

# Records and Archives Book Covers Wide Swath of Multicultural Interests, Divergent Approaches

Nancy Dupre Barnes, Ph.D., CRM, CA

**E**ngaging with Records and Archives: Histories and Theories is recommended reading for archivists seeking diverse, global viewpoints in archival science and recordkeeping practices. It is a carefully curated compilation of works authored by individuals from a variety of archival settings.

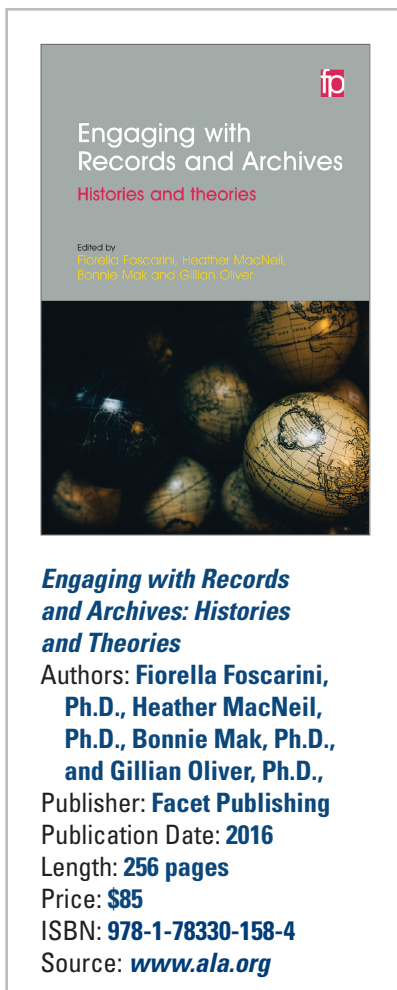
The focus of each of the 11 chapters is, generally, non-North American and mostly European; authors working in countries such as Italy, the Netherlands, Poland, and the UK are highlighted. There is a chapter devoted to recordkeeping developments in the sub-Saharan, African nation of Malawi and a chapter on archival ethics that contains a case study involving native, tribal peoples of Canada, also.

## Unique Retrospectives

The five chapters in Part 1 are classified as “Rethinking Histories and Theories.” This is an apt descriptor for these macro, theory-based works. In contrast, Part 2, “Engaging Records and Archives,” represents findings at a grassroots level and provides six chapters of unique retrospectives and lessons learned.

The book’s editors are, themselves, recognized leaders and respected educators in the archival community. The “Editors’ Introduction” section offers insights into the publication’s genesis, stating that the book was compiled from papers presented in 2015 at the Seventh International Conference on the History of Records and Archives (I-CHORA 7).

The 2015 conference was sited in Amsterdam, but it has been held in various locations over the years, including the United States. While a limited number of participants may be able to attend these biennial



conferences, the availability of this book allows readers around the world to gain access to others’ scholarly efforts and in-the-field experiences.

## The Danger of Digital

The chapter “Mapping Archival Silence: Technology and the Historical Record” may be of particular interest to information governance practitioners and records managers. The discussion of digital technologies and their effect on information management is thought-provoking.

The author posits that where there is digitization, the specter of “archival

silence” looms. According to the author, archival silence is described as either “gaps or omissions in a body of original records” or “materials that are not available in formats useful for scholarly research.” The ever-expanding trove of digitized records, whether harkening from government, corporate, or cultural heritage groups, points to the importance of recognizing this consequence of digital technology’s advancement. The time, personnel, and costs required for digitization projects, particularly those conducted on a grand scale with large amounts of records, can be massive. This dilemma will, undoubtedly, continue to plague the archives/records management community for decades to come and will affect future generations of educators, users, and researchers.

## Gaps in Coverage

A shortcoming of this volume, if it could be deemed as such, is the predominance of chapters focusing on paper-based recordkeeping initiatives. Given that this book is a compilation of selected research from I-CHORA 7, this may have been unavoidable due to the nature of the body of work presented at that conference.

