

Archival Accessioning. Edited by Audra Eagle Yun. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2021. 170 pp. Softcover. \$55.00. \$39.00 for SAA members.

Accessioning is an essential component of collections management, establishing a baseline of legal, physical, and intellectual control over each collection held by an archival repository. However, the theory and practice of archival accessioning remains largely overlooked in professional literature. *Archival Accessioning* seeks to address this gap through a robust introduction to the history and principles of accessioning and a collection of thoughtful case studies.

In her introduction, editor Audra Eagle Yun centers accessioning as a foundational element of archival work, “the keystone of responsible collection stewardship practice,” which impacts every subsequent element of collections care and access (p. 2). In the next four chapters, Eagle Yun provides an excellent introduction to the history and practice of archival accessioning, providing a detailed literature review, outlining the core functions of accessioning and briefly addressing the related topics of reappraisal and deaccessioning.

In the first chapter, Eagle Yun outlines how conversations surrounding Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner’s More Product, Less Process have transformed archival accessioning over the past 20 years (p. 22).¹ She also discusses Christine Weideman’s “Accessioning as Processing” and Daniel Santamaria’s *Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections*, which explore how minimal-level description could be applied to all incoming collections at the point of accession and how archival accessioning could be incorporated more completely into an efficient accessioning workflow.² Eagle Yun draws heavily from Weideman, Santamaria, and others who conceptualize archival accessioning as the logical first step in minimal processing.

The book’s 10 case studies draw heavily from the same influences, focusing almost exclusively on the development of intake processes and workflows that result in minimal-level description of all accessioned collections. Many of the case studies are intentionally general in scope, providing simple and straightforward guidelines for accessioning personal papers, institutional records, government records, and accretions to processed and unprocessed collections.

The sample checklist and accessioning worksheet provided by Kelly Spring in chapter 8 is an especially useful resource, drawn from worksheets produced by Johns Hopkins University and the University of California, Irvine Libraries’ Department of Special Collections and Archives. Chapters on accessioning audiovisual materials by Lauren Sorensen and digital archives by Erin Faulder underscore the importance of identifying and completing an assessment of fragile media upon intake and provide several possible workflows for identifying preservation needs and completing the ingest of electronic records.

Case studies on retrospective accessioning by Chela Scott Weber, deposits by Michael Rush, and reappraisal and deaccessioning by Laura Uglean Jackson provide valuable insights on how to manage legacy acquisitions when incomplete or outdated accession records complicate custody resolution. Weber provides an essential list of questions to consider before undertaking retrospective accessioning that should be helpful to anyone

considering a complex or large-scale project. Case studies drawn from Yale University's Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library and the University of Wyoming's American Heritage Center comprise the chapters written by Rush and Uglean Jackson.

Archival Accessioning provides a helpful introduction to the history and core principles of accessioning, and the case studies present practical and well-outlined workflows and questions for improving an existing accessioning program. The book may be most helpful for archivists who have already established an accessioning program and are looking to enhance their existing workflows or undertake larger reappraisal or retrospective accessioning projects. However, archivists working at small institutions without a full-time accessioning archivist may find the volume less helpful. Most of the case studies are written by university archivists with well-established accessioning or intake programs, and the writers presume that the reader comes to the book with a working knowledge of the legal and administrative functions of archival accessioning. Deeds of gift and other legal instruments of transfer are mentioned only in passing, and no sample documentation is provided.

Eagle Yun also introduces several compelling themes in the introduction that are never fully explored. She acknowledges that archival accessioning is personal and subjective, the technical services field remains predominately white, and the roots of accessioning practices are Eurocentric. She also notes that information exchanged between donors and archival institutions are essential to the development of accession records. However, the case studies that follow her introduction never address these issues and focus almost exclusively on accessioning workflows after a deed of gift is signed. While accessioning archivists may not always be involved directly in donor interactions, many archivists do undertake this work as a routine process of accessioning. Additional case studies outlining how archival institutions engage with their communities during the donation and accessioning process would benefit the profession.

Archival Accessioning provides a valuable introduction to accessioning and will hopefully inspire an increased examination of the related topics of donor relations, custody resolution, and the lack of diversity in the technical services field.

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1. Mark Greene and Dennis Meissner, "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing," *American Archivist* 68, no. 2 (2005), 208–63, <https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.68.2.c741823776k65863>.
2. Christine Weideman, "Accessioning as Processing," *American Archivist* 69, no. 2 (2006), 274–83, <https://doi.org/10.17723/aarc.69.2.g270566u745j3815>; Daniel Santamaria, *Extensible Processing for Archives and Special Collections: Reducing Processing Backlogs* (Chicago: American Library Association, 2015).