

very accessible to amateur archivists, it does offer a strong and compelling message regarding the serious challenges that digital records and the Web pose to both our profession and to amateur family archivists. Since the intent of the Web has been to remain as open and democratic as possible, perhaps the populist approach that Cox promotes is ultimately the best remedy. It is evident that the time has come for archivists to share the responsibility for preserving personal records with the public, which can be accomplished by empowering and better preparing our constituents to contend with the difficulties and perils of preserving their digital treasures on their computers and on the Web. Despite the fact that we may regard this type of memorabilia as overly voluminous and non-archival if it falls outside of our institutional mandates, as Cox persuasively argues, these types of records do hold tremendous value to their custodians and to society. By abandoning our traditionally narrow perspective, we can share our unique skills with a segment of society that may never have stepped inside an archives before, resulting in the broadening of our clientele and support base, and subsequently educating the public about how to take control over their family archives.

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**The Story Behind the Book: Preserving Authors' and Publishers' Archives.** LAURA MILLAR. Vancouver: Canadian Centre for Studies in Publishing Press, 2009. 224 p. ISBN 978-0-9738727-4-3.

Designed to introduce archives and their preservation to authors and publishers, Laura Millar's *The Story Behind the Book* discusses the importance of authors' and publishers' archives, and provides strategies for maintaining records in-house and for approaching an archival institution to preserve them. The book is a follow-up to her 1989 publication *Archival Gold*; it covers extended territory by treating the archives of authors as well as those of publishers in an international context, and by discussing digital archives. The title hints that it may provide the history of the acquisition and preservation of literary and publishing archives; however, the work is not a deep analysis for archivists. Rather, its light tone is meant to entice writers and publishers into preserving their archives.

Millar is a persuasive writer. Her direct language and humour are well suited to a work of this type; she frequently is able to dovetail her thoughts to the experience of her audience. With reference to preservation, she states, "Publishers know more than most about the differences in quality, longevity, and cost of the paper used for printing and binding" (p. 124). At another point she engages the ever-growing archival literacy and interest of authors, with examples such as Margaret Atwood's donation to a library of an original letter

used in researching her novel *Alias Grace*.

Millar grounds the reader in the whys and wherefores of preserving both publishing and literary records, and resists attempting a complete survey of institutions or resources. She presents examples that are as far-ranging as they are engaging, and makes good use of the heady cocktail of fame, fortune, and genius that draws so much public interest to the world of publishing and authorship. She uses anecdotes about past authors such as Oscar Wilde, Virginia Woolf and James Joyce, and living writers such as Salman Rushdie. She also makes keen use of examples from publishers, agents, and editors. One such anecdote describes how Scottish publishing house John Murray kept some of its archives in an airing cupboard in the attic, with “Darwin in a shelf marked ‘underpants’ and Byron in a drawer marked ‘sheets’” (p. 16). Such detail enlivens the nature of publishers’ and authors’ archives, and conveys the thrill of their discovery.

The work progresses from what the reader might be expected to know about literary and publishing archives to a deeper discussion of archival acquisition and preservation. The early chapters offer examples of important literary archives from around the world, and explore the archival value of literary and publishing archives, and their interest to researchers in diverse disciplines (from literary history to women’s history).

Chapters 4 to 8 address archival appraisal and present the documents commonly found in publishers’ and writers’ archives as well as those from others active in the field of publishing (e.g., agents). Millar discusses the acquisition policies of varied institutions worldwide, how archival acquisition and processing are conducted, and how to negotiate an archival agreement. Chapters 9 to 12 discuss records management techniques and how these might be applied to the records of organizations and individuals; electronic records; frequently asked questions; and additional resources.

Although the discussion is fluent and coherent, the text suffers from a shifting between the issues concerning publishers to those of authors: these are vastly different types of archives in scope and form. The text tends to focus on organizations, with individuals and their archives as an afterthought. At other times, the wording shifts between “literary archives” and “literary and publishing archives.” Although interest among researchers, the public, and publishers valorizes the literary, the use of the latter term is more suitable because of the inclusion of general publishing and non-fiction authorship. The work itself makes good use of examples from both.

