

BOOK REVIEWS**Elisabeth Kaplan, Editor****The Film Preservation Guide: The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums**

San Francisco: National Film Preservation Foundation, 2004. xi, 121 pp. Illustrations. Bibliography. Index. ISBN 0-9747-0990-5.

The National Film Preservation Foundation's (NFPF) *Film Preservation Guide* is not intended to replace any of the current literature available on various topics related to motion picture film preservation. On the contrary, as indicated by the subtitle, *The Basics for Archives, Libraries, and Museums*, the purpose of this book is to make the fundamentals of this technical specialty readily available for the great many archivists, librarians, and museum staff who have some quantity of film in their collection, but no knowledge or training in how to manage and preserve it. The emphasis of this publication project is clearly to get the information into the hands of people who need it, in a form that is useful. The book is available directly from the NFPF, for an \$8 shipping and handling charge; the contents are also available for free from the NFPF Web site (www.filmpreservation.org), where the user can select from PDF files of the various chapters, or a single PDF of the entire book.

As NFPF director Annette Melville relates in the preface, for many years motion picture preservation in the United States was the province of a very small number of institutions, generally oriented toward Hollywood feature films. But over a relatively short period of time, researchers have come to value a wide variety of moving images as unique historical and cultural documents, and many more organizations now collect them. This trend is illuminated further in the first chapter of the *Film Preservation Guide*, which references a survey conducted by the NFPF in 2002. Findings from this survey suggest that mixed media collections have become more common than not, with 90 percent of the respondents indicating that they are responsible for two or more media types, and more than 50 percent reporting that they have duties involving film and at least three other media types.

The nature of this trend pointed toward a gap in the available literature, so that same year the NFPF, the Image Permanence Institute at the Rochester Institute of Technology, and the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation

at the George Eastman House began work to address it. With funding from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, they structured an interactive process that began with needs assessment workshops involving collection professionals representative of the ultimate end-user population. The resulting content was then reviewed by students at the L. Jeffrey Selznick School of Film Preservation, the editorial committee for the *Guide*, technical specialists, and, finally, members of the original needs assessment workshops.

The result is a compact primer brimming with information on a wide range of film preservation issues. The text is lean and to the point, with a minimum of technical jargon, and structured to help the reader find information quickly. Although the primary text is under one hundred pages, the table of contents is more than four pages long, with an entry point on roughly every other page.

Most of the book is devoted to core film preservation issues: the physical characteristics of motion picture film, film handling, duplication, and storage. These sections are well illustrated and include many useful sidebars (e.g., “Estimating Shrinkage: The Low-Tech Approach”) and tables (e.g., “Film Equipment by Function: Safe Handling Tools for Every Budget”) to help a new film preservation program get off the ground. One of the more detail-intensive chapters, “Understanding Film and How It Decays,” ends with a summary in the form of a full-page table that could easily be copied and posted above a film inspection area. Case studies—which were among the requests made in the needs assessment workshops—are also included at the end of most chapters. These essays relate practical circumstances that help underline and expand upon the concepts discussed in the preceding text.

Other sections of the book relate to topics that will be less foreign to many readers (e.g., cataloging, copyright, access), but that emphasize issues specific to motion picture film collection management. While most of the book is drawn from other published works, combined with suggestions and input from the various review stages, two chapters have bylines: “Cataloging,” by Paul Eisloeffel (curator of visual and audio collections at the Nebraska State Historical Society and a member of the editorial committee for the *Guide*), and “Legal Context,” by Eric J. Schwartz (partner in the Washington, D.C., law firm Smith & Metalitz L.L.P., and a member of the NFPF board of directors).

Eisloeffel briefly introduces the reader to the MARC format, the major cataloging resources (e.g., *Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules*, etc.), and moving image-specific works (e.g., *Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual*). The chapter also includes a discussion of two collaborative projects that will be of interest and utility to anyone beginning a moving image cataloging project: the Moving Image Collections (MIC) Web site, and Independent Media Art Preservation’s (IMAP) MARC database template. The IMAP MARC template is a very inexpensive way to get started on a moving image catalog in a standard file format. While the text correctly states that the template is used with

FileMaker Pro, note that IMAP has also released a version for Microsoft Access since the book was published. Its Web site (at www.imappreserve.org) has also been expanded and includes detailed tutorials on the use of the template.

