on reappraisal upon her experience with immigration case files at the National Archives of Canada. Powell observes that a faulty organizational structure contributed to redundancy in the collections. At this repository, appraisers of different medium types worked separately from one another and did not realize that they were duplicating each other’s collections. A reappraisal of such records, Powell contends, should take the form of an original appraisal, once the conditions that contributed to the original flaws have been removed.¹⁶ This view of reappraisal contrasts with the focus on researcher use within a defined period that characterizes Rapport’s and Jackson’s positions.

¹⁴ Ibid, 138-141.

¹⁵ Sheila Powell, “Archival Reappraisal: The Immigration Case Files,” *Archivaria* 33 (1991/1992), 104.

¹⁶ Ibid., 106-107.

Wojcik discusses the usefulness of a reappraisal program for sorting through the backlog of unprocessed records at her own repository, the State Archives of Michigan. This repository had an enormous backlog of records, many of which the staff suspected to be of “marginal value.” Recognizing a potential conflict in deaccessioning records that had been made publicly available in the past, the Michigan archives chose to limit the reappraisal program to unprocessed materials.¹⁷ The Michigan reappraisal project turned out to be an excellent way of deaccessioning records that should never have been transferred to the repository in the first place: the staff found that half of the deaccessioned items had already been scheduled for destruction.¹⁸

The literature on the reappraisal debate that treats the effect of a reappraisal program on the image, reputation, and public relations of an archival repository is especially useful to archivists considering reappraisal programs for their own repositories. Mark Greene holds that reluctance regarding reappraisal and deaccessioning has harmed the archival profession. Arguing against the supposed conventional wisdom, he maintains that reappraisal is an ethical exercise that should be a “normal part of standard archival administration.” Moreover, a “public and transparent” reappraisal program can even improve the reputation’s relations with donors, researchers, and resource allocators.¹⁹ Greene is well qualified to comment on this topic. The University of Wyoming’s American Heritage Center, which he directs, is well known for instituting its reappraisal and deaccessioning program

¹⁷ Caryn Wojcik, “Appraisal, Reappraisal, and Deaccessioning,” *Archival Issues* 27:2 (2002), 151-152.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 157.

¹⁹ Mark Greene, “I’ve Deaccessioned and Lived to Tell About It: Confessions of an Unrepentant Reappraiser,” *Archival Issues* 30:1 (2006), 7-8.

after refocusing an ambitious collections policy. Reappraisal and deaccessioning were necessary for this repository to strengthen its holdings in the areas on which it has chosen to concentrate. Deaccessioned records were, in many cases, transferred to other repositories where they could be better cared for and of more use to researchers. This reappraisal program was, therefore, more than what Greene calls a “necessary evil.” As a repository’s mission, goals, and clientele change, collections must change for the repository to remain relevant. As Greene’s work demonstrates, records that have research value can be transferred to a better home and need not be destroyed just because they are being deaccessioned.²⁰

Greene suggests some public relations strategies for repositories that reappraise. First, it is critical to be open about reappraisal and deaccessioning. In newsletters and public forums archivists can frame the practice and explain their decisions. If archivists are not vocal about reappraisal, critics are assured the loudest public voice. Second, archivists should contact donors or records creators to discuss reappraisal decisions. Greene himself was successful in gaining the permission of donors. His experience suggests that archivists have misjudged their constituents and stakeholders in presuming they would not understand and support reappraisal.²¹ Third, reappraisal should proceed only after careful thought and the development of written reappraisal policies and procedures based upon institutional mission and collection development policy. Fourth, reappraisal should be carried out either for the entire collection or for “significant defined subsets.” Random reappraisal of individual collections, apart from being inefficient, makes for

²⁰ Ibid., 8-12.

²¹ Ibid., 10-11.

inconsistent reappraisal decisions, which would open the repository to well-deserved criticism.²²

Other archivists have found reappraisal to have a beneficial or neutral effect on public and donor relations. The reappraisal program of congressional collections at the Minnesota Historical was intended to align the collection with the Society's mission to document congressmen not as national figures but as representatives of Minnesota and in relation to state politics. The society began applying these appraisal criteria to new collections in 1993, and only later began reappraising its holdings using the new criteria. The Society found that the former elected officials trusted the archivists' judgment to dispose of what was needed to make the collection most useful and accessible to researchers.²³ Richard Hass, who conducted a crisis-driven reappraisal of the holdings of the University of Cincinnati Special Collections Department, did not run into the expected wall of donor resistance. He found that half of the donors or offices of origin he contacted to discuss deaccessioning were surprised that the archives had retained the records in question.²⁴ Wojcik, whose experience at the Michigan State Archives was discussed previously, found that reappraisal provided the occasion to rebuild a damaged relationship with state agencies. Because of poor communication, outdated records schedules, and inconsistent deaccessioning practices, agencies feared that transferring records to the state archives meant they were lost forever. Part of this reappraisal program sought to build trust between archivists and records creators by revising records schedules and improving communication and

²² Ibid., 12-14.

