

Archives in Libraries: What Librarians and Archivists Need to Know to Work Together. By Jeannette A. Bastian, Megan Sniffin-Marino, and Donna Webber. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2015. 137 pp. Appendix, bibliography, index. Softcover. \$69.95. \$49.95 for SAA members.

The notion that archivists are, in their natural habitat, a breed of professionals with a unique set of ethical guidelines, best practices, and standards, distinct from those within the library profession, should not be a surprise to any archivist. However, archivists are not always able to roam in their native habitat—frolicking among the rolling stacks—and often are employed in an academic or public library setting. Among librarians in a public or academic library, the archivist can be an indispensable, yet exotic or strange, resource capable of ensuring that institutional records or family papers in that library’s control are preserved and described for future access and study. In *Archives in Libraries: What Librarians and Archivists Need to Know to Work Together*, authors Bastian, Sniffin-Marino, and Webber have created an exemplary guide on the proper care and maintenance of archivists and archives in a library setting, specifically tailored to librarians and library administrators. Both librarians and archivists may attend similar graduate programs and receive master’s degrees from library and information science departments, but it is refreshing that the authors discuss how librarians and archivists are information professionals in related fields and, then, explore where the two professions differ and can, potentially, misunderstand one another.

The Society of American Archivists (SAA) published *Archives in Libraries*, but the primary audience for the publication is librarians and library administrators in either academic or public libraries, especially those institutions that may be considering establishing an archival repository or hiring an archivist. As part of their introduction to the book, the authors explain that, from 2011 to 2013, they conducted a series of interviews with library directors and archivists employed in library settings. In addition to providing the core data set that underwrites much of the analysis in the book, the authors use anonymous excerpts from the interviews to illustrate and reinforce points they make. The quotations, along with vignettes based on real academic and public libraries, enhance their central message that archives and archivists in library settings are not always properly understood, but “by placing [their] explanations within a context familiar to library directors” (p. 7), further cooperation and collaboration can be promoted between librarians, administrators, and archivists. Although the primary audience for the book is public and academic librarians and administrators, *Archives in Libraries* is also insightful for administrators and librarians in other settings, such as corporate, governmental, or religious libraries and archives, as it is an excellent introduction to the archival profession. Information on archivists and archives need not be limited in scope to academic and public libraries as many of the issues raised—such as advocacy, outreach, and funding—are germane to administrators in a special library setting.

For librarians and administrators to better appreciate the benefits and responsibilities associated with having an archival repository as part of a library or an archivist as a colleague, it is incumbent on the authors to explain what archivists do and why. The authors use librarians’ professional vocabulary, history, education, core values, code

of ethics, and descriptive workflows to establish a crosswalk between the two professions. This is an excellent strategy that allows readers familiar with librarian values and practices to identify areas of commonality and contrasts between the two professions, especially in terms of the uniqueness of archival materials, the acquisition or further accretion of papers or records, and the arrangement and description of archival materials. For instance, the connections made between cataloging a publication compared with processing an archival collection, a core activity of each respective profession, is an insightful illustration of how different archival work can be:

While the goals of processing and cataloging are similar, there are significant differences between the resources needed to create a bibliographic record for a published monograph and the resources needed to describe a collection of unpublished, unorganized, and diverse materials through a finding aid. . . . Librarians arrange (nonfiction) books by subject, archivists arrange material guided by the archival principles of provenance and original order. (p. 65)

This comparison may seem basic to an archivist, but the authors detail the steps in processing a collection to explain how gaining intellectual control over a collection can “require considerable research and contextual understanding on the part of the archivist” (p. 65). For an administrator unfamiliar with archival practice, such information may be particularly helpful when formulating a realistic time line for an archival processing project or understanding how an archivist allocates his or her time on a daily basis. Likewise, Bastian, Sniffin-Marinoﬀ, and Webber leverage librarians’ own professional knowledge to illustrate why climate control and security are important in an archival repository, how to provide access to archival materials, and how an archivist performs reference services to patrons.