Schwartz, in the chapter addressing legal issues, provides a remarkably clear and succinct explanation of copyright, the changes that have taken place in U.S. copyright law since 1977, and how this all relates to film. Other topics touched on include donor agreements, archival rights and responsibilities, and fair use. Public domain should have received more attention, though. Content can be in the public domain, but still have strings attached—a point only alluded to in a somewhat confusing example offered in the section on donor agreements. A more complete discussion of these sorts of pitfalls would be a good addition to what is still a very useful essay.

Throughout the text the reader is directed to resources where more information on a topic can be found, and the selected bibliography lists some of the most useful Web sites, listservs, and discussion forums alongside the printed works. With luck, these links will persist for the lifetime of this edition.

Other useful features of the book include lists of selected film preservation laboratories and equipment vendors, an eleven-page glossary of film preservation terminology, and a sample print condition report. Perhaps future editions of the *Guide* might include more media collection-specific forms, to augment existing resources like the ARMA International/SAA publication, *Sample Forms for Archival and Records Management Programs*.

As an archivist at a small nonprofit organization with a mandate to help preserve moving image collections across an extremely large, diverse, and far-flung state, I would like to offer a very hearty welcome to this publication, and thanks to all of the people who worked to put it together. Along with IMAP's MARC template, the NFPP's *Film Preservation Guide* will certainly become a valuable part of our institution's outreach toolkit. Now what we need is an equally up-to-date and affordable video preservation primer; perhaps the new National Television and Video Preservation Foundation could work with the Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC) to issue a second edition of BAVC's out-of-print *Playback*.

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Lost in the Archives

Edited by Rebecca Comay. Alphabet City, no. 8. Toronto: Alphabet City Media, Inc., 2002. 776 pp. Out of print. ISBN 0-88784-643-2 (no. 8, 2002).

Founded in Toronto in 1991, Alphabet City produces conferences and exhibitions, taking interdisciplinary approaches to the analysis of global issues. *Lost in the Archives* is the eighth in a continuing series of publications documenting Alphabet City's activities. Previous works have such titles as *Social Insecurity, Fascism and its Ghosts*, and *Nations and Nationalism*.

As described in the corresponding Web site, *Lost in the Archives* starts here:

There is a crisis in the archives. The contemporary world requires that increasingly vast amounts of material be archived and accessed, and this presents unprecedented possibilities and problems for the production, storage, and use of knowledge. With this context in view, *Lost in the Archives* explores the productive potential of memory's failures—its technical dropouts, omissions, burials, eclipses, and denials.¹

As documentation, the work includes a wide variety of contributions, in a variety of media: essays, photographs, fiction, poetry, representations of collections, and exhibitions. The contributors come from diverse backgrounds, but are primarily artists and academics, with many Canadians and a fair sprinkling of Europeans and Americans.

The book is notable for a number of reasons. While it follows the all-too-common habit of invoking archives without listening for the voice of any archivist, it manages to cover nearly eight hundred pages without using the tired old cliché of the “dusty archives.” Instead, it posits a central, even primal role for archives. In this context, we are all archivists. Memory, writ large, is an archives where everyone works away every day. The book illuminates all the processes at play there, few of which are currently sanctioned by the archival profession.

As Rebecca Comay writes in her introduction, “What isn't an archive these days? . . . In these memory-obsessed times—haunted by the demands of history, overwhelmed by the dizzying possibilities of new technologies—the archive presents itself as the ultimate horizon of experience.” (p. 12) Her exploration looks for some boundaries, of categorization, of description, of collection, of interpretation, and, ultimately, of meaning. Her conclusion draws on two strands of thought, post-structuralist and Freudian.

¹ http://www.alphabet-city.org/ac_site/ac8_des1.html

From the former, she argues that there are no meaningful boundaries, only uncompleted journeys, despite an interminable search, glossing over numberless aporia along the way. We can't get there from here; moreover, we're probably not here and there is somewhere else. The reference to interminability hints at the Freudian influence, which makes itself more strongly felt in terms of the concerns with memory. What we remember, what we forget, how we manage the gaps and absences to produce and reproduce usable memories—these perhaps form a more interesting point of attack.