²³ Todd Daniels-Howell, "Reappraisal Of Congressional Records at the Minnesota Historical Society: A Case Study," *Archival Issues* 23:1 (1998), 35-40.

²⁴ Richard L. Hass, "Collection Reappraisal: The Experience at the University of Cincinnati," *American Archivist* 47:1 (1984), 52.

coordination among archivists and records managers. As a result, the archives could assure that no records scheduled for transfer to the state archives would be deaccessioned.²⁵

While reappraisal and deaccessioning are not synonyms, they are deeply intertwined. Reappraisal may lead to deaccessioning, but it may also lead to retention. Deaccessioning itself can have multiple outcomes. Records may be returned to the donor or originating body, they may be transferred to another repository, they may be sold, or they may be destroyed. In any event, archivists must consider the legal issues that arise when reappraised records are selected for deaccessioning. An archivist must confirm that nothing in the governing documents of the archives or of its parent institution prohibits deaccessioning. The archivist must also be certain that the archives has legal custody of the materials and that no restrictions placed by the donor or creator are being violated. Even when a collecting repository is not legally bound to contact the donor, it is usually wise to do so anyway. The entire deaccessioning process and the reasoning supporting it should be meticulously documented so the archives can justify its actions if they are ever questioned.²⁶

Selling is one way of disposing of deaccessioned records. While this strategy brings some benefits, it also poses additional legal and ethical questions. Benefits to selling include the possibility of escaping from the “cycle of poverty,” although careful attention must be paid to how proceeds from sales are budgeted. Institutions considering selling deaccessioned holdings must examine the regulations to which they and their parent bodies are bound

²⁵ Wojcik, 153-154.

²⁶ Menzi L. Behrnd-Klodt, *Navigating Legal Issues in Archives* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2008), 63-65. See also Melissa Mannon, “Deaccessioning,” *Managing Archival Collections* 4:1 (2003/2004), 1-2.

in order to ensure that such a means of disposal is permitted. Public institutions generally have much less freedom than private ones to sell their holdings. Whether public or private, a repository must be attentive to how donors and the public perceive the sale of records. Michael Doyle, who defends auctioning in certain situations as a “legitimate collection management activity,” recognizes that selling materials may have negative long-term consequences for acquisitions.²⁷ To be considered for sale, deaccessioned materials should have substantial financial but little or no research value. Ethical behavior demands that records proposed for deaccessioning because of a realignment of their repository’s collecting policy be transferred to a new home rather than sold.²⁸ Doyle observes that the online auction services that appeared in the 1990s offer archives a cost effective way to connect deaccessioned materials to prospective buyers. Since this method of sales is much better for an archives than relying on a dealer, archival sales via online auctions have grown.²⁹

The Society of American Archivists has finally begun the process of developing reappraisal and deaccessioning guidance. In 2009 the SAA created a Deaccessioning and Reappraisal Development and Review Team to propose guidelines. The web page of this team, like the literature on reappraisal, refers to the reappraisal and deaccessioning as “controversial topics.” Yet the time has come for these topics to be addressed under the auspices of SAA for two reasons. First, archival repositories have not been furnished with resources commensurate with the volume of records they accession. Second, high profile examples of successful projects at the Minnesota Historical Society and the American Heritage

²⁷ Michael Doyle, “Experiments in Deaccessioning: Archives and Online Auctions,” *American Archivist* 64:2 (2001), 353-358, 361.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 353-354.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 355-357.

Center have sparked profession-wide interest in reappraisal and deaccessioning as an approach towards collections management. The SAA recognizes the need to provide practical guidelines and articulate ethical standards for deaccessioning and reappraisal.³⁰ Perhaps the wider acceptance of reappraisal under the auspices of professional bodies will encourage the compilation of statistical and survey data on the practice.

Reappraisal should be understood as one among several related responses to the challenges of modern collections. Every type of repository struggles to secure staffing, space, and resources to deal with the growth in volume of holdings. Greene and Meissner propose their “More Product, Less Process” approach to archival processing with these constraints in mind. Observing that “our profession awards a higher priority to serving the perceived needs of our collections than to serving the demonstrated needs of our constituents,” they propose a light processing approach that makes needed records available more quickly.³¹ Reappraisal, too, puts the needs of constituents ahead of the needs of records.

Despite the dearth of specific arguments against reappraisal and deaccessioning in the professional literature, we should recognize that a trend in archival thought implicitly disputes the legitimacy of reappraisal. While Luciana Duranti does not specifically warn against reappraisal, she does reject methodology driven by practice rather than by archival theory. In other words, reappraising

³⁰ “Deaccessioning and Reappraisal Development and Review Team,” Society of American Archivists, <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/acq-app/DeaccessioningWG.asp> (checked November 13, 2011).

