

Community Archives, Community Spaces: Heritage, Memory and Identity. Edited by Jeannette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn. London: Facet Publishing, 2020. 190 pp. Softcover. \$89.99.

In *Community Archives, Community Spaces*, editors Jeanette A. Bastian and Andrew Flinn bring together three analytical essays and seven case studies to build upon and expand the theoretical framework for community archives established by other literature, including Bastian and Ben Alexander's 2009 volume, *Community Archives: The Shaping of Memory*, while also examining interpretations of community archives and envisioning them as another step in the archival continuum.

Bastian and Flinn note in the introduction that “community archives” as both a term and a concept has grown in the past decade:

Exploration of the term is increasingly international. Still diversified, it is their diversity that defines them, and they are often seen as bridges between the traditional representations of the formal archives and the representations of the many marginalised groups that do not appear in those archives. (p. xxii)

Indeed, case studies in this volume examine community archives efforts in New Zealand, Thailand, Canada, Australia, the United States, Croatia, and the digital arena. Regardless of the location, each archives discussed in *Community Archives, Community Spaces* responds to the needs of a community, often by centering the group in question and their voices in the archival record.

The first of the three analytical essays, Rebecka Taves Sheffield's “Archival Optimism, or, How to Sustain a Community Archives,” considers the practicalities of sustaining community archives once the initial excitement has worn off. Drawing from archival studies and queer theory, Sheffield offers archival optimism as a way “to understand the reasons why communities contribute labour, often without compensation, and invest in sustaining archival practices that tell as much about this community's past and present as it does about their promissory stake in an imagined future” (p. 4). Sheffield examines sustainability from multiple vantage points—considering funding, expertise, and sustained momentum within the community. Her chapter offers both analysis and optimistic suggestions for positive action.

In the following essay, “Affective Bonds: What Community Archives Can Teach Mainstream Institutions,” Michelle Caswell introduces “valuing affect” to the list of key principles that distinguish community-based archives from mainstream or “traditional” archives.¹ Part analysis, part case study, in this chapter, Caswell draws from her experience with the South Asian American Digital Archive (SAADA) project, “Where We Belong: Artists in the Archive,” to investigate how community archives value affective or emotional impact in the ways they conduct appraisal and outreach. She asserts that mainstream archives have traditionally focused little on emotional impact, especially on marginalized groups, and that they stand to learn from community archives “new ways to be accountable to new communities, new modes of practice that repair harm and

restore communities broken by injustice rather than further exploiting them, and new ways of enacting and articulating the impact of archival work more broadly” (p. 37).

In the final analytical essay, “Community Archives and the Records Continuum,” Michael Piggott examines community archives alongside the records continuum and considers if and how the two theoretical frameworks might work together. Piggott notes the “mutual indifference” (p. 47) of continuum proponents and scholars of community archives despite their parallels, but the chapter falls short in its presentation of the future and what community archives and the records continuum have to offer one another.

The second section of *Community Archives, Community Spaces* includes case studies that examine the breadth of community archives, in both geography and in interpretation of community and community archiving. Claire Hall and Honiana Love explore the role of community archives in language and culture revitalization efforts in New Zealand. Case studies in their chapter examine how Indigenous communities navigate repatriation and the transmission, attribution, and contextualization of traditional knowledge. In the following chapter, “Self-documentation of Thai Communities: Reflective Thoughts on the Western Concept of Community Archives,” Kanokporn Nasomtrug Simionica examines how individual and community motivation influence both tangible and intangible heritage preservation work and also notes the emphasis on intangible heritage in Thai archives in communities in the Isan region.

In “Popular Music: Community Archives and Public History Online,” Paul Long, Sarah Baker, Zelmarie Cantillon, Jez Collins, and Raphaël Nowak explore the DIY practices of digital communities preserving and documenting the history of popular music online and how this work is tied to cultural justice. In “Maison d’Haïti’s Collaborative Archives Project: Archiving a Community of Records,” Désirée Rochat, Kristen Young, Marjorie Villefranche, and Aziz Choudry present an overview of a project to organize and preserve the archival records of a community-based organization in Montreal. Throughout the chapter, they note the integral role volunteers from the community played in organizing, identifying, and contextualizing materials to shape a community of records.

In their chapter “Indigenous Archiving and Wellbeing: Surviving, Thriving, Reconciling,” Joanne Evans, Shannon Faulkhead, Kirsten Thorpe, Karen Adams, Lauren Booker, and Narissa Timbery use the Australian Human Rights Commission’s 1997 *Bringing Them Home Report* as a launching point to examine archival records related to Indigenous Australians and to introduce a “Social and Emotional Wellbeing” model to reflect on the interconnectedness of Indigenous archiving with well-being. They discuss the challenges Indigenous communities encounter in gaining access to institutional archives and discuss the ways in which institutions might better support and work with communities by embracing community participation and knowledge.

In “Community Engaged Scholarship in Archival Studies: Documenting Housing Displacement and Gentrification in a Latino Community,” Janet Ceja Alcalá discusses bringing community-engaged scholarship and the community engagement continuum to archival science to forge partnerships and to address pressing societal issues. She

presents the community engagement continuum model as a way for researchers to partner with communities outside of academia and to introduce more inclusive and participatory principles into the process. Alcalá notes that “the community engaged continuum can range from low intensive, where a researcher may work individually on addressing a community issue with little community input, to highly intensive where the researcher is collaborating horizontally on a community problem” (p. 152). As an example of this community-engaged scholarship, Alcalá shares her work on the Eastorias oral history project, which documents the housing displacement and gentrification in East Boston, and the effect of this partnership on the community, as well as on her work as an archivist and educator.

In the final chapter, “Post-X: Community-based Archiving in Croatia,” Anne J. Gilliland and Tamara Štefanac explore the nuanced considerations of community-based collections in post-Yugoslav and postconflict Croatia, what they refer to throughout the chapter as “post-x” (p. 166). They note how the specific context of post-x Croatia, with legal, regulatory, funding, and professional structures, as well as “the history of multiple reversals in power and majority status between historically antagonistic ethnic communities in the region” (p. 168), complicate and add challenges to community-based archiving efforts.

As the editors of *Community Archives, Community Spaces* note, we are in a “community archives moment” (p. xxiii). Generally speaking, the term describes nontraditional collections tied to a specific group, and yet, for a field dedicated to classification, much is left ill defined. What qualifies as a community? Which records count as community archives? Perhaps these questions are left unanswered because the book casts a wide net in its consideration of communities of practice. Its chapters present the myriad ways in which a community can approach documenting and preserving its history. Whether through informal, evolving processes or via structured projects with institutional agreements and arrangements, the work highlighted in *Community Archives, Community Spaces* shows how archives can be responsive in serving the needs of communities. Overall, this book, while slim, provides an excellent frame of reference and insight into community archives for both students and practicing information professionals.

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NOTE

1. Participation, shared stewardship, multiplicity, archival activism, and reflexivity are the five key principles Caswell originally identified in her article, “Toward a Survivor-Centered Approach to Human Rights Archives: Lessons from Community-Based Archives,” *Archival Science* 14 (2014): 307–22, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10502-014-9220-6>.