While many have criticized both post-structuralism and Freud for playing with language instead of caring for what happens to actual persons and events, Freudians are more likely to have to come to grips with the facts on the ground simply because of their therapeutic concerns. And readers know the difference. Hence, reading this book, we may respond aesthetically and intellectually to Karen Knorr's photograph of a wolf in a library (labeled "the peripatetic philosopher") or Vid Ingelvic's visual representation of "The Mirror Stage of the Public Museum," but we have a more emotional reaction to Krzysztof Czyzewski's reflections on then and now in the Kosovo.

It all comes together in Ian Balfour's and Rebecca Comay's interview of Geoffrey Hartman: "The Ethics of Witness." Hartman occupies a unique place in a volume marked by repeated references to and the participation of Jacques Derrida. As one of the first and most prominent Americans to tackle deconstruction, from his longtime complementarity as "vigor" to Paul de Man's "rigor" in the so-called Yale School, and through his 1981 work *Saving the Text: Literature/Derrida/Philosophy*, Hartman undoubtedly knows his stuff. Moreover, through his close work with the Fortunoff Video Archive for Holocaust Testimonies, Hartman is the closest the book comes to an encounter with a practicing archivist.

Within a complex theoretical discourse, Hartman quite eloquently raises concerns and uses terms that a professional archivist readily recognizes. There are references to events as positive facts and discussions of how to structure and frame interviews so as not to impose some agenda or some narrative framework on the testimony (and in that context Hartman explicitly distances himself from the use of psychoanalysts in the interviews). The meanings of the term "memory" are teased out and contrasted with those of "narrative" and "history." There is a recognition of the proactive nature of oral history, in contrast to the receptive nature of a "bureaucratic or institutionally-mandated archive."

And there are discussions of the basic ingredients of an archival program: preservation, access, description, cataloging, information technology and, as ham with eggs, costs. "Digital modes of recording are easier to alter than analogue modes, so that the testimonies that have to be 'migrated' from analogue tape to digital-optical format must also be preserved in their original analogue version for proof of authenticity. This raises the cost of archival preservation

enormously.” (p. 504) While there would be differences of opinion over his determination of authenticity and his estimates of costs, it is still remarkable to hear this echo of the debates in the archival profession.

This brings us to the leading question. Balfour and Comay wonder, “Could we ask what you make of the philosophical or theoretical questions about the archive, that have lately become a topic, say in Derrida or [Giorgio] Agamben?” Hartman’s response is surprising: “At the moment, I don’t think the implications of this ‘archive fever’ are very clear . . . I am somewhat suspicious or wary, not of the power of their minds and the stimulus of their thought, but of certain generalizations made without a hands-on (that kind of *main-tenant*) experience.” (p. 506) Details follow, but the reference to Hartman’s doing something now as reason to be wary of theory is telling.

It echoes a comment he made earlier in the interview about starting the interviewing process with an imperfect technology: “But we had also to start this project—it was urgent. We couldn’t say to the survivors: come back in twenty years when the technology is perfected . . .” (p. 504) So Hartman accurately identifies the choices at hand: doing something, when the need and the opportunity are at hand, or preparing to do something later, when the implications are fully considered. Clearly, for him, the latter is unthinkable; after all, we can’t get to certitude from here. But his motivation for doing anything is closely linked to the moral and ethical significance of witnessing the Holocaust. He may doubt how the testimonies are prepared; how they may be preserved; and, most important, how they may be used; but he does not doubt the necessity to compile them.

To borrow from Freud, in the spirit of *Lost in the Archives*, we could characterize this approach as “archiving terminable and interminable.”² In his last years in exile in London, Freud looked back on a life marked by failure and frustration. His world had collapsed. How could he reconcile that to his therapeutic hopes?

He concluded that analysts should lower their sights. They should abandon any hope of finally getting to the bottom of things, of telling their patients the truth that would explain everything once and for all. Instead, they should just find a story that worked for the time being, until some fresh trauma came along, which added something new to the mix and demanded another story. And he suggested we should all just get used to illness, that we simply accept the fact that, at best, analysis could only turn crippling neurosis into everyday, routine anxiety.

