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Review of *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*

By Anne J. Gilliland. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2014. 322 pp. Softcover. \$69.95. ISBN: 978-1-931666-68-8

Anne J. Gilliland, author of *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives*, is currently a professor and director of the archival studies specialization, Department of Information Studies, and director of the Center for Information Evidence at the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles. She has two Masters Degrees in English Language and Literature and Library and Information Science; and a PhD in Information and Library Studies with a cognate in Business Information Systems from the University of Michigan. Dr. Gilliland has received several awards and honors during her career as an archivist and professor, including being elected as a Fellow of the Society of American Archivists in 2000. She has published dozens of articles, books, chapters, and other publications on a range of archival topics. According to her biography at the end of this book, the majority of Gilliland's teaching and research interests relate to "the design, evaluation, and history of recordkeeping, cultural and community information systems and practices, metadata creation and management, community-based archiving, and archival pluralization." It is this broad scope of interests and expertise in the current trends of the archival profession that uniquely qualifies Gilliland to not only document the history of the profession with relation to these trends, but also to assess where the profession is or should be going to ensure relevance and stability in a world of ever-changing technologies and socio-cultural constructs.

When I first read the title *Conceptualization of 21st Century Archives*, I thought it might be about how the day-to-day operation and management of archives in the 21st Century differs from past centuries due to technological changes and advancements. I expected to read about practical applications for archivists to meet this challenge. However, Gilliland seems to be less practical and more intellectual, focusing more on paradigm and theoretical shifts that must take place for archives and archivists to remain relevant in the 21st Century. To explore these paradigm shifts, she constructs the book in such a way as to teach both history and application. The main premise is in portraying how records, archives, and recordkeeping have developed as a result of or in response to the constant changes in technologies and society associated with the digital age. In this sense, the book is as much a history of the profession as it is a manual for how archivists should begin to think and approach their work in the 21st Century, exploring areas in archival science that information and communication technology have significantly affected. Areas explored include the following:

- American archival engagement with the documentation movement, 1900-1950 (Chapter 3)

- Standardization and automation of description and access in America (Chapter 4)
- Archival description and metadata, and how it applies to digital networks (Chapter 5)
- Early analog computing and machine-readable records, and the transition to digital records (Chapter 6)
- Research in electronic records management (Chapter 7)
- Recordkeeping models (Chapter 9)
- Digital repositories, preservation, and curation (Chapter 10)

Chapters 3 through 6 are quite informative for new or experienced archivists, as Gilliland takes the reader through the history of archives and the archival profession, focusing primarily on the United States but also mentioning developments in other parts of the world, in relation to the reaction of the profession to emerging technologies since the early 20th Century. This pattern helps archivists to realize that the need to adapt to technology is not new, and has been a part of the profession from the beginning. Gilliland informs the reader of key historical figures or events that played a part these developments, including Waldo Gifford Leland, Solon J. Buck and the American Documentation Institute (ADI). Each chapter also concludes with a proposal from Gilliland as to how we can learn from this history. For example, the documentation movement of the early 20th Century fostered international collaboration and standardization, both in archives and in related professions, concepts key to recordkeeping in the 21st Century. Unfortunately, the era around World War II forced many, particularly the United States, to look inward and become insular in their developments and standards, something Gilliland hopes we will start to move away from in the 21st Century.

Gilliland also points out in the chapter on standardization of archival description and access that standards have always had to be reassessed and adjusted to accommodate emerging changes in formats and technologies, and other professions, such as librarians, have readily accepted to constant evolution of these standards. This is something the archival profession must learn from as we move into the digital age. In Chapter 5, Gilliland describes ways archives can use and take advantage of new and emerging metadata standards to enhance description and build bridges between related fields, as well as utilize the community of archival users.

In the chapter on early analog computing and machine-readable records, Gilliland explores the history of recordkeeping as it relates to technology and computers, arguing that computing and records creation have been tightly linked from the outset, mapping how first- and second-generation archivists have had to deal with electronic records that are increasingly more complex from the end of World War II to the first decade of the 21st Century. This leads into Chapter 7, the longest chapter in the book, where Gilliland provides tables to show the most

important research developments related to electronic records management, including early projects by Margaret Hedstrom (1991), NHPRC (1991), University of Pittsburgh (1993-1995), University of British Columbia (1994-1997), and Indiana University (1995-1997). Each of these projects, and others that followed, show how archivists have grappled with the challenges of managing digital records, dealing with such topics as record-keeping system requirements; metadata standards and repurposing; defining records in electronic systems; authenticity and reliability of records in an electronic environment; and digital records preservation. Gilliland concludes that research is showing that the traditional concept of archivist as custodian does not apply to electronic records, but we must now follow a post-custodial or non-custodial approach and be more “records consultants” involved in creating recordkeeping systems that meet archival standards of preservation and authenticity. Important emerging areas of research, covered in Chapter 8, include digital forensics, social media, and cloud computing, which introduce archivists to new vocabulary common to the information technology world; challenges concepts of provenance and authenticity; and, shows the need for archivists to create policies and strategies for proper management of electronic records.

Dr. Gilliland concludes by reviewing recordkeeping models that could be considered for managing 21st Century records; and, the emerging concepts of digital repositories, preservation, and curation, and how archivists might contribute positively to these developing fields. In her concluding chapter, she restates the purpose of this book is not so much to address archives and archival ideas in the digital age, but to show “the shifts and divergences in archival discourse that technological developments necessitate, facilitate, or inspire,” and also alludes to “the multiple ‘-tions’ that tug increasingly at different corners of archival consciousness and practices—including globalization, pluralization, integration, collaboration, participation, democratization, liberation, reconciliation, co-creation, repatriation, and replication.” (p. 255). Gilliland emphasizes the importance of archivists needing to change and adapt; and, to look at records regardless of form or medium, emphasizing records as evidence, in order to meet the challenges of managing records in the 21st century and beyond.

The key benefits of this work lie in how it provides a great introduction to key historical developments and events related to archival science and concepts today that appear to have risen out of the technological age, but really have their roots in earlier times. It introduces or reminds archivists of key figures (i.e. Waldo Gifford Leland) or events (documentation movement, analog computing) in the history of the archival profession, and the theoretical concepts that fuel today’s practices, without overwhelming them with information. This is key to teaching both long-time and emerging archivists how technology has affected the profession from the beginning, and that we should not fear the changes it causes, but rather embrace them. Throughout the book, Gilliland’s knowledge and expertise in record keeping models and systems is evident. The book does well in portraying how electronic records and digital records management are challenging longtime concepts of what an archivist is or does, as well as key archival theories and practices, such as archivist as

custodian. This work will go a long way in helping archivists to understand the historical context of these theories, how they were created and applied over time, and how their conceptual nature is applicable to records of any type, regardless of medium or format.

However, as the book begins to introduce the reader to more modern concepts and theories, the amount of technical detail increases. This may be fine for an established archivist with background knowledge of these concepts. But it might be a bit overwhelming and difficult to follow for archivists with little exposure to emerging research in electronic records management. Gilliland also introduces such concepts as “pluralization,” “glocalization,” and several other “-tions,” both in the beginning and ending of the book, but provides little explanation of what these terms mean or how they apply to the theories spelled out in the book.

Overall, *Conceptualizing 21st-Century Archives* is extremely useful and valuable to the archival profession by providing historical context for many of the standards and issues archivists deal with as they attempt to manage records in the 21st Century.

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