

*Archives and Archivists 2*. Edited by Ailsa C. Holland and Elizabeth Mullins. Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013. 240 pp. Hardcover. \$70.00.

The 2013 work *Archives and Archivists 2* is proof that a successful project breeds success. *Archives and Archivists*, published in 2006, marked the 30th anniversary of University College of Dublin's archival and records management programs. This equally important sequel sets out to highlight research by the program's postgraduates and, according to the editors Ailsa C. Holland and Elizabeth Mullins, "Its purpose is to provide an opportunity for new practitioners in archives and records management to continue engaging with the research they began during their studies and to provide a platform on which they can publish" (p. 7). Functionally, the book is broken into three sections: postmodernism, perceptions and memory, and advocacy and user perspectives. It features 13 authors whose postgraduate experiences are fairly diverse, but all of whom have capitalized on their education to find employment in cultural humanities or cultural history fields, predominantly in Ireland. Indeed, it will come as no surprise to the reader that the case studies and subject focus of the latter two sections of the book—perceptions and memory, advocacy—center almost entirely on the Irish experience from the perspective of archivists and archives users as well as the laws and cultural institutions that govern archival practice in Ireland.

*Archives and Archivists 2* begins with a critical section dedicated to archival theory. Collectively, the essays provide timely reflections on theoretical issues in the field ranging from Antoinette Doran's thoughtful primer concerning the impact of postmodernism, postcolonialism, and feminism on archives, to Julie Brook's equally analytical review of the effect of modernism and postmodernism on appraisal. The essays of Harriet Wheelock and David Ryan, concerning the intersection of Web 2.0 and postmodernism and personal *fonds*, respectively, seek to analyze the unique space where archival theory and practice meet. Wheelock's critique of transparency, or lack thereof, of online archival descriptions is particularly relevant as archivists continue to wrestle with the Internet as a way to "harness collective intelligence" while at the same time revealing the limits of archival authority (p. 49).

The second section of the book, perhaps its most successful and informative for a non-Irish reader, concentrates primarily on the complex relationship between Irish archival practitioners and Irish archival users. Kevin Lohan's research focuses on a qualitative analysis of two Irish newspapers and their portrayal of archives. Luckily for all archivists, his research points to an emerging halo effect—associating archives with societal accountability that renders archives institutionally trustworthy and thus relevant outside of a narrowly defined cultural milieu of historical research (pp. 95–96). Indeed, as further substantiated by the work of Pauline Swords, archives serve important cultural and social functions within Irish society in the form of community archives. As she concludes, community archives can protect or even restore a unique shared identity especially during times of generational shift or other major changes/challenges to a community such as during "the Troubles" (pp. 105–7). Swords touches on an enduring subtheme of the powerful role archives play in a community that wants to remember, while at the same time struggling with its profoundly difficult past.

The sometimes-fraught relationship between the individual and the state, particularly

around the issue of “right to know” surfaces again, and most explicitly, in the deftly written essay by Kristen Mulrennan. In a fascinating review of recordkeeping practices in Irish asylums, primarily focusing on Grangegorman Psychiatric Hospital, Mulrennan reveals the complex intersection of records creators, legal restrictions, and user expectations. Similarly, Leah Benson’s comprehensive assessment of Irish privacy laws with regard to archival access issues exposes the real tension between the benefits of research using personal information and the importance of individual consent. Emma Saunders takes a similar tack but with a refreshing focus on the Stasi records of the former German Democratic Republic. Saunders’s detailed description of the establishment and function of the BStU (Office of the Federal Commission for the Records of the Ministry for State Security of the Former German Democratic Republic) makes for an important case study on how the state, and archivists working for the state, can negotiate the extremely challenging terrain of historical state records generated illegally about its own citizens. Given recent dramatic shifts in global politics and the underlying dialogue concerning the exercise of governmental authority through surveillance, the lessons of the BStU experience are particularly germane.

The final section of the book ruminates upon the very core ideology of Irish archival practice, albeit from different perspectives. Niamh Collin’s essay on the relationship between archivists and family historians from the archivist’s perspective is a solid foil to Catherine Wright’s essay, which presents the perspective of family historians. Both authors recognize the increasingly important role of family historians as a user group in local authority archives. Therein are important lessons for any archives seeing a spike in use by nontraditional or nonscholarly researchers. According to Collin, family historians (genealogists) are enthusiastic users who consume a disproportionate amount of staff time compared to traditional academic scholars. Moreover, these nonprofessional users typically work and publish with a disregard for historical context. At the same time, family historians, by their proliferating numbers, have compelled archives to revisit their service and access structures. In contrast, Wright suggests that while family historians may begin without knowledge of or regard for historical context, they often develop complex research narratives around their original research question. Indeed, in an area of shared deduction, Wright found that family historians want greater access to the records and more instruction from archivists. The last two essays of *Archives and Archivists 2* focus on other archives users—teachers. Brian Kirby’s sophisticated analysis of the complicated tensions between teachers, instructional requirements, and archivists ultimately posits that even when excluded from structural planning—in this case curriculum development—archivists must nevertheless assert their value. Fundamentally, he concludes that archivists have an opportunity, if not an obligation, to teach the teachers. Louise Kennedy carries a similar thesis through to the role of archives and archivists in higher education pedagogy. As is also typical of North American student experiences, too few University College Dublin undergraduate students find their way to the archives, while graduate students often do. For both groups, student experiences vary from heavily mediated to self-directed. Ultimately, Kennedy rightly argues that faculty-archivist collaboration is key in deepening student experiences in the archives, but that archivists need a more defined role in that collaboration.

As a whole, *Archives and Archivists 2* is a crisp read of contemporary archival issues in Ireland composed by newly minted archival practitioners. In the editors' stated purpose—to provide a platform for new professionals to reach a broad audience—it is a resounding success. Ultimately, many of the essays suffer from the limits of their own construction, which was a result of masters or doctoral coursework. Many, if not most, of the authors qualify their work as being limited in scope. For example, the authors' use of small interview pools and their employment of qualitative rather than quantitative analysis makes drawing large-scale conclusions difficult. Further, many of the essays reflect the standard graduate school writing template of literature review, methodology, and analysis. While this does not impair the research itself, it nevertheless creates reader fatigue. These criticisms are minor, however, and should not detract from an otherwise cohesive group of essays, attentively arranged, thoughtfully presented, and well argued.

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