That caveat aside, the Part 1 section includes a nod to 1980s database technologies with its chapter on data modeling. Ideally, Part 1 could have benefited from inclusion of a chapter devoted to an examination of social media’s projected impact on recordkeeping theory and culture; while the “history” of social media is short, it could be argued that social media-related technologies are ingrained in society and have necessitated “rethinking” of many facets of records management.

## An Artistic Sensibility

Certainly, discourse related to the importance of interdisciplinary collaboration, inclusivity, and diversity abounds in the archival literature, spanning both rigorous academic reporting and press communications in various print and electronic media. This book does succeed in covering a wide swath of multicultural interests and divergent approaches.

Notably, the final chapter, "Reflecting on Practice: Artists' Experi-

ences in the Archives," is intriguing in its unique vantage point and artistic sensibility. It reminds readers of the need to embrace the broad continuum of experience, appreciating affect and effect alike. The author suggests, "Artists can remind and encourage archivists to think differently."

## A Worthy Addition

Written from a distinctly academic (and archival) perspective, the book's chapters are products of extensive

research and contain bibliographic references, as well as notes. The concluding section of the publication is a comprehensive index.

This title would be appropriate as a supplementary text for a graduate-level archives/records management course. It would also be a worthy addition to the bookshelf of any well-read information practitioner – whether archivist, records manager, or information governance professional. **E**



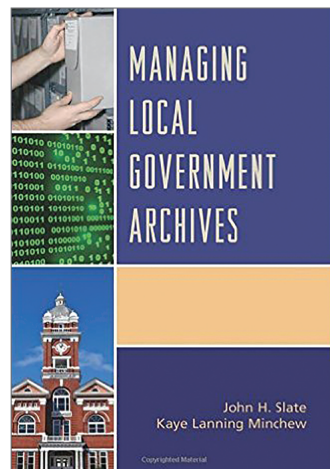
**About the Author:** Nancy Dupre Barnes, Ph.D., CRM, CA, is a Certified Records Manager and Certified Archivist who has authored more than a dozen books and articles and is currently a self-employed consultant. She holds a Ph.D. in educational psychology and research from the University of Kansas and a bachelor of arts degree in political science from the University of Massachusetts. Dupre Barnes can be contacted at [ndbarnes@gmail.com](mailto:ndbarnes@gmail.com).

# An Attempt to Effect Change in Local Government Records

Richard J. Cox, Ph.D.

**B**ack in the late 1970s and into the 1980s, a resurgence of interest in local government records resulted in many new archives and records management programs and publications on the subject. Basic volumes appeared: *Local Government Records: An Introduction to Their Management, Preservation, and Use* by H.G. Jones in 1980 and *The Management of Local Government Records: A Guide for Local Officials* by Bruce Dearstyne in 1988. Then interest seemed to wane, although a lot of good work continued going on, quietly reported at conferences and other meetings.

This new volume, *Managing Local Government Archives*, by archivists John H. Slate and Kaye Lanning Minchew, both with considerable experience in local government archives, will be welcomed by many interested in the topic for its updating of the earlier manuals. The focus by the authors is on providing "practical information" on managing local government records. And with this they succeed.



## Managing Local Government Archives

Authors: **John H. Slate** and **Kaye Lanning Minchew**

Publisher: **Rowman and Littlefield**

Publication Date: **2016**

Length: **146 pages**

Price: **\$45**

ISBN: **978-1-4422-6395-6**

Source:

[www.rowmanlittlefield.com](http://www.rowmanlittlefield.com)

## Traditional Book for Undervalued Profession

Slate and Minchew believe that most people holding responsibility for government records possess little formal training on how to deal with them (an indictment that what was going on several decades ago did not succeed, an issue they really do not address). In fact, in the initial paragraph of the book, they state, "While there is a long and proud history of local archives programs, it is a sobering fact that the vast majority of local government archives do not have the support of their governments, in spite of their incalculable value and worth."

This book certainly provides lots of reasons why this is a problem and suggestions for how the problem can be resolved, but I am not sure it goes deep enough into the substance of the challenge. Following this purpose, the authors have written a very traditional book. The book includes:

- Background on the history of local government recordkeeping and records programs