

Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists. Anthony Cocciolo. Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2017. 218 pp. ISBN 0931828937

KATRINA COHEN-PALACIOS

Clara Thomas Archives and Special Collections
York University Libraries

It is easy to see why Antony Cocciolo's book, *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*, won the Society of American Archivists' 2018 Waldo Gifford Leland Award for writing of superior excellence and usefulness in the field of archival history, theory, or practice. Audiovisual preservation can be a complex, nuanced, and resource-intensive undertaking, and Cocciolo's book offers solutions for low-cost, do-it-yourself digitization and preservation using open-source access tools (p. 185). It takes the position that "the preservation of and access to moving image and sound records is best advanced by reformatting them to digital formats . . . and engaging in digital preservation of those assets" (p. 3). In creating this guide for the non-specialist, Cocciolo sifts through an abundance of information, highlighting nuggets that are carefully balanced to avoid overwhelming the reader.

Cocciolo, who is currently Dean at the Pratt Institute School of Information, is an associate professor with expertise in digital preservation. In his sound and moving image course, he formed partnerships with archival institutions to provide students with hands-on expertise and noticed that media holdings were mainly ignored by many archivists.¹ This, in addition to his inability to locate

1 "Episode 77: Saving the Sound of the Record (Anthony Cocciolo)," interview by Geof Huth and Karen Trivette, *An Archivist's Tale*, Spreaker, June 27, 2019, podcast audio, 28:03–30:00, accessed January 5, 2020, <http://www.spreaker.com/user/archiviststale/0077-anthony-cocciolo>.

a concise publication that covered the preservation of film, video, and sound recordings for his course,² led Cocciolo to decide to “data dump” his course into a book³ for the benefit of the professional community. With chapters mirroring weekly themes in his course syllabus,⁴ the thematic organization of *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* makes it easy to dive in to a specific area of interest and makes the book a handy reference guide. *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* is divided into two parts: the first half of the book concentrates on archival activities (appraisal, accessioning, legal issues, digital preservation, and outreach) and the second outlines the intricacies of specific formats (audio, film, video, digital video, and complex media). Each chapter integrates analog and digital records and includes an introduction to the subject, an explanation of theoretical and practical knowledge, and an outline of a case study about preserving records on a shoestring budget.

The first chapter, on appraisal, summarizes archival theory on the topic and dives into the unique appraisal activities specific to audiovisual holdings. Cocciolo emphasizes that audiovisual records are both time- and labour-intensive, with appraisal typically occurring at an item level (p. 11). He also provides insights into what some consider more advanced acquisition methods, such as the bulk extraction of video content from the application program interfaces (APIs) of social media platforms (p. 14). He outlines the importance of reappraisal to mitigate resource constraints and demonstrates this through the case study, which recounts a decision to preserve high-resolution videos of exhibition material and to save storage space by preserving compressed video recordings of corporate meetings (p. 15).

The next chapter, titled “Accessioning, Arrangement, and Description,” focuses primarily on processing audiovisual records. It also explores information covering physical and digital storage and the advantages or disadvantages

2 Ibid. Note that *Moving Image* was published shortly after the publication of the Northeast Document Conservation Center (NEDCC)'s open-access online textbook, *Fundamentals of AV Preservation* (2017), which also covered video, film, and sound records. See <https://www.nedcc.org/fundamentals-of-av-preservation-textbook/chapter1-care-and-handling-of-audiovisual-collections>.

3 Society of American Archivists, “Episode 6: Anthony Cocciolo,” *Archives in Context*. January 28, 2019, podcast audio, 2:25, accessed January 5, 2020, <http://archivesincontext.archivists.org/2019/01/28/episode-6-anthony-cocciolo/>.

4 See “INFO 668-01: Projects in Moving Image and Sound Archives, Fall 2019,” http://www.thinkingprojects.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/info668-01_fall2019_projects_moving_image.pdf.

of varying metadata standards. Cocciolo's practical approach is highlighted in this chapter, which includes, for example, suggestions to simplify audio cassette digitization by creating a single file for a set of digitized recordings rather than creating one file each for side A and side B (p. 34). While introducing the reader to many possible schemas and identifiers, including PBCore (a cataloguing standard for the description of audiovisual content developed by the American broadcasting community), *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* is clearly written for an American audience. Nevertheless, it is relevant to Canadian archivists and may broaden Canadian archival thinking. For example, if reading-room access to media is hindered by a lack of playback equipment, compliance with *Describing Archives: A Content Standard (DACS)* requires a descriptive note and, while this is absent from the *Rules for Archival Description (RAD)*, inclusion of such a note in Canadian descriptive practices would result in a more user-friendly research experience.

