

discussions of the issues faced by professionals who work in archives with little or no digital content or Internet access (some archives are located in areas that have poor or no Internet access, and some may not make use of technology for cultural or philosophical reasons).³

The New Professional's Toolkit will be a useful resource for many – however, from the point of view of new archivists, it is limited by its focus on career planning and issues associated with new technologies in information management, with the result that it tends to gloss over differences between professions within the broader information management field. Since the book offers further reading and other resource suggestions throughout, it would have been nice to see in these sections more references to professional development resources available specifically for archivists. Perhaps this will be forthcoming on the website.

These gaps aside, *The New Professional's Toolkit* is a credible entry into an emerging area of interest. As experienced archivists retire, new archivists, especially those in smaller archives, may find themselves with less support and mentorship than have been available in the past. The book challenges archivists to take control of their careers and outlines some of the steps to do this. It is hoped that this will inspire others to develop career planning and management resources specifically for new archivists, lone archivists, and those whose careers are in transition.

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Past or Portal? Enhancing Undergraduate Learning through Special Collections and Archives. ELEANOR MITCHELL, PEGGY SEIDEN, and SUZY TARABA, eds. Chicago: Association of College and Research Libraries, 2012. xiii, 320 p. ISBN 978-083898610-3.

Past or Portal? provides how-to examples for librarians, archivists, and teaching faculty who want to bring archival and special collections resources to undergraduate students in the humanities. In their introduction, the editors comment that “Undergraduate engagement with the rich holdings of special collections and archives in colleges and universities, public and special libraries, is a powerful trend in higher education” (p. ix). They further state, “We hope that it will

3 For example some Aboriginal communities may object to the digitization of culturally sensitive material. Where a group or community decides not to digitize material, it is important that archivists respect that decision and provide alternative methods to manage and maintain those records effectively.

inspire librarians and faculty who are new to teaching using these resources, as well as those who have been using similar methods for years” (p. ix). All three editors come from predominantly library backgrounds, holding administrative positions in American academic libraries: Eleanor Mitchell is the director of library services at Dickinson College, Pennsylvania; Peggy Seiden is the college librarian at Swarthmore College, Pennsylvania; and Suzy Taraba is the director of special collections and archives at Wesleyan University, Connecticut. Although librarians are the intended audience for this book, many of the case studies cited will be of interest to archivists.

Past or Portal? is organized in four sections: “The Artifact,” “The Pedagogy,” “The Program,” and “The Work.” There are forty-seven short case studies, each presented as a separate chapter. No fewer than ninety-three authors, including archivists, professors, students, and librarians from universities all over the United States, offer many voices and experiences about working with faculty and arts students. All of the case studies are centred on the unifying theme of introducing undergraduate students to archival and special library collections.

The section entitled “The Artifact” presents examples of how to use a published source as the object of the lesson. For example, one case study explains how to create a speed-dating exercise by setting up stations, each featuring a book and a set of questions. The purpose of this exercise is to encourage students to critically analyze a book related to their topic. The students spend five minutes at each station, examining the source and answering the questions. The exercise is followed by a group discussion, looking for common themes and issues among the books (pp. 30–34). This section focuses only on the use and analysis of published sources. The authors provide a substantial amount of detail, including lesson plans, which make it easier for the reader to understand how to structure an engaging session. Many of the examples can be modified to develop lessons that can be offered in many academic institutions.

The section “The Pedagogy” demonstrates the benefits of planning an entire course based on primary documents. For example, one case study discusses how architectural plans in the archives can be used to supplement an architectural history course; students gain hands-on experience working with primary sources. After the initial information session in the archives, the students work one-on-one with the archivist to review the research strategy and select relevant sources (pp. 92–96). The entire assignment is essentially completed in the archives. All case studies emphasize that a close collaboration between the archivist and the teaching faculty is important to the design and delivery of a course that involves assignments based on primary sources.

The third section, entitled “The Program,” discusses academic courses that integrate archival and special collections materials throughout the term. This section is less about the value of single information sessions and more about integrating primary and rare secondary sources into the undergraduate curricu-

lum. For example, one of the courses described in a case study lays out a curriculum for a series of lectures, each supported by an assignment that requires an analysis of a set of primary sources. The students are asked to “develop arguments and draw conclusions from the source itself, rather than find sources that support pre-established arguments” (p. 214). This section includes a great deal of advice for the reader who wants to design a course, or work with teaching faculty to be part of a structured program.

The case studies in the final section, “The Work,” offer examples of assignments that are mutually beneficial to the student and the archives. For example, one of the featured archives uses a blog as a tool for creating box inventories at the item level. Students post an item-level descriptive record to a blog while analyzing a primary document within a fonds (pp. 255–60). The items that are described, using predetermined description fields, can be incorporated into a finding aid or database. Other cases show how students can be engaged in processing collections, designing exhibits, and social networking assignments under the direction of the archivist. The authors provide examples of their work sheets or supplementary handouts as part of an appendix to the case study.

All of the case studies are written in an easy-to-read style and include many personal reflections and experiences. The editors claim that “This book is one attempt to address the need for models that offer best practices, creating approaches, and solutions to commonly experienced challenges” (p. x). However, one common message provided by all of the authors is the time commitment required to be involved within the classroom. Their vast collective experience clearly shows that a great deal of planning, collaborating, assessing, and re-vamping are involved when designing and delivering educational and outreach programs.

This book begins to fill the gap in archival literature by providing examples that demonstrate how primary sources can be incorporated into the classroom. Archivists may well consider using the examples to their advantage when involved in educational and outreach programming. Perhaps then archivists could share their experiences more widely, adding to the small selection of literature available on this topic. *Past or Portal?* demonstrates the need for more educational and outreach programs to be designed by archivists, delivered to undergraduate students, and discussed in the archival literature.

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