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Review of Sustainable Enterprise Strategies for Optimizing Digital Stewardship: A Guide for Libraries, Archives, and Museums

By Angela Fritz. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2021. 95 pp. Softcover. \$39.00. ISBN: 978-1-5381-4286-8

Angela Fritz is the state archivist and division administrator of Library, Archives, and Museum Collections at the Wisconsin Historical Society. Before this, she served as the head of the University of Notre Dame Archives and interim head of Special Collections and University Archives at the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville. Fritz has also worked as an archivist for the Office of Presidential Libraries and Museums in Washington, DC. She holds a Ph.D. in American history and public history from Loyola University Chicago and a master's degree in library science with a concentration in archival administration from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

This new publication is part of the Library Information and Technology Association (LITA) Guides series to provide current and practical information on technology for librarians and archivists. Fritz covers a wide range of topics in a concise ninety-five pages. She covers the importance of digital collection assessment, the need to think holistically about tool selection and infrastructure development, and the importance of creating cross-functional workflows that streamline the accession process. Chapter one covers general concepts of digital stewardship as well as a history of digital archiving. Chapter two deals with assessing digital collections; chapter three lays out a tiered plan for instituting a digital archive and then building on it. In chapter four, she argues for digital stewardship integration in the broader IT functions of the institution. Finally, she covers the merits of cloud-based digital preservation storage in chapter five. Finally, Fritz makes a strong argument for the need for distributed digital preservation that emphasizes cloud storage.

The strength of Fritz's work is its comprehensiveness. Fritz has produced a good survey of the current state of thought and technology regarding integrated digital archives aimed at the knowledgeable professional in a medium or large institution. The bibliography is excellent and is a valuable resource on its own. The question is who the intended audience is for this book? Suppose this work is meant for the archivist who was tasked with establishing the institution's first digital archive. In that case, Fritz's writing style is not accessible enough for the average archivist, who is probably the person most likely to purchase this book. The text is dense and heavily burdened by business jargon, making it difficult to understand what is being discussed on an initial reading. It takes several read-throughs of each passage unless the reader already understands the concepts and has a firm grasp of corporate argot. An example can be found on page 39:

“As GLAM institutions contemplate ‘building out’ an interoperable infrastructure, DAME development should also provide a set of scalable general-purpose services accessible to varied organizational units, multiple repositories, and operating environments.”

This type of dense writing will make it difficult for a novice to find anything useful in the book. The title should have been a clue to any likely reader of what they are in for. For all that, the author does deliver on what she promises and describes a plan for an integrated enterprise-level digital repository system, but only as far as describing the required organizational units and relationships. There are almost no nuts and bolts directions on establishing the various parts of the larger plan. This makes it clear that the book is aimed at a senior archivist or librarian manager attempting to grow a small, established digital repository inside a larger institutional IT division.

These criticisms aside, the author has succeeded in producing a complete but unpleasant to read survey of the state of digital repositories. Her recognition that the maturing of digital archives as an essential and primary function of traditional archives instead of the “nice to have” afterthought that it frequently was during the previous two decades and that they need to be embedded in larger IT departments for survivability and growth is inciteful and timely. This ensures that these repositories have access to the resources required to provide large amounts of digital storage and the technical talent to keep the data uncorrupted and secure. It is just a shame that it isn’t easier to read.

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