³¹ Mark A. Greene and Dennis Meissner, “More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing,” *American Archivist* 68:2 (2005), 208-211. The author thanks an anonymous reviewer for the encouragement to mention Greene and Meissner in the context of reappraisal.

simply because space has run out is not theoretically rigorous enough to be justifiable; Duranti rejects any archival decision “arrived at...on purely pragmatic grounds.”³² Moreover, Duranti opposes the very idea of the archivist attributing value to records. This neo-Jenkinsonian perspective understands archivists’ proper role to be mere keepers of records, “to preserve them uncorrupted, that is, endowed with the integrity they had when their creators or legitimate successors set them aside for continuing preservation.”³³ Essentially, a rejection of reappraisal logically follows the Jenkinsonian disapproval of archival appraisal *tout court*.

Other arguments indirectly reject reappraisal. For example, Roy Turnbaugh criticizes archivists’ understanding of archival use as measured by reference services and research visits. Since advocates of reappraisal cite level of use as a reappraisal factor and a determinant of archival value, Turnbaugh’s perspective is relevant. He insists that accessioning is the primary “use” of an archives by the parent body. According to this point of view, archivists have a responsibility to preserve certain records regardless of their level research use.³⁴ Even if we accept Turnbaugh’s elegant conception of archival use, all forms of use are not equal. When repositories have access to limited resources, they must prioritize.

The literature makes clear that archivists’ approaches to reappraisal are associated with the types of repositories in which they work. As Rapport acknowledges, his own view of reappraisal is based upon his experience at the United States National Archives and Records Service

³² Luciana Duranti, “The Concept of Appraisal and Archival Theory,” *American Archivist* 57:2 (1994), 339, 343-344.

³³ *Ibid.*, 336.

³⁴ Roy Turnbaugh, “Archival Mission and User Studies,” *Midwestern Archivist* 11:1 (1986), 28.

and is especially applicable to public records.³⁵ A public archives, however, may have a stronger ethical and legal mandate to preserve evidence despite level of research use. Certain government archives may by law only reappraise holdings that were accessioned before the development of detailed schedules. An archivist in a collecting repository, on the other hand, can embrace reappraisal but recognize that he must deal with certain ethical and public relations issues specific to his type of repository. A private repository’s relations with wealthy individual donors of records (and of money!) are quite different from a government archives’ relations with originating offices. Deaccessioning, therefore, presents certain specific problems for each type of archives.³⁶

Reappraisal can be placed in a logical development pattern of archival theory. Jenkinson’s preferred approach that leaves appraisal decisions to offices creating and accumulating records may have been manageable when the volume of records was low. The expansion of the state in the twentieth century, coupled with advancements in reproduction and document creation technologies, challenged Jenkinson’s impartial approach. “Can we,” Jenkinson asks,

faced with the accumulations which the War has left us and the difficulties they involve, leave any longer to change the question what Archives are to be preserved? Can we on the other hand attempt to regulate them without destroying that precious characteristic of impartiality which results, in the case of older archives, from the very fact that their preservation was settled either by pure chance or at

³⁵ Rapport, 144.

³⁶ F. Gerald Ham, “Archival Choices: Managing the Historical Record in an Age of Abundance,” *American Archivist* 47:1 (1984), 17; Turnbaugh, 28.

least by considerations which did not include the possible requirements of future Historians?³⁷

Jenkinson expresses hope that such a method could be found, but the sheer volume of postwar records necessitated what we now know as the Schellenbergian approach of retaining only permanently valuable records.³⁸ Although Schellenberg does not discuss the reappraisal of already-accessioned records in *Modern Archives*, reappraisal carries his strain of archival theory and practice into the next era.³⁹ Reappraisal deals with a new set of practical constraints, but it also presents a way to actually improve collections through refinement rather than just reduce them with minimum damage. Gerald Ham's endorsement of reappraisal as a "creative and sophisticated act...that will permit holdings to be refined and strengthened" is particularly significant given his previous warnings that archivists should not pay too much attention to the "changing winds of historiography." For Greene, the evolution of Ham's views suggests a "larger philosophical shift within the archival profession."⁴⁰

As recently as 1997 William Jackson asserted in *Archival Issues* that "the idea of culling an archives in response to relative use has not been embraced by the profession."⁴¹ Although it is a bit meager, the professional literature demonstrates that a range of archivists have in fact argued in support of reappraisal. The literature has also evolved to recognize the various motives to reappraise.

³⁷ Hilary Jenkinson, *A Manual for Archival Administration* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1922), 21.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 22. See also Reto Tschan, "A Comparison of Jenkinson and Schellenberg on Appraisal," *American Archivist* 65:2 (2002), 177-181.

³⁹ T.R. Schellenberg, *Modern Archives: Principles and Techniques* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956).

⁴⁰ Doylen, 351-352; Ham, "Archival Choices," 17; F. Gerald Ham "The Archival Edge," *American Archivist* 38 (1975), 8.; and Greene, 9.

⁴¹ Jackson, 134.

