

Book: Archival Accessioning by Audra Eagle Yun

Society of American Archivists (2021) | 170 pages B/W | 978-1-945246-56-2 | Paperback \$45.00

According to Audra Eagle Yun (2021, p.2) “robust accessioning is the keystone of responsible collection stewardship practice”. Her book, *Archival Accessioning*, aims to show readers how to “develop an integrated accessioning program to consistently provide access to all holdings in an archival repository” (Yun, 2021, p.3). To achieve this Yun draws on not only her own expertise but that of other archive specialists whose credentials are established in the book’s biography. Divided into two parts, the first (the Introduction and Chapters 1-4), are authored by Yun who focuses on accessioning history as well as the major concepts and best practices. The second features guest contributors whose chapters contain useful scenarios and suggestions on reducing backlogs, retrospective accessioning and digital archiving along with helpful notes and references for further research. Clearly, each contributor has thought carefully about how to convey useful information without overload as chapters are fairly concise. Another bonus is the relaxed style of the book, making it a valuable resource for new entrants to the profession as well as those seeking to gain some different perspectives. In our busy, time-pressured world, this book is easy to dip into for something specific or to read through in one or two sittings.

Yun stresses a holistic approach to collection management and encourages readers in this view, rather than seeing accessioning as a standalone process. She convincingly argues the merits of institutional collecting and retention policies with adherence by archivists viewed as fundamental for procedural consistency and transparency. Another important aspect is the influence of the ‘more product, less process’ (MPLP) method of Greene and Meissner (2005) notable in a number of suggestions made by Yun and other contributors.¹ The book’s emphasis on finding aid development and minimal description practices dovetails with the focus on increasing access to backlogged and unprocessed materials. The book rightly casts this approach in a positive light, although there is little acknowledgment of scholarly criticisms regarding preservation (Phillips, 2015) for instance, well as the opportunity costs of implementing MPLP.²

There are two additional areas that would have benefitted from further discussion. Although Yun refers to marginalised communities in her introduction there is no expansion on the possible effects of an accessioning programme for such groups. Most of the contributors hold positions in university libraries while archivists from community or indigenous archives are not represented. More recognition of the diversity of institutions, communities and donors involved in archival practices and their accessioning perspectives would have been beneficial.

While not stated explicitly Yun's work is directed toward an American audience. All contributors are American as is the chapter on the history of accessioning. Other chapters, for instance, refer to DACS, the US descriptive standard for archives, as well as resources from the Society of American Archivists. Unfortunately, this US (rather than international) focus reduces the relevance of certain aspects thus lessening its overall value as an accessioning text for those working outside America.

Despite these caveats, *Archival Accessioning* is a book worth considering if you are looking to develop, review, or reflect on your accessioning programme and collection accessibility.

Alison Day

PhD Candidate, School of Information Management, Victoria University of Wellington, Wellington.

Endnotes

1. Greene, Mark A, and Dennis Meissner. 2005. "More Product, Less Process: Revamping Traditional Archival Processing." *The American Archivist* 68, (2): 208–263.
2. Phillips, Jessica. 2015. A Defense of Preservation in the Age of MPLP. *The American Archivist*, 78 (2): 470–487. <https://doi.org/10.17723/0360-9081.78.2.470>