Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives. FRANCIS X. BLOUIN JR. and WILLIAM G. ROSENBERG. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. x, 257 p. ISBN 978-0-19-974054-3.

By the end of the twentieth century, archival education had gained its independence from the discipline of history, as archivists' traditional historical orientation proved insufficient when dealing with the complexity of modern records. However, according to Francis X. Blouin Jr., Director of the Bentley Historical Library and a professor in the Department of History and the School of Information at the University of Michigan, and William G. Rosenberg, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of Michigan, historians are largely unaware of archivists' move away from historical foundations. Blouin and Rosenberg identify the growing separation of the historical and archival professions, which they call the "archival divide."

In *Processing the Past: Contesting Authority in History and the Archives,* Blouin and Rosenberg describe the archival divide as problematic for both historians and archivists: the former are unaware of how archival practices shape the documentary record, and the latter are unable to be responsive to the needs of contemporary historians. Hoping to bring these matters to the attention of both communities, Blouin and Rosenberg address archival and historical issues in alternating chapters, outlining the parallel development and eventual separation of the two fields. The book attempts to speak "in one voice to what have now become two very different audiences" (p. 7), and in their introduction, the authors point out which chapters will be most relevant to each group. The book won the Society of American Archivists' 2012 Waldo Gifford Leland Award for superior writing in the field of archival history, theory, or practice.

In the first part of the book, Blouin and Rosenberg trace the development of the disciplines of history and archives in the modern era, and they discuss the impact of "scientific" history on the structure and theoretical underpinnings of archival programs. They outline the evolution of the modern archival profession and the resulting opening of the archival divide, highlighting archivists' shift away from historians beginning in the 1950s, the subsequent adoption of a records management approach, and the more recent challenges archivists face in managing increasingly complex electronic records systems.

Turning their attention to history, the authors trace the development of the discipline in the post-war era. They discuss the rejection of the positivistic methods employed in the nineteenth century and describe historians' engagement with postmodernism and its challenges to traditional historical narratives as well as to the authority of archival sources.

The second part of the book outlines the concerns and methodologies of contemporary historians, such as the interest in the study of social memory and its relationship to identity. Blouin and Rosenberg also discuss the vari-

ous practices, technologies, and theories that shape the archival record and influence its interpretation. They examine the impact of archival functions on the meaning of documents, particularly appraisal, arrangement and description, and reference. They also consider the effect of legislative and policy frameworks and describe the challenges and opportunities presented by the digital world for the acquisition, discovery, and use of records. As well, the authors outline current approaches to historical understanding and the impact of the changing nature of archival practice on academic history. The authors conclude by offering thoughts on how the archival divide might be bridged.

For the archival reader, there are several significant issues with this book. The first is that in creating their narrative of the evolution of archival theory and practice, the authors oversimplify archival scholarship, suggesting that archivists' only concerns are dealing with the ever-growing bulk of archives and the challenging nature of electronic records. While these have been prevalent topics of discussion, the authors completely ignore the postmodern turn in archival theory and the work of scholars such as Brien Brothman, Terry Cook, Verne Harris, Randall Jimerson, Eric Ketalaar, Tom Nesmith, and others.[1] Blouin and Rosenberg state that "new historiographical or methodological concerns were simply not in evidence" (p. 85) in archival writing, but this is not true. Since the mid-1990s, archival theory, based on the same theoretical foundations employed by the "new" historians, emerged and influenced thinking about records and archives. Contrary to Blouin and Rosenberg's assertion, archivists have critically engaged with archives and records from feminist, leftist, post-structuralist, queer-theory, and other perspectives. In neglecting the critical archival theoreticians, the authors suggest that archivists, with the exception of the seemingly rare "thoughtful" (p. 142) or "insightful" (p. 149) ones, have not engaged with trends of contemporary theory. According to their narrative, archivists, unlike critical historians and cultural theorists, have not questioned documentary sources or interrogated archives and remain unaware that their institutions are neither objective nor neutral. However, an examination of archival literature since the

1 The only exception to this is that, in a footnote, Blouin and Rosenberg do cite a number of these critical archival theorists. This note (Chapter 9, pp. 239–40, fn. 46) echoes a list of citations provided in an article by Joan Schwartz and Terry Cook, with some minor modifications. All the articles listed are dated prior to 2000, and there is no engagement with them in the main text of the book. See Joan M. Schwartz and Terry Cook, "Archives, Records, and Power: The Making of Modern Memory," *Archival Science* 2, nos. 1–2 (March 2002): 10, fn. 17. Where the authors do make reference to archival writings in their text, it is predominately drawn from a collection of essays they edited based on lectures presented at the University of Michigan in 2000–01. See Francis X. Blouin Jr. and William G. Rosenberg, eds., *Archives, Documentation, and Institutions of Social Memory: Essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2006.

mid-1990s would show that this is not the case. Making reference to the work of archival theorists would have strengthened Blouin and Rosenberg's argument, particularly when they discuss the "archivist as activist" in appraisal, arrangement and description, and the architecture of archives, all topics that have been covered in archival literature.

