

Digital Archives: Management, Use and Access. Edited by Milena Dobreva. London: Facet Publishing, 2018. 183 pp. Index. Softcover. \$95.00.

Given the unique realities, modalities, and possibilities inherent in digital archives, Milena Dobreva assembled a team of writers to address the acute choices archivists face, such as what to preserve and how, for whom, by whom, and by what means, as well as upon what basis and toward what ends. This collection consists of nine chapters in two parts. The first part, “Drivers for Modern Digital Archives,” sets the stage in broad terms and includes chapters on digital humanities, management, the political economy of digital cultural preservation, legal issues, scientific information, and access. The second part consists of case studies in research data archives, access restrictions, and oral history research. The contributors bring a truly global range of praxis and perspectives to their respective chapters, and each is an experienced practitioner. The occasional nation-specific details of a legal precedent or mode of implementation will not prevent alert readers from taking away substantive insights. Rather, the range of diversity enables readers to contextualize their own experiences, grasp the international or global impact of emerging issues, and participate in a dialogue despite peculiarities in practice.

In the first chapter, “Digital Humanities and Documentary Mediations in the Digital Age,” Enrico Natale ably surveys the field of digital humanities from the epistemology and phenomenology of research practice and information literacy, to mediation practices and implementation in a web-based and electronic environment. Natale summarizes the process of development from machine-readable text processing to quantitative analysis of texts to the emergence of the field of digital humanities wherein qualitative analysis of texts and impact of human culture upon texts exist in a reciprocal relationship. In such an environment, information scientists are now called upon to address the constraints of common tools such as search engine functionality in light of the “paradoxical tension between the ease of access to digital information and its incomplete nature” (p. 10). The challenge, he observes, is to leverage the cultural value of the collections information scientists steward into the work of the researchers who interpret it. To address this challenge, information professionals must apply their expertise in organizing, describing, and providing access to analog and digital information assets. Rich metadata description for digital assets, heightened attentiveness to information literacy, and broader, more transparent mediation procedures remain distinctly important, imperative even. The chapter is eminently readable and even provocative in that it stimulates readers to thoughtfulness about how they can leverage their unique skill sets through innovative engagement with digital humanities.

In the second chapter, “Managing Turbulence,” Trudy Huskamp Peterson thoughtfully explains how archival managers might navigate the electronic realities of workplace culture in archival settings to their best advantage. Specifically, she outlines the “electronic penetration of hiring,” such as the use of electronic job bulletin boards and other clearinghouses for announcing available positions, the impact of social media profiles on the evaluation of job candidates, the manner in which interviews are conducted, and the electronic processing of contracts and payroll paperwork (p. 25). She attends carefully to the nature of archival practice as she advocates for change in terms of what

contemporary leadership ought to look like. She not only realizes the changed nature of users' behavior when they engage with digital archives, she translates those realities into actionable practice for managers. For example, she calls upon leaders to hone their advocacy skills. When users expect online availability of discovery tools and full digital repositories, it will fall upon managers to marshal the resources necessary for staff to populate, maintain, and market them. The nature of archival practice, such as the commitment to preservation, implementation of quality metadata description, and support for reference and access for all users, must inform and undergird all aspects of archival management.

In "The Political Economy of Digital Cultural Preservation," Guy Pessach demonstrates that the reality of how culture is formed, disseminated, and distributed is more radically changed than we often readily acknowledge. In a concise and articulate manner, he describes how traditional models of centralized, consensus-based cultural dissemination have been upended. He describes how the paradigm has shifted from one in which institutions maintain centralized control of cultural assets to one in which collecting institutions distribute and disseminate their holdings, or at least digital surrogates of them. When collecting institutions are no longer the guardians of the treasures, and users no longer pilgrims who travel to see or research them, institutions must recalibrate their roles even as they reform, and are reformed by, the habits of users who have come to expect access to collections using a variety of technologies and media. Inasmuch as this process of reculturalization is already underway, archivists can take better advantage of these changing modalities. As an example, Pessach notes how open access measures reframe the economy of use. By heading off abusive commercialization, or at least prescribing its limits, such initiatives allow diverse materials to remain or become more widely available amid ideological or commercial pressures.

Oleksandr Pastukhov, in "Legal Issues Surrounding Digital Archiving," summarizes what constitutes copyright and the nature of its fixation, formation, and duration, as well as its possession, use, and transfer. Of particular value is his focused attentiveness to how these issues impact archives. He also describes privacy, personal data collection, and related concerns as they relate to memory institutions. While technological capability and user expectations have resulted in wider dissemination of materials, Pastukhov's chapter reminds professionals to consider how to do so legally. He suggests open access publishing licenses and open source software solutions as two options to explore as we navigate technological capacity, user expectations, and current legislation. Furthermore, he calls upon professionals to vigilantly safeguard both the private information contained in collections and the privacy of users. This chapter is ripe with citations that may prove helpful to readers who desire to become familiar with the changing international complexities of these issues.

The final two chapters are more specific in their applications, but nonetheless offer substantive material and suggestions. In "Scientific Information Policies in the European Context," Carla Basili elucidates the animating principles of scientific knowledge creation, curation, dissemination, and preservation in a way that is accessible for both scientists and humanists. Of particular utility is her experience with policy

implementation, change, and development for scientific information. She begins with the formation of international consensus soon after World War II about the importance of shared scientific information, then examines the establishment of political and technological infrastructures to accommodate the exchange of information, and concludes with a description of the more recent “political logic” of “the conception of information and knowledge as goods to be shared” (p. 103). In this way, she contextualizes the increasingly ubiquitous concepts of open access, open data, and open science.

Finally, in “Access to Digital Archives: Studying Users’ Expectations and Behaviours,” Pierluigi Feliciati advocates for archivists to take user needs seriously in substantive and generative ways. Specifically, he articulates a case for distributing authority for the creation of descriptive metadata by empowering users to collaborate across the traditional steps of finding aid production and outlines the implications of a fluid, dynamic, and iterative process of knowledge creation in the digital environment. Specifically, through user surveys, a fluid model takes community voices quite seriously as information professionals design systems and create discovery tools that effectively address user needs and expectations. Rather than shying away from the fact that the democratizing nature of digital technology undercuts the traditional model of institution-centric mediation, Feliciati urges professionals to leverage that dynamism to improve their public-facing platforms.

The second part of the book consists of three case studies: Elli Papadopoulou, Panayiota Polydorotou, Sotiros Sismanis, and Donald Tabone’s “Research Data Archives: Current Data Management and Data Audit Practices”; Gillian Oliver’s “Access Restrictions”; and Milena Dobрева and Edei Jennings’s “Citizen Science: Two Case Studies in Oral History Research.” Each is clearly written and amply descriptive, and therefore will assist readers in seeing how the issues meet the realities of practice on the ground. Through the case studies, readers may gain insight into the management of media archives and the implementation of access restrictions according to “cultural imperatives,” and how one institution partnered with volunteers across the various stages of conducting an oral history project (p. 157). Dobрева concludes the book with an afterword that provides guidance for concrete next steps by briefly summarizing current literature.

Digital Archives: Management, Use and Access was not designed to be a manual of practice, but rather an introduction to several complex, and at times interlocking, aspects of the digital archives domain. The research is current, well versed, and wide ranging; each chapter is clearly written, with ample documentation, helpful notes, and occasional charts and tables; and the whole volume reflects considerable care in editing for style, clarity, and tone.

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