Whereas for Rapport limited space and dwindling resources were the key practical considerations, reappraisal is now considered appropriate in response to a changed repository mission. Today, reappraisal is emerging as a normal part of archival management, much as Rapport hoped it would become back in 1981. Even if the SAA abetted the silence through its failure to provide a “clear rationale for reappraisal and deaccessioning,” it has finally taken steps to create such professional guidelines.⁴²

Virtually the entire literature on archival reappraisal since the 1980s shares a curious feature. It contains numerous statements presuming that a wall of professional opposition has stood against reappraisal, but the footnotes after such statements contain only a single citation: Karen Benedict’s “Invitation to a Bonfire.”⁴³ Either the supposed multitudes of anti-reappraisers are timid or they are not and never were numerous. Indeed, if reappraisal were such a threat, why have not more archivists made their arguments known in the professional literature? It appears, rather, that a consensus has easily emerged in the face of little opposition: Reappraisal is much more conventional and

⁴² Greene, 12; Society of American Archivists, “Deaccessioning and Reappraisal Development and Review Team,” <http://www.archivists.org/saagroups/acq-app/DeaccessioningWG.asp> (checked November 13, 2011).

⁴³ Powell contends that “Rapport’s position has been greeted with concern by many American archivists, who fear that reappraisal according to Rapport’s criteria would lead to the destruction of records simply because few researchers have used them.” See Powell, 104. Jackson writes that Rapport’s argument for reappraisal “challenged the profession to make the use of records a tool by which plans for appraisal, reappraisal, and what many regard as the ‘mortal sin’ of deaccessioning are accomplished.” Jackson, 133. Greene writes that “critics have argued that reappraisal is a necessary evil, necessary only in emergencies when space has literally run out in a repository.” Despite the invocation of the “many” archivists who oppose reappraisal and the plural form “critics,” these writers cite only Benedict as a voice opposing reappraisal. See Greene, 9.

reasonable a proposition than anyone thought when Rapport broke the ice in 1981. Perhaps Rapport was the first person to put in writing what many were reluctant to admit believing. This discussion of the reappraisal literature should offer comfort to those who are reluctant to embrace reappraisal because of its supposed history of controversy. Archivists supporting well-designed reappraisal programs have the better arguments on their side. Reappraisal's neo-Jenkinsonian detractors adhere to a doctrinaire theory of archives that, however intellectually interesting, is too rigid to guide the practicing archivist through real-world dilemmas.

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BOOK REVIEWS

Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense. By Ann Laura Stoler (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009, 316 pp.)

In *Along the Archival Grain*, Ann Laura Stoler, a professor of anthropology and historical studies, continues a critical engagement with questions of documentation, power relations, and knowledge explored in her numerous other works, including *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power* (2002) and *Race and the Education of Desire* (1995). She endeavors to tease apart how power relations related to national identity, empire, race, and moral character were inscribed in records of governance and technologies of rule during a distant colonial past. In this book, Stoler's focus is the official archives amassed by the Dutch colonial state of nineteenth-century Netherland Indies (now Indonesia), and her approach is "archives-as-process" rather than "archives-as-things." Clarifying the former, Stoler states her interest in "the colonial order of things as seen through the record of archival productions" (20).

Stoler's *modus operandi* is deconstructive and involves close textual readings of primary sources, coupled with a commanding grasp of seventeenth through nineteenth century European intellectual history. Through this approach, she moves beyond a view of records as simple registers of official actions, commands, and decisions to one that views colonial archives as sources documenting uncertain authorities, unintended consequences, and imperial anxieties that rub against notions of rationality, reason and order. Understanding this critical and cultural method partially explains the book's title, an evocation inspired by Walter Benjamin's widely quoted admonition to "brush history against the grain." The

choice of title and approach places *Along the Archival Grain* in company with the past decade's trend in arts and humanities scholarship that utilizes "archive" and "archives" as analytical concepts – not physical collections, places, or spaces – to examine notions of memory, affect, and more.

Along the Archival Grain starts with a two-chapter introduction, which details the theoretical underpinnings and methodological approach shaping the subsequent main sections. In Chapters 1-2, Stoler describes her ideological framework about colonial histories, empiricism, governmental recordkeeping practices, race, and narrative. She moves between a range of theorists from Levi-Strauss to Michel Foucault before shifting to her subject – Dutch colonial archival documents and the Netherland Indies, roughly from the 1830s to the 1930s. Each of the two main sections, Parts 1 and 2, contains two to three supporting chapters. These focus on the state of colonial studies and a critical reading of the history of late nineteenth and early twentieth century governing practices of the Netherland Indies. The final two chapters hone in on the life of Frans Carl Valck, a mid-level civil servant of the colonial state, which provides a telescopic view of the conflicts and tensions in day-to-day life between colonizer and colonized, capital and labor.

While the subject of the book may hold little interest for the archival community at large and some may find Stoler's dense, jargon-filled writing style off-putting, portions of this book – especially the first two chapters – will engage archivists who follow trends in humanities scholarship or practitioners who keep track of the ways in which notions of "archives" circulate in academia and society in general.