In addition to their lack of awareness of archivists' understanding of contemporary archival theory, Blouin and Rosenberg have a problematic view of non-governmental/institutional archives, which they term "identity archives" (pp. 132–35). Identity archives are, according to the authors, institutions whose mandate is to preserve records relating to race, ethnicity, gender, or sexuality. Singling out the Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture at the New York Public Library, the Lesbian and Gay Archives in San Francisco, and the Leo Baeck Institute at the Center for Jewish History in New York, they flag a series of "problems" with identity archives. They question how these institutions could establish appraisal criteria and how they would determine what types or forms of documentation to acquire. They ask, "Should archivists *simply let* collecting institutions solve whatever problems the changing nature of sources may present?" (p. 134, emphasis added). Blouin and Rosenberg suggest here that groups operating identity archives are not neutral and therefore lack the authority to establish legitimate mandates, are unable to devise appraisal criteria appropriate to their area of interest, and are ill equipped to deal with diverse record types. Similar concerns are not raised about the legitimacy of other collecting institutions, such as the Immigration Research Center at the University of Minnesota (pp. 5, 156) or Blouin's own Bentley Historical Library. The authors recognize that identity archives have been established because governmental and other institutional archives do not necessarily serve the needs and interests of particular groups, and that marginalized groups are inadequately documented – or even actively silenced – in mainstream archives. However, in this discussion of identity archives, Blouin and Rosenberg patronizingly dismiss the validity of a diverse group of institutions and question their ability to operate their archives as they see fit.

Another significant issue with the book is that the authors, despite providing a thorough overview of why archival theory and practice diverged from historical concerns, uncritically maintain the belief that historians should be entitled to continue to influence archival functions. In chapters on political aspects at play in archival work (Chapter 9) and on cyberinfrastructure (Chapter 10) in particular, Blouin and Rosenberg seem surprised that contemporary historians are not consulted during appraisal and other archival activities. They even suggest that historians should be involved in the design of electronic recordkeeping systems. They note that these systems are not based on the "needs and values of scholarship" (p. 184) and that while systems, such as those conforming to the recordkeeping requirements implemented in the

wake of Sarbanes-Oxley legislation,[2] "have been carefully engineered to meet legal and administrative requirements, they have no regard at all for the needs of the historical or scholarly research" (p. 192). Such statements appear regularly throughout the book in the discussions of archival functions, including appraisal, arrangement and description, and the provision of access to records. They imply that historians are a privileged user group whose interests should be paramount when archivists conduct their work. While these chapters introduce historians to the important processes by which archival practices shape the documentary heritage and historians' access to it, Blouin and Rosenberg do not consider why historians do not, and should not, have a privileged position in archival work.

The book concludes by emphasizing the continuing importance of archives to historians, the need for historians to understand the pressures that shape the archival record, and by proposing future areas of collaboration. While the authors overstate the case for the role of the historian, they correctly identify areas for collaboration, such as contributing to description using Web 2.0 and other emerging technologies.

Processing the Past provides historians with a detailed, if too narrowly focused, introduction to archival work and the factors that have an impact on the shape and meaning of the archival record, which ultimately affect historical research. It is clear from this book that archivists have not done an exceptional job of informing users of the various methodological, technological, social, and political pressures that shape the archives and affect preservation and the ability to provide access to records. If historians understood how archives are composed and function, they might feel less frustration when working in archives. This volume goes some way to communicating archival practices, but because of the way the authors simplify their narrative regarding archival theory and practice, it may be a frustrating read for an archival audience.[3]

Despite its limitations, *Processing the Past* has some value for archivists as it provides a good overview of the development of the discipline of history, and it shows the assumptions and desires of academic researchers, a small but

2 The Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002 is a corporate accountability law that was passed in the US in the wake of a series of major financial scandals. It has sections dealing with recordkeeping, specifying the types of business records that must be kept; it defines retention periods for records; and it specifies penalties, including fines and/or imprisonment for the destruction, alteration, or falsification of records. See Sarbanes-Oxley Act of 2002. Pub. L. 107–204. 116 Stat. 745. §802.

3 For two detailed examinations of the relationship between archivists and historians, from the Canadian archival perspective, see Tom Nesmith, "What's History Got to Do With It? Reconsidering the Place of Historical Knowledge in Archival Work," *Archivaria* 57 (Spring 2004): 1–27; and Terry Cook, "The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape," *The Canadian Historical Review* 90, no. 3 (September 2009): 497–534, reprinted in *American Archivist* 74, no. 2 (Fall/Winter 2011): 600–32.

not insignificant group of users. If archivists are aware of this group's expectations, of how records enter an archives and how historians wish them to be presented, archivists can be better prepared to manage these expectations in light of archival realities.

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Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age. ROY ROSENZWEIG. New York: Columbia University Press, 2011. xxiv, 309 p. ISBN 978-0-231-52171-0.

Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age is a collection of eleven essays that takes its title from history's muse, Clio, and is authored (some articles are co-authored) by the late American historian Roy Rosenzweig, founding director of the Center for History and New Media at George Mason University in Virginia. The Center uses digital media and technology to advance history education and research and investigates their impact on history education, research, dissemination, and preservation.[1] The essays examine and explore the impact that digital media, in particular the Internet, have had on history – from research and teaching to preservation and access. The collection was originally envisioned by Rosenzweig in 2005 as "a book of essays that would track significant developments in the field of digital history during its earliest years and consider possible directions for its future" (p. xxi).

Clio Wired was published posthumously thanks to Deborah Kaplan, Rosenzweig's widow and an associate professor of English and Cultural Studies at George Mason University. Kaplan organized Rosenzweig's work into three thematic sections to emphasize the ways he "engaged with the new technologies" (p. xxi): Rethinking History in New Media; Practicing History in New Media: Teaching, Researching, Presenting and Collecting; and Surveying History in New Media. The essays span a twelve-year period, 1994 to 2006, and are arranged chronologically within each section; however, nothing will be lost to the reader who randomly peruses the book based solely on interest. While Kaplan admits the categories are "overly neat," they serve to situate the essays in the broader context of Rosenzweig's research and meditations on history education and research, and how these intersect with digital media and his knowledge of the history of the Internet.

1 Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media: http://chnm.gmu.edu/about/