
Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists

By Kathleen D. Roe. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2019. 160 pp.
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For decades, the Society of American Archivists (SAA) has developed manuals to guide archivists in the major and basic functions that constitute archival practice. These manuals have now seen five iterations and have expanded vastly in content since their conception in 1973. The increased recognition of the skills and functions that represent archival practice has evolved the archival manual compendium from a series of five leaflets meant for ready reference to a series of instructional books in the form of the Archival Fundamentals Series. Although the content of these manuals has expanded with each iteration, the most recent iteration, the Archival Fundamentals Series III, addresses for the first time the topic of archival advocacy.

The author, Kathleen D. Roe, has a history of authorship and professional involvement with SAA, including authoring *Arranging and Describing Archives and Manuscripts* (Archival Fundamentals Series II) and serving as president of SAA from 2014 through 2015. Her professional experience and advocacy make her an authority on this topic. Roe recently retired from the New York State Archives as the director of Archives and Records Management and has managed advocacy and legislative issues during her tenure as president of the Council of State Archivists. Her experience as an instructor for advocacy, arrangement and description, and documenting crises informs the structure of this publication. *Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists* is an experiential read that carries readers through a learning process reminiscent of an effectively diversified classroom curriculum.

Including advocacy as a core topic in the Archival Fundamentals Series is a refreshing addition. Similar to the topic of donor relations, advocacy was once neglected among archival professionals and, in this reviewer's experience, is usually seen as a secondary obligation after other primary archival functions directly related to caring for archival materials. Although arrangement and description, appraisal, and preservation directly impact archives themselves and are perceived as crucial and foundational functions, the archival profession's acknowledgment that, without advocacy, these practices will cease to exist is welcome. The archival profession includes an abundance of solo archivists who are independently responsible for the archives of institutions with limited or even no staff. It is imperative for archivists to have a broad skillset

that encompasses all aspects of archival management. Without an in-depth knowledge of how to implement an effective advocacy program, solo archivists can flounder, missing opportunities to bolster their programs with staffing, grants, and effective public programming while watching funding wither away due to a lack of interest and knowledge about what their archives offer to the community. Not only will archivists see their programs reduced without advocacy, they will not be considered in legislative actions that can have a direct and pronounced impact on funding in their local areas, as well as on the management of archives themselves.

Digital records are the most rapidly expanding body of records. Legislation regarding digital copyright, digital asset management, and the treatment of digital records as official records is evolving swiftly, often without guidance regarding the long-term preservation of these digital assets. In June 2018, the current administration released *Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations*.¹ This document was followed one year later by Memorandum M-19-21.² The two documents outline the transition of federal recordkeeping from analog to digital. The memorandum mandates that by 2022 the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) will no longer accept analog records. Both documents emphasize that managing analog records costs millions in taxpayer dollars, yet fail to acknowledge that digital records preservation is also expensive and more complicated than the preservation of analog records. Meanwhile, NARA's budget has seen consistent annual cuts and has dwindled from \$475 million in 2010 to \$356 million in 2020. It is the obligation of all archivists to understand legislative advocacy and become involved in the decisions that dictate how records are preserved for decades to come.

Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists progressively introduces readers to the core elements of building an advocacy program. Topics are presented in the order in which any advocacy effort should address them and in order of increasing complexity. Each chapter clearly articulates an individual step in the advocacy process. Chapter 4, "Understanding Audiences, Key Stakeholders, and Supporters," for example, focuses on defining the audience of an advocacy effort, including identifying internal and external stakeholders, and choosing targeted messaging to appeal to the identified audience. Each chapter's purpose is expertly emphasized with ample quotations, examples, or exercises. After detailing how to advocate to government officials in chapter 7, "Advocating with Government Officials," Roe provides a sample letter to Congress and detailed lists of what to expect in meetings and phone calls. In this structuring of each chapter, Roe shines as an instructional author. She formulaically introduces a topic, with the assistance of quotations from other professionals and often diagrams or images from her lectures, then provides examples of the concept she has described in action, concluding with an exercise for the reader. This model

allows the material she presents to be fully absorbed and helps readers begin thinking about how to implement these concepts in their own archives. For example, the exercise presented at the end of chapter 3, “Developing Goals for Advocacy and Awareness Initiatives,” makes readers pause to answer questions about issues and stakeholders in their own archives and then use these answers to draft a goal statement that will serve as the backbone of their advocacy effort.