The past few years have witnessed a slew of books ostensibly about archives. Among the more recent ones, including *Along the Archival Grain*, are *Beyond the*

Archives: Research as a Lived Process (2008) and *Archive Story: Facts, Fictions, and the Writing of History* (2005). It is notable that a common thread to these books is a lack of acknowledgment of, or engagement with, a century long history of archival literature. Conversely, only a handful of thinkers and writers in the profession – examples being Terry Cook, Dominique Daniel, Margaret Hedstrom, and Randall Jimerson – engage humanities-based critical cultural theory of the past few decades to refine and redefine archival theories and practices. These gaps and overlaps aside, *Along the Archival Grain* will be of value to those interested in the place of archives within current humanities scholarship about narrative, authority, power, history, evidence and memory.

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How to Keep Union Records. Edited by Michael Nash.
(Chicago, Illinois: Society of American Archivists, 2010.
240 pp.)

Wisconsin's anti-union debate and the growing unemployment rate prove the continued relevance of union records and labor archives. The publication of *How to Keep Union Records*, a compilation of essays edited by Michael Nash, could not have been timelier.

Nash's volume is an updated and expanded edition of Debra Bernhardt's 1992 manual *How to Keep Union Records: A Guide for Local Union Officers and Staff*. Ten essays written by knowledgeable archivists and curators traverse the challenges of managing union records. Contained within are discussions on basic archival theories

and best practices, as well as suggested retention schedules, sample forms, and practical tips.

The book begins with Nash's historical survey of labor archives from their emergence in the late 19th century to the growth of academic interest in the 1970s and 1980s. Coincidentally, the first major attempt to collect data from union records was instigated by Richard Ely and John Commons of the University of Wisconsin in Madison, where earlier this year tens of thousands protested legislation that could potentially abolish collective bargaining rights. Nash also emphasizes the role of historical research and writing in transforming how union records are maintained. Pamela Hackbart-Dean's essay continues the discussion by focusing on the relationship between unions and repositories. She stresses the importance of fostering trust, communication, and cooperation with union members to ensure records are properly preserved. Her essay also describes donor relationships at several US labor archives, including the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University.

Similar to conventional archivists, those working with union records confront an assortment of problematic issues on a daily basis. It has been estimated that only 1-5% of union records have permanent historical value. Thomas James Connors' essay tackles the difficult but necessary task of evaluating records. He presents several points to consider during the appraisal process, including assessing records for their ability to meet union information needs as well as the needs of the scholarly community.

Another challenge is presented by mergers and consolidations, which create periods when union records are particularly vulnerable to destruction. James Quigel, Jr. discusses the critical role of the records manager in preserving local records during this transitional phase. The numerous access, security, and copyright issues that arise when opening union records to the public are addressed in

Diana Shenk's essay. She also briefly describes the three common user communities (scholars and students, general public researchers, and the unions who created the records) and to what purpose the records are most often used.

Oral histories are an essential part of documenting the experiences of rank-and-file workers. Lauren Kata does an excellent job addressing the subjective nature of oral histories and the complexity of recording historical memory rather than hard fact. She provides tips on enlisting volunteers, conducting interviews, and purchasing recording equipment. Kata also discusses the ethical and legal concerns in recording oral history interviews.

The last two essays highlight the necessity and challenges of preserving non-paper formats. Photographs, audiovisual recordings, and artifacts provide rich illustrations of working class culture not often found in official union paperwork. For example, banners, songs, and cartoons contain symbols and slogans that depict workers' perspectives and appeals. Barbara Morley stresses the importance of understanding the context of labor-related artifacts and recordings. Who created the item and for what purpose? Who was responsible for its preservation and why? The final essay addresses the most recent challenge faced by the archival community— electronic records. Emails and websites have become important means of communication between union members and local and national chapters. They are ephemeral by nature, yet subject to the same litigations and audits as paper records. Michael Nash and Julia Sosnowsky present a list of current best practices, yet acknowledge that few repositories have the resources to manage electronic records according to these standards. The essay also includes an intriguing discussion of the difficulties in determining the validity and authenticity of electronic records.

The book concludes with a bibliography and a comprehensive directory of labor archives in the United States.

Nash has successfully created a manual that serves a wide spectrum of records managers and archivists. Regardless of one's experience, readers will find useful and intriguing discussions of the unique issues presented by union records. The publication's one blemish is that at times it can be repetitious. Undeniably, this is a negligible flaw. Whether you are fresh out of graduate school or counting the days to retirement, *How to Keep Union Records* is a worthy addition to your bookshelves.

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Critical Library Instruction: Theories and Methods.

Edited by Maria Accardi, Emily Drabinski, Alana Kumbier,
(Duluth, MN: Library Juice Press, 2010. 341 pp.)

Critical Library Instruction is an excellent primer that will help begin serious discussions about the best methods for conducting instruction sessions. This book's collection of chapters authored by a wide array of librarians and teaching faculty, offer the reader different approaches to the theoretical backgrounds of library instruction, focusing on how critical pedagogy can best be used. This book does provide some resources on how to implement innovative instruction methods, such as problem-based learning. Unfortunately, these practical guides are few. What the book does best is to expose and remind us to ponder different ways to approach to library or literacy instruction.