The purpose of analysis, then, was to come up with a persuasive, explanatory narrative that took the stuff of dreams and trauma and instinct and turned it into

² To paraphrase the title of one of Freud’s last essays, “Analysis Terminable and Interminable,” *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, vol. 23, *Moses and Monotheism, An Outline of Psychoanalysis* (London: Hogarth Press, 1968), 211.

a story that made sense, that allowed a patient the psychic breathing space to live and work until things changed and a new story was needed. Just something that worked, in other words, something that was not the best, because the best was unattainable, but something that was certainly better.

Substitute archives for analysis, and, *mutatis mutandis*, perhaps there is a moral to *Lost in the Archives*. Whatever we make of loss—physically missing, intellectually curious, historically obscure, aesthetically edgy, personally anxious, personally irritated (and the many contributors to the volume hit all these notes)—an archives offers a potential for encounter and discovery that constitutes its continuing value. And both reader and writer experience that with *Lost in the Archives*.

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Ethics and the Archival Profession: Introduction and Case Studies

By Karen Benedict. Chicago: The Society of American Archivists, 2003. 91 pp. Available from the Society of American Archivists, \$24.95 members, \$34.95 non-members. ISBN 1-931666-05-9.

The first thing to say about *Ethics and the Archival Profession* is that it is a needed new archives title that presents forty professional ethics case studies. This may appear to be faint praise, but it is not. As the book's excellent bibliography attests, there are many books and journal papers on various aspects of archival ethics. However, there are very few texts principally dedicated to case study analysis. Thus, the appearance of a high quality, up-to-date offering of cases such as *Ethics and the Archival Profession* is important and an appropriate note on which to begin. This review attempts to evaluate *Ethics* from the perspective of its implied purpose—what it set out to do—(might we also say *context* here?), structure, and content. In addition to cases, *Ethics* includes excellent introductory chapters by Benedict on distinctions between ethics and professional conduct, the impact of ethics on institutional practices, and ethical vs. legal behavior. These preliminary chapters offer a broader context in which to consider professional behavior.

The introduction of *Ethics and the Archival Profession* does not explicitly state the book's purpose. Rather, it offers an excellent short explanation of ethics as a branch of moral philosophy and professional ethics in terms of deontological (the rightness or wrongness of actions) and teleological (the good or bad consequences of choices) approaches to the subject. The author notes that the former approach may be prescriptive (or proscriptive) whereas the latter

analyzes desirable or undesirable results of actions. She uses this discussion to segue into a short history of ethical codes of conduct in the U.S. from the mid-eighteenth-century code of the American Medical Association and the subsequent trend among professional organizations, including the Society of American Archivists, to establish codes in the twentieth century as ethical guidelines for their members. Reading the book, it becomes clear that a principally deontological approach was adopted. The cases refer to the SAA *Code of Ethics*, 1992, in advocating their prescriptions.

Implicit is this purpose: to provide professional archivists with a classroom, workshop or personal reference guide to archival ethics using cases reflecting wide-ranging, practical, and common workplace circumstances that create ethical dilemmas and prescriptions based on interpretations of the principles included in the 1992 SAA code. It presents practical situations that any archivist might have faced or could expect to face, perhaps on very short notice. And it does offer prescriptions (and/or proscriptions) for the circumstances outlined in the cases. Although it might be assumed that most prescriptions were developed in consultation with the 1992 code—or at least would not be in contradiction with it—at least one indicates that the code doesn't cover the situation. Only about 40 percent of the cases actually make reference to the code. To this extent, the book may fall short of part of its implied purpose. This point may be somewhat moot, however, as may be the publication's appendix. The SAA has recently published a significantly different "Draft Revision to SAA *Code of Ethics*" (2004) and has requested comments in time for discussion of the draft at its August 2004 annual conference.³

The case approach is a strong point of the book that adds considerably to its usefulness and is important enough to be worthy of further discussion by itself. Tackling professional issues from a case perspective is one of the most effective and potentially powerful ways to teach or learn about ethics in classrooms or workshops as, for that matter, it is for many other conditions with which people come into contact on a regular basis. Stephen Yorke, editor of *Ethics, Lies and Archives*,⁴ which includes sixteen short, job-related hypothetical cases, puts it more strongly:

[I]n my experience broad discussions or treating ethics as theory gets nowhere. Unless (of course) the audience has gathered for that purpose and

³ The existing 1992 Code has thirteen sections and explanatory commentary. It is six times larger in word count, two-and-a-half times larger without the explanatory commentary in comparison to the 2004 Draft Code, <http://www.archivists.org/news/ethics.asp>, which has nine differently organized sections and no explanatory commentary.

