

PUBLICATION REVIEWS

Documenting Society. CD-ROM. Version 1.1. By Ann Pederson, Mark Brogan, and Alin Huma. Perth, Western Australia: School of Computing, Information and Mathematical Sciences, Edith Cowan University, 2000. \$500.00. 802 pp. Instructional guide with Internet links, videos, interactive illustrations, charts and tables, photographs, glossary, up-to-date bibliography, full texts of key readings, and workbook.

Documenting Society, a CD-ROM presentation by Ann Pederson, Mark Brogan, and Alin Huma, all from Edith Cowan University, presents for both the novice and seasoned professional in the field a two-pronged view of the world of records and archives. The first is a philosophical overview of the history and necessity of records management and the establishment and maintenance of archives. The second is a practical set of guidelines for assessing physical, institutional, and policy needs for creating, storing, and accessing records, among other issues. However, this is no dry textbook-like introduction to the combined fields of archives and records management. This is a multifaceted presentation with video, linked Web sites, and additional articles of high relevance, together with a workbook component (with both broad and detailed questions, as well as a challenging level for those who want or need a challenge) so students can test themselves along the way. All this in a tidy little package. This is a "must read" for the newcomer to the field, provided the cost (\$500) is not prohibitive.

Pederson and company have compiled some of the more timeless and relevant articles of recent years by noted professionals such as Richard Cox to augment their own perusal of archives and records management history and its application from ancient times to the present. The overarching theme to the text, related articles, and media contained on the CD-ROM seems, from the American perspective, to be a much-needed call for the merging of the archives and records management professions in a venue in which it might have some long-term effect—on students. A noble undertaking. In introducing archives and records management students to the idea that the two fields are intertwined—perhaps dependent on one another—advocates of the combined approach may garner some support for this idea in the future. This is one of the presentation's greatest assets, philosophically speaking.

From a practical standpoint, there are clear definitions of all terms used, charts to compare users, access, and other needs of records to help students evaluate the multiplicity of issues that will be presented to them in the professional world. The authors define the things whose meanings we all think we already know, such as "record" and "recordness," i.e., the quality that makes a record authentic. And this reminds us, as professionals, why we are who we are and what our mission is or ought to be. In that way, *Documenting Society* has the capacity to create new professionals who are dedicated, impartial stewards of records.

All this aside, there are some flaws in this CD-ROM presentation. While this is a format with much to offer in terms of compacting a great deal of information into a portable size, in providing access to extraneous information, and in providing a multimedia experience, there are "glitches" in need of ironing out. Even when viewing this

CD-ROM on an average workplace computer with a relatively recent operating system and all the bells and whistles to enable adequate viewing of such a presentation, there were difficulties. The videos, which were excellent in content, were difficult to view: they were all of two by two inches and any attempts to enlarge the viewing area resulted in grainy, unviewable images. Though annoying, this is acceptable, provided the user considers the aural content to be of more interest. Less acceptable was the poor text quality. Perhaps there were problems in converting the text data to this format; perhaps it was an editing problem. Either way, there were sections of text that were completely undecipherable, at least until our IT folks came around to do a routine update, which no user should assume is necessary to read the CD text. Nonetheless, some articles remained disturbingly poorly edited. In James O'Toole's article in module 1.02, the repeated typographical error was "sign)ficant." That, along with other numerous misspellings, too many or too few spaces, and the like created quite a distraction.

Does any of this detract from the quality of the content of *Documenting Society*? No, but it brings to bear the question of presentation. Such errors create the sense that perhaps the presentation was put together too hastily or insufficiently tested. Though this is probably not the case, whatever the reason the technology here leaves much to be desired. Though trivial, it is doubtful that Richard Cox would care to see that he is an Associate Professor at the University of "pittsbulrgh" and that he is one of the Directors of the Project on the Functional Requirements for Evidence in Electronic "RecOrd~<eePing" (module 1.05 reading). At least this is how my computer translated it.

However, with some minor revisions in the technological capacity and delivery of the presentation and a more thorough editing of the text, this would be an excellent package for presentation to students new to the field. There are enough different activities to engage the mind and they are presented at multiple levels to capture the attention of students with different capacities for learning. Additionally, the authors remind us, as archivists, who our public is: it is not simply the researchers who walk into the archives or records center looking for material from 50 years ago. Our public constitutes the creators of the records. This text encourages professionals and students alike to remember that we need to see a bigger picture. As the authors write, "Individual participants [in the record making/keeping cycle], trapped in their own vantage points, seldom consider or appreciate the multifaceted richness of archival records" (module 1.05). If preserved correctly, the records we collect tell miraculous stories about our civilizations.

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AMIA Compendium of Moving Image Cataloging Practice. Ed. Abigail Leab Martin, comp. Jane D. Johnson, Linda Tadic, Linda Elkins, Christine Lee, and Amy Wood. Beverly Hills, California: Association of Moving Image Archivists; Chicago: SAA, 2001. \$40.00. 272 pp. Appendices. Soft cover.

The sense that "many moving image archivists seemed to be working alone, with few opportunities to discuss or debate the issues and problems unique to the cataloging of moving image materials and lacking any sort of cataloging standards" (pp. 1–2), motivated the compilation of this joint publication of AMIA and SAA. Stemming from surveys initially conducted in light of the revision of *Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual*,¹ the *Compendium* aims to document practice and to complement, rather than compete with, the revised *AMIM*.