Throughout the book, specificity in messaging is emphasized. This emphasis is absolutely imperative when speaking to those in a profession that emphasizes freedom of information for all. It is natural for archivists to wish to reach a broad audience, for it is our purpose to ensure that everyone who has a desire to learn also has access to information. When it comes to defining one’s audience, Roe states “. . . your definitions need to be as specific as possible . . . the idea of directing something at the ‘general public’ is a common approach that is so wide and amorphous that it provides little focus or real guidance . . . it usually compromises any real effectiveness” (p. 48). Roe goes on to expand general advice with specific examples and strategies, such as the importance of incorporating both statistics and data, as well as impactful stories, when devising a messaging platform for an archivists’ advocacy program. For example, figures 10, 11, and 12 in chapter 7 all display targeted messaging created for the Georgia Archives to lobby with government officials. Graphics show a plummeting budget over twenty years’ time, data contrasting the Georgia Archives’ hours with the more robust programs of other states, and a list of examples of recent projects supported by archival research that emphasize the many benefits and contributions of the Georgia Archives.

Finally, Roe leaves readers with a toolkit in the form of the book’s appendixes. The appendixes include a short list of wonderful, relevant, ready reference materials for use once the reader absorbs the content of the book. The appendixes include example advocacy documents, checklists, and specific information regarding lobbying, passing bills, and contacting government officials. These documents are what make this volume repeatedly useful; they provide a concise set of materials that readers can use time and time again when devising an advocacy program for their archives.

Despite these achievements, making the publication more broadly applicable to and approachable by all archivists would have strengthened it. Although the inclusion of plentiful examples is useful, most examples are of very large-scale advocacy efforts, including the initial establishment of NARA and forming a coalition to advocate for the Georgia Archives. These efforts focus on enlisting large advocacy teams who are willing to launch multiyear campaigns. The funding, time, and resources outlined in these examples are not always accessible, or necessary, depending on the scale of the advocacy effort being attempted. Readers intending to begin with small-scale, local efforts may find it difficult

to apply the book's recommendations. Furthermore, Roe states herself that the majority of the advocacy efforts used as examples are reactive. By neglecting proactive efforts, Roe fails to highlight those that can be initiated at any time and that may be more approachable initial advocacy endeavors. Bearing solo archivists in mind, it is interesting that an introductory manual would not provide examples that represent more varied scales, and types, of advocacy.

These critiques do not diminish the value of *Advocacy and Awareness for Archivists*. The topic is a much-needed addition to the Archival Fundamentals Series and acknowledges that advocacy is equally as valuable, and as complex, as many of the more technical competencies of archival administration. The volume reduces complex topics into digestible messages and provides a toolkit that can, and should, be reached for on the bookshelf when beginning to craft any advocacy effort.

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NOTES

- ¹ *Delivering Government Solutions in the 21st Century: Reform Plan and Reorganization Recommendations*, Executive Office of the President of the United States, 2018, <https://www.performance.gov/GovReform/Reform-and-Reorg-Plan-Final.pdf>, captured at <https://perma.cc/S5JV-G29F>.
- ² *Memorandum M-19-21*, Executive Office of the President of the United States: Office of Management and Budget, 2019, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/M-19-21.pdf>, captured at <https://perma.cc/H7QA-TDUB>.

Participatory Archives: Theory and Practice

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In the face of developing networked societies, heritage institutions (libraries, archives, and museums) must rethink the ways they conduct cultural activities. Multiple documentary resources are nowadays easily accessible on the Web for the public. Thanks to the potential of Web 2.0 technologies, diverse modes of interaction and participation have emerged, minimizing institutional boundaries between cultural agents and users. In the archives world, users are invited to interact more actively with their cultural institutions and participate in the management and the description of archives. This illustrates a paradigm shift in archival science, called *participatory archives*.