Millar centralizes records management techniques in her approach to creators’ maintenance of records. She chooses not to ground the discussion in the archival concepts of provenance and original order; rather, archival functions are presented as a series of steps, and archival concepts appear fleetingly in the text. The discussion of appraisal values in Chapter 4, for example, tends to focus on informational value and not contextual information; original order

appears in reference to preparing material for transfer, but rarely in the context of recordkeeping. Downplaying archival concepts is meant to make the text accessible and tailored to the creator; however, the text could have been expanded to include clarification of archival principles. As well, a few statements stick out while reading the work, such as Millar's insistence that probably less than five percent of the records of government and business, and less than fifteen percent of an individual's documents should be kept as archives. I suspect the percentage is much higher for an individual's personal archives.

Millar's advice about what to keep and what to destroy centres on the retention of operational records in order to preserve what, at times, she calls an "official record" (p. 165). While a records survey and records schedule are useful devices for larger organizations to control and access their records, this advice is most suited to large publishing companies and not applicable to all smaller office situations or to the personal archives of authors. For example, *The Coach House Press Fonds*, acquired in 1986 by the National Library (now LAC), contains a file for the contents of the office drawer of founder and printer, Stan Bevington, titled "Stan's Top Drawer: 1977." This is telling for a small press whose disorderly office was reflective of the "hippy era," and whose printing and publishing sides blurred amorphously. Most small presses are two- or three-person operations and to advise systematization prior to transfer is to efface this less structured, working order. This advice could be modified to accommodate the arrangements of small businesses more akin to cottage industries.

Millar's directives are even more problematic for the personal archives of authors. Fully adopting records management techniques to personal archives is not a generally accepted practice. At times Millar's approach seems to be based on assumptions about the structure of writers' archives, as with her insistence that, "writers usually divide their records according to their work and assignments. Writing a novel, attending an authors' conference, or teaching a summer workshop on writing are all different tasks, and the records related to them should be filed separately. Within those functions, records would be filed by the specific task being performed, not by date or correspondent or type of document" (p. 147).

Encouraging the cohesion of personal archival fonds, Millar mentions several times that a fonds is meant to capture both the personal and professional sides of life. However, she stresses functional analysis, and suggests that authors make decisions about their archives based on notions of "operational" and "housekeeping" records. She suggests that the most current version of a manuscript is the most vital version to its creator. This may be correct as far as the author is concerned but is a dangerous proposition for researchers of textual genetics (the analysis of a literary writing process). Statements like these may lead authors to undertake drastic culling or prioritization. Inviting a creator to classify his/her work by function implies reorganization of what may

already be a comprehensive or nearly complete filing order of personal value.

Millar often reiterates that a prospective donor should be in touch with an archivist or records professional before making drastic decisions, and she mentions that an author's personal archives would provide a broad basis for historical and biographical research, rather than only focusing on "writing-related documents." Yet Millar also makes specific suggestions to authors such as "records about local arrangements and guest speakers can be destroyed right away" (p. 147) because they are housekeeping records. Surely tracing the creator's role in activities involving others is integral to personal fonds as are the qualities of that interaction.

In summary, this book has gone far to reach prospective donors in a vital area of cultural archives production. The text is lively and engaging. Millar makes our procedures and processes clear to these readers. She provides extensive, useful advice of particular importance to this group while debunking myths and false expectations. She encourages these creators to value their records from an understanding of their archival value. This book is a first-stage intervention with literary and publishing communities, which encourages further discussions with archivists.

This work not only provides advice to creators, it also offers archivists the opportunity to debate particular latent issues in our field that are considered current fault lines in our profession. Such questions include: How do the fonds resulting from the application of records management procedures differ from the fonds that receive other types of pre-custodial intervention or none at all? How are conceptualizations of archives shifting toward records management with arguments for increased utility? How are issues surrounding personal archives being addressed in this environment? Although this work is strong in its comprehensiveness and in its utilitarian approach, I encourage its specialist readers to debate these underlying issues.

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**Thinking About Oral History: Theories and Applications.** THOMAS L. CHARLTON, LOIS E. MYERS, and REBECCA SHARPLESS, eds. Lanham: AltaMira Press, 2008. 392 p. ISBN-13: 978-0-7591-1090-8.

Oral history became popular both as a practice and as an archival record with the arrival of the portable tape recorder in the 1970s. It has proven to be much more than a fad with ongoing archival acquisitions and, perhaps surprising to some, as a movement that has evolved into a separate discipline. This book is testament to the evolution of oral history as an intellectual activity, not just as a technique that creates archival records as a by-product. The book is intended for the oral history scholar and/or professional oral historians teaching oral