One of the main themes found throughout *Critical Library Instruction* is the importance of critical pedagogy. For those unfamiliar, critical pedagogy, as defined by Henry Giroux, is “the educational movement, guided by passion and principle, to help students develop consciousness of freedom, recognize authoritarian tendencies, and connect knowledge to power and the ability to take constructive action.”¹ Giroux also believe that “Critical pedagogy offers the best, perhaps the only, chance for young people to develop and assert a sense of their rights and responsibilities to participate in governing, and not simply to be governed.”² If there is any fault to be found with this book, it is that it relies too much on this philosophy as a basis for library instruction. The inclusion of different approaches would have made for a more rounded discussion.

Critical Library Instruction is arranged into five sections. These sections are devoted to different aspects of thinking about instruction. The sections cover theory, toolkits for classrooms, teaching in context, working with unconventional sources such as Wikipedia, and dealing with institutional power. The second section is the most useful in the book because it provides not only discussion of different theories and approaches to instruction, but also “concrete lesson plans and classroom strategies” (xii)

One of the most fascinating chapters in *Critical Library Instruction* is Damian Duffy’s “Out of the Margins into the Panels: Toward a theory of comics a medium of critical pedagogy.” In his chapter, Duffy set out to demonstrate an “overlap between comic and critical pedagogy” and explain the place of comics in critical library pedagogy (199). He effectively does this through the medium of comics. It is a very rare treat to find a

¹ Henry Giroux, “Lessons From Paulo Freire,” *Chronicle of Higher Education* (17 October 2010).

² Ibid.

scholarly comic, especially one that makes such a good case for using the comic book or graphic novel as an important tool in a library's educational and information literacy programs.

Of particular interest to those who teach instruction sessions focusing on primary source/archival research or lead courses on archival studies is Lisa Hooper's chapter "Breaking the Ontological Mold: Bringing Postmodernism and Critical Pedagogy into Archival Educational Programming." The philosophy of Postmodernism asks us to disavow the objectivity of records in favor of examining the social, culture and linguistic constructs in which they were created. Often times, postmodernism does not allow its adherents to say that there is a universal truth to be found within archival materials. This contempt for objectivity and truth frightens many, archivists included, but many of the ideas expounded by the likes of Michel Foucault are worth incorporating in some capacity into archival instruction. Specifically, it's important to consider the types of documents that are selected for instruction sessions and the stories they tell students. Hooper insists that "the archivist should consciously work to provide documents that not only challenge their own authoritative legitimacy, but that also provide insight into events from the perspective of the subaltern and Other in addition to the dominant force" (136). The representation of the Other's perspective in archival instruction is very important concept that many of us would be wise to take to heart. Hooper does an excellent job of engaging this complex philosophy and showing how postmodernism can be used to create deep learning experiences for students.

Overall this work does more to generate thoughts and new ideas than provide a handbook to implementing the techniques and theories described within its covers, but this does not diminish its value. Theoretical discussions can lead to a deeper understanding, or at least a questioning of,

why we do the things we do when we step in front of a group of students. While this book may not guide you to change you instruction sessions, it will begin the conversation.

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The Ethical Archivist. By Elena S. Danielson (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2010. 437 pp.)

Ethical dilemmas challenge people in all professions, and archivists are no exception. Indeed, archivists may face more ethical issues than many professionals because of their close work with donors and their families. In addition, the nature of archival documents themselves often raise ethical problems – archives by definition are composed of private papers that were often never intended for public consumption and that may contain sensitive information. The Society of American Archivists has attempted to provide some guidance for professionals through the creation of a code of ethics and the publication of books such as Elena S. Danielson's *The Ethical Archivist*.

In *The Ethical Archivist*, Elena S. Danielson argues that archivists face unique ethical challenges in their profession, and that these challenges arise directly from the nature of archival work (7). Furthermore, she argues that the importance of archives in shaping the collective memory of society demands caretakers who are responsible stewards—ones who make thoughtful and ethical decisions. Danielson also explores the limitations of a code of ethics such as the one created by the Society of American Archivists. In the process of ethical decision-making,

Danielson contends that following a code of ethics is not enough in itself; codes can be contradictory and cannot possibly take into account the myriad situations that archivists face in the course of their work. Danielson proposes that archivists should not mindlessly follow the precepts laid out in a code, no matter how well formulated. The intention of her book is to generate further discussion regarding a number of areas in which archivists often face ethical decisions.

Danielson begins her discussion by reviewing the evolution of ethical codes, especially the code of ethics adopted by the Society of American Archivists. Readers may find this chapter ironic as Danielson contends that codes of ethics may not be helpful in resolving ethical problems. However, codes of ethics do provide a basis by which to begin to evaluate problems, and as such, Danielson's opening chapter can be justified. After the introductory material, Danielson's book is then subdivided into several areas reviewing ethical decision-making. Topics covered include acquisition, disposal, equitable access, privacy, authenticity, and displaced archives. By focusing on these topics, Danielson covers a number of problem areas but avoids overextending her discussion by trying to cover every possibility. Case studies and a list of questions for further discussion are also included for each topic.