⁴ *Ethics, Lies and Archives*, Proceedings of a one-day Seminar conducted by the Canberra Branch of the Australian Society of Archivists Incorporated at Becker House, Canberra, Thursday 20 May 1993, Stephen Yorke, Anne-Marie Schwirtlich, and Laurine Teakle, Editors, Australian Society of Archivists, Inc. Canberra 1994.

really *wants* to hear. However, case studies—even if they start slowly—soon actively engage an audience no matter how reluctant initially.⁵

Philosophical and theoretical approaches are important components of any graduate program; but case studies provide a needed practical balance to theory and are likely to be much more appreciated and useful to individuals who have been in the workplace long enough to run into troublesome situations requiring them to make difficult choices in dealings with bosses, clients, or colleagues and in managing records. Cases force the individual to become engaged, to consider like personal experiences, and to make his or her own choices. Remembrances of well-done case studies are also more likely to raise warning flags when individuals are suddenly faced with like circumstances in the workplace that will cause them to go back and review the cases before possibly making an inappropriate decision. Thus, the central focus on case studies is an excellent one for the messages of this book.

It is worth noting that ethics and accountability, while quite distinct subjects, are often linked, and readers will find an excellent complement to this volume in Richard Cox and David Wallace's *Archives and the Public Good*. This powerful pair of books should have a place in any archives and records management graduate program or on the personal bookshelf of any member of the profession.

At ninety-one pages total, *Ethics and the Archival Profession* contains forty very short, typically one- or two-page cases by well-known authors and practitioners. Fourteen were written by Timothy Ericson, eleven by Benedict, four each by Mark Greene and Robert Sink, three each by Mark Shelstad and Leon Miller, and one by Robert Spindler. Nearly all of the cases are based on hypothetical situations in U.S. settings. They predominantly concern manuscript collections management. Some are tested against the 1992 code, which is also included as an appendix.

While at least one of the case studies suggests that the individual consult the SAA for guidance, the book does not discuss how to go about doing this. The SAA Committee on Ethics and Professional Conduct was established to accept written requests for ethical advice and interpretations of its code as well as complaints about alleged ethical misconduct. In 2002, SAA Council charged the committee, which is chaired by Benedict, to propose revisions to the 1992 code.

The purpose of this book, however, was not to question or analyze the 1992 code. Rather, the code is used as a benchmark for the cases. One could argue that doing otherwise might have overly complicated the book. As it is, the reader can go to *Ethics* quickly, look in the appropriate section for cases similar to

⁵ Stephen Yorke to R. E. Barry, 16 June 1997, in the author's possession.

what the reader is facing at the moment, and get some fairly straight answers. While the book offers an excellent reference for the person needing quick advice, one hopes that most readers will have studied the book before the fact. In taking the approach it did, *Ethics and the Archival Profession* missed an opportunity to draw attention to areas where the 1992 code may not be as helpful as it could be. For example, when should “whistle-blowing” (a term that archivists have traditionally liked to articulate) become the right thing to do? When, if ever, does it take precedence over avoiding being critical of another archivist or institution or the archivist’s responsibility to his or her employing institution?

The six cases in the *Ethics and the Archival Profession* section on “An Archivist’s Responsibility to His or Her Employing Institution” come down in various ways in favor of the archivist’s institution or another external institution. None address instances in which the archivist’s institution is acting contrary to the “public interest,” a term used in the 1992 code but one that does not appear in the 2004 draft revision, nor suggest how the code might help and what real options the archivist has, including leaving the institution or whistle-blowing. It is my impression that where this question comes up elsewhere in the book, it is couched in terms of the threat that taking such action might present to the archivist’s job and future. Preserving one’s job appears to be a good and sound reason for not challenging the institution, resigning, or blowing the whistle if necessary. The implication seems to be that if one does, she or he is professionally doomed. Yet, it is difficult to imagine, for example, that if any of the authors of the cases in *Ethics* were to take such an action in their own organizations they would have great difficulty finding new and at least equally rewarding positions elsewhere. As with most other professions, archivists establish reputations in their field. Taking appropriate action, even if so bold, would not diminish an archivist’s reputation or employability. On the contrary, it might very well enrich it. Indeed, among the authors of cases in Cox and Wallace’s *Archives and the Public Good*, are examples of professionals who have done just that. Because they were people of high reputation, they have survived, continue to do well professionally, and if anything enjoy higher standing than they did before. Certainly taking on one’s own institution is not to be done lightly, but there must be certain things about what we do that are worth it. We need to speak more often about what those things are in our codes, in our deliberations on them, and in our considerations of particularly troublesome workplace quandaries.

