

# The American Archivist Reviews

## Report to the Editorial Board

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July 29, 2016

### Summary

Between August 2015 and August 2016, I transitioned into the role as Reviews Editor for the journal. Amy Cooper Cary, former Reviews Editor, graciously provided guidance and facilitated the transition during the first three months.

Over the last year, five reviews were submitted for 79:1 and six reviews for 79:2; six reviews are currently in process for 80:1 as well as six for 80:2 (detailed further below). In addition to reviews for the journal, work has focused on addressing several issues identified at the 2015 editorial meeting in regards to the Reviews Portal. For the last few years the Reviews Portal (RP) has suffered from low pageviews, and in the last year has concurrently faced difficulty finding and retaining reviewers. In October 2015, Alexandra Orchard and I proposed moving the RP to a blog platform in order to increase engagement with readers and garner interest from prospective reviewers, as well as expand the scope of potential resources for review. Re-envisioning the RP as a blog will leverage its content, enhancing its accessibility and dissemination. The transition of the RP to a WordPress site is described below in the Reviews Portal section.

Additionally, Alexandra Orchard became the Editor of *Archival Issues* and thus resigned her position as the Coordinator for the Reviews Portal. The position opening was announced in June, and phone interviews were conducted by myself, Greg Hunter, and Abigail Christian in mid-July. Gloria Gonzalez was offered the RP Coordinator position and will start August 7, 2016.

### Highlights

- In October 2015, five monograph reviews were submitted for issue 79:1
  - *Donors and Archives*, reviewed by Geof Huth
  - *Preserving our Heritage*, reviewed by Diane Vogt-O'Connor
  - *Through the Archival Looking Glass*, reviewed by Kären Mason
  - *Crisis, Credibility and Corporate History*, reviewed by Menzi Behrnd-Klodt
  - *The Archive Thief*, reviewed by Katharina Hering
- In February 2016, six reviews were submitted for issue 79:2, including five monograph reviews and one review of a scholarly report
  - *Archives Alive*, reviewed by Mary Mannix
  - *Dissonant Archives*, reviewed by Christopher Laico
  - *Curiosity's Cat*, reviewed by Caryn Radick
  - *Rights in the Digital Era*, reviewed by Jean Dryden
  - *Archives in Libraries*, reviewed by William Maher

- *The Evolving Scholarly Record*, reviewed by Jordon Steele
- In February 2016, Alexandra and I began working with Abigail Christian and Matt Black on setting up a WordPress instance for the RP. In addition to moving over reviews, the editorial team has been working on reorganizing the navigation bar at americanarchivist.org in order to give the Reviews Portal a more prominent place on the bar instead of in the dropdown menu. A top menu for americanarchivist.org will be added to the title of Reviews Portal added for cohesive branding.
- As of July 2016, all reviews were migrated to WordPress: <https://reviewsamericanarchivist.wordpress.com/>. The last stage of the transition is to work with Matt Black on customizing and branding the site to complement americanarchivist.org, which will happen following the annual meeting
- In addition to reviews of monographs, I am including one scholarly report in each issue (starting with issue 79:2). Recognizing new modes of publication in online environments, and the number of scholarly reports published by the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC), OCLC, etc., that archivists engage with and impact professional work, Greg and I agreed to explore publishing one review of a report in each issue. While such resources are also included in the Reviews Portal, the reports featured in journal are generally more theoretical in nature and/or address important issues relating to praxis

### Reviews Portal (Alexandra Orchard)

During the 2015-2016 year, five reviews were posted in the Reviews Portal's with the emphasis on digital projects using archival materials, as well as technologies and tools supportive of archivists' work. Items reviewed included three projects using archival materials: A tale of Two Plantations, Histories of the National Mall, and Richard Pryor's Peoria, technologies and standards reviewed included the new oral history transcription tool Oral History Metadata Synchronizer, and EADiva.com an EAD resource.

At last year's Editorial Board meeting, a list of proposed 2015-2016 Reviews Portal goals were created, which are assessed below:

#### 2015-2016 Goals

- **Continue updating Resources and Tools page; recruiting reviewers; and adding reviews**
  - Alexandra updated the Resources and Tools page on a regular basis, including external submissions.
  - Alexandra and Bethany recruited reviewers: Alexandra wrote a blog post for Cheryl Oestreicher's "Publishing in the Archives Profession" blog, and included reviewer calls in the Winter 2016 and Summer 2016 Description Section newsletters. Bethany recruited reviewers, resulting in a currently in-progress review. Abigail and Teresa also announced opportunities to review for the Reviews Portal via twitter and In the Loop.
  - Five reviews were added to the Reviews Portal in the 2015-2016 year. While this was less than in years past, this was due to difficulties in attracting reviewers which are being addressed by the platform transition (see New Platform, below).

- **Work with incoming Reviews Editor / Transition**
  - Bethany and Alexandra worked together, continuing to publish reviews. Significant time was spent focusing on moving the Reviews Portal to a new platform.
- **Revise the “What’s Your Favorite *American Archivist* Article” page**
  - Bethany and Alexandra opted to not to include this page in the new platform due to low usage by readers.
- **Consider including blogs and other non-traditional media as a reviewable resource types**
  - Bethany and Alexandra decided to include these media types as reviewable items. A “Blogs” heading is included on the “Technologies and Resources” page on the new site (see New Platform, below).

#### **Additional 2015-2016 Work and Web Coordinator Transition**

- **New Platform**
  - Given the difficulty in recruiting reviewers and ongoing low page views, Bethany and Alexandra felt it would be worthwhile to investigate changing the Reviews Portal platform to one that is more interactive, such as a blog platform (i.e., WordPress). This would also help to solve the ongoing desire to add an RSS feed to the Reviews Portal page which was impossible given the current platform.
    - Alexandra and Bethany wrote a proposal providing the background, metrics, and benefits of moving to a new system and sent it to Greg and Teresa. It was determined to move forward and move the Reviews Portal platform to WordPress. Alexandra and Bethany worked with Abigail and Matt, and the WordPress site was created.
    - As of the end of July 2016, all content from the Reviews Portal has been migrated to the WordPress platform. Next steps include theming the new site to be consistent with SAA branding.
- **Web Coordinator Transition**
  - Alexandra resigned from the Web Coordinator position upon accepting the role of *Archival Issues* Editor. She is staying on until a replacement is found (anticipated shortly after the Annual Meeting) and will assist in the transition. She wishes to thank everyone on the Editorial Board for their support over the last four years!

Respectfully submitted,  
Bethany Anderson