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## Review of Born-Digital Design Records

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## Review of *Born-Digital Design Records*

Edited by Samantha Winn. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2022. 235 pp. Softcover. \$39.99. ISBN: 978-1-945246-87-6

Samantha Winn, editor of *Born-Digital Design Records*, has been affiliated with the International Archives of Women in Architecture at Virginia Tech, SAA's Design Records Section, and their Digital Design Records Taskforce. The authors of *Born-Digital Design Records* are archivists, digital archivists, and information managers focused on digital preservation, design, and technology, including a licensed architect turned teacher, writer, and consultant. They are from various repositories including California Polytechnic State University's Kennedy Library, Canadian Centre for Architecture, Eames Institute, Georgia Institute of Technology's Library, Getty Research Institute's Special Collections, Sasaki, and Yale University Library. The contributors to this title are well qualified through experience and education in this subject area.

*Born-Digital Design Records* consist of three modules that "guide archivists in managing born-digital design records through historical overviews, use cases, practical tool registries, sample workflows, and robust glossaries of terms. This accessible volume applies to archivists in business archives, architectural firms, museums, universities, and government offices." Design records are a specialized record group and extremely niche. As the book points out because of this and other factors archiving these records have not been focused on as extensively as their analog counterparts until the last twenty years. This ensemble of authors does an excellent job of bringing together the background and technical practicalities that archivists will need to be aware of when working with these types of records.

The first module "Navigating the Technical Landscape of Born-Digital Design Records," covers the historical background and progression of archiving design records, including past research. This module is very helpful and puts into context the standards that have emerged and the steps to archiving at different stages in a project's life cycle. The files that archivists will be processing from design projects cover the familiar PDF and JPG to the more complicated DWG. This module has a section that breaks down the different data types, their files, descriptions, and standards. This can be very handy for those unfamiliar file types that archivists might encounter. It also makes it apparent why working with the creator of a collection is important before any material is transferred. No person or design firm is going to create and organize their records in the exact or even similar way. The module has examples of possible folder structures and mentions the variety of programs that are available to creators of these records. The detailed glossary was especially helpful regarding the technical language for many of the components of a born-digital design

record. For archivists having to deal with design records this module is a good starting point to understand what you can expect and look for from the records before you get them.

The main point I would like to make about the second module “Emerging Best Practices in the Accession, Preservation, and Emulation of Born-Digital Design Records,” is that it is an informative section for ALL born-digital records and not just limited to design records. The topics covered are useful to all digital archivists, including ingest and working with donors, the complications that come with born-digital material, and preservation and access fundamentals. If you are working with born-digital records this is foundational information. The authors share the most up-to-date migration and emulation practices referring to a multitude of tools, guidelines, and best practices. The appendices for this module contain a “Digital Material Donor Survey” that would give archivists a better grasp of what they are receiving and a highly detailed “Sample of Deed of Gift” for digital material to inform both the archivist and the donor of their rights and what can be expected from the management of these records. Created by Georgia Institute of Technology’s Archives, Records Management, and Digital Curation Department, this would be a useful template for those starting a born-digital design records program or for those looking to revamp their outdated deed of gift. Describing the bare minimum preservation techniques to the most intricate this module explains that there are instances where “processing” material to the nth degree might be necessary and they list out tools to assist in this endeavor. Much of the decision making depends on research needs and individual policies. I like the fact that they point out that the bare minimum might be all that an archivist can do at this specific time and that it might be all that is needed for a specific repository. They also point out that because archivists probably will not be able to handle it all, working with others in an organization is important. Archivists might collaborate with the IT department or seek out help from preservation groups. Again, working with the creators can minimize the amount of time and effort the archivist will need to expend when processing a collection.

The last module “Case Studies in Born-Digital Design Records,” focuses on three different repositories, California Polytechnic State University Special Collections and Archives, Canadian Centre for Architecture (CCA), and the design firm Sasaki. This section shares the current practices of these institutions for their management of born-digital material, including appraisal and acquisition, arrangement and description, preservation and storage, and finally access. Although mentioned in the second module, the Open Archival Information System (OAIS) framework and its different stages, Submission Information Package (SIP), Archival Information Package (AIP), and Dissemination Information Package (DIP), are referenced more frequently in this module and connect with the case studies. Examples from CCA are used the most followed by Cal Poly and then the design firm. As in the rest of the book the figures and tables bring the text into perspective and helps the reader get a bigger picture of the tools the authors are referring to. The main take away from this module is that there is not a one size fits all way of handling records and every institution will have challenges to figure out.

The layout of *Born-Digital Design Records* into these three separate modules was an effective writing strategy. The topics' progression happened naturally, and it allowed for a flowing narrative. The technical terminology can seem intimidating, especially to those new to the field, but the authors do a good job in breaking the explanations and examples down into easily digestible parts. I would recommend this title to archivists without any experience with born-digital design records, especially if you will be working with those records in the future. Knowledge of basic archival practices as related to analog materials and some digital background would be a plus since this is not an introduction to archives type of work. The authors share sensible practices and give attainable recommendations. The many applicable tools mentioned, and articles and websites footnoted give the reader plenty of resources for further reading and education. The up-to-date resources are compiled from what is happening with born-digital design records and other born-digital records globally and are created by those in the forefront of the field.

As an archivist with a background in digitization and one who is just starting to process born-digital special collections and university archives I appreciated that many of the topics mentioned work with any type of born-digital material. The challenges mentioned could pertain to any digital material, software dependency, obsolescence of software and hardware, lack of backward compatibility and long-term preservation needs. Some parts feel overwhelming with technical jargon but that is the nature of the beast when dealing with born-digital material especially in such a complex field as design. Born-digital material is the future of archives and it is good to know that there are so many resources available to help navigate this area. When the authors compare the changes in technology from the last decade it is remarkable what is accessible and readable now that was not ten years ago and what helpful archival tools that are now built into the software.

*Born-Digital Design Records* is a useful text for an archivist processing born-digital design records.

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