

NOTES

- ¹ Richard Pearce-Moses, s.v. "Memory," *A Glossary of Archival and Records Terminology* (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 247; Helen Willa Samuels, "Who Controls the Past," *The American Archivist* 49 (Spring 1986): 110, quoting George Orwell, 1984.
- ² Jeannette Bastian, "Whispers in the Archives: Finding the Voices of the Colonized in the Records of the Colonizer," in *Political Pressure and the Archival Record*, ed. Margaret Procter et al. (Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2005), 41, quoted in Michelle Caswell, *Archiving the Unspeakable: Silence, Memory, and the Photographic Record in Cambodia* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2014), 20.
- ³ William J. Maher, "Archives, Archivists, and Society," *The American Archivist* 61 (Fall 1998): 255.

Archives in Libraries: What Librarians and Archivists Need to Know to Work Together

By Jeannette A. Bastian, Megan Sniffin-Marinoff, and Donna Webber. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2015. vi, 137 pp. Softcover and PDF. Members \$49.95, nonmembers \$69.95. Softcover ISBN 1-931666-87-3; PDF ISBN 978-1-931666-88-6.

The administrative relationship of archives to libraries in the United States may be atypical of other parts of the world, but few would be surprised that these two cultural entities are often coupled together within the larger institutions that fund them and provide their mandates. The public and our administrative superiors often confuse us and see archivists and librarians as duplicative curators of information artifacts.

Thanks to the distinctively American tradition of the public library, the ubiquity of libraries has placed them in a more visible role than archives. This predominance of libraries has led some to perceive a tension between archives and libraries, especially when looking at the historical differences in the types of content, technological limits, and resultant audiences. Historically, these tensions have played out in competing standards, descriptive practices, and employment credentials, a situation that Robert L. Clark and Lawrence J. McCrank explored in landmark 1976 and 1985 monographs.¹ However, by the early 1990s, the disruptive effects of technology for archives and library management combined with advances in the public's access to digital networks began to break down the information monopolies that characterized both archives and libraries. Thus, the old dualism is long overdue to be revisited.

The Society of American Archivists' publication program has stepped to the fore. Its *Archives in Libraries* is a cleverly designed, concisely written, and eminently readable book that is the current generation's contribution on the

enduring dualism of archives and libraries. The Clark and McCrank monographs were essentially collections of discrete essays written by multiple authors; *Archives in Libraries* instead presents a single coherent text with an integrated narrative and story line. Furthermore, its team of authors comprises three individuals with collectively nearly a century of experience in archival administration or education within library settings.

What really sets *Archives in Libraries* apart, however, is that rather than focusing on the current problems in archives/library relations, it seeks “. . .to narrow the divide and build shared understandings . . . while helping archivists working within libraries to better negotiate the relationships . . .” (p. 5). The world of archivists is not always understood by librarians, so it proceeds by explaining the nature of archival work, the theory on which the profession rests, and the standards that it follows. This will help librarians in administrative positions above archivists to better understand archives and presumably be more inclined to provide support rather than conflicting directives. All archivists subsumed within libraries should supply their library directors with a copy of this book and do all they can to ensure their directors spend the modest time needed to study it.

Readers will be well served by the thoughtful and approachable way that Jeannette Bastian, Megan Sniffin-Marino, and Donna Webber have written the text and by the modular design they used. They make very effective use of comparative charts, notes on interviews of archivists and librarians, and “vignettes” providing short case-study examples. Archivists should also be pleased by the fact that the book’s judiciously used footnotes point their library directors to a current citations on archival basics, even if they sometimes read as if they were the SAA publications sales catalog.

The book’s well-chosen chapters also interweave the generous use of charts, interviews, and vignettes to provide the library reader with a virtual primer in archival theory, practices, and professional concerns on matters including appraisal, arrangement, user access, and ethics. Simultaneously, as they present those topics, the authors draw broad comparisons to the corresponding library principles and activities, although not in sufficient detail to give the average U.S. academic archivist any new depth of understanding of libraries.

Archives in Libraries will be of great value to archives/library relations by making today’s more mature archival profession intelligible to, and respected by, library administrators. The book thus fits in well with the present greater partnership that has resulted from what the book notes is the convergence of the two allied fields since the time of the Clark and McCrank books. As the *Archives in Libraries* authors explain, the current digital environment not only provides ground for greater convergence of library and archival work, but it also opens both the possibility and necessity of greater cooperation (pp. 111–13). Indeed, the convergence of interests in digital access can afford archives greater

access to technological infrastructure than would have been available a few decades ago (p. 118).

The book acknowledges that archives and libraries coexist in many kinds of institutions, but it chooses to focus on two major settings—colleges/universities and public libraries. Although the team of authors includes some public library experience, the predominance of the college and university experience shows in the kinds of archival work and the examples provided, which are more extensive and richer for the academic library and archives setting. Public library directors may find this somewhat frustrating, yet it should not be a substantive barrier to the usefulness of the findings in *Archives in Libraries*. Its analysis and recommendations have a universality for any archivist or librarian in a reporting-line relationship.