Without a better understanding of how any professional society addresses ethical issues among its own members and takes public stands on sensitive matters relating to its profession, its members, readers of books such as *Ethics and the Archival Profession*, and society more generally are likely to have a dim view of the profession in question. Since many archivists feel that society does in

fact have either no view or a poor view of their profession,⁶ this does not seem to be an unimportant criticism of this book.

Ethics and the Archival Profession has no index. Benedict must have considered this issue carefully, because she compensated for the absence of an index with an excellently structured table of contents. Despite pagination problems,⁷ the table of contents is very effectively organized by key job-related topics that will be very familiar to the archivist and that allow one to quickly focus on a particular kind of issue rather than having to read the whole book again when a crisis arises in which the archivist needs some quick reference material.

Especially in the absence of a rich index, the classification of cases in sections tied to the code was a very good choice for organization of the contents. There are seventeen major headings in the table of contents, such as “Appraisal of Collections and Collection Policies,” “Archivists Responsibility to Employing Institution,” “Copyright,” “Description,” “Ownership of Records,” “Privacy,” and so on. All match up with the thirteen specific sections in the code, some identically. However, some of the cases do not link up with the section headings. For example, the first section of *the book*, “Appraisal of Collections and Collection Policies,” logically is tied to section III of the code, “Collecting Policies.” Yet, three of the cases in that section make reference to section IV of the code, “Relations with Donors and Restrictions.” One wonders why these cases were not included under the table of contents section, “Donor Relations.” Other cases in the “Appraisal of Collections and Collection Policies,” section refer to sections VI (“Appraisal, Protection and Arrangement”), VII (“Privacy and Restricted Information”), and XIII (“Conclusion”) of the code. Only two reference Section III of the code.

In fairness to the authors and to the subject, it may just be too difficult to pigeonhole many ethical situations in such a classification scheme. More often than not, they are multidimensional. This may also speak to a weakness of this particular case approach. But if multidimensionality is the reason, it would have been extremely useful to have included a matrix table showing the case numbers on one axis and the code sections on the other, with “X” marks in each of the intersecting cells for each case. Such a matrix could be very helpful to the reader, even retrospectively on the SAA Web site or as a simple insert with further distribution of the book—all the more so if the cases could be mapped against the draft revision or newly authorized code. At least, the authors of

⁶ See findings of “Report on Society and Archives Survey,” by R. E. Barry, 29 January 2003, <http://www.mybestdocs.com/barry-r-soc-arc-surv-report-030129toc.htm>.

⁷ Unfortunately, the usefulness of the table of contents is somewhat abridged until one breaks the pagination code. Page references of the table of contents are all off by three pages, the same number of pages as the Introduction that the author obviously intended to be in roman numerals. The table of contents shows chapter 1 as beginning on page 1, but it begins on page 4. The first page of the introduction is page 1. SAA now provides printed sheets with the correct page numbers to paste over the two pages of the table of contents.

the cases might make such an analysis of their own contributions to see the extent to which the problem noted above is due to multidimensionality or simply misplacement of cases.

Apart from the desirable organization of cases by sections linked to the code, there are cross-cutting issues throughout the cases, such as undercutting or being undercut by professionals in other institutions, taking over an organizational mess, conflicting views with one's boss, and so on. These are all highly relevant to the workplace irrespective of profession, and the authors are very forthcoming with specific advice on how such circumstances should be dealt with. This may be an advantage of hypothetical cases and makes *Ethics and the Archival Profession* all the more useful to the practitioner. Perhaps because of the cautions of their ethics codes, archivists are typically reticent in how they say what other archivists should have done in real situations. Yet, it is this very kind of advice that people seeking help badly need.