One of the strengths of Danielson's book is that she does not try to dictate how archivists should respond to ethical problems; her book is not a practical manual that outlines the correct responses to certain situations. Readers seeking a specific answer to an ethical quandary should look elsewhere. *The Ethical Archivist* also generally avoids giving legal advice. Ethical and legal issues often overlap, but laws change over time and it is often better for archivists to seek legal counsel in such cases. Danielson recognizes that solutions will vary depending on the

circumstances of the case and the nature of the repository. She is able to cover broader principles by distancing herself from the role of an advisor.

Over the course of the book, Danielson presents a number of case studies from archivists working in a variety of repositories. Those who have read other publications on archival ethics may be disappointed with the case studies discussed in Danielson's book. A number of them are classic examples from the field, which may already be familiar to some readers. However, readers new to discussions of archival ethics will find that the case studies are engaging and enhance the readability of the book; Danielson's case studies do illustrate points from the text and provide memorable examples of the ethical nature of archival work.

Answers to ethical problems are typically not straightforward. *The Ethical Archivist* provides guidance in such situations, and is a contribution to ethical discussions in the field. Archivists will benefit from increased discussion of ethical issues; dialog with colleagues can be one of the most useful means of resolving these situations. Archivists—both newcomers to the field as well as the more experienced—will profit from reading Danielson's book, which covers a number of common ethical problems unique to the profession. As caretakers of the documentary record, archivists make decisions that will have repercussions on how society will remember historical events. By provoking new thoughts and encouraging discussion, *The Ethical Archivist* contributes to making sure those decisions are ethical ones.

Jana Meyer
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An American Political Archives Reader. Edited by Karen Dawley Paul, Glenn R. Gray, and L. Rebecca Johnson Melvin (Lanham, Md.: Scarecrow Press, 2009. 477 pp.)

The editors of this book have assembled one of the best collections of recent scholarship in regard to the acquisition, description, and access to congressional collections. Over the past thirty years, many changes have taken place in the area of documenting Congress and its members as well as in methods of access to these materials. The Congressional Papers Roundtable of the Society of American Archivists was formed in 1984 and in 1990 a resolution was passed on Capitol Hill forming the Advisory Committee on the Records of Congress. The Association of Centers for the Study of Congress was established in 2003 so that a support network for repositories holding these records would be created as a means of further standardizing the collecting process by involving not only archivists and records managers, but also historians, political scientists and politicians themselves. This compilation could widely be interpreted as the product of all of this activity.

An American Political Archives Reader is divided into six sections: Acquiring Political Collections, Documenting Congress, Appraising Political Collections, Arranging and Describing Political Collections, Building Research Centers, and Using Political Collections. While best practices in regard to all of these topics are covered in Cynthia Pease Miller's *Managing Congressional Collections* (Chicago: SAA, 2008), the *Reader* provides case studies that give life to Miller's recommendations. These studies are of particular help in an area of collection and processing in which the lines of personal and public are blurred: collections are privately given but contain records in which the majority pertains to the public. As many uncertainties are based on the availability of resources such

as staff, funding and spatial concerns, Miller's recommendations paired with the writing in the *Reader* are a boon to professionals.

While the majority of issues in regard to working with congressional offices and the staffers within remain relatively unchanged, there are constantly evolving matters that will need to be addressed in subsequent publications. Electronic records preservation and accessibility is foremost among those areas. Elisabeth Butler and Karen Dawley Paul discuss various means used for various ends by offices in Chapter 10. At the time of writing, only a dozen office or so used the in-house system OnBase; however, a wide selection of approved tools were available including Correspondence Management Systems, Legislative Information Systems, LANs in each office, specially created databases, legislators' homepages, and each offices' email system. Some of the potential problems involved in acquiring and preserving these specific records have been alleviated due to advances in electronic records curation; however, for every system, structure, and format that is "conquered" by archivists, another system is created with more issues, such as proprietary data storage, interpretation, and retrieval.

Another idea that has been discussed for over five years within the profession is the advent of the "More Product, Less Process" (MPLP) method of appraisal and arrangement. While widely considered an accepted standard in archives today, its advantages and disadvantages are still debated among archivists working with congressional collections. Larry Weimer writes in Chapter 21 "An Embarrassment of Riches" that although the methods described and proposed in Greene and Meissner's seminal article were already practiced in a great many repositories, resistance to fully employing them in regard to congressional collections is still ongoing as some practitioners interpret the proposed methods as a way of

allowing information that might need redaction or review to slip through the cracks. Weimer states that the point of MPLP is to encourage flexibility in processing and encourages the adoption of the practice in order to “perform a level of efficient and expeditious processing” while still honoring the responsibility of due diligence.

An American Political Archives Reader is applicable to a much wider audience than many perceive. While the framework is based on congressional collections, the lessons within can be applied to many areas of acquisition, appraisal, arrangement, description and access. Any archivists tasked with processing extremely large collections (i.e. 500 linear feet or more) should be heartened by the advice within. Issues of privacy and security are also great contributions to the bigger conversation outside of this specific collecting area as well as those regarding artifacts and museum objects. This volume is a significant contribution to literature focusing on legislative archives and subsequent scholarship in this area will owe it much.

Renna Tuten
University of Georgia

Archival Anxiety and the Vocational Calling. By Richard J. Cox (Duluth, MN: Litwin Books LLC., 2010. 355 pp.)

Richard J. Cox has a distinguished career as a professor of archival studies and prolific author on archival issues. There is an element to this book that leads the reader to categorize it as an autobiography, not of Cox’s life, but of his mind. Cox may even intend it as such. At the conclusion of chapter two, Cox expresses his reflective mood, which may have inspired him to once again wrestle

with issues which disturb him. This book is also a hellfire and damnation sermon, to the faithful and the unfaithful of the archival world, to examine our souls and commit our lives to the highest ideals of archival practice. Cox promises “[a]s for me, I will continue to take on unpopular issues within the archives community, but these, after this book, will be more restricted to my classroom and other essays. I weary a bit of the public debates that reflect that most members of the profession are busy tending to their own gardens...to care about cases questioning the role, leadership, and activities of either NARA or SAA. I can hear the voices of the others in the lifeboat telling me to sit down” (204).

There is a good deal to ruminate on in these three hundred odd pages. Cox addresses a range of issues: the ideal candidate for the archival profession, how best a professional association can represent archivists to the public, the responsibilities of a professional association to regulate and discipline its associates, which organizations provide leadership to the profession and how they provide this leadership, the position of ethics within the profession, and the education of practitioners, especially in regards to ethics.

Cox feels that the core issues of professional organization – leadership, ethics and education – are the most critical in the debate for the future of archives and archivists. The issues that determine our responses to our mission (preserving records to secure evidence in record keeping, holding organizations and governments accountable to a democratic society and insuring our national and cultural memory) have needed concerted thought and debate and will need even more consideration as we adapt our mission to our changing technological environment.

For those who feel they must educate themselves on these core issues, Cox’s book is a boon to self-study. In

each chapter, he discusses authors and books that have influenced his viewpoint. Works he recommends are: Benjamin Hubbauer's *Presidential Temples*, and Pallitto and Weaver's *Presidential Secrecy and the Law* or Bruce Montgomery's *Subverting Open*. Unlike many experts, he even recommends works he does not ultimately agree with, feeling they offer thoughtful scholarship to the debate. The main thrust of the book centers on Cox's disapproval of actions taken by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) and the Society of American Archivists (SAA), which he felt invalidated these organizations commitments to the preservation of and access to public records. Cox focuses on NARA's role in the reclassification of previously declassified documents, and the unwillingness of NARA to cooperate with researchers wishing to see public records of NARA's operations. He also details his disagreement with positions taken by SAA towards NARA, and actions the SAA has taken in the preservation of its own public records. The chapter on SAA's failure to archive its listserv is a good case study about the dilemma an organization can get into when there is a lack of planning. SAA leadership made a unilateral decision to shut down the listserv archive after 15 years. The leadership failed to understand that they must make the case to the shareholders to justify their actions. The membership, bred to the bone to believe in consensus before action, lashed back at the leadership and hostilities commenced. This chapter is strongly recommended reading. It is a morality tale in how *not* to make a decision in any organization but especially one in which the membership is purely voluntary.

Cox should remember that SAA is not the only professional association in which archivists are interested. Many of us turn to our state and regional associations because they are a better fit for our needs and because local organizations discuss our most pressing issues. Proximity

plays a role. In our local organizations we can insure that we will be able to invest the time, energy and money necessary for true participation. When formulating an understanding of best practice as we confront our day-to-day issues, we turn to a variety of organizations of which SAA is only one. Is the real question that archivists feel truly leaderless or that they feel less need for a strong national organization than Cox would like?

Anxiety is an apt word to include in the title of this book. Cox is genuinely concerned with the archival profession and this book does reflect an “unpleasant emotional state with qualities of apprehension, dread, distress and uneasiness” over the state of the archival profession.³ The points Cox has enumerated are legitimate concerns and his voice has a role in debating them. Cox admits that past experiences over time have formed his views; his fixation is expressed in his vehemence, which can make the reader dubious of his argument.

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Augusta State University

³ "Anxiety." *The Penguin Dictionary of Psychology*. London: Penguin, 2009.

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David B. Gracy II Award

A \$200 prize is presented annually to the author of the best article in *Provenance*. Named for David B. Gracy II, founder and first editor of Georgia Archive (the precursor of *Provenance*), the award began in 1990 with volume VIII. It is judged by the Provenance Editorial Board.

Melanie Griffin won the 2010 David B. Gracy II Award for her article, "Postmodernism, Processing, and the Profession: Towards a Theoretical Reading of Minimal Standards."

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Use of terms which have special meaning for archivists, manuscript curators, and records managers should conform to the definitions in Richard Pearce-Moses, ed., *A Glossary for Archivists, Manuscript Curators, and Records Managers* (Chicago: SAA, 2005). Copies of this glossary may be purchased from the Society of American Archivists, 17 North State Street, Suite 1425, Chicago, IL 60602-3315; www.archivists.org. The glossary may also be accessed online at <http://www.archivists.org/glossary/>.

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