The US-centric perspective continues in the third chapter, "Legal Issues." This is perhaps the weakest section of *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* for an international audience because Cocciolo limits his discussion to the application of American legislation. Nevertheless, it contains information of interest to Canadian archivists, such as a convenient explanation of the layered rights embedded within audiovisual material (p. 45). This chapter also demonstrates the book's proactive approach, reaching beyond the basics and into thought-provoking explorations – of applications such as creative commons licensing with donors and of copyright alternatives such as the uploading of a small portion of an oral history interview to YouTube in order to promote research interest (pp. 47–48).

The fourth chapter, although it describes digital preservation operations for born-digital records and for the migration of content off of deteriorating media carriers, left this reader wanting more. This archival function may be the most challenging for archivists with limited resources, and the information about it could certainly have been expanded. For example, the chapter's case study of the Lesbian Herstory Archives – which describes a set-up where digital material resides on a hard drive connected to a Raspberry Pi, which auto-boots on a weekly basis thanks to a power timer, reviews fixity checks for errors, and sends an automated email report of errors (p. 61) – ignites inspiration for digital preservation projects on a limited budget. Sadly, the book lacks a descriptive explanation of how to build such a system and does not provide a citation for further informa-

tion.⁵ The helpful bibliography, however, alerts readers to resources such as the Preserving Digital Objects With Restricted Resources (Digital POWRR) project, and the glossary at the end of *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* guides readers through the jargon related to digital preservation.

Unfortunately, the fifth chapter, “Access and Outreach,” falls flat as it predominantly focuses on uploading content to the Internet. For example, Cocciolo discusses the terms and conditions of social media platforms, including those for YouTube uploads, which grant the company a worldwide, non-exclusive, and royalty-free license (p. 72). He also emphasizes the importance of an accessible approach to outreach and highlights the usefulness of alt tags, user-contributed descriptions, and closed captioning (p. 74). The most valuable section of this chapter is the list of open-source programs (with and without graphic user interfaces) for compressing videos and encoding MP3 files for distribution; examples include HandBrake, FFmpeg, and LAME (pp. 68–70). In the case study focusing on screenings, Cocciolo perhaps missed the opportunity to equip archivists with an overview of how to attract local and national attention by working with the press in outreach initiatives.

The second half of *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists*, appropriately titled “Format-Specific Guidance,” dedicates chapters to describing the nuances of audio, film, video, digital video, and complex media. Each chapter contextualizes the relevant media carriers with a history of the format, facilitates an understanding of format-specific technical details with illustrated figures and charts, and includes helpful colour photographs to assist with identification of popular and less-popular formats. Budgeting is a predominant theme throughout this section, which includes grant application tips, open-source software recommendations, and advice to splurge on higher-end machines rather than on consumer equipment for digitization.

5 This is unfortunate, as Cocciolo presented on the project and provides a full copy of the scripts in his GitHub repository. For more information about the project, see Anthony Cocciolo, “FixityBerry: Environmentally Sustainable Digital Preservation for Very Low Resourced Cultural Heritage Institutions” (poster, Illinois Digital Environment for Access to Learning and Scholarship *iConference*, Newport Beach, CA, March 24–27, 2015), accessed June 1, 2020, <https://www.ideals.illinois.edu/handle/2142/73686>.

Overall, *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* accomplishes what it sets out to do: it is an informative read with a holistic approach that guides archivists through the challenges of sound and moving image archives while taking format, function, and resources into consideration. Grounded in theory and practice, this book is highly recommended for archivists with sound and moving records in their holdings. With limited time before the complete degradation of most media carriers, archivists must be equipped with the knowledge to overcome the barriers related to preserving information embedded within sound and moving image records before it is too late.