Benedict's treatment of the legion Union Bank of Switzerland case in her opening chapter on "Ethics Versus Professional Conduct," departs from the hypothetical cases and speaks to a very real one concerning the destruction of litigious World War II "Nazi Gold" bank records. Benedict shows how a good lawyer could make a case getting each of the players off the hook whatever course they followed. This risks leaving the reader with the surely unintended view that any behavior—any choice—can be successfully defended. Unfortunately, in the increasingly litigious world in which we live that characterization may too closely reflect the real world.

There are about a dozen footnotes in the introductory chapters of the book. Not surprisingly, the majority of the text, which is case studies, has no footnotes. To compensate for this, *Ethics and the Archival Profession* contains an extensive bibliography at the end of the book, which should be a very useful resource for educators, students and others doing research on ethics.

Perhaps if more business and government organizations formally adopted national association ethical codes for recordkeeping practices, ethical quandaries would arise less often than otherwise they might; and where they did arise, it would make the manager's and archivist's jobs much easier in dispassionately deciding on the most ethical course of action. An important lesson that this reviewer learned from this book is that in future consulting I will not only recommend that organizations adopt established professional standards for the organization's recordkeeping regime and software functionality in its organizational policies, but I will include similar recommendations for codes of ethics. For organizations implementing the Sarbanes-Oxley Act and other Securities Exchange Commission requirements for the establishment of internal whistleblower facilities and internal information controls, or even as part of their audit policy, the manager of the archives and records management unit might recommend that adoption of such a code be done as part of that package. More

needs to be done on the *preventive* or *defensive* aspects of ethics to stave off ethical quandaries where possible. That is surely one of the overarching lessons of these cases.

The cases in *Ethics and the Archival Profession* have been authored by an impressive array of highly regarded professionals, and they are both well written and cover real-life conditions that could arise with any archivist. As noted earlier here, they are almost entirely oriented toward archivists dealing with manuscript collections—about 10 percent are oriented to state, university, or private sector archives. Although the situations largely have relevance beyond manuscript archivists and curators, the book might have been seen to be of greater relevance had there been greater balance in the case venues. But archivists in local, state, provincial, and national governments, and indeed in the private sector, should not so misjudge the relevance of this book to their own workplaces and daily decision making. The bottom line is that ethical dilemmas are universal in the archives and records management world, and professionals need to know how to address them. In this, *Ethics and the Archival Profession* hits the mark well and fulfills important roles in formal and continuing education programs and as a quick reference tool.

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Thirty Years of Electronic Records

Edited by Bruce I. Ambacher. Lanham, Md. and Oxford: The Scarecrow Press, 2003. xix, 190 pp. Available from the Society of American Archivists, \$36 members, \$42 nonmembers. ISBN 0-8108-4769-8.

The clearly stated purpose of *Thirty Years of Electronic Records* is to sing the praises of the custodial electronic records program at the National Archives and Records Administration over the past thirty years and make publicly known both its struggles and accomplishments. This book does an admirable job of celebrating, enlisting prominent figures (prominent both within NARA and the larger archival community) to contribute twelve essays. They document the important work that was completed, share anecdotes about interesting solutions to technical problems, grumble about recurring budgetary problems, and outline hopes and plans for the future. There is just cause for such celebration, especially considering all that has been accomplished by these people and the obstacles they overcame. The book testifies to a seemingly constant flux of staffing and budgetary constraints imposed on the archives

by different presidential administrations, as well as the scarcity of peer institutions to turn to for support. No other institution is as large or has exactly the same requirements. Furthermore, during this period, few other “archival programs. . . actually took any electronic records into custody and attempted to preserve them over the long term.”

Today’s archivist is able to deal with electronic records more successfully because of the strides made by NARA and its electronic records program. New archivists have little need even to consider many of the issues that seemed almost insurmountable several years ago. A new archivist, even a lone university archivist, would not even consider the preservation of electronic records until he or she has, at the very least, access to the technologies and procedures suitable for the tasks required. In most cases, archivists already have the technologies at their fingertips to allow storage media to be refreshed and reference copies to be produced. Trudy H. Peterson describes the situation when the electronic records program, “had no computer processing equipment, so all tapes had to be taken out [in their cars] to a contractor for duplication, whether for preservation or reference.” New archivists can scarcely imagine such a situation, and they have little need to. In a sense, they are able to stand upon the shoulders of giants, almost oblivious to the obstacles that have been overcome by this, “the oldest, largest, and most actively managed program for electronic records in the world.”

