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**Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists**

ANTHONY COCCILO

Chicago: Society of American Archivists, 2017

US \$69.99

Anthony Cocciolo's volume *Moving Image and Sound Collections for Archivists* is written for the general archivist who has or will experience finding among their collection or donations, material in various audiovisual formats.

Many an archivist has sorted through material to come across some media format and wondered quite what to do with it. Whereas paper has been fundamentally stable for centuries media formats seem to change every decade or so, leading to a plethora of formats all with their own preservation and access challenges. Having to identify the particular characteristics of the format is necessary before making decisions about the long-term value of the content and considering its access and preservation. This book provides information and guidance which helps the archivist make that decision a more informed decision.

Cocciolo is well-placed to provide this advice. Interim Dean at the Pratt Institute School of Information he has written widely on a range of topics including recent articles on email as a cultural heritage resource (*Records Management Journal* 26 (1), 68-82), and the differing approaches of archivists and digital asset managers (*The American Archivist* 79 (1), 121-136), both exploring aspects of his long-time interest in archives and digital preservation.

As Cocciolo comments, paper has been shown to be able to cope with some level of benign neglect over time. Not so media formats. Both analog and digital media archives are subject to hardware obsolescence and digital media also has the added complication of software becoming unreadable.

The author has structured the book into two parts. The first deals with general archival practices as they apply to moving image and sound collections. He argues that appraisal of media formats not only requires the standard considerations as to the potential value of the material but must also include a decision about what format it should be retained in. The future accessibility and integrity of the item may well hinge on this second decision. He then goes on to discuss specific arrangement and description elements particularly relevant to media formats and provides a useful table of relevant metadata, covering both descriptive metadata (using Dublin Core metadata fields), and technical metadata (using the

PBCore standard). For those who are new to this area these provide a good practical starting point or model.

The chapter on 'Digital Preservation of Digitised and Born-Digital Content' is one clearly core to the author's message. He believes that analog media materials must be digitised for their long term access and preservation and therefore spends some time discussing what archivists need to know in order to make informed decisions. The digitisation of media archives need to give special attention to the sound and/or video quality of re-formatted object. This chapter includes four short examples of practices employed by a range of small to medium-sized archives and it is a pleasure to see a New Zealand case study included here. Elizabeth Charlton provided information from her experience at the Marist Archives, Wellington, using a combination of vendor-supported reformatting and in-house preservation.

While the section on "Legal and Ethical Issues" is naturally located in the world of USA copyright law, there is still value to be derived from the discussion of donor agreements, preservation exemptions to copyright law, and privacy concerns. This section is relatively light in comparison to the others, but given its less universal applicability this is not really an issue. Given the wide scope of the book overall and to avoid the reader being overwhelmed, the discussion of individual areas can only touch on the main points. This is counterbalanced to some extent by useful 'Notes' sections at the end of each chapter, and a useful section of further readings near the end of the book.

The second part of the book gives guidance of the handling and management of specific formats, considering in turn audio collections, film, analog video, digital video and complex media. Cocciolo works through the most commonly found formats, giving practical advice on how to manage the two key concerns of preservation and access. He realistically acknowledges that many archivists are not able to call on large budgets and specialist services and have to make pragmatic and practical decisions. Alongside providing a brief history of each format, good use of images helps illustrate the difference between the physical carriers and explain some of the technical points being made. He also provides some useful tips on storage of the various media, recognising that few small archives will have the resources to immediately implement full digitisation projects.

The range of real-life examples gathered from a number of practitioners alongside clear explanations gives the reader reassurance that these are achievable proven solutions rather than theoretical

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approaches. Although not the target readership, the specialist media archivist may also pick up some ideas from Cocciolo's suggestions and the experiences of others.

Cocciolo has identified that many archivists need to develop a better understanding of the elements of digital media preservation, especially as more and more archival material is being produced in multimedia formats. In this book he has delivered an excellent starting point, providing a good overview of the field, practical advice and leading the reader to more detailed studies if desired.

One minor criticism regarding the formatting – a slightly larger font with a more obvious break between paragraphs would have made the text easier to read. This is not just from the perspective of someone whose eyesight may not be quite what it was but a common reaction by a number of readers that I showed the book to. But this is no way diminished the value of the information contained within the volume.

*Elizabeth Nichol*