Overall, for what it intends to be, the book succeeds quite well and is certainly worthy of a place on the bookshelf of all library directors and of archivists reporting to librarians. However, the book is a bit disappointing for what it could have been. Perhaps as a result of its success in providing such a digestible narrative for the librarian audience, there is an unfortunate over-simplification of some important archival concepts. While this may help the book connect with librarians, in some cases, it may also have the effect of blurring the lines between archives and libraries to the point of reducing the clarity of principles that traditionally define archives. One particular example of this loss is the discussion of arrangement. It appropriately makes the point that archives are not arranged by subject but by source (pp. 20–21 and 30–31). Yet, in starting the discussion of arrangement with provenance (p. 65), the authors forfeit the critical value of the related but antecedent principle of *respect des fonds*, by which archivists first distinguished themselves from librarians by insisting on not mixing materials from one deposit with those of another. Meanwhile, at a later stage, when comparing library cataloging and classification to archives work (p. 67), the book reflects an apparent assertion that classification is alien to archives, when, for a century from its inception, provenance was closely related to systems for classifying by origin, most commonly understood in record group and subgroup numbering schema.

A second area where the effort to be concise leads to confusion relates to the overly common trap of using the word “collection(s)” when referring to records (p. 53 *inter alia*). The theoretical difference between the characteristically organic nature of archival records and the artificiality of assembled collections may not always hold true in the case of specific deposits, transfers, or acquisitions, but the understanding that a conceptual difference exists is at the very center of the difference between archives and library work. In this way, the narrative’s simplification to be approachable by librarians comes at the cost of setting aside one of the principles that distinguishes the two professions.

Archives in Libraries further confuses matters by using “collections” to refer not just to specific deposits of records and papers but also to assemblages of such *fonds* and, even further, to refer to the entirety of an archives’ holdings as “the collection,” whether they be records, manuscripts, “papers,” or synthetically assembled “collections” (e.g., pp. 52–56, 60). The problem of the “collection” term is a larger one than could be resolved in a book about professional relations of archivists and librarians—it reflects a general weakness of the American archival profession that we have not created a more precise language for what we do. Nevertheless, one wonders whether a specific discussion of the inherent weakness of the term “collection” might have provided the librarian audience of *Archives in Libraries* with a deeper appreciation for the fact that library models cannot be applied in a cookie-cutter fashion to archives even if the terminology sounds familiar.

The authors might be right to disregard these reviewer concerns because they reflect broader debates within the archives field, and they are not intended to subtract from the value of *Archives in Libraries* in reaching its primary audience. Still, they deserve notice to encourage archivists not to shy away from insisting on what may seem like only little differences in terminology when those differences relate to fundamentals. Our ability to be understood and accepted by librarians requires that we not allow such core differences to be elided despite the technological and user-driven factors that create the convergence this volume so rightfully applauds.

These concerns emanate from the risks in the overall “librarianification” of the profession. Is this an effect or a cause of the convergence? Interest from librarians has increased over the past twenty years as they have come to see archives as a way to increase their credibility in difficult budget times. As the authors note, this interest has brought many valuable resources to archives as well as support for our work. However, given the risk that archives can lose their identity in the process, it is essential that we remember to be fastidious about those things that have long distinguished the two fields.

Admittedly, if such detail and shading of meaning were to have been inserted throughout *Archives in Libraries*, it might not have succeeded so well at being a concise articulation of our values—values that may sometimes compete but that generally enable collaboration. Thus, even though the book may not be a definitive digest of archives, it is strongly recommended as a way to improve communication.

William J. Maher

University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

NOTES

- ¹ Robert L. Clark ed., *Archive-Library Relations* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1976); and Lawrence J. McCrank ed., *Archives and Library Administration: Divergent Traditions and Common Concerns* (New York: Haworth Press, 1986).

Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections

By Diantha Dow Schull. Chicago: ALA Editions, 2015. xxvii, 324 pp. Softcover. \$85.00. ISBN 978-0-8389-1335-2.

Full disclosure: as an archivist working in a public library, I get incensed when others, who don't work in public libraries, tell us what we should be doing and how we should be doing it. I am not alone in feeling this way. Working in a public library, the assumption is often that we are not real archivists, that we do not have the proper training or preferred background. Otherwise, we would be employed elsewhere. Clearly, I have a chip on my shoulder. Before I first opened *Archives Alive: Expanding Engagement with Public Library Archives and Special Collections* by Diantha Dow Schull, I had my doubts and concerns. I shouldn't have. While I do not necessarily agree with all of the author's assumptions about the development of programming in public library archives and special collections, Schull makes no attempt to direct what we should do. Instead she shares over a hundred examples of programming triumphs in public library archives and special collections.

As stated in her biography, Schull serves as an advisor in the cultural heritage sector and is a consultant with her own firm. She is a museum professional and recently served as president of Libraries for the Future. Previously, she worked as special consultant for Interpretive Programs at the Library of Congress, and as director of exhibitions at the New York Public Library, the beacon of successful public libraries. Schull has largely held administrative positions and worked as a manager, a project director, and an evaluator; however, her résumé does not indicate that she has ever worked a reference desk or processed a collection. Her view is from the top down, not the bottom up. Nevertheless, this does not negatively impact her understanding of or appreciation for the unique challenges of that world.

Seventy-seven interviews with information professionals, including librarians and archivists, who work directly with or oversee public programs involving unique or rare materials comprise the examples of public programming featured in *Archives Alive*. As a result of these interviews, Schull presents us with