The largest part of the text is devoted to comprehensive analysis of the results from a 78-question survey. It was an obvious challenge to design a survey that provides detailed, useful information while still being relatively easy to comprehend and complete, but the responses indicate that the survey writers were very successful. Nearly all aspects of the cataloging process were examined and the respondents were clearly able to provide substantive answers that illuminate the variety of approaches used in their institutions.

The survey and its analysis cover broad areas of cataloging practice where specific decisions about record creation would be made, including chapters on sources of information, record structure, title, "versions," credits information, production and distribution information, physical description, notes, and name and subject access.

Apart from the content of the survey, the most significant factor in the results was the selection of institutions to participate in the survey. The introduction indicates that nearly half the moving image archives originally asked to participate in the survey did so; the resulting sample represents an amazingly diverse cross section of institutions. It is not immediately clear, however, what criteria were originally used to select participants; this would have been interesting.

The responses of the 27 institutions illustrate an admirable breadth of size, type of institution, subject coverage, formats, etc. In addition, the most fundamental distinctions among institutions, in terms of cataloging, are whether they create records in the MARC format or in some other format, and if those records reside locally or are shared. Institutions completing the survey exhibit all these possible scenarios in their records, making it very difficult to create relevant summaries of best practice. This reality is unfortunate, since part of the appeal of the *Compendium* would be to publicize decisions made by representative archives in order to help others in making similar decisions.

The editor and compilers do an admirable job of analyzing the responses, including citing tantalizing quotations that reveal the frustrations and challenges inherent in policy setting for cataloging. These responses are illuminating and it is unfortunate that more space could not be devoted to the candid thoughts of practicing catalogers within the text. For example, when explaining why commercially released materials were not viewed before cataloging, one respondent asserted that "such material is usually what it says it is—the Archive is prepared to accept the risk for the rare ones that turn out not to be" (p. 23). One respondent summed up the difficulties of setting policy for handling mul-

multiple versions: "It is difficult to set forth rigid guidelines for cataloging multiple versions of films since each case may be unique and may affect the appraisal or preservation function" (p. 124).

Another drawback to the *Compendium* is its format. The conscious decision to limit examples in the print text in order to keep the volume at a manageable size is understandable. In cases where examples are truncated, reference is made to the full example located in Appendix E on the accompanying Web site (accessible from <<http://www.amianet.org/>>). Since examples in the *Compendium* are reproduced only as text, this is useful particularly where the full examples on the Web site are given in their original form, such as a screen shot of a non-MARC database.

The distinction between information presented in the text and that presented only on the Web site does not work as well as one could hope. For example, each institution is given a number in the appendix. In the print work, institution names are spelled out in full, with subsequent references using a logical abbreviation. In the record examples, however, the institution name is spelled out again. This inconsistent nomenclature is confusing and repetitive.

Also, a great deal of space seems to be wasted. Often only one or two examples are reproduced per page; better layout and typesetting would have made better use of the space as well as making it easier to identify institution names and elements of the record without constant repetition of text. The lack of header text and distinctive chapter divisions makes it difficult to determine where in the analysis a given example falls. Also, the nearly limitless space available on the Web site was not fully utilized. The complete responses to the survey would have been very interesting, especially given the revealing comments quoted throughout the text that are apparently not available in their entirety.

In a way, the *Compendium* consists of two discrete parts: the analysis and summary of the survey responses, which are of interest to a general audience, and the examples to illustrate the responses, which might be of more interest to catalogers working with particular formats or genres. Perhaps bibliographic and database records could have been presented only on the Web site for those interested in consulting the full example without detracting significantly from the analysis. As is it, however, the text and the Web site must be consulted together by anyone trying to really grasp the structure of the records. Since *AMIM* uses only MARC-coded examples, it is particularly useful to see non-MARC records for cataloging records reproduced faithfully on the accompanying Web site.

Despite these formatting drawbacks, several important points emerge from the examples and their accompanying analysis. Even among institutions with similar structures or collecting areas, there is very little shared cataloging practice. Decisions fundamental to the creation of cataloging records can be made in many ways dependent on the institutional context and they can all be "right." Archives that use MARC records appear to be as variable in how they construct records, at least in some fields, as their non-MARC counterparts.

Another theme throughout the *Compendium* is of archives in transition. In some ways, moving image archives are less traditional than print archives, but even so the responses make it clear that policies are being changed, practices are being reviewed in light of technological changes, and material is being handled differently because of external

forces such as grants and staffing. The frequency with which many institutions answered “not yet” to a variety of questions dealing with practice and policy indicates that archives are aware of possible changes on the horizon.

This thought-provoking work presents many different ways for catalogers to accomplish the goal of enhanced access to often specialized collections. The same survey might have yielded completely different results had it been distributed to a different set of institutions. Its usefulness, therefore, lies in its ability to highlight workable approaches, rather than as a guide to best practice in moving image archival cataloging. Since many decisions about how to catalog moving image materials will be made based on factors removed from abstract cataloging ideals, the *Compendium* helps save catalogers from reinventing the wheel when determining cataloging policy and practice. It would be very interesting to see this work updated or revised on an ongoing basis, particularly if the problems with the layout could be addressed. Nonetheless, the snapshot of cataloging practice it offers is interesting, thorough, and stimulating.

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¹ White-Hensen, Wendy. *Archival Moving Image Materials: A Cataloging Manual* (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 1984); 2nd ed. (Washington, D.C.: Library of Congress, 2000).

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