The book’s twelve essays are compiled into eight chapters that are sometimes organized chronologically and sometimes topically. (The inclusion of an index, however, would have facilitated better access to the book’s content.) Meyer H. Fishbein’s “Recollections of an Electronic Records Pioneer” and Thomas E. Brown’s “History of NARA’s Custodial Program for Electronic Records” adequately recount the history of the custodial electronic records program. Mark Conrad’s “Early Intervention” traces the development and impact of the National Historical Publications and Records Commission’s electronic records research agenda. Completing the arc, Kenneth Thibodeau’s “Building the Future” maps the course for the Electronic Records Archives that is currently under development. Chapters 2–4 (contributed by Linda J. Henry, Bruce Ambacher, and Margaret O’Neill Adams, respectively) refocus on events already recounted in the light of the archival activities of appraisal, processing, description, and reference. This arrangement of the chapters leads to a certain amount of repetition as important events like the PROFS case or the cutbacks suffered in the 1980s are rehashed over and over. Similar territory is covered by an uneven chapter containing contributions from four different administrators responsible for managing the electronic records program at the National Archives between 1975 and 1988. At times, these contributions expend too much energy discussing the changing placement of the electronic records program or get bogged down in a mire of acronyms that renders the material

difficult to digest. Important issues are clouded amid the recounting of myriad organizational changes that hearken back in style to the Old Testament (NNPD begets NNR, NNR begets NNSR, NNSR begets NNX, NNX begets NSX, and NSX begets NWME).

One chapter does stand out from the others. Jason R. Baron's "The PROFS Decade: NARA, E-mail, and the Courts" is the one essay of enduring value that will likely have the most influence on future archival and electronic records professionals. Baron's essay is not the first, nor most thorough, account of the PROFS case (he cites a number of prominent examples in his notes), but it is perhaps the most interesting account written to date, presented in a style that makes the important subject matter accessible even to those with only a very general interest in electronic records. This essay seems destined to end up on a number of archival education reading lists and will help instruct a generation of future archivists about electronic records.

Beyond Baron's PROFS piece, it is not entirely clear who might best benefit from reading this book. As a celebration, it is perhaps most valuable to all those who have been directly or indirectly involved in NARA's work on electronic records. However, given the small number of archival programs in the United States that have actually implemented functioning electronic records programs, it seems possible that some might be looking to this book as a guide to establishing a program. The intention of this book was never to guide, and it is not a blueprint for the development of an electronic records program. The authors make it clear that NARA is unlike any other archival institution and that new types of electronic records demand new archival methods, not an "extension of the successes of yesterday." However, knowledge of the work of NARA can only help the budding archivist or emergent electronic records program. In this sense, the book does have something to offer.

For the reader only generally interested in electronic records issues or unfamiliar with the particulars of NARA and electronic records practice, this book can only paint a picture of past progress rather than guide future development. It is not a groundbreaking work identifying new information about NARA. The authors represent one particular point of view, with little effort made to including opposing viewpoints. That was not part of the book's purpose, of course, but more experienced readers wish to see beyond the celebration.

A close examination of *Thirty Years of Electronic Records*, however, reveals a broader context in which the electronic records program has operated within NARA. The picture is one of constant organizational change, fluctuation of budgets, and a bureaucracy not necessarily concerned with the preservation of electronic records. Both specialists and generalists would have benefited from a more cohesive message throughout the entire book—perhaps a better sense of some of the lessons that might be learned from all of NARA's hard work and experience with electronic records—for there are certainly lessons to be learned

from NARA's experience. Any organization wishing to manage and preserve electronic records must have organizational viability, technological suitability, and financial sustainability. This book describes how an inability to maintain sufficient staff levels and to obtain positive input from outside experts and peer organizations threatened the long-term viability of NARA's electronic records program. For a long time, the electronic records program at NARA did not have access to the technology suitable for the work that needed to be done. Perhaps most importantly, this book describes a constant battle to maintain fiscal sustainability amid constantly changing economies and government budget conditions. These are the issues that every repository of electronic records must seek to master, and a stimulating consideration of these issues may be the most important reason to read *Thirty Years of Electronic Records*.

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