

*Archival Research and Education: Selected Papers from the 2014 AERI Conference*. Series on *Archives, Archivists, and Society*. Edited by Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead, and Eleanor Mattern. Sacramento: Litwin Books, 2015. 436 pp. Index. Softcover. \$45.00.

Developed and funded between 2008 and 2015 by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), the Archival Education and Research Initiative's (AERI) primary mission is

a collaborative effort amongst academic institutions to support the growth of a new generation of academics in archival and recordkeeping education and research . . . the initiative seeks to promote state-of-the-art scholarship in Archival Studies, broadly conceived, as well as encourage curricular and pedagogical innovation in archival education.<sup>1</sup>

AERI is a consortium of eight founding institutions, all with robust graduate archival studies programs that not only prepare and train practicing archivists but, more important, nurture a growing cohort of doctoral students. A central feature of AERI, the annual week-long summer Archival Educational and Research Institutes (AERIs), fosters intellectual collaboration between doctoral students, junior faculty, and senior faculty to provide academic support and mentoring in a field at once firmly established in the university and continuously in flux. While the primary focus of the institute is academic training and development of future archival teaching and research faculty, they strive toward a more universal goal, according to editors Richard J. Cox, Alison Langmead, and Eleanor Mattern, “. . . to strengthen the archival profession's profile in the university and also to reinforce its societal mission” (p. 1). *Archival Research and Education (ARE)* is the result of the sixth annual AERI conference held in 2014 at the University of Pittsburgh and is the seventh volume in the series on *Archives, Archivists, and Society* (Richard J. Cox, editor). As evidence of its growth and maturity within the academy, this collection represents the recognition of the cultural, intellectual, and societal importance of archives. It includes 15 papers divided in 8 thematic sections that are international in scope and feature a mix of topics including archival education history, theory, digital heritage and curation, personal archives, and ethics and standards. They reflect current trends in the literature and a nuanced expansion of the field beyond the basics. The diverse issues covered have useful and theoretical applications for both the practitioner and the scholar alike. These essays are not directed at the casual reader; they are complex and, at times, inaccessible to all but the most experienced archivists, faculty, and advanced graduate students.

Reviewing a compendium of conference papers is challenging. In the case of *ARE*, lack of a cohesive theme amplifies this. The papers represent a wide range of styles, topics, and research methodologies. It is not practical to review each essay or to compare case studies with theoretical essays, or historiographies with technical analyses. What the papers do share is rigorous critical analysis and impeccable documentation (with supporting evidence and appropriate, comprehensive notes). *ARE* also successfully executes the goals of the initiative by offering diverse subjects, both old and new, and placing them within the context of the corpus of current archival scholarship. The authors reveal new research directions: “affect science” applied to archivists, challenges of big

data and digital curation, the iconography of records in film, creating new frameworks for ethics and rights in records, the history of archives and archival education. More “familiar” topics (e.g., arrangement and description, reference services, etc.) are notably absent.

Several broad concepts, however, wind through the papers. One striking topic—the leitmotif of the collection—is archival identity and the role of archivists and records in both the academy and in society. Contemporary archival education—in a time when we grapple with paradigm shifts that have dislocated and disrupted the library environment—conveys prestige and legitimacy. Subtly, the volume (and AERI itself) chronicles the evolution of the profession from the pragmatic to the intellectual and how it established an archival authority. This transformation coincides with recent advocacy efforts to demonstrate the importance of records in all aspects of society from community to private life, from artistic expression to war and conflict. Gilliland's examination of “affect” and agency of archivists and Lindsay Mattock and Eleanor Mattern's analysis of records in cinema, for example, highlight archival identity as individual and emotional or public representations. Archival identity figures prominently in the essays on archival history and explorations of the role of archivists in documenting underrepresented or hidden groups and the subaltern. Critical analyses of conflict, trauma, community, justice, identity, and memory invigorate our discussion of appraisal theory and documentation strategies. Nowhere has the archival field seen such an explosion of research than in cultural heritage, human rights, and social justice. *ARE* exemplifies the growing awareness in recent scholarship of postcolonial studies and its impact on archival practice and epistemology.

As a profession, we cannot exist in isolation. *ARE* articulates the importance of contextuality, collaboration, and interdisciplinarity within the cultural heritage ecosystem. Patricia Galloway's call for a more “comprehensive digital heritage preservation” (p. 159) explores digital data (mining big data, video game emulation) and museum methodologies used to document the multiple dimensions of knowledge—craft, process, and procedure—to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH). Practical and theoretical frameworks for digital preservation highlight the imperative of working in concert with technical experts and offer fresh perspectives on old problems. Sutherland identifies a “collaboration continuum” regarding ICH; her example of Trinidad and Tobago's efforts to document calypso mirrors folklore studies and public history perspectives. Institutional and community collaboration approaches to archival problems echo past discussions of documentation strategy and bring the archivist into closer alignment with allied cultural heritage professions and stakeholders. We're witnessing an unprecedented expansion of the field and can learn from allied disciplines and rediscover common bonds: archaeology, museum studies, folklore studies, public history, material culture studies, and art history. The evidence of humanity's existence cannot be represented by one type of object, the elemental “record” goes beyond the document, beyond literacy and the written word.

Analysis of recordkeeping practices as seen in Sarah Ramdeen and Alex Poole's paper on personal archiving and information management or James O'Toole's reassessment of

*Understanding Archives*<sup>2</sup> remind us of the instrumental and emotional motivations that lead people and institutions to make, keep, and organize records: a motivation essential to human history, culture, and behavior and the cornerstone of archival knowledge. Indeed, the most engaging theme of *ARE* is archival identity as embodied in archival knowledge and its place in the academy. As a profession with an ancient lineage, we have a canon, traditions, intellectual history, and standards of practice, so it is not surprising that archivists and archival educators experience the “square peg” syndrome of being “in but not of” the library. AERI and the authors of *ARE* signal that time has come for an independent discipline. The transformation of archival studies in the United States is traced through Alison Langmead’s history of archival education in America, James M. O’Toole’s intellectual history of archival ideas, and Jane Zhang’s essay on Ernst Posner. As they chart the progression of the archival educator from historian/practitioner to academic faculty within the university, the authors offer tantalizing opportunities for inquiry. Archival education, research, and scholarship are presented almost exclusively in the context of the academy and its attendant structures of faculty status and tenure. Cutting-edge research and scholarship are not the exclusive domains of the academy; the research output and rigorous scholarship of practicing archivists should not be ignored. We need to be aware of the potential danger of creating a caste system in a profession that is steadfastly egalitarian.

For good or ill, archival scholarship and education have shifted away from the arts and humanities toward library and information sciences, dominated by social science methodologies and a historically vocational mission. Does the hegemony of the social sciences prevent intellectual innovation by separating us from history, museum studies, archaeology, art history, and literary studies? If we are to believe *ARE*, the “history versus library science” debate is over, but a new one has taken its place: the conflict between practice and theory. Should archival educators focus on research and scholarship or on teaching practical skills to budding archivists? Can the third wave of archival faculty (who may never be practitioners), adequately prepare students for the field or effectively teach the craft if they have no craft knowledge themselves? Analysis of archival education may reveal tensions about our place in library or iSchools and must include contextualization of trends in higher education. How does the nascent archival studies discipline navigate the current crisis in LIS as it faces declining enrollments and loss of full-time faculty? Archival educators might also consider the necessity of advanced subject degrees, which are increasingly a requirement for employment in academic libraries and special archives. Perhaps the master of archival studies (MAS) will, true to the spirit of other interdisciplinary models, strike a balance between conveying credentials, teaching a craft, and preparing research scholars. Overall, *Archival Research and Education* is a success, encouraging exploration and leaving the reader with a sense of the endless potential of the archives profession.

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## NOTES

1. Archival Education and Research Initiative, “Homepage,” accessed July 25, 2016, <http://aeri.website/>.
2. James M. O’Toole, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 1990) and James M. O’Toole and Richard J. Cox, *Understanding Archives and Manuscripts* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2006).