In *Library in Archives*, establishing an archives and archival ethics tie together in a particularly relevant way for library administrators. Bastian, Sniffin-Marinoﬀ, and Webber offer a salient point for library directors and administrations unaccustomed to archives: the creation and maintenance of an archives or the hiring of an archivist within a library setting is beneficial to an academic institution or public library, but it is a long-term commitment with a good deal of responsibility. The restrictions placed on a collection by a donor or the privacy issues that an archivist encounters while processing a collection are uniquely archival issues, different from the ethical issues that a librarian may encounter. In examining how archival practice and ethics may overlap or diverge from those found in librarianship, the authors systematically review both professions’ codes of ethics as articulated by their largest professional associations, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) and the American Library Association (ALA). For the authors, the codes overlap significantly when evaluated side by side:

. . . the ALA code emphasizes equal access, unbiased service, and user’s right to privacy, the SAA code focuses on the protection of materials to ensure authenticity, security, preservation and respect for privacy of third parties. Both codes express concern for equitable and fair access, respect for professional relationships, and not taking advantage of privileged information. (p. 96)

Considering the ethical codes alongside the practices and standards of both professions is a laudable and holistic approach for the two professions to understand how librarians and archivists may manifest similar values in different ways or how the respective codes may advise different courses of action. The ethical landscape is different for the archivist, which the authors reveal in series of vignettes in each chapter. There may be competing ethical interests—in relation to privacy, access, or copyright—that could be foreign to the librarian. It will be the task of archivists, librarians, and administrators to devise workable solutions, since, as the authors correctly note, “The ethics of the archives must also be of great concern to the library that will house and maintain the material and ultimately take responsibility for it” (p. 101).

Perhaps a flaw made within *Archives in Libraries* is the assumption that archivists have a thorough understanding of library practices and standards, even after acknowledging that an archivist may have earned his or her graduate degree from a history department. Professional bafflement or misunderstanding between archivists and librarians can certainly be mutual, even in areas where the professions have much common ground, such as creating a collection-level catalog record from a collection-level finding aid using the descriptive standard Resource Description and Access (RDA) to assign content, media, and carrier types for materials found in an archival collection. Nevertheless, *Archives in Libraries* methodically describes the more esoteric of the two professions and delineates the opportunity for further collaboration and convergence between them in areas like information literacy, access to digitized library or archival materials, and digital preservation of institutional assets. Librarians, directors, and administrators interested in going beyond bridging the knowledge gap between librarians and archivists can go a step further.

Librarians and archivists can work to ensure that they are also clearly communicating and collaborating with their colleagues working in information technology (IT). The authors allude to the potential for miscommunication between an archivist and an IT professional when they discuss the shifting meaning of the word “archiving”:

To an archivist, “archiving” a collection implies a whole range of activities including appraising, preserving, and processing. To the library IT department, “archiving” may mean storing data in the institutional repository. (p. 35)

Miscommunication between professionals in a library setting is not a rare occurrence, but *Archives in Libraries* offers an effective approach to alleviate the sources of misunderstanding. By studying how a professional works as well as his or her professional language, history, education, and ethical issues, it is possible to establish a more productive relationship and environment between professionals. Librarians, archivists, and IT professionals can adopt a similar strategy. For instance, for those interested in cultivating better communication between library professionals and IT professionals working in a library setting, there is Mashcat, “a loose group of library cataloguers, developers and anyone else with an interest in how library catalogue data can be created, manipulated, used and re-used by computers and software.”¹ Mashcat has online meet-ups, unconferences, sponsored sessions at professional conferences, and regular communications on social media. All who follow its code of conduct are welcome to participate, whether

they are librarians, archivists, or IT professionals. In line with the approach advocated by Bastian, Sniffin-Marino, and Webber, Mashcat recently hosted a Twitter chat entitled, “Communicating Requirements and Detecting IT Brushoffs,”² which brought together librarians, systems administrators, and IT professionals to discuss what information to convey to IT professionals about system problems and requests, and the best method for conveying that information between professionals. This subject is equally relevant to archivists within a library setting, since archivists regularly collaborate with librarians and IT professionals to ensure that archival collections are adequately identified, described, and accessed within library catalogs and discovery tools.

A publication like *Archives in Libraries* can greatly assist librarians and library directors in understanding what archivists do and why, but archival professionals, too, should reach out to their respective directors and professional colleagues to offer input regarding the systems that facilitate discovery of and access to archival collections within their library.

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NOTES

1. Mashcat: Mashed Catalogue Data/Cataloguers and Developers, “About,” 2016, accessed April 16, 2016, www.mashcat.info/about.
2. Mashcat, “Communicating Requirements and Detecting IT Brushoffs,” Twitter chat, February 18, 2016, accessed April 26, 2016, storify.com/gmcharlt/mashcat-twitter-chat-